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**Strategies of Coping and Patterns of Accommodation of
Irregular Egyptian Migrants in Europe**

09-May-09

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Cairo 9-10 May 2009

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Strategies of coping and patterns of accommodation of irregular Egyptian migrants in Europe

Ayman Zohry¹

Abstract

This paper presents an overview of ethnographic documentation of irregular Egyptian migrants' strategies and patterns of accommodation in European societies. Documentary evidence is drawn from Italy and France in the form of short case studies of individuals who were previous and current irregular migrants living in Europe. The migrants interviewed present low-income workers and few middle-income technicians and professionals. Particular attention is given to the differing socio-cultural conditions of the sending and receiving countries in order to account for certain strategies of coping among Egyptian migrants.

1. Introduction

Over the last four decades, two distinct destinations have emerged for Egyptian migration. Emigrants have moved to the Arab Gulf countries, especially after the 1973 oil crisis, benefiting from the need for foreign labour in these countries to implement massive scale development plans and projects. Since the 1960s, growing numbers have been migrating to Europe, North America and Australia with the intention of staying permanently in the destination countries. In recent years, a new migration stream from Egypt to Europe, especially Italy and France, is observed. Most Egyptian migrants to Italy and France would be in an irregular situation. Migration statistics and the estimates of Egyptians abroad vary according to source. However, the Egyptian estimates are always higher than the receiving countries' estimates. Moreover, Egyptian estimates themselves vary from one source to another, making it difficult to make a good estimate of the number of Egyptians abroad.

All living beings routinely utilize coping skills in daily life. For example, people with disability use aids to behave like others without disabilities. Migrants utilize coping strategies

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through kinship and family ties, migration networks, and job mobility in order to moderate the consequences of migration and living in new societies that differ from their societies of origin (Khalaf and Alkobaisi 1999). It is noted that the literature of the international migration of Egyptians is origin-dominated. Studies on the living and working conditions of Egyptians abroad are rare (Moursi 2003; Saad 2005, 2007; Stocchiero, 2005; Baraulina et. al. 2007; Zohry, forthcoming). This study attempts to fill in a gap in the Egyptian migration literature by shedding some light on the living conditions of irregular Egyptian migrants in Europe. Documentary evidence is drawn from Italy and France in the form of short case studies of individuals who were previous and current irregular migrants living in Europe.

Coping strategies, in general, are the methods that human beings adopt to deal with challenges or adversities. In this study, ‘coping strategies’ refers to the specific efforts, both behavioral and psychological, that migrants employ to master, tolerate, reduce, or minimize stressful events they face in the countries of destination. Qualitative measures are utilized to fulfill the objectives of this study. The data are presented in the form of case-studies of Egyptian individuals, and is also based on field observations by the researcher in the last two years (from mid 2007 to late 2008) in two receiving countries in Europe: France and Italy. The migrants interviewed present low-income workers and few middle-income technicians and professionals.

Egyptian Migration to Europe

Egyptian migration to Europe started about two hundred years ago in the beginning of the 19th century, after the Napoleon’s Egyptian Campaign (1798-1801). In 1813 Mohamed Ali, the founder of modern Egypt, sent the first Egyptian mission to Italy to study printing arts, and another mission to France in 1818 to study military and maritime sciences in order to establish a strong Egyptian army based on the European standards of that time. Since then there has always been a channel of communication between Egypt and Europe. Europeans migrated to Egypt and formed successful minorities in Alexandria and Cairo until the early nineteen-fifties².

² Mainly Italians and Greeks.

II.1 Contemporary Egyptian Migration to Europe

Economic pressures and the transition to socialism in the Nasser era led many European Egyptians - persons with European ancestry and Egyptian nationality, in addition to dual nationals - to migrate to Europe. In addition, Egyptians started to migrate to the West in the 1960s. Active and successful Egyptians live at present in most of the large metropolitan areas in several European countries.

From the beginning of the 1960s, political, economic, and social developments led some Egyptians to migrate to North America and European countries. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' estimates based on consular records, the total number of Egyptian migrants in non-Arab countries is about than 1.4 million comprising about 29% of the total number of Egyptians residing abroad. According to the same source, the total number of Egyptians in Europe is more than five hundred thousand. About 80% of Egyptians in Europe are concentrated in four countries: Italy (210,000 Egyptians comprising 41.1%), The United Kingdom (74,764 Egyptians comprising 14.6%), France (70,000 Egyptians comprising 13.7%), and Greece (50,000 Egyptians comprising 9.8%), (See Table 1 for more details).

Table 1
Egyptians in Europe (Circa 2006)

Country	Number	Percent
Italy	210,000	41.1
UK	74,764	14.6
France	70,000	13.7
Greece	50,000	9.8
Germany	40,265	7.9
Netherlands	20,000	3.9
Austria	20,000	3.9
Switzerland	12,000	2.3
Sweden	3,510	0.7
Denmark	2,000	0.4
Cyprus	2,000	0.4
Spain	1,000	0.2
Belgium	1,000	0.2
Other European Countries	4,339	0.8
Total	510,878	100.0

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Manpower and Emigration

II.2 Irregular Migration of Egyptians to Europe

Irregular migration of Egyptians to Europe is driven by complex factors, including unemployment and lack of livelihood opportunities, the demand for cheap labour in destination countries in Europe and the lack of regular migration opportunities. In addition, irregular migration is facilitated by criminal networks that profit from migrant smuggling (Roman, 2008). Statistically speaking and due to the clandestine nature of this movement of people, accurate figures of the numbers involved in irregular migration are difficult to estimate. Although the governments of sending countries set measures to stop irregular migration, they can not eradicate it completely. Similarly, the governments of host countries in Europe can not stop the movements of irregular migration with high rates of success due to the complicated nature of this phenomenon and its linkages to policy and socioeconomic conditions in the sending and receiving countries.

The current stream of Egyptian irregular migration to Europe started in the last decade of the 20th century and increased starting from the eve of the 21st century with thousands of fresh graduates and poorly-educated unemployed youth engaged in irregular migration to Europe either through the Mediterranean Sea via Libya or by over-staying touristic Schengen visas (Zohry, 2006). The main reasons behind this new type of migration are not related to the tightened policy adopted by the European community, but mainly to high unemployment rates among Egyptian youth, the difficulty for Egyptian youth to find employment opportunities in the Arab Gulf countries due to the competition they face there with South-East Asian migrants. Also a factor is the geographic proximity between Egypt and Europe, and the ease of traveling to Libya where most of the boat journeys to Europe originate (Zohry, 2006).

A survey that was carried out in 1996 in Egypt as part of *Push and Pull Factors on Migration* (Eurostat, 2000a & 2000b) indicates that Egyptian non-migrants and return migrants who intend to migrate prefer to migrate to any Arab country; Saudi Arabia was still the favourite destination (40.0%) compared to only 6.0% who prefer to migrate to any European country. A recent survey carried out by the European Training Foundation (ETF) indicates a shift in preferred destination of Egyptian youth. The survey reveals that 33.7% of the surveyed

population who expressed their desire to migrate prefer to migrate to any European country compared to 61.9% who expressed their desire to migrate to any Arab country (ETF, 2007).

II.3 Forces behind Irregular Migration of Egyptians to Europe

The topic of migration is widely discussed in the daily life of Egyptian youth, since it is strongly connected to the economic, political, cultural and social situation in the country. In addition, the motives for irregular migration of Egyptians to Europe are overwhelmingly economic, and linked to the support and survival of the family base in Egypt. Key migration factors are unemployment, very low incomes, and lack of job opportunities. Europe offers higher wages, a more exciting life (for some) and, most important of all, the chance to remit cash in order to support family members at home. Migration thus improves the material quality of life for the left-behind families. For many irregular migrants working in Europe, migration is a waiting game until they can find permanent and more secure job opportunities in their homeland. However, for many, such hopes are illusory and hence to-and-fro migration will continue. In addition, irregular migration of Egyptians to Europe can be considered as a kind of “Survival Migration.” Egyptian irregular migrants in Europe sacrifice their own expediency to help their families in homeland, and to ensure a decent life for them (Stocchiero 2005; Zohry 2006; Saad 2007). In addition, irregular migration of Egyptians to Europe is male-dominated.

IV. Case Studies and Fieldwork

In this section, I present ten short case studies to illustrate Egyptian migrants’ experiences and strategies of coping and modalities they utilize to survive in a different culture and community.

Case 1: Mohamed El-Sharkawi, the tourist guide

The work and income of Mohamed, who comes from Sharkyia governorate, depends on the weather conditions. Every morning he dreams of a sunny and a clear day with a lot of tourists coming to visit the Doumo; Rome’s marble Cathedral located in the city center. “*I have corn*

seeds and I can take you some photos with your camera with the pigeons while they are picking the seeds from your hand,” Mohamed Said.

Despite the fact that Mohamed’s family does not own any agricultural land, he arrived in Italy five years ago after completing his study towards the low-status vocational education diploma in the specialization of agriculture. With colleagues and friends from his village, Mohamed took the risk of the hazardous boat journey across the Mediterranean from Libya. When he first arrived in Italy, he joined relatives and counterparts from his village who managed to cross the Mediterranean a few years ago.

“When I first arrived in Italy, I called one of my relatives in this city and they offered me accommodation in a very crowded apartment in the suburbs of this large city. Most of my friends were working in the field of construction. I worked with them for about six months, but because I have no experience regarding this harsh work, I did not manage to continue working in this field and I moved to work with a friend of mine in cleaning services. The work was easier than working the construction field but the revenues were less, and I have had to wake up early in the very cold weather. One day, I went with one of my colleagues to the city center. There, I met with two of our village counterparts who were working there. Their nature of work and revenues attracted me. They were working with the tourists and the visitors of the Doumo, just helping them taking photographs with their own cameras with the pigeons while feeding them with corn seeds. I left my work in the cleaning services and I joined them,” Mohamed said.

Mohamed’s work is the same as the work of young people in touristic places in Egypt, selling handicrafts to tourists. This work is illegal here and there. When I asked Mohamed whether the police let them work freely in the area he said *“The police people here are very kind and they know us and let us work without any abuse, but they sometimes arrest us and we stay in the police station for one night and then leave without any legal action.”*

How do you live in this big city? Do you wish to go back to Egypt? How do you see your future in the coming years? *“Now I live with three of my colleagues in a rented two-room*

apartment and I come here at about 10am and I work till sunset. I make good money compared to my other Egyptian colleagues who work in the construction field, but I'm not happy – he said with sorrow – I'm here for more than five years and I wish to go back to Egypt to visit my family but not to stay in Egypt. In fact, I can't go back to Egypt because of my regular status here. Also, if I go to Egypt, it is very difficult to come back to Italy. I dream of the day that I can regularize my status in Italy so that I can go and visit my family in Egypt. In fact I don't think of the future, simply because I don't see it," said Mohamed (Milan 18 Dec. 2007).

Case 2: Abdel-Nasser Abdel-Shafi, the English teacher

Abdel-Nasser is 40 years old. He was working as an English teacher. He is married and has three children. In 2002 he heard from colleagues from his village in Dakahlyia Governorate that a naturalization process will take place in Italy for irregular migrants who were residents in Italy at that time. He left his village and headed to Libya, from where he took the boat journey to Italy to get the benefit of the regularization process. He arrived in Italy in 2002 and managed to naturalize. After naturalization and in order to keep his job at home, Abdel-Nasser returned to Egypt and applied for a leave without pay and returned to Italy.

Abdel-Nasser joined a group of workers from his village who are working in wood floor installation in Milan. The company is founded and run by an amateur Egyptian who migrated to Italy in the late 70s. Abdel-Nasser forgot about his initial specialization as an English language teacher and he works as a master in his new profession. He is happy with his new profession but still remember his previous profession, *"I'm making good money here but as a well-educated English language teacher I was supposed to make a life in my country. I feel I'm forced to come to this country – Italy – and if I have a good opportunity to secure a decent life for my family in Egypt, I will not stay here anymore, but what I can do? Outside Cairo and Alexandria, private tutoring is not rewarding, and salaries are very low. Do you think I'm happy working here and leaving my family alone?"* Abdel-Nasser Said.

Despite the negative feelings of Abdel-Nasser towards his living conditions in Italy, he is regarded by his fellows as a lucky person because he managed to naturalize, and because of his

ability to visit his family in Egypt every year. Most of his colleagues who work with him cannot go back to Egypt for visits, because of their irregular status. Abdel-Nasser lives in a small apartment with 11 of his colleagues who belong to the same governorate in Egypt – Dakahlyia. “.... *but anyway, working here is better and more rewarding than working as a teacher in Egypt or even working in the Arab Gulf countries,*” Said Abdel-Nasser (Milan 2 Nov. 2008).



The Author with irregular migrants in Paris, October 2008

Case 3: Hamada, the young baker

Hamada (a pet name usually used in Egypt to express fondness of those named Mohamed) is one of the young Egyptians I met in Milan among irregular migrants; he is 22 years old. He arrived in Italy four years ago with a group of his relatives through Libya. At that time, he was less than 18 years old. The Italian law gives a special treatment for young people – less than 16 years old - who enter the Italian territories. The government of Italy adopts those young people and offers them a chance for training and naturalization. Under the immigration

legislation for non-EU citizens, separated children are entitled to a special residence permit “for minor age” because they are under 18 (and therefore cannot be expelled)³. Hamada’s hope was to get the benefit of these privileges. Unfortunately, due to incompleteness of his documents, he did not manage to get these privileges. However, upon his arrival, Hamada participated in a six-month Italian language training course and he claims that he has mastered Italian.

Hamada’s relatives are working in the bakery field and they own many bakeries in Milan. It was easy for him to work with them. After a few months of working in this field, Hamada was a skilled laborer in a relative’s bakery. *“I did not have any experience working in this field when I was in Egypt. It was my first time to work in this field here in Milan. Many Egyptian migrants in Milan work in the field of restaurants that serve Italian pizza and bakery shops. I can say with pride that the best bakery products in Milan are produced by Egyptians,”* Said Hamada.

“It is difficult to live away from the family, but what can I do? Here, I learned a profession and I have a good income that enables me to send money to my family in Egypt. Also, I live with a big group of relatives and friends from the same village which makes living expenses affordable. We pay 1,000 Euros for a small apartment; everyone pays 100 Euros. Also we eat together to cut cost. On the weekends we usually gather together in an Egyptian coffee shop to smoke shisha –water pipe – and to watch Egyptian football matches.”

Hamada dreams of the day that he can go back to Egypt, but he cannot because he has reached the age for compulsory service in the Egyptian military and will be conscripted upon arrival in Egypt. Even if he is exempted from the service, he will not be able to come back to Italy easily (Milan 29 Oct. 2008).

Case 4: Yasser, the hair dresser and garbage collector

Yasser is 32 years old and from Sharkyia Governorate. He has a secondary school diploma in agriculture. I met him near Maciachini metro station in Milan. He arrived in Italy 14 months ago. He is almost unemployed in Italy, where he can barely work for less than 20 hours a

³ Immigration law n. 286/98 (Turco-Napolitano Law 1998)

week as a garbage collector or cleaner. Yasser was a co-owner of a hair-dressing shop in his village in Egypt. *“I was working very well in Egypt and my income was good. However, I was amazed by the change that occurred in my village because of its youth who work in Italy. I was tempted by the wealth and decent life of migrants and return migrants; the money they send to their families, luxurious houses they constructed in the village, automobiles, and social status of those who succeeded to migrate to Europe, especially those who were very poor. But they did not tell me the truth. Life here is very difficult and expensive. In addition, work is not available and I cannot afford the harsh work in the construction field,”* Said Yasser

“I’m married and I have three children, the eldest is 11 years old, and my income was very good, but when I decided to go to Italy I sold my share of the shop and I paid a migration broker an amount of 20 thousand Egyptian pounds,” Yasser Added. Yasser started his journey by boat from Alexandria, Egypt. Yasser feels that he is a captive; he can not find a suitable job with a good income here, and at the same time he cannot return to Egypt because of the loss of his trade and the money he paid to the migration broker. *“I don’t know what to do, I have to pay 150 Euros for the bed I’m renting in a crowded apartment and I have to match the expectations of my family in Egypt. I’m just passing time until I can find a job,”* said Yasser (Milan 1 Nov. 2008).

Case 5: Hammam, an Upper Egyptian in Paris

Hammam is the only Upper Egyptian migrant I have met in Paris. He is from a village in the Tema district of the Souhag Governorate. Hammam (33 years old) holds a technical secondary diploma in agriculture. He arrived in France eight years ago with a touristic visa for 16 thousand Egyptian pounds. *“I paid 16 thousands only. Now the cost of the visa exceeds 70 thousand pounds,”* Said Hammam. After his voluntary exile in Paris without visiting his family in Upper Egypt because of his irregular status, Hammam is very happy that he will receive his permanent visa in few weeks; he has been dreaming of this day for eight years. In a few weeks he will be able to visit his family in Egypt and come back to Paris.

“I’m very excited about my upcoming visit to my home country; I’m here for the work opportunity and the good income, but one day I will be back permanently to Egypt. My family prepared for my marriage ceremony in this visit. My mother has chosen my bride and I haven’t seen her. Two years ago they sent me her photo, sometimes photos don’t reflect reality, but I trust my mother’s choice,” Said Hammam. In addition, Hammam calls his family every day using street telephone cabins. *“Street telephone calls are cheaper than mobile phone calls. I usually keep a calling card in my pocket,”* Hammam added.

Despite the long stay of Hammam in Paris, he does not speak French well. *“In fact most of the people I’m dealing with at work or after work are either Egyptians or Maghrebans – from Morocco, Algeria, or Tunisia, so that I don’t use the French language,”* Said Hammam. I asked Hammam if he knows other Upper Egyptians who are working in Paris. *“There are many Egyptians from Menia governorate who work here; many of them are masters who have their own businesses. Sometimes I work with them. Also there are a few people from Souhag, after work we gather and smoke shisha – water pipe - at the Simplon Egyptian café,”* he said (Paris 14 Oct. 2008).

Case 6: Ashraf, the Construction master

Ashraf (39 years old) who is from Menoufyia governorate, arrived in Paris in 1992 through a Spanish tourist visa. He took the train to Paris to join his family members and friends who migrated to Paris before. His friends and family members were working in the field of construction. *“The main problem I faced was securing a residence visa. I stayed about two years without papers and then I got married to a Tunisian lady to get the residence visa. We stayed together for two years until I got the visa in 1995 and then we divorced. Because of the good relation between us I paid her a small amount of money,”* said Ashraf.

Since 2003, Ashraf co-owns a small construction office specialized in painting. The co-owner is also Egyptian *“Most of Egyptians work in two field; constructions and the fruit and vegetable market and most of them don’t have a residence visa. The problem Egyptians face is not only the residence visa but also their failure to communicate in French language. About 40%*

of Egyptians don't speak the language. This causes a lot of problems and loses in our fields of work compared to Algerians and Tunisians who speak the language very well," Said Ashraf. Ashraf also got married in this village in Egypt and he plans to bring his wife to live with him. *"She will not be alone here since there are a lot of families from my village living here,"* Ashraf added (Paris 21 Oct. 2008).

Case 7: Hamdan, the Mayor of Egyptian Irregular Migrants in Paris

Despite the fact that he is no longer an irregular migrant, Hamdan is considered the mayor of Egyptian irregular migrant in Paris. Hamdan (44 years old) – from Gharbyia Governorate - arrived irregularly in Portugal in 1990, and then he went to work in Italy for three years. In 1993 he came to Paris to join a crew of friends and relatives who were working there. Hamdan claims that more than 20 thousand citizens from his village – Meet Badr Halawa - are working in Paris. *"In my village, you can find a donkey rider that speaks French. I help anyone from my village who wants to work in Paris. The people from my village prefer to come here through a touristic visa. The visa now costs about 70 thousand Egyptian pounds. In one year, the newcomers can cover the cost of their visa,"* Hamdan said.

Despite his good position in Paris, Hamdan plans to return to Egypt. *"I'm fed up with living alone here and I'm planning to return, but I'm waiting to bring my brother from Egypt to work here. He is 18 years old and I will leave him here to stay with my brother,"* Said Hamdan. With respect to living and working conditions of Egyptians in Paris, Hamdan believes that Egyptians are better off than Algerians and Moroccans and also better off than Egyptians in Italy. *"Egyptians here help each other. We are not like Egyptians in Italy who compete with each other. Also we help newcomers and find work opportunities for them. Anyone who comes to me asking for work I send him to one of my friends in the fruit and vegetable market or in construction. I also have four newcomers at home waiting for job opportunities. Algerians and Moroccans envy us and they are surprised by our success given the fact that we don't master French language like them,"* said Hamdan (Paris 14 & 17 Oct. 2008).

Case 8: Adel, an irregular migrant in transit

Adel is 26 years old and from Behera Governorate. He has a secondary school certificate diploma in electricity. I met him in Paris. He works in the construction field. Adel entered Italy through the boat journey via Libya and stayed in Milan, Italy for one year but he was satisfied neither with the work nor with the income there. *“Living and working conditions in Italy are no longer like before. There is a competition between Egyptians there and working conditions and revenues are not so good,”* Said Adel. With three of his colleagues, Adel moved to Paris to find a better job and, hence, better income as well.

Adel knows that there are many laborers from Behera Governorate who work in England and he is planning to join them. *“I’m waiting to go to England to join my friends and colleagues there. I’m negotiating with a mediator to facilitate my move to England through the Munch – The English Canal – and I agreed with him to pay him the amount of money we agreed upon when I arrive in England. The mediator told me that we can go there by a ship,”* said Adel. Adel indicated that the preferable country in Europe for the people from Behera is England while Milan is dominated by the people from Fayoum. Paris is dominated by people from Gharbyia Governorate. *“In England I can find a lot of people from my village who may help me find a job there,”* said Adel (Paris 19 Oct. 2008).

Case 9: Ramadan, the Young Dreamer

Ramadan (21 years old) originates from Tatoun village in Fayoum Governorate. He claims that the number of Tatounians in Milan may exceed seven thousand. They work mainly in the field of construction. Ramadan arrived in Italy right after completing his technical secondary study. Ramadan did not follow the common route of his village counterparts: to enter the EU zone by boat through Libya. He arrived through a touristic visa to Russia and then crossed many European countries to reach his last destination; Milan. Ramadan paid 40 thousand Egyptian pounds to arrive in Italy. He works with his friends and relatives in the field of construction.

Two years ago, Ramadan took Italian language courses offered by a local NGO and he claims that he has mastered the Italian language, which helps him communicate with residents. Despite his young age and the fact that he cannot go back to Egypt because of his irregular

status, Ramadan has started the process for marriage in Egypt and his family arranged for his engagement one year ago. Ramadan dreams of naturalization in order to be able to go back to Egypt, but it seems that he will wait a long time until his dreams turn into reality (Milan 3 Nov. 2008).

Case 10: Ibrahim, the Painter

Ibrahim is 30 years old and from Dakahlyia Govenorate. I met Ibrahim in a coffee shop owned by an Egyptian from Alexandria in Padava Street, Milan. Ibrahim arrived in Milan through Romania in 2000. *“My trip to Italy was very long and I have had to pass through many European countries to arrive in Italy. They put me in jail for two months in Romania. When I arrived in Italy, I joined my family members here – three of my uncles are working here. I’m still working with one of them. He owns a small construction company specialized in painting,”* said Ibrahim.

In 2003, Ibrahim managed to regularize his status and received his permanent residence with thousands of foreigners at that time. *“I was lucky because this was the last group regularization scheme that took place in Italy; nowadays it is a case-by-case regularization which is very difficult. I’m married and have two children in Egypt, and without regularization I can’t go and visit them. Since my regularization, I visit my family every year as if I’m working in any Arab country. But, living and working here is more rewarding than working in the Gulf countries,”* said Ibrahim (Milan 27 Oct. 2008).

V. Analysis of Coping Strategies

In the context of the case studies presented in this paper, one can consider the decision to migrate from Egypt as a coping strategy. Egyptian migrants in Europe are pushed to leave their country of origin because of the fact that they did not manage to cope with high levels of unemployment and low income, as well as to be able to live decent lives like those who managed to migrate from their villages and localities to the same destinations. Return migrants manage to

create a stereotype about Egyptians in Europe and to present it as a “European Eldorado” (Zohry, 2006). Contrary to their expectations, when they arrive in Europe, Egyptian migrants are faced with difficult circumstances. Then adjustment and coping with the new realities is required.

V.1 Kinship and family ties

Kinship is often the foundation of social networks in developing nations; it may have important implications for migration (Quinlan, 2005). Kinship and family ties are major stimulants for migration. As indicated by the cases studies presented in this research, family ties are very important, not only in maintaining migration streams from a specific locality in Egypt to a specific locality in Europe, but also in helping new migrants find jobs in the labor markets in destination. In addition, family helps cover the initial cost of migration and offers accommodation to newcomers.

V.2 Migration networks and community-based coping strategies

As with all migrant communities, migrants establish networks to make life easier in the diaspora and to support each other (Castles and Miller, 2003; Zohry, forthcoming). A significant community-based strategy is the use of networks to share information about access to work. The in-depth interviews indicate clear evidence of the utilization of such networks where personal contacts from the same village in Egypt are utilized to secure their positions resulting in the clustering of specific locality groups in different economic sectors of Milan and Paris’s labor market. These community-based strategies are clear in the cases of Tatounians in Milan and Meet Badr Halawa residents in Paris.

Beyond work, migrant networks are also important in operating consumption-minimizing strategies such as reducing the cost of housing (Bloch, 2006; McIlwaine, 2005). It is noted that Egyptian migrants choose to live together in crowded apartments to reduce the cost of housing and to increase savings and remittances.

V.3 Re-migration as a survival strategy

Due to their failure in finding jobs and the saturation of the labor market in Italy, Egyptians who fail to find profitable jobs in Italy re-migrate to France; where they can find jobs through the Egyptian network there. In addition, migrants tend to migrate to countries with established networks from their governorates and localities in Egypt. This is clear in the case of Gharbyia, Fayoum, and Behera governorates; where migrants from Fayoum tend to migrate to Italy, migrants from Gharbyia tend to migrate to France, while migrants from Beheirs tend to migrate to England.

V.4 Changing jobs and downgrading in jobs

To cope with the new realities of the European labor market, Egyptian migrants tend to accept jobs that are not relevant to their skill level or their specialization in their home country. Case 4 (Yasser) is an example of this downward in the type of job. While he was working as a hair-dresser in Egypt, he accepted work as a garbage collector in Milan. In addition, migrants tend to change jobs to cope with their inabilities to take harsh jobs. Case 1 (Mohammed) is an example of this phenomenon, where he changes his work from the field of construction to a marginal job in tourism without any prior experience in either fields.

VI. Conclusion

The results of the fieldwork indicate that Europe to the Egyptian irregular migrants means working hard and remitting money to their families in Egypt. It is clear that the psychic base of Egyptian migrants in Europe is still there in their localities and villages in Egypt (Zohry, forthcoming). This attitude of Egyptian migrants in Europe makes it of a minor importance for them to integrate with host country. However, Egyptians in Europe are fully integrated in the European economy and the labor market but they do not care about social or cultural integration in the host country. Moreover, Egyptian migrants in Europe have their own social space materialized through strong kinship ties and Egyptian networks.

In this context, and despite the different legal and political framework, one can say that irregular Egyptian migration to Europe is a reproduction of the Egyptian migration pattern to Arab countries; where males migrate to maximize economic benefits through remittances. The singles and the single-like migrants – those who are married, but their families are still living in Egypt – reside in shared apartments with a high crowding rate. The most important thing to most of the migrants is to maximize remittances to their families in Egypt. Because of this target, they accept a meager quality of life. Most of them are living at the margin of the European society and many of them don't communicate with anyone but their Egyptian colleagues for months. In addition, many Egyptian migrants in Europe indicate that their stay in Europe is temporary, even if it lasts for many years. Moreover, they mentioned that Europe to them means working hard and remitting money to their families in Egypt. The living and working conditions of Egyptian migrants in Europe can be described as a sort of accommodation without assimilation.

Acknowledgments

Some of the interviews presented in this study were made possible through fieldwork carried out as part of a study for the Euro-Mediterranean Consortium for Applied Research on International Migration (CARIM) in 2008. The author also acknowledges the useful discussions on this work with Dr. Mohamed Mohieddin and Mr. Salah Abdel-Tawab.

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