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## The World Bank and the Land Center for Human Rights: spaces of contested meaning

Keith Glenn Whitmire

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The American University in Cairo  
School of Humanities and Social Sciences

# **The World Bank and the Land Center for Human Rights: Spaces of Contested Meaning**

A Thesis Submitted to  
The Department of Sociology, Anthropology, Psychology, and Egyptology

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Master of Arts

In Sociology - Anthropology

By **Keith Whitmire**

Under the supervision of **Dr. Nicholas S. Hopkins**

**May/ 2011**

## **Dedication**

For Dad, who will never get to read this.

Garland Ray Whitmire  
(September 23, 1954-September 1, 2006)

## Acknowledgements

First of all, I wish to thank my committee, Dr. Nicholas Hopkins, Dr. John Schaefer, and Dr. Reem Saad, for all their hard work and dedication. You have been wonderful to me, and you have my sincerest thanks. However, any errors are entirely my own and are not reflective of my committee. I would also like to thank my mother, Linda Whitmire, for her constant support and for being there to listen to me whenever I needed her. I would also like to thank my brother, Scott Whitmire, for his support during the January 25<sup>th</sup> 2011 revolution in Egypt. You were there when I needed you most, and there are not words to express my gratitude. I would also like to extend my thanks to Viola and Jim Palmer, my aunt and uncle, for their help in getting me home when staying in Egypt was no longer an option. I also wish to thank my friend, Jerry Hames, for being there when I needed him. My brother Blake Miles also merits mention here, because if he had not pushed me, I never would have gotten this far. Last, but certainly not least, I wish to express my gratitude to my grandmother, Mae Johnson, without whom none of this would be possible. You have all supported me more than you can know and you all have my sincerest thanks.

## **Abstract**

Since the 1970s, the World Bank has been engaged in a project of neo-liberal economic reform and social change in the Egyptian countryside. These reforms have resulted in profound changes in the countryside, including loss of owned or rented land by smallholders due to impoverishment and social change. Though the effects of the World Bank's views have been seen in the countryside and in greater Egypt, the particular nature of these conceptions and how they affect policy remains obscure. Meanwhile, organizations such as the Land Center for Human Rights are conceptually and geographically closer to Egyptian farmers and provide a separate and distinct point of view that opposes the Bank. Therefore, the purpose of this project is to perform a discursive analysis of the views of the World Bank and the Land Center for Human Rights on land, education, and moral economy in Egypt in order to ascertain their effects on economic and social life in Egypt.

## Table of Contents

i. Dedication

ii. Acknowledgements

iii. Abstract

iv. Table of Contents

1. Introduction and Theoretical Framework.....	pp. 1-28
2. Land.....	pp. 29-52
3. Moral Economy.....	pp. 53-77
4. Education.....	pp. 78-100
5. Conclusions.....	pp. 100-109
6. Works Cited.....	pp. 110-116

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Since the 1970s, the World Bank has been engaged in a project of neo-liberal economic reform in Egypt. In these reforms, agriculture has received an intense focus. These reforms have resulted in profound changes in the countryside in Egypt, including land loss due to debt, impoverishment, and social change. However, these changes have been the result of particular views held by the Bank on land, education, and moral economy. Though the effects of the World Bank's views have been seen in the countryside and in greater Egypt, the particular nature of these conceptions and how they drive policy remain obscure. Organizations such as the Land Center for Human Rights are conceptually and geographically closer to Egyptian farmers and provide a separate and distinct point of view that opposes the Bank. Thus the Land Center provides a valuable counterpoint to the World Bank's views of agriculture in Egypt. The Land Center is valuable because it provides a conflicting view and a separate space where the Bank's views can be called into question. Therefore the purpose of this project is to perform a discursive analysis of the views of the World Bank and the Land Center for Human Rights on land, education, and moral economy in Egypt in order to ascertain the effects of these views economic and social life in rural Egypt.

Neo-liberal reforms in Egypt have produced vast changes in rural life over the past 30 years. Shifts in rural life have been tracked by others (Bush, 2007; Bach, 1998; Toth, 1998), but the particular discipline the Bank seeks to impose on rural life by means of economic transformation has not been examined. As this thesis will show, the Bank seeks to impose this discipline in part by utilizing conceptions of land, education, and moral economy that differ from those held by organizations such as the

Land Center for Human Rights. Therefore, this thesis can also provide valuable insight into this new order and its relationship to agricultural changes in Egypt.

Egypt provides a good place to examine World Bank views because the situation in Egypt has been very well documented. The World Bank documents on its work in Egypt are extensive, as are Land Center publications and press releases. Moreover, there is a great deal of literature regarding agriculture in Egypt. Therefore the situation in Egypt provides a valuable place to study the World Bank's views on land, education, and moral economy, as well as effects of this policy. Agriculture in particular has received an intense focus by both the World Bank and social scientists, providing a great deal of information. Moreover, the way the Bank deals with knowledge has been discussed in other places (Goldman, 2001; Mehta, 2001). Nevertheless, the particular way the Bank views specific subjects and how these views drive policy objectives have not received much study. Moreover, land, education, and moral economy are not ideas or concepts exclusive to Egypt. Therefore, Egypt can provide a valuable case study showing how Bank conceptions and systems of knowledge drive World Bank policy.

### *Methodology*

Interviews, working papers, project reports, and policy documents from the World Bank and the Land Center for Human Right serve as raw data. These two sets of literature will be crosscut with literature from anthropologists, sociologists and economists that gives information on the ground. First, I will perform a literary analysis of the Bank documents and the Land Center documents to determine how the Bank and Land Center view land, education, and moral economy in the Egyptian countryside. Second, I will utilize data from sociologists, anthropologists, and



economists to show how the Bank's views affect policy in Egypt and the results of these policies. Finally, I will examine the places where Bank discourses collide with Land Center discourses and what the result of this collision is.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### *Other Actors in the Mix: International Financial Institutions*

It is important to note here that the World Bank is not the only institution engaged in the process of neo-liberal reform in Egypt. International financial institutions (IFIs) such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as well as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) also play a part. They have joined the World Bank in projects such as pushing for land titling, and they also have their own individual projects in the countryside. USAID is also an engine of US foreign policy, while the IMF and the World Bank have larger aims. Focusing on the World Bank has several benefits as well. First of all, the World Bank is one of the central players in the project for neo-liberal reform in Egypt. As such, it possesses key views that are worth examination. Moreover, the World Bank is capable, if it so chooses, of exerting pressure on the IMF and USAID to alter their policies in accordance with its wishes. The World Bank may or may not possess direct leadership over the IMF and USAID, but it does have enormous influence that can be utilized for good or ill.

### *The World Bank as an Institution*

The World Bank is a non-profit non-governmental organization founded in 1944 at the Bretton Woods conference. Its original goal was to assist in the reconstruction of Europe after the end of World War II. Later on, the Bank began assisting countries in reconstruction after “natural disasters, humanitarian

emergencies, and postconflict rehabilitation” (World Bank: *About Us*, 2011). In the past 30 years the Bank refocused itself to engage in poverty reduction as well. The World Bank (World Bank: *FAQ*, 2010) consists of two organizations: the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the International Development Association. The International Development Association provides loans and grants to poorer nations, while the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development provides middle-income countries such as Egypt with loans, grants, and risk advisory and analytical services. The World Bank is run by the Board of Governors, the Board of Executive Directors, and the President of the Bank. Its membership consists of 187 countries, each having a representative on the Board of Governors (World Bank: *FAQ*, 2010). The Board of Executive Directors, in contrast, consists of the five top shareholders: the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Japan, along with a total of nineteen other members representing the remaining 182 countries. The president of the Bank is always a United States national and is nominated by the Executive Director of the Bank (World Bank: *FAQ*, 2010). Hence the balance of power rests with the United States followed by the remaining four countries, those being Japan, the United Kingdom, Germany, and France. The remaining 182 member countries still have some power, but since they must select 19 representatives from among themselves, they do not have nearly as much influence as the remaining five. This leaves the five nations on the executive council with a great deal of influence over World Bank policy. This is especially true of the United States, since the president of the World Bank is always a US national (World Bank *FAQ*, 2010).

The Bank obtains its capital by selling AAA bonds on the international market.

In addition, the Bank may call on up to \$187 billion of capital from other countries, though it has never done so (World Bank: *FAQ*, 2010). However, its largest source of funding comes from a supply of capital replenished every three years from 40 member countries (World Bank: *FAQ*, 2010). The Bank also receives interest on the loans it grants, generating further capital. The World Bank is thus a financial institution, but not in the sense that one can go to it and open an account. It sells bonds and gives out loans, but it is not a depository institution. Moreover, due to the apportionment of power within the Bank, the United States, Japan, United Kingdom, Germany, and France have a disproportionate say over the way the funds are distributed. Since loans are tied to development objectives, this disproportionate control enables these countries to enforce their policy interests on countries receiving these loans. Thus if the other 182 members wish to receive Bank loans they must often bend to the policy desires of the five major nations.

The World Bank's projects in Egypt began in the late 1970s under Anwar Sadat's *infatih* program. Early projects focused mostly on education. However, the financial crisis itself did not truly begin until the 1980s when remittances from the Gulf dried up, unemployment rose, and domestic inflation caused the government of Egypt to fall deeply into debt (Abdel-Khalek, 2002; p. 33). This financial crisis resulted in the Economic Reform and Structural Adjustment Programme (ERSAP) (Abdel-Khalek, 2002; p. 33). At this time, the government of Egypt sought additional help from the Paris Club (Abdel-Khalek, 2002; p. 38-39), the World Bank, and other IFIs. This period of structural adjustment has continued up until the present day and has focused intensely on agriculture. In the case of the World Bank, this focus has included policy changes, as well as projects dealing with irrigation, mechanization,

and education. Among others, the focus on agriculture has included a series of irrigation projects (World Bank, 2010; World Bank, 1994), and two projects in Marsah Matrouh (World Bank, 2003; World Bank, 2004A) and one in Sohag (World Bank, 2008). There have also been projects in the New Lands, as well as an aborted attempt at fish farming (World Bank, 1994). In the 1990s, the Bank backed Law 96 of 1992, (World Bank, 1993; p. 32), ending input subsidies, and ceasing government purchase of crops such as wheat (World Bank, 1993; p. iii). In the 2000s, focus has turned towards irrigation and education projects. At present, few parts of rural life have not somehow been touched by Bank programs.

#### *The Land Center for Human Rights*

The Land Center for Human Rights is a non-governmental and non-profit organization that was created in order to protect the rights of small farmers in Egypt. As such, it engages in advocacy with regard to land rights, human rights, education, and gender equality. It supports the interests of factory workers and agrarian laborers in the countryside. The Land Center provides small farmers with legal aid and also publishes periodic reports about land rights, human rights, and ongoing issues in the countryside. Its board consists of several professors from Cairo University as well as non-professionals. As an organization that advocates for Egyptian farmers, it is both conceptually and geographically closer to the interests and viewpoints of Egyptian farmers than is the World Bank. However, the Land Center is a small organization, and it is also marginal. Because its power and constituent base are derived from small farmers and workers, the Land Center does not possess a great deal of influence with the Egyptian government or the World Bank. However, the Land Center provides a viewpoint that is opposed to the World Bank and the government of Egypt. As such, it

can provide insight into Egyptian life that the World Bank does not possess.

*The Egyptian Government and the World Bank: Relationships of Opportunity*

The Egyptian government has been cooperating with the World Bank and other financial institutions for the past 30 years in a project of neo-liberal reform. However, the nature of this cooperation bears examination. Some of the World Bank's policy initiatives have been fairly straightforward. Policies such as ending input subsidies (World Bank, 1993; p. iii) were performed with a simple stoppage of payment. Despite possible effects on rural life, reforms such as ending input subsidies were passed so easily in large part because they bore little risk to the government of Egypt and they did not require a great deal of modification by the government in order to carry out. Large landowners could afford the change, and small farmers possessed little influence to stand in the way. Other reforms, such as land titling or privatization, bear closer examination.

In the process of privatization, control over many of the former government owned industries went to friends of the regime, and there is a reason for this action that goes beyond opportunity or greed. In a dictatorship, the dictator's first objective is to sustain his power. In order to do that, the dictator requires a coterie of surrounding people who help him maintain it. In return for their loyalty, the dictator provides benefits of various kinds such as lucrative business deals and other perks. So when the Bank backed privatization of government industries, the regime's inner circle was the first to benefit. This is not just because they were already managing many of these industries; as well, giving them the industries constituted a form of tribute that helped the government sustain itself. The president's inner circle and members of parliament got the businesses, and in turn, the president received their continued loyalty. This

opportunistic method of maintaining power is also seen in the government of Egypt's refusal to institute a tax on irrigation water. Not only does charging for water present a serious risk of unrest among small farmers, but the large businessmen that formed Sadat and Mubarak's inner circles would have to pay for it as well. The Bank, on the other hand, does not see this process take place.

The Bank's inattention to political realities is evident in other areas as well. For example, due to the particular way the reforms have taken place in Egypt, the income gap has increased. Nevertheless, in 2008, Egypt was given the “Reformer of the Year” award by the World Bank. The Bank sets out goals and directives, and as long as they are completed, it is content. It sees very little of the political considerations that have been made. Moreover, the Bank opportunistically backs laws that it sees as beneficial to itself. The Bank backed Law 96 of 1992, even though the law was not its idea nor a result of one of its directives. It did so because the Bank supports a land market, and Law 96, by allowing the removal of tenants from their land, created that possibility. That this did not happen as it had envisioned is a result of the particular opportunistic relationship that produced Law 96. The government of Egypt instituted Law 96 because the law allowed large landowners to reclaim their land from tenants and to charge higher rents, not because they wanted to sell land. Therefore, the government of Egypt may follow Bank advice or receive Bank support, but at the same time it may still be carrying out actions for different reasons and with different outcomes than the Bank would have wanted. The government cooperates, superficially, because it does need some support and because the Bank is a powerful institution. However, this cooperation is done in a way that benefits the government of Egypt, not the World Bank or even the Egyptian people.

### *Foucault, the World Bank, and the Many Modernities*

As a whole, the World Bank is attempting to create a new order in Egypt. By instituting economic reforms based on neo-liberal ideas, it is changing the face of Egypt. Due to changing land laws and increasing income disparity (Fergany, 2002; p. 211), farmers are being forced to migrate and change their lives in very particular ways based on the Bank's conception of discipline and order. Western life embodies a particular order of time and space based on a particular kind of discipline. The Bank backs land reform to cause consolidation, whether or not this actually occurs, while education creates a new kind of worker. It is a similar reordering of time and space that the Bank wishes to impose upon rural Egypt. However, the ultimate goal of this order remains unclear. The Bank seeks to alter perceptions of time and space to create a countryside that is more legible to the state and capitalist interests, yet the particular goal of this order has not been specified. Only vague conclusions can be drawn here. One of the reasons the Bank backed Law 96 of 1992 (World Bank, 1993; p. 32) was because of its desire to create a particular order in discipline and space. By altering the land laws so that rental was subject to market rates and no longer inheritable, Law 96 could ideally free up land to be bought and sold more easily. Moreover, by also backing land registration, the Bank seeks to make land more visible to the state and to capitalist interests. In a very graphic fashion, the Bank is seeking to impose a new regime of space upon the countryside. The land registration move, in combination with the increased price of inputs and new investments that smallholders are expected to pay accomplishes a new order as well. Under the new conditions a great many people are able to sell their land, and in combination with the changes Law 96 imposed on tenure, it becomes possible to dispossess a large number of smallholders,

though whether or not mass dispossession is actually occurring is unclear. Yet many small farmers have been pushed into full-time wage labor, whether it is farm labor, factory work, construction, or something else entirely. They collect paychecks and are integrated into a new style of life that is reflective of the Bank's Western idea of social order (Foucault, 1982). However, this is not a case of modernity being imposed on tradition. If the Bank's order is neo-liberal capitalism, then the Egyptian economy is in a state of transition. This transition is not from tradition to modernity, but from state capitalism to neo-liberal capitalism. Egypt is transitioning from one form of capitalism to another more dominant form.

In addition to discipline, Michel Foucault also deals extensively with discourse and its connection to power (Foucault, 1982). There are many competing discourses in the development of Egypt, but the ones that concern this thesis are those of the World Bank and the Land Center. These discourses are comprised of the literature of the World Bank and the Land Center for Human Rights. The Bank discourses have been created by the conjunction of a number of wealthy and powerful relationships. The Land Center discourses, being constituted via power relationships of small farmers and the interest of the Land Center itself, hold much less power. Therefore, the conjunction of power and resistance constituted by the meeting of these two discourses is much less obvious. The Land Center discourses could be seen as a form of resistance, but because they are overwhelmed by the power of Bank discourses, the Bank's voice remains dominant. As such, the Land Center provides a voice in the wilderness and a counterpoint, but it is not necessarily a powerful site of resistance.

#### *The World Bank and Systems of Knowledge*

In recent times, the Bank has set itself up as both an arbiter and storehouse of



knowledge. However, this knowledge comes in a particular form. In the Bank's conception, knowledge is colonial, hegemonic, technocratic, Durkheimian, and economic.

The hegemonic nature of the Bank's regime of knowledge is starkly reminiscent of that of the old colonial powers. An example here can be seen in the Bank's efforts to build a dam in Laos. The Bank offered consultants “high salaries, unique research opportunities, and access to formerly impenetrable societies and research sites” (Goldman, 2001; p. 8), in exchange for rapid reports of basic social facts. The consultants told stories of discovering new languages, camping in the jungle, and being ferried about in helicopters. Such a regime of knowledge production is not only distinctly colonial, but disturbingly military. The Bank returns anthropology firmly to the “savage slot” described by Trouillot (1991; 24-25) by reifying notions of untouched places and primitive cultures. Moreover, it returns anthropology to its original colonial purpose: to understand cultures in order to dominate them.

The Bank has also been charged with suppressing reports that it found disagreeable. Despite the Bank's contention that these cultures were previously untouched, the same report tells of self-described “fish heads” who had been living in these areas for years among these supposedly “untouched” peoples. These Western ichthyologists had been studying fish species (Goldman, 1998; p. 198-199). Moreover, as the situation with the ichthyologists in Laos demonstrates, reports that disagree with Bank goals are often suppressed or simply not circulated (Goldman, 1998; p. 198-199).

The Bank's conception of knowledge is hegemonic in that it overpowers most

other forms of knowledge in the places where it operates. Moreover, it is backed by the particular interests of those who create it. Private enterprises have a great deal of incentive to support certain kinds of knowledge and suppress others because they benefit greatly from World Bank projects. Poorer nations tend to accept this regime because it is tied to a great deal of money and political pressure. Hence the hegemony of the Bank's knowledge is supported by both money and power.

The Bank sees knowledge as a public good that is both non-rivalrous and non-excludable (World Bank, 1998; p. 16). As such, the possession of knowledge by one person does not preclude another person from possessing it. Once knowledge has been put into the public domain, anyone can use it. Despite these laudable goals however, the Bank does not consider that the ability to access and use knowledge is tied to the possession of the wealth needed to reach those sources. The Bank fails to anticipate the proposal that knowledge might not exist on an open market and that it is not free of the circumstances of its production. Instead, the Bank believes that knowledge stands above the real and can be accessed by anyone. This view of knowledge is, rather paradoxically, structurally platonic because the Bank has set itself up as the arbiter of development knowledge. In Plato's republic, only the King had true knowledge (Williams, 2001; p. 43). The King's "true knowledge" are the Bank's ideas. Accessing this knowledge and bringing it into the real only corrupted it. The King's closest confidants were meant to disseminate knowledge, and his soldiers provided knowledge with power (Williams, 2001; p. 43). The people's job was simply to follow that knowledge, however impure it was by the time it reached them. By following knowledge, they achieved enlightenment. In the Republic, the common people never really understood, they only followed orders. The Bank's role as the

storehouse of enlightenment in knowledge, is therefore, to disseminate knowledge, through which others may follow and gain a portion of enlightenment. This is an extremely hegemonic and positivistic conception of knowledge that brooks no dissidence.

Knowledge is generated when anthropologists and sociologists are hired to do very rapid assessments using questionable research methodologies such as *Rapid Rural Appraisal* (Goldman, 2001; p. 8). The goal of rapid rural appraisal is to “extract” (Goldman, 2001; p. 8) knowledge for the Bank's use. It is done in a short time frame, and it implies a distinctly Durkheimian conception of knowledge. Under Durkheim's conception, each society possessed a series of social facts that could be known about it (Durkheim, 1895). As such, knowledge was largely static and not subject to change. This kind of knowledge is what the Bank seeks, and it is reflected in its reports. In the second Matrouh project, a laundry list of reputed “social facts” is given about the Bedouin. Clan and subclan structures are described, as is the transhumance of the Bedouin. Since social facts are conceived of as largely static, this allows for the reification of rather racist stereotypes, such as when the Bank states that the Bedouin tendency towards eating little and transhumance may be “genetic” (World Bank, 2004A; p. 145).

The Bank's understanding of knowledge is also technocratic. As such, their reports are highly technical and economically oriented. This technocratic viewpoint is in line with a particular point of view based on the achieving of economic goals. The Bank sees high technology as the answer to ground-level development. The Bank repeatedly refers to the process of development as “modernization.” Since modernity is often equated with high technology, in Egyptian agriculture, modernization means

advocating and funding the use of advanced agricultural technologies and understandings (World Bank, 1993; p. 81). Farmers are taught technical skills and technical viewpoints because technical knowledge is valued by the Bank above all other forms of knowledge.

### *Neo-Liberalism and the Chicago School*

The Bank utilizes a perspective called neo-liberalism. Specifically, the philosophy of neo-liberalism argues that the market does not need intervention of any kind (Mudge, 2008; p. 715). As a result of this perspective, the Bank advocates offloading risk onto individuals rather than corporations or governments. Various forms of government intervention are criticized by the Bank, including input subsidies (World Bank, 1993; p. 62), tariffs (World Bank, 1993; p. 45), and price controls (World Bank, 1993; p. 3). Neo-liberal ideologies encourage no economic intervention at all levels of government, and privatization is encouraged for government industries (Mudge, 2008; p. 704) and portions of public education (Mudge, 2008; p. 704). In Egypt, this de-regulation includes, among other things, removing social safety nets such as agricultural input subsidies (World Bank, 1993; p. 62) and floor prices for crops (World Bank, 1993; p. 62).

Neo-liberalism advocates a level of market freedom that most wealthier nations do not follow. Western states routinely protect industries they view as strategic, including farming. The Bank engaged in neoliberal reform in Egypt in the midst of major failure elsewhere. Arguably, decreased government regulation caused the mortgage crisis in the United States in 2008 and subsequent crises in Europe. Government de-regulation in the manner the Bank advocates allowed banks to give mortgages to those who could not afford them and then allowed those mortgages to be

re-packaged and sold in complex and incomprehensible ways that intentionally avoided regulation. Instead of purchasing insurance, mortgages were packaged into unregulated derivatives. Then when people could not pay for the mortgages, the derivatives failed and the system collapsed. Non-intervention paved the way for a crisis that is now sweeping the entire globe. As Marx predicted, capitalism has moved from crisis to crisis. The failure of a number of large banks and hedge funds and the subsequent US government bailout caused panic and the crisis swept the globe for reasons that are still not well understood. Such events throw into question the entire Bank strategy. If the recent financial crisis based on government de-regulation is any indication, then de-regulation bodes ill for governments such as Egypt that are following the Bank's example.

Indeed, political instability is often the ultimate result. It would be both premature and an oversimplification to blame the wave of revolutions that swept the Middle East in 2011 entirely on economic distress, yet it does play a part. More accurately, the poor feel a loss of dignity not least because many of them were not always so poor. The Bank's emphasis on large land ownership plays no small part in the impoverishment of Egypt. Having rightfully owned land taken away is more than an economic loss, it is an indignity that has not been idly suffered. Ex-farmers shuffled off to the slums of Cairo played their part in the revolution as well, as did people who came directly from the countryside to participate (Bush, 2011).

*Phenomenology: Seeing through the eyes of the Bank and the Land Center*

Phenomenology is essential for understanding the contested spaces that the Bank and Land Center for Human Rights occupy. In order to propose that meanings can be contested, it must first be acknowledged that meaning is public (Jackson, 1996;

p. 2-3). Ideas themselves do not stand above empirical reality, but rather are integrated into it (Jackson, 1996; p. 2-3). Ideas are made and shaped by people and are a part of their reality (Jackson, 1996 p. 2-3). To treat ideas as outside or above reality is to be unable to fully understand them. That said, in no sense does this mean that everyone has to agree on these meanings. Indeed, contested meanings are part and parcel of life and make up the discourses that shape our world. Jackson's emphasis in phenomenology is on lifeworlds, or the discursive spaces in which people live (Jackson, 1996; p. 15-17). In lifeworlds, people share meanings, agree on things publicly (Jackson, 1996; p. 15-17), and problematize life in certain ways (Berger and Luckman, 1966; p. 24). Further, phenomenology points out that even though we often assume we share our lifeworld with others, we do not always share quite the same lifeworld (Berger and Luckman, 1966; p. 46). Hence we conceptualize things in very different ways. Development experts at the World Bank exist in different lifeworlds than of Egyptian farmers. World Bank experts do not live in the countryside or work in the fields. Most of them live well, and they do not struggle to make ends meet in the way that farmers do. I do not intend to paint development experts as bloated bureaucrats who live in the lap of luxury. Nevertheless, it is necessary to point out that without a real crossing of lifeworlds, it is difficult to reach a mutual understanding of concepts such as land, moral economy or tradition, and education. World Bank policies are formed by individuals who do not inhabit the same lifeworlds as the Land Center activists or Egyptian farmers.

Sharing lifeworlds is not all the phenomenological approach entails. The need to understand how people problematize is critical to understanding not just what individuals see as problems, but also how they go about dealing with them. For

example, for years many people in the countryside have lived just above the margins. Yet in 2006 and 2007, the Tagammu party organized large-scale protests over living conditions in the countryside (Bush, 2007; p. 10). Granted, there was a drastic change in living conditions after 1992, but this does not necessarily explain why years of baseline poverty did not incite public protest prior to 1992. There have been other protests, but they did not relate to land or quality of life. To understand this phenomenon, it pays to know how the poor in the Egyptian countryside problematize their world. Scott calls this a “subsistence ethic” or moral economy (Scott, 1976; p. 3-4) and argues that more often than not, people living close to the margin will take a steady paycheck over a risky venture (Scott, 1976; p. 35). For the poor, losing on a risky venture means they lose everything. It also means that the poor develop mutual support systems which are meant to shelter each other in hard times. An example of this is the *Hoka* work system in Zimbabwe, where workers meet on Fridays at another person's land to help them (Bessant and Muringai, 1993; p. 2), and another example is communal bread-making in Egypt, where the women of a village get together to make bread (Mitchell, 2002; p. 262).

Moreover, the moral economy thesis argues that rebellion takes place when sudden shocks take place that violate custom (Scott, 1976; p. 193-194). Though protest was ongoing for various reasons for many years, the 2006 protests in Dakhalia can be seen as a response the shock of structural adjustment and the subsequent violations of cultural norms.

However, this alone leaves us with a far too simplistic picture. First of all, protesting this particular set of economic conditions is new, even while protest is not. Moreover, Scott's argument stresses that the rural poor have many networks of

support and that before rebellion takes place, these have to have been exhausted. The incidents of public protest in 2006 in Dakhalia implied a breakdown of the moral economy itself. Due to smallholders losing their land, rising rents, dropping subsidies, and diminishment of food security in general, normal methods of dealing with crisis failed. Public and private shaming, rumors, means of quiet encroachment (Bayat, 2009; p. 56), and even physical retaliation against landlords proved insufficient to deal with the new problems. Moreover, public and private means of supporting one another failed as well. Farmers increasingly had to leave their fields to find work elsewhere (Bach, 1998; p. 187), and the need for ever more money to achieve basic subsistence meant they had reserve money, which put strains on the old moral economy. Hence, the rebellion involved in the large-scale protests organized by the Tagammu' party (Bush, 2007; p. 9) was a result of the breakdown of the moral economy in many regions.

A moral economy changes with time and operates within a web of relationships. When this web changes, the moral economy must also. The poor do not see their poverty as a problem necessarily. They do not problematize it as such. However, losing what little they have is a problem and requires a re-orientation of life-worlds and a restructuring of moral economies.

Yet the Bank conceptualizes the practices of a moral economy, such as traditional cropping methods and risk management, as inefficient and problematic (World Bank, 1993; p. 33), arguing that they are not suited for a free market. Meanwhile other practices slip by unnoticed by the Bank despite their importance. Yet conceptually it makes perfect sense to be reluctant to give up security. Taking risks is a good option only if there is a way to mitigate them, and moral economy is a way of



mitigating risk.

Consequently a phenomenological study of everyday life offers valuable insight into the ontology and epistemology of both the Land Center for Human Rights and the World Bank. Phenomenology can illuminate not only how these groups go about implementing and dealing with policies, but also how they problematize rural life.

### *Co-Temporality and Social Analysis*

Co-temporality states that all people live in the same time as one another (Fabian, 1983). The importance of this concept can only be seen in light of its historical context. In early colonial times, European explorers described and analyzed the social formations they encountered. Explorers argued that local peoples were living in the past and that what they really needed was to be modern and “civilized” (Fabian, 2000 p. 183). The problem for this project lies in that the same discourse still abounds today. Anthropology as we know it was founded later as a salvage operation, to record the lives of vanishing and primitive peoples (Trouillot, 1991; p. 24-25). This perspective becomes important to the study of rural peoples because an examination of the discourse reveals that urbanity is all too often associated with civilization and Western life, while rural living is primitive, passive, and ignorant. In order to understand anything besides the urban, we must place the countryside in the proper time and space, that is, with the rest of us and not from 1000 years into the past. Co-temporality is critical to the success of development because it allow us to see the subjects of development as human beings and not primitives. Hence I posit that Egyptian farmers are actors and collaborators, not passive objects to be acted on.

Sadly, an examination of a great deal of the discourse on the countryside

makes clear that co-temporality is something that rural dwellers are not often accorded. There is a veritable genealogy of images of a mythical Egyptian peasant, living as he has for the past 6,000 years. Much of the discourse, as Timothy Mitchell (1990; p. 3) points out, has a long history in which Henri Ayrout (Ayrout, 2005) plays a large part. Originally published in 1938, Ayrout's work is considered a classic. However, despite its acknowledged and widely held historical value, the book itself contains a full-fledged denial of co-temporality. Ayrout argues that Egyptian peasants have lived the way they do since the time of the Pharaohs. He also argues that every village is exactly alike (Ayrout, 2005; p. 89). Ayrout seemed to believe that by stepping into the countryside, he was living in the past. Yet Ayrout's work forms a part of a discourse about peasants upon which development experts continue to draw.

The influence of Ayrout's work and peasant discourse can be seen in the discussions surrounding market reforms and Law 96. When Egyptians and international organizations were discussing market reform in the early 1990s, the head of the World Bank said that “the concept of the market is foreign to the Egyptian farmer” (Bush, 2002; p. 17). When Law 96 was being discussed, the Egyptian media and elites portrayed farmers as “traditional”, which implied that they were lazy, passive, and untrustworthy (Saad, 2002; p. 109). The lack of co-temporality is made all the more difficult by the World Bank's reluctance to deal directly with farmers. Reports such as the World Bank's *Agricultural Plan for the 1990s* (World Bank, 1993; p. vii) are compiled without visiting local farms. Instead, the Bank relies on reports from other projects in which they deal primarily with government officials, not farmers. This gap in understanding can be difficult to mend unless the Bank is willing to engage farmers directly, or at the very least to read something besides Ayrout's

work or its many derivatives.

*Peasants, Farmers and the Countryside: Competing Definitions*

The countryside is not a bounded entity, but a region that has been discursively defined by those in power. It is a varied and heterogeneous series of places where agriculture is carried out, mostly outside of Cairo. There is constant movement between the countryside itself and Cairo (Toth, 1998; p. 67). People travel routinely from the Oases or the Delta to Cairo and other administrative centers. Cairo is the administrative center for the country. Many services cannot be obtained nor can many disputes with the government be resolved without a visit to Cairo. The countryside is also incredibly varied. Differences in economic, social, and political circumstances abound, particularly between the Oases, the Sa'id, and the Delta regions. Hence, the countryside is neither a monolithic nor a bounded entity.

The idea of a peasant, or *fellah*, as it is known in Egypt, is tied up in a number of discourses and assumptions, and it does not often address the fact that Egyptian rural-dwellers may not be peasants at all. However, in order to understand the history, the conceptions what a peasant or *fellah* is will be discussed here. As noted before, the concept of *fellahin* features prominently in the discourses of the Egyptian government, NGO workers, and academics. Yet it is a problematic conceptual category at best.

The first of these arguments is of a “peasant essentialism” (Bernstein, 2006; p. 401). Peasant essentialism assumes that peasants have a singular, timeless, and unchanging essence (Bernstein, 2006; p. 401). Such an assumption implies that all peasants are really the same, no matter what place, time, or circumstances that they may live in. The problem with essences is that they cannot be defined and that they

unfairly box people into a category. Peasant essentialism allows for an exceedingly narrow scope of inquiry.

Another assumption made is that peasants are “tied to the land” and that this tie is the source of a peasant's timeless essence (Ayrout, 2005; p. xvii). Therefore, as the Earth is changeless, so are the *fellahin*. Yet peasants are not, in fact, tied to the land, as history in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and onward has shown. According to a number of sources, peasants, if that is what we assume they are, can and do leave the land and move elsewhere. This movement may be caused by economic circumstances (Bush, 2002, p. 194; Mitchell, 2002, 157 p. ; Toth, 1998, p. 67), governmental edict (Bush, 2002; p. 194), or simply a desire for something else (Bach, 1998; p. 187), but peasants do move, and there is a constant flow of people to and from the cities and in broader circuits as well.

Perhaps it is better to ask if people who live in the countryside were ever peasants at all. At this point a definition of peasant is needed. According to Weber, class is defined by market position (Weber, 1914; p. 248). Therefore, peasants as a class should be identified by the particular set of relations that defines their market position. In contrast, according to Marx, peasants were defined by their productive relations in Europe with a feudal lord (Marx, 1906; p. 515). They were serfs under this lord, and lived on his land. They grew food, of which they gave a portion of to the lord of the estate. Furthermore, agriculture was based on subsistence and was carried out by the family unit. Peasants also occasionally served in the armies. In exchange, the lord provided protection, seed, clothing, and materials. There was very little exchange of money. A more recent, yet still somewhat incomplete definition argues that peasants are those who are engaged in agriculture for their own subsistence

(Wolf, 1969). A more complete definition of peasant labor is provided by Trouillot, who says that peasants are defined through “an institutionalized process through which a household performs agricultural labor on a unit over which it exerts a form of control that excludes other groups, with instruments of work which it also controls in an exclusive manner which generally represent less of an input than the labor itself” (Trouillot, 1988; p. 4). Nevertheless, even by the broadest definition, Egyptian rural dwellers are not and were not, even prior to the 1950s, peasants at all.

Prior to the 1950s, the countryside was organized into something known as the *'izbah* system. This system began developing in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and lasted until the 1952 revolution when the Free Officers took power (Richards, 1980; p. 6). Rural dwellers lived on an *'izbah* and worked for the owner of the estate (Richards, 1980; p. 5). However, the system of relations on an *'izbah* was very different from that of the European peasantry or in Trouillot's definition. Like the European peasantry of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, workers on an *'izbah* did not own their own land, but rather worked on the owner's land (Richards, 1980; p. 5). They did own their tools, but they were not engaged in subsistence labor in a household unit. Instead, they were engaged in wage labor. They were sometimes allowed small plots of their own, but their chief means of income were the wages paid either in cash or in kind by the owner of the *'izbah* (Richards, 1980; p. 5). Since they did not own the means of production, and the only thing which they had to sell was their labor, *'izbah* workers were proletarians, not peasants. After the 1950 revolution, agricultural reform was begun under Mohammed Naguib and continued under Abdel-Nasser (Bush, 2002; p. 9). The *'izbahs* were split up, and a land ownership cap was set in order to break the power of the large landowners in the country. The cap was set at 200 *feddans* per individual, and 300

*feddans* per family (Bush, 2002; p. 9), a *feddan* being roughly equal to an acre. The land cap was later reduced to 200 *feddans* per family. The newly expropriated land was then redistributed to the poor (Bush, 2002; p. 9). Despite loopholes that allowed many large landowners to keep much of their land, (Bush, 2002; p. 23) the redistribution of land simultaneously did two things: it de-proletarianized the countryside, and it created a class of smallholders. These new smallholders were farmers, not peasants.

Moreover, Egyptian rural-dwellers are not solely engaged in farming, but also in a vast web of relationships (Abdel Aal, 2002; p. 143) both inside and outside of their home villages and cities. Given the current emphasis on selling crops and the fact that rural dwellers do, in fact, now sell much of what they have grown, rural dwellers are no longer solely engaged in subsistence activities. This market engagement occurs in spite of the turn towards subsistence in wheat production and other basics noted by Mitchell (2002; p. 250) following the passing of Law 96. Moreover, the household unit is not the sole force of labor utilized by small farmers. Rural dwellers now commonly engage in wage labor in both in their home villages and abroad to make ends meet. It is not uncommon for a young man to leave the village and agricultural work for years at a time in order to earn enough money to pay for a wedding (Bach, 1998 p. 67). In fact, 40 percent of income in the countryside comes from working abroad or the city rather than from farming itself (Adams, 2001; p. 10). Given that much of agriculture in Egypt is no longer chiefly devoted towards subsistence and may never have been in the first place, and that the household is no longer the primary means of production, Egyptian rural dwellers cannot be called peasants, but are rather farmers.

The issue of rural dwellers as farmers needs to be taken up both before and after Law 96. But first, a definition of a farmer is required. Wolf defines farmers as those who are engaged in the practice of agriculture for a market economy (Wolf, 1969). Between 1963 and the 1980s, the economy of Egypt was dominated by a form of state-run capitalism (Mitchell, 2002; p. 280). Almost all of the major industries in Egypt were owned by the government (Mitchell, 2002; p. 8), and agriculturalists in Egypt were required to sell major crops such as wheat, sugarcane, and cotton crops to the government and government-controlled corporations (World Bank, 1993; p. 9). Hence, prior to 1992, Egypt was not engaged in a pre-capitalist system of relations, but rather a different form of capitalism instituted by Abdel-Nasser in the 1950s. In the 1980s Egypt underwent an economic crisis. In response, the Egyptian government turned to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Bush, 2002; p. 11). The international financial institutions lent Egypt money and restructured its debts in exchange for neo-liberal reforms (Bush, 2002; p. 11). These reforms and the neo-liberal ideas that directed them were predicated on “opening up” the system to capitalism. The reforms required Egypt to remove certain import tariffs, to cap other tariffs, to transfer state-owned businesses to private ownership, and to remove subsidies (Abdel-Khalek, 2002; p. 35). These subsidies included fertilizers, bread, sugar, oil, and flour (Korayem, 2001; p. 70). The state also ceased buying most crops from rural growers at set rates, fully exposing them to the vagaries and price fluctuations of the world marketplace (World Bank, 1993; p. 9). Egyptian rural dwellers are farmers fully engaged in the production of agriculture geared towards a market economy. Therefore since the 1950s, Egyptian rural dwellers have been farmers. At the same time, given their work outside the farm to make ends meet

(Bach, 1998, p. 187; Toth, 1998, p. 67), rural dwellers can also be seen as semi-proletarians.

### *Mass Production and the Forces of Rationalization*

For the purposes of this illustration, we will refer to wheat and its derivative flour. In order to mass produce and consume any crop, several things are required. Two of the demands of mass production are consistency and quantity. Consistency demands that each bag of flour bought off the shelf be the same as any other. Gluten content must be stable. In other words, if water is added, the response of the flour should be the same each time. This facilitates bread baking in that one can rely upon the measurements for each batch of bread to be close to identical to ensure that the final product is of a consistent quality. Therefore quality must be strictly controlled, and the same cultivars of wheat in the same proportions must be contained in each batch of flour. Growers are held responsible for quality control. If the wheat they produce is unsatisfactory, they cannot sell it to be made into flour. Quality control can be difficult for a small farmer or peasant, because a bad year or an unsatisfactory crop can be devastating to their finances, as can the inputs required to produce this quality of wheat and cultivar of wheat.

The second demand of mass production is quantity. A great deal of wheat must be produced to satisfy demand. Producers are often required to grow the same cultivar of wheat year after year and season after season in the same plot without rotation. Certain weeds, pests, and diseases are native to wheat (Gardner, 2001; p. 166-177, 207). If the wheat crop is not rotated out, these weeds, pests, and diseases must be treated with increasing amounts of fertilizer, pesticide, and herbicide. The problem here, known as lodging (Shiva, 1991; p. 36) is that local cultivars, or land races,



cannot deal with this problem well, since wheat land races grow tall, fall over, and die (Shiva, 1991; p. 36). The solution proffered by development experts is to utilize genetically engineered crops such as those promulgated by Norman Borlaug in the Green Revolution (Shiva, 1991; p. 63). Yet the patents and rights to these seeds are owned by multinational seed companies (Shiva, 1991; p. 63). By contract, farmers are not allowed to reuse seed from previous years even if they are collected. This places further financial burden on small farmers. Of course, the combined effect of fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides acidifies and wears out soil over time, leading to the need for ever more resistant and expensive cultivars of wheat. The result of this process is soil degradation and bankrupt small farmers (Shiva, 1991; p. 176). Their land is then bought up or repossessed by larger farmers and organizations more capable of absorbing the financial shock and controlling quality.

The purpose of development is to draw economies in the periphery further into national and international economies (Long, 1977; p. 4). Therefore agricultural development, despite its noble aims, often plays a part in rationalization. Larger organizations and states, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the government of Egypt, and USAID are deeply involved in development and hence are also implicated in the process of rationalization. In Egypt in particular there has been an intense focus on agricultural reform and development (Bush, 2002; p. 4). The agricultural sector constituted 25 percent of Egypt's export earnings in 1993 (World Bank, 1993; p. 5), yet many crops are able to be consumed only locally, and other products such as wheat, must be imported.

While scholars such as Timothy Mitchell have argued that the point of land reform in Egypt was to place farmers into factories (Mitchell, 2002; p. 266), the

evidence for this assertion is thin. Though in other countries there may have been a push for industrialization, there is no evidence that Egypt has followed suit. Rationalization and land consolidation have played a part in neo-liberal reform, but a desire for this particular outcome has not been expressed by the World Bank. Moreover, the World Bank's projects in Egypt do not display this kind of direction. There is not a series of land reforms followed by factory construction and education, but rather a series of land reforms followed by education in no specific direction. If rationalization has taken place, it is a result of a Western desire for services, not factories. It is easier to contract work out to large companies rather than to individuals, and Egypt has expertise in several areas such as construction and tourism.

### *Conclusions*

In this chapter, I introduced the problem of my thesis and laid out my methodology. I discussed the Land Center for Human Rights and the World Bank as institutions. I also laid out the theoretical framework for my thesis. In future chapters, I will discuss the Bank's and the Land Center's views of land, moral economy, and education. I will then offer some conclusions and suggestions for a way forward.

## Chapter 2: Land

### *Introduction*

In this chapter I propose that the World Bank views land as a commodity and a means of production. I present the Land Center's more expansive view of land as including heritage, authenticity, and a legacy. Afterwards, I critique the Bank view of land and discuss the relationship between the Bank and Land Center views of land. I also address the results of this collision. Lastly, I offer some conclusions as to the ongoing effects of this process of collision such as changed rental practices and the possibility of land consolidation.

### *Land as a Means of Production*

The Bank sees land as a means of production. This view of land means that within Bank discourse, land is treated much like a factory. Workers come in on a daily basis to work for the landowner. The landowner eventually harvests the crops and pays his workers. Profits are generated from the crop sale, which are then reinvested into the enterprise. Hence farmers are expected to use capital generated from the farm to reinvest in irrigation, education, the purchase of more land, and new technology. This constant reinvestment produces ever-higher returns, which are then trickled down to workers in the form of higher wages.

Though the Bank realizes that smallholders are in need of “social safety nets” (World Bank, 1993; p. iv) and do not fit the model just described, it still treats smallholders as capitalists by expecting them to do without input subsidies (World Bank, 1993; p. 71) and reinvest heavily into their land in the form of irrigation projects (World Bank, 1993; p. iv) and new technologies. In the policy document Arab Republic of Egypt: *World Bank Agricultural Plan for the 1990s* in particular, this

reinvestment into irrigation is discussed openly:

“Given the limitations on the Government's ability to meet fully the O&M costs, it is important that the farmers contribute more towards meeting these costs.” (World Bank, 1993; p. iv).

Here the Bank argues that the state is unable to pay for the full cost of operation and maintenance (O&M) for irrigation reform, so small farmers must take some of the costs (World Bank, 1993; p. iv). These costs are estimated to be 3-6% of revenue, and said to be “not a significant impact on net farm incomes.” (World Bank, 1993; p. iv). This is because smallholders are seen as bourgeois engaged in the production of capital. An illustration of this perspective can be seen in the Bank's scheme for paying for irrigation water (World Bank, 1993; p. 86-87). The Bank believes that businesses should pay for water use. Since farmers are assumed to be engaged in business and thus possess and generate capital, the Bank is able to justify its scheme.

#### *Land as a Commodity*

The Bank sees land as a commodity that can be bought, sold, and rented at market rates. The Bank's opposition to restrictions on land sales and support of Law 96 of 1992 is evidence of this view. Though Law 96 was not the Bank's idea, the Bank supported Law 96 of 1992, calling it a “step in the right direction.” (World Bank, 1993; p. 32). Law 96 repealed the tenancy laws put in place by Abdel Nasser. The reason for the Bank's support of Law 96 is that tenancy restricted sale and state-regulated rental prices were too low (World Bank, 1993; p. 32). Landowners could not sell rented land unless an agreement was reached with the tenant (Bush, 2002; p. 20). In the absence of an agreement, the land was simply transferred with the tenant intact (Saad, 2002; p. 105). Because of the difficulty, rented land was not often sold and

could not easily be commoditized. Moreover, owners were reluctant to rent out more land because artificially regulated rent rates were so low, and if more than a year passed, tenants could claim permanent tenure under the law. Hence landowners had various incentives to keep their holdings stable.

Land registration was a key part of the effort to commoditize land. Much of the arable land in Egypt is unregistered or registered to someone who is now dead (Bush, 2002; p. 20), a situation that is due to several factors. First, the government registration process is long and ponderous, and many small farmers have neither the time nor money to go through it (Bush, 2002; p. 20). Second, people have also moved onto state-owned land, built houses, and cultivated it as well (Land Center, 2002; p. 135). Finally, the entire process of registration presents a dilemma because the official land records are not accurate. Land ownership is maintained locally through collective memory, squatter rights, and out of date records. Therefore, land is commoditized through reform. In order to commoditize land, the Bank has pushed for land registration and supported Law 96 of 1992.

#### *A Critique of Land as a Means of Production*

From an economic perspective, land is a means of production and a commodity. Ironically, this perspective places small farmers squarely into the ranks of the bourgeoisie, as owners of the means of production. As such farmers are expected to behave as capitalists, making the most efficient and capitalistic use of the resources available to them. This means that by the Bank's logic, farmers should be willing and able to take risk and make investments to improve their land. In the irrigation and drainage projects the Bank advocates, the government of Egypt is seen as unable to pay for these improvements on the large scale (World Bank, 1993; p. iv). On the small

scale however, farmers are expected to pitch in for improvements on their own land. Therefore, farmers are asked to handle some of the cost and risk involved. Treating farmers as capitalists is acceptable because as owners of the means of production, farmers are being asked to invest in their land and their surroundings in order to increase production. This becomes problematic because of the particular assumption involved in treating land as a means of production. First of all, food is treated as a simple commodity whose price can be manipulated by altering the inputs. In other words, the assumption is that the rising price of inputs can be compensated for by both improved efficiency and a rise in the farmgate price. Yet while efficiency can be improved and costs lowered in that fashion, the farmgate price is not nearly as subject to change. Crops yields and prices depend on soil quality, weather, water quality, freedom from disease, manageable pest levels, and a number of other factors. Not all of these factors are so easily manipulated. Moreover, the farmgate price is largely dependent on factors outside direct farmer control. If there is a bumper crop in wheat for a major producer one year, then the market price will drop reflecting a surplus. This is not something an individual farmer has any control over. Food is not a typical commodity, and therefore an investment in land does not produce predictable returns. In places such as the United States and Europe, this uncertainty is mitigated by providing floor prices for crops and other forms of subsidies such as tax breaks or cash payouts. However, the Bank opposes these subsidies, referring to them as “price distortions”. Instead the Bank believes instead in the market as the ultimate regulator of price. This treatment of the market as the best regulator ultimately treats land as if it is a factory, ignoring agriculture's highly variable returns in favor of the economies of scale brought on by land consolidation.

Another assumption made by treating land as a means of production in the sense of an industrial factory is that it indicates a certain level of liquidity where cash is concerned. Farmers are seen as able to handle risks because they can increase crop production and make more money from increased outputs. However, it is often overlooked that farming is a cash-poor and inherently risky enterprise and smallholders are under-capitalized. Crops can and do fail due to lack of water, accident, or disease. A bad year can spell disaster and leave a farmer ill-equipped to deal with further risk. In addition, events half a world away can cause the farmgate price to drop unexpectedly, leading to lower than expected returns.

Moreover, money gained from crops is often gone as soon as it reaches the farmer's hands. This is because farmers are often extremely leveraged with respect to their land and crops in fashions that the Bank does not see. Farmers often go to local merchants, relatives, and other wealthy people to access credit (Hopkins, 1986; p. 76, 90; Bush, 2002; p. 198). For those in possession of a *hiaza* card, there is also the option of the local agricultural cooperative. In the case of the merchants, collateral used is often the crop itself. Therefore, a portion of the crop is either immediately taken from farmers or the cash made off of it is immediately spent. In the case of cooperative membership, the cooperative charges farmers for the seeds and fertilizers, and if crops are sold back to the coop, then the cost of the inputs is deducted from the proceeds and the remaining money is given to the farmer. However, as the government no longer buys most crops, this is rarely an option. The remaining funds go toward household expenses such as food, clothing, and educational needs. If it is a good year, some of this money may be saved or carried over for the next crop.

However, savings remain small, and given recent pressures and changes, savings are

even smaller than usual. At any given time, a farmer is highly unlikely to have a large amount of cash on hand. Hopkins (1988; p. 23) argues that smallholders are petty commodity producers utilizing a household as the means of production, not capitalists or bourgeoisie business owners. The Bank fails to adequately separate the bourgeoisie from those engaged in petty commodity production. Land might be a means of production, as the Bank views it, it is capable of generating capital only if one owns enough of it. A moment here is needed to point out the constraints that cause smallholders to be petty commodity producers. Small farmers are still constrained, but not in the same ways as they were in the 1980s when Hopkins was writing. State restrictions have been replaced by constraints placed on them by more powerful agricultural bourgeoisie interests as well as pressures from the agricultural liberalization pushed by the Bank. Where the state once dictated what crops could be grown, and what prices would be paid for these crops, now farmers are constrained by what a global market will accept as a fair price. Unlike the state, which usually provided a floor price, and in so doing a form of security, the prices of agricultural products on the global market are volatile and subject to a great deal of change from year to year, or even month to month. Smallholders are also constrained by the rising price of inputs, demands for investment in drainage and irrigation, and an increasing debt load. In the end the result is the same as Hopkins argued. Small farmers are making a wage, not generating capital. However, the treatment of farmers as producers of capital is part and parcel of creating a new geographic orientation being pushed by the Bank in which large landownership is predominant

*The Reason for Land as a Commodity and the Inherent Contradiction*

The Bank emphasizes a different geographical and political orientation than



the current one in Egypt with regards to land ownership. Currently much of the land in the Egyptian countryside is owned by smallholders who possess 5 *feddans* of land or less. Yet in the article *Rising Global Interest in Farmland: Can it Yield Sustainable and Equitable Benefits?* (Deininger et al., 2011) the World Bank specifically lays out a regulatory framework for the consolidation of land (Deininger et al., 2011; p. 32).

The Bank views having a few large landowners and a series of smallholders who service them as the end result of an efficient market system in countries such as Egypt and as a desirable outcome (Deininger et al., 2011; p. xxxv). Yet for land in Egypt to be configured with a few large landowners and a series of smallholders who service them, consolidation must occur. If land is to be treated as a means of production into which investments are made and large returns are sought, then large landowners are far better equipped to reap large returns than smallholders. Globally, the phenomenon of large-scale consolidation is called land-grabbing. Conceptually, in the case of Egypt, it is the consolidation of a number of smallholders engaged in petty commodity production into a few large plots engaged in capital-generating enterprise. The remaining petty commodity-producing smallholders are then supposed to service the needs of the few large agricultural enterprises, though the means of service mentioned by the Bank are unspecified and vague. The push here is for increased productivity, and as the Bank notes, this is because the use of farmland in developed countries is declining (Deininger et al., 2011; p. 16). Therefore the Bank sets out guidelines for land-grabbing, which they call “large-scale land acquisition”. These include respecting land and resource rights, ensuring food security, transparency, consultation and participation, responsible investing, and environmental sustainability (Deininger et al., 2011; p. xxvii). These guidelines are voluntary, however which

means that it is impossible to ensure a fair arrangement with regards to land. Moreover, the Bank is already ethically compromised here. The International Financial Corporation, the private investment section of the World Bank Group, has invested deeply in companies involved in large land acquisitions in Egypt (GRAIN, 2011). The IFC has a stake in making sure these acquisitions happen because its returns depend on it. The Bank has not merely given loans to these corporations, but has bought into them as shareholders to the tune of over 347 million dollars (GRAIN, 2011). It could be observed that the Bank is hardly a neutral observer or policymaker with the best interests of small farmers in mind.

Yet there is another problem with land consolidation. Land fragmentation in Egypt means that holdings tend to be scattered and large amounts of contiguous cropland are a rarity. Moreover, because inheritance divides up land within a family, adjacent holdings tend to be owned by the same family (Abdel-Khalek, 2002). Therefore a smallholder who is selling his land due to distress or some other reason may not be selling their land to the person next to them, but rather to someone whose land is somewhere down the road. Therefore land accumulation is a more likely outcome of these policies than land consolidation. However, another opportunity arises due to the current laws on rental. Land can still be rented, but it is done at much higher rates than were charged under the permanent tenancy contracts that existed prior to Law 96. Hence it is easier for large landowners to rent or lease land than it is for smallholders. Therefore it is possible for the Bank to achieve the new structure they desire not by land consolidation, but by accumulation. This accumulation can take the form of ownership or rental. Therefore a large factory farm can be built on leased or rented land as well as land owned. Though this is likely an unintended

consequence of Bank-backed policies, it is an intentional act by the government of Egypt (Saad, 2002; p. 105).

### *Technocratic Problems and Understandings of Land*

It is important to discuss both the technocratic nature of the Bank's understanding of land as well its economic aspect. The World Bank's understanding of land is technocratic in that it views improvements to this land in technical terms. Improvements are brought about by the introduction of technologies such as tractors (World Bank, 2008; p. 4), deep plowing (World Bank, 2010; p. 41), and laser land leveling (World Bank, 2010; p. 41). Land is spoken of in terms of its productivity and the efficiency of its use. Emphasis is therefore given to the technological aspects of land as well as the economic returns that can be derived from technological improvements. However, the technocratic and technologic emphasis here is expensive, and not always the best option for small farmers. Deep plowing is used where soil below a few feet is hard or chalky. It utilizes a tractor carrying a large device used for tearing deep into the soil to loosen it. It is believed that deep ploughing increases crop yields by loosening otherwise difficult soils and allowing deeper root structures to grow. The Bank ignores more low-tech solutions such as no-till or minimal tillage strategies, which do not require tractors or expensive machinery, even though they may be cheaper and ultimately more beneficial. Yet the technocratic emphasis of the Bank's knowledge precludes the use of methods like no-till. For the Bank, knowledge is technologic.

### *The Land Center and Local Knowledges*

The Land Center for Human Rights sees land in more expansive terms than that of the Bank. These terms do not exclude land as a commodity or as a means of

production, but they are more expansive, and imply differing needs and desires than that of the World Bank. The Land Center also sees land as heritage, a legacy, authenticity, and security.

Much of the land in Egypt, rented or otherwise, has been passed down through families for at least 40 years. When farmers speaking to the Land Center talk of their land, they always mention how long they have had it, who has been farming it, and what they have done to improve it (Land Center for Human Rights, 2003, p. 24; Land Center for Human Rights, 2001A; p. 16; Land Center for Human Rights, 2001B; p. 19). These statements go further than defending a right to their land, though that is one aim. It is also a discourse of *asala* (اصالة) or authenticity. They are stating that they are real farmers, sharing a family heritage that goes back generations. Authenticity is often contrasted with large landowners who live in Cairo, hire others to farm their land, and brag about it.

*Ardi Hayati (ارضي حياتي) – My Land is My Life*

Without reifying Ayrout's notion that farmers are tied to the land (Ayrout, 2005; p. 6) or unduly romanticizing farming, a moment needs to be taken here to examine the wider cultural context in which the Land Center is situated and to discuss the perceived connection between land and small farmers in Egypt. Farmers plant crops in the field, tend them, and harvest them. They watch as plants sprout and the wheat waves in the field under the sunlight. They feed this food to their wives and children. They grow old and pass this land on to their children and their children pass it on to their children. Land can pass down within a single family through the generations. There is a satisfaction in this process of generational investment in labor and hard work that cannot easily be quantified. Within the discourse of authenticity,

this process of generational labor and heritage is what makes smallholders the “real” farmers in Egypt. It is a portion of their identity and gives legitimacy to small farmers as the rightful owners of that land. Ownership here is not doled out on paper, as indeed many small farmers do not have such papers anyway (Bush, 2002; p. 20). Instead, ownership is a matter of length of time, work done, and family and generational labor.

“The dream of Farraag now is to own a piece of arable land and work in planting it as this is the only thing he knows in life and the only thing that will provide him a secure income.” - Land Center for Human Rights, 2003; p. 1

As the Land Center acknowledges, the stated goal of many farmers is to buy more land, or to own land of their own (Land Center for Human Rights, 2001A; p. 2; Land Center for Human Rights, 2003; p. 1). Buying land is a difficult process and land can be extremely expensive. Yet small farmers dream of owning land. This is because of the economic security and prestige that owning land brings. When the Land Center documents a farmer, they often mention how much land they own and for how many years they have owned it (Land Center for Human Rights, 2003, p. 2). However, the purpose of mentioning land ownership goes beyond mere documentation. In Egyptian society, land ownership is associated with respectability. Within the countryside, being, as the Land Center puts it, a “simple farmer” (Land Center for Human Rights, 2003; p. 1), brings with it a certain level of respectability and authenticity. It can also be argued that someone claiming to be a “simple farmer” is also claiming to be part of the *ibn al-balad* (ابن البلاد), or sons of the country. As Armbrust argues, the *ibn al-balad* are seen as rough, but good people and to be a part of this group is no shame (Armbrust, 2001; p. 205). The extra food more land can

provide means that families are healthier and the extra money from more crop sales can allow children to get a better education, but it also solidifies one as an authentic member of the *ibn al-balad* and as such authentic and good.

Given the aforementioned arguments, losing land is more than watching crops in the field go to someone else. When small farmers lose land, they lose heritage, a legacy, and a portion of their authenticity. The damage goes far beyond a loss of security, and this is something that is difficult to quantify.

In addition, the de-skilling of the labor force (Hopkins, 1988; p. 25) and its relation to land and authenticity is also worth discussing here. One of the Bank's main initiatives is to educate farmers as to the reputed benefits of modern agricultural technologies such as tractors, reapers, and more advanced irrigation (World Bank, 2010; p. 41) in order to increase returns. Yet in contradiction to the Bank's contention that knowledge is free and available to all (World Bank Knowledge Report, 2010; p. 16), here we see that it is not. The returns from smallholding are sufficient neither to afford to buy advanced agricultural technologies, nor the education required to obtain the knowledge to maintain these technologies. Therefore smallholders rent out this knowledge and technology from wealthier farmers and organizations (Hopkins, 1987; p. 107).

Aside from the additional leveraging and pressure required to rent these items, there is another problem here. First of all, de-skilling is not necessarily an accurate term here. Mechanization is only truly useful when there is a deficiency in the labor available to cultivate land. Most smallholders in Egypt do not own more land than they are capable of cultivating with either household or hired labor. What mechanization does is allow for large-scale farms with a minimum of labor costs.

Labor-intensive techniques of agriculture are still utilized where capital is insufficient for rental, where mechanization may not be appropriate, and where mechanization is not necessary. A tractor is not needed to till a portion of land smaller than a *feddan*, nor it is likely to be affordable to a farmer owning or renting such a plot. Yet the World Bank privileges mechanization over manual labor and thus local methods and knowledge of land cultivation are devalued. However, despite Bank contentions about a lack of technological knowledge, smallholders have been using tractors for over 70 years (Hopkins, 1987; p. 105). Tractors are being rented by smallholders who cannot afford them otherwise. Whether or not technology rental ultimately beneficial to smallholders is up for debate: however, smallholders are learning about these technologies and how to use them. While many farmers are using mechanized methods to work their land, some are not. The reasons are complex and cannot entirely be attributed to the cost of rental or ownership of a tractor. Some plots of land are too small or too narrow to be properly tilled by a tractor and other farmers use animal-based methods of water-lifting because they are more convenient to the task at hand. In some cases, a discourse of “keeping the old methods alive” may also be defense. Also, as Mitchell points out, older methods may also be used as a shield against the dangers of the market (Mitchell, 2002; p. 247). These farmers may be embarrassed that they are unable to afford a tractor, and so take pride in the fact that they cultivate their crops by hand in order to defend themselves against charges of poverty or inadequacy. Yet regardless of the reasons, these methods do remain, and the Bank does not recognize that they are there, creating an unseen conflict between authenticity, convenience, and Bank ideas of modernity.

The Bank recognizes that small farmers are unable to take on the full costs of

technological investments in land, and it is willing to help by means of subsidy or loan. Aside from the fact that taking a loan is a risk unto itself, the particular problem here does not come from the risk of credit alone. Following the neo-liberal model, the Bank has argued that subsidies to inputs should be removed (World Bank, 1993; p. 8). Input subsidies include those covering fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides. Furthermore, arguing that land is a means of production, the Bank supports taxing farmers owning less than three feddans of land (World Bank, 1993; p. 32-33), something that the government of Egypt already does (Land Center for Human Rights, 2003; p. 28). This taxation is something that the Land Center opposes on grounds that it adds expenses to those who are already poor (Land Center for Human Rights, 2003; p. 28). It is seemingly ignored here that entrepreneurship in most countries is “subsidized” by tax breaks. This is not to say that such measures are appropriate for all countries. It is rather to point out that the Bank is ignoring common and worthwhile practices in other countries by re-conceptualizing land as a means of production and inappropriately elevating small farmers to the ranks of the bourgeoisie. However, the largest part of the problem comes with the aggregate risks involved. While additional expenditures on improved irrigation and maintenance may seem small to the Bank (World Bank, 1993; p. iv), it is debatable whether or not this is a small cost to farmers. Moreover, the aggregate risk involved in exposing farmgate prices directly to the world marketplace, paying more for inputs, and investing in land creates a process of attrition that can eventually lead to the loss of land by smallholders.

In addition to viewing land as a means of production, the Bank also views land as a commodity. As such, land should be bought and sold freely. As briefly mentioned



in the previous chapter, the Bank along with USAID has pushed for land registration in Egypt (Bush, 2002; p. 22). This desire for land registration bears further examination here. This push for registration does two things. First of all, land registration paves the way for consolidation in land, which the Bank acknowledges as one of its goals. Second, registration provides legibility for the government. By forcing land registration, land can be both taxed and sold in a much simpler fashion than is currently provided for. Moreover, treating land as a commodity means that arrangements such as tenancy, which was common prior to Law 96, are problematic. As mentioned before, tenanted land was difficult to sell and stood in the way of land consolidation by means of either sale or large-scale rental. Therefore, the Bank backed the changes in the tenancy law and pushed for land titling. Yet the harmful and negative effects of these changes went largely unnoticed by the Bank.

These effects relate to the second major consequence of treating land as a simple commodity: people disappear from it. Commoditizing land alienates people from it in both the physical and discursive sense. Land is an object to be bought and sold, but it has no value beyond that. A land market is achieved at the cost of land value. If people are not seen as part of the landscape, then they are easily removed from it. The Bank utilizes a euphemism to deal with impoverishment: “economic dislocation.” This term refers to those who are displaced by structural adjustment and more specifically, indicates migration, whether this is rural-urban or otherwise. The Bank views these dislocations as an inevitable part of adjustment (World Bank, 1993; p. 12). In fact, to deal with economic dislocation, urban migration is encouraged in the hopes that new migrants will find jobs in the city. The violence involved is ignored. However, dislocation does not always end in urban migration or some form of

proletarianization. Former tenants find work as agricultural day laborers, or they move into the cities and often the slums. The commoditization of land has made a severe decrease in quality of life possible.

However, land cannot be so narrowly viewed as only a commodity. People live on it and are deeply invested in it. Nor is land a means of production in the factory sense. Land does produce food, but it does not conform to most of the basic rules by which factories are governed. Though labor can influence crop price, the price of a crop is not the aggregate of the labor spent on it. While more labor intensive crops such as saffron or vanilla are more expensive on the whole, the price can also be attributed to their scarcity. Not many regions are suitable for their growth. Arguably, this restriction does not apply to more commonly grown crops such as cotton, wheat, or maize. Crop price is rather a function of how every other identical crop has done that year the world over. To farm is to bet against weather, disease, and natural disaster. If one year in the United States, the weather is good, and wheat produces a bumper crop, then the global price will drop, removing many of the possible financial gains that improved production in Egypt has made. Moreover, if a natural disaster or a period of disease occurs in Egypt, the crop may be insufficient to provide income needed to pay for investment. Hence cropping is not nearly as reliable an indicator of cash returns as is manufacturing t-shirts or batteries. Moreover, land is more than a commodity. While land is bought and sold, it is not unoccupied. Allowing land to be narrowly commoditized erases people physically and discursively from it, and ignores the fact that its value goes beyond monetary wealth.

*The Space in Between: Devalued Definitions*

Though the Land Center would not disagree with the World Bank that land is a

means of production, there are key differences in their views of land that are worth examining. The Bank tends to view land in economic terms, while the Land Center possesses a more expansive view of land that includes personal terms.

Authenticity, or *asala* (اصلة) is more than a discourse of belonging.

Authenticity is a discourse of defense. Within Egyptian society, authenticity is valued even as it is denigrated. Farmers may be seen as pre-modern *fellahin*, but they are also viewed as the storehouse of authentic cultural knowledge (Armbrust, 1996; p. 38).

This is why when the Land Center documents a piece of farmer's land, they never fail to cite the farmer's family, the length of time on the land, and the improvements made to the land (Land Center for Human Rights, 2003; p. 20; Land Center for Human Rights, 2001B; p. 32). The discourse of authenticity with regard to land ownership is utilized to emphasize the rights of small farmers and their value in Egyptian society.

The discourse of authenticity regarding land ownership therefore serves as a defense against the encroaching and often damaging knowledge systems utilized by the Bank.

Unfortunately, the two parties are talking past each other here. The Bank systematically devalues local systems of knowledge. Knowledge about land and agriculture is meant to flow from the center to the periphery (World Bank, 1998; p. 13), not the other way around. Therefore, though individuals may learn the Bank's definitions of land, there is no place for the Bank to learn about the way farmers view land. Local knowledge of land is obtained and utilized by the Bank only insofar as it can be used to get farmers to utilize Bank knowledge. Despite protestations about knowledge going two ways (World Bank, 1998; p. 13), the Bank emphasizes economics and a form of social facts in order to understand what other cultures need from it. The Bank thus collects economic knowledge of land, but not local

understandings of land such as authenticity. Furthermore, this collection of knowledge is seen as only useful in convincing small farmers to use Bank knowledge.

Moreover, social facts such as those the Bank collected about the Bedouin in Marsah Matrouh (World Bank, 2004A; p. 125-161) allow for several problems to arise. In Marsa Matrouh in particular, the Bank only goes so far as to elucidate their perception of Bedouin social structure and culture. Possible transformations in the structure as well as exceptions are not allowed for here, and hence the Bank is unable to grasp the deeper implications or reasons for this structure. If social facts are believed not to change, then it is a simple logical step to argue that these social facts have not changed in centuries. In the case of the Bedouin, the Bank repeatedly refers to them as “traditional”. This denial of co-temporality is especially easy when the Bank speaks of traditional societies and cultures in terms of social stability (World Bank, 1998; p. 72). It is even more of a problem in Egypt where an essentialist peasant discourse is prevalent among the elites of Cairo and Alexandria (Armbrust, 2001; p. 38). Hence the concept of a “knowledge gap” can be sustained as not only are Egyptian farmers lacking Bank technical skills, but their very co-temporality with the Bank is denied. In stating that poorer nations “need not re-invent the wheel” (World Bank, 1998; p. 2) the Bank's invocation of the primitive seems oddly representative of the problem here. In multiple places, the Bank documents refer vaguely to of the value of indigenous knowledge, yet the only concrete examples given are of indigenous peoples knowledge of plants that could be used for western medicine and of the role played by women in developing new crop varieties by testing them on behalf of several corporations (World Bank, 1998; p. 153). Who benefits more from “local knowledge” here is seriously in question as is the reification of

poorer nations as populated with primitives incapable of helping themselves. Since the Bank takes knowledge to be a “public good” (World Bank, 1998; p. 131) the power differential between the Bank and small farmers is ignored. Yet there is force involved here. The Bank's powerful sources of finance mean that the Egyptian government has a powerful incentive to accept Bank meanings, reinterpreting and using them to enrich the ruling classes.

The reason that this transformation is possible is because Bank understandings of land, being largely economic, are shallower than those of organizations such as the Land Center or even the Egyptian government. Meanings associated with land such as authenticity are absent from Bank discourse, but they are not absent from the discourse in the countryside or the Egyptian government. In the case of Law 96, the Bank understandings of land as a commodity and a means of production were used only shallowly. The government of Egypt was more accurately dealing with discourses of authenticity similar to those found in Land Center documents. Public discourse labelled tenants lazy and greedy (Saad, 2002; p. 109), implying that they were not authentic or hardworking, and thus large landowners were more worthy of state protection and help. This government and large landowner discourse was propagated in contradiction to the discourses of small farmers and the Land Center. In the end, the Bank's meaning did not so much prevail as it was transformed. The government of Egypt decided that smallholders were parasitic and therefore further commoditized land to the advantage of large landowners.

In some cases, seeking its own interests, the Government of Egypt even colludes with the Bank in these meanings. An example of this collusion is of Law 96 of 1992, which was supported by the World Bank (World Bank, 1993; p. 32), and

USAID (Bush, 2002; p. 20) in order to take advantage of economies of scale brought on by possible land consolidation. The government of Egypt's purpose in passing the Law was to allow landowners to charge higher rental rates (Saad, 2002; p. 115), while I argue that the Bank's purpose in supporting the law was to further commoditize land. Farmers were left ill-informed of Law 96's passing or its consequences (Saad, 2002; p. 115-116), which removed the inheritability of tenancy and de-regulated rental prices. The result of this reform was a violent series of dispossessions (Land Center for Human Rights, 2002; p. 128). There were been widespread reports of violence, extortion, and dispossession in the countryside at the time and leading up to the present day. Such violence between large landowners and smallholders has occurred at least since the 1950s and the initial land reforms by Abdel-Nasser (Mitchell, 2002; p. 153-172). Despite the fact that scholarly journals, press articles, and the Land Center covered the violence after Law 96 extensively, there is not one single mention of these actions in the Bank reports written during these times. The Bank reports are disturbingly and unaccountably silent. There is even evidence that the authors of the reports have read some of these documents. In his scholarly notes and articles, rural sociologist Ray Bush has described the violence associated with Law 96 extensively, and at least one Bank document cites Bush (World Bank, 2010; p. 102). Yet there is no mention of the violence or torture detailed in any of Bush's articles. This is highly suggestive of a serious and terrifying suppression of information by the Bank itself. As a self-proclaimed “arbiter” of neutral knowledge, such an elision or omission is particularly disturbing. The violence in the countryside cannot have gone unnoticed by Bank analysts. Yet the understandings gained from these moments have somehow been suppressed. The more disturbing conclusion that can be drawn here is that a full

acknowledgement of the effects of Bank policies in Egypt might be damaging to Bank operations in Egypt or even to the willingness of wealthier democratic nations to provide funding for further Bank projects. In order to preserve the Bank's system of knowledge with regards to land and its financial and policy interests, it can be surmised this information was suppressed.

Land fragmentation is another issue where local knowledge and understandings of land and effects outcomes in unforeseen ways. Part of the reason that the Bank has pushed for tenancy reforms and land registration is the stated objective to create a land market (Bush, 2002; p. 20). The land market was meant to allow a reduction in fragmentation and thereby increase production. However, fragmentation in Egypt is in part a result of the application of Islamic inheritance laws. Here we can see that tenancy actually served as a shield against land fragmentation because rented land was not owned and therefore shielded from inheritance laws. The inherited nature of tenancy and the inability to sell land meant that land could not be fragmented when its owner died either. Removing tenancy restrictions may actually result in even more fragmentation of land over a period of generations. Moreover, fragmentation is dealt with by a complex series of negotiations and relationships (Abdel-Aal, 2002; p. 140) meant to insure that each household has land to grow crops on. Not only do smallholders own land, but they also rent in and rent out land inside and outside their families (Abdel-Aal, 2002; p. 143). The Bank's largely economic and technocratic perspective on land means that it views land fragmentation as an obstacle that inhibits production, but its uninformed perspectives have lead it to miss the relationships that produced land fragmentation and allowed rental to begin with. Thus, in dealing with any given project, the Bank

must negotiate with numerous stakeholders and navigate a complex series of relationships. On smaller-scale projects such as irrigation schemes in the Nile delta, the Bank deals only with households and larger political structures (World Bank, 2010; p. 7). Hence, the family and outside relationships that surround land fragmentation are ignored because the Bank focuses on large political structures and households and not the web of relationships between them. In the case of large-scale policy, the invisibility of these relationships to the World Bank means that radical changes have altered on these sets of relationships, such as in the loss of tenure. One result of these changes has increasing pressure on small farmers which has resulted in discord and violence (Land Center for Human Rights, 2002; p. 131). Such violence has not just come between small farmers (Land Center for Human Rights, 2002; p. 137), but also between large landowners and small farmers (Land Center for Human Rights, 2002; p. 131; Land Center for Human Rights, 200A1. p. 17-20). Nineteen years after Law 96 was passed, sporadic violence is still ongoing and the ramifications of the loss of tenure on these relationships have still not been fully understood.

Moreover, while the Bank may argue that the weak property rights as evidenced in Egypt by a complex system of local land registration are the reason for rural conflict, the Bank's alternative is also inherently problematic. In the Bank's eyes, a free market with firm property rights (i.e., registered land) will reduce conflict by allowing free and informed consent on sales of land or land lease (World Bank, 2010; p. xxxii). However, again relationships are overlooked. Due to the complicated rental market that still exists, conflict is still a problem. Also, even though physical coercion by beatings may be less prevalent in a regime with firm land rights, although it is debatable whether or not this is the case, economic coercion is still present. Bank



policies that resulted in the government of Egypt eliminating input subsidies and ending government purchase of crops at floor prices have put strains on the finances of small farmers. Some who once rented land have been forced to give it up, while some smallholders have been forced to sell their land. While this form of coercion may be legal, it is still coercion. Given that some of these smallholders no doubt rented portions of their land, conflict still occurs. For example when Law 96 went fully into effect, there were still some tenants renting land. Even though they had legal leases, they were forced off extrajudicially. The Land Center has documented a process whereby police would pick up tenants or their families, threaten them with arrest, beat them, and force them to sign away their land (Land Center for Human Rights, 2002; p. 131). Even owners have also been picked up by the police and forced off reform land in the same way (Land Center for Human Rights, 2001B; p. 16-20). After such extrajudicial events, the resulting document that turns over land rights to a new owner is then accepted as legally binding. The transfer of land by extortion or imprisonment may not be legal in the sense of rule of law, but it results from corruption, not weak land rights as the Bank alleges.

*Conclusion: Land as Commodity and Means of Production*

The World Bank sees land as a commodity to be traded and a means of production. This view of land as both means of production and commodity ties into the ultimate goal of the Bank: the transformation of smallholdings into the Bank's vision of a factory farm. This conceptual farm is fully mechanized, with tilling, sowing, reaping, and pesticide and herbicide applications all done by machine. Advanced knowledges of soil science and horticultural techniques are utilized to produce maximum returns from the soil. Modern irrigation minimizes water use,

while new cultivars of wheat, corn, and other crops produce ever-higher returns. In this vision, numerous smallholdings become a few much larger sets of land that are capable of producing capital and utilizing the Bank's technologies. Moreover, the fact that large landowners are adopting Bank-advocated practices means that they are taking on the Bank's worldview as well, and they have good reason to do so. If land is a commodity, then large landowners have more money to buy or rent than anyone else. If land is a means of production, then by buying or renting it as a commodity, large landowners can increase production and generate more capital. As for the remaining smallholders, many of them are already engaged in supporting larger farms. Smallholders provide day labor to large landowners, rent tractors from them, and service debts to them. All of these actions provide further profit to large landowners and indicate that at least a part of the Bank's vision is being realized. Moreover, understandings of land as a source of authenticity, a legacy, and a source of security have been either devalued or shifted to favor large landowners, though this was not an act of direct intent by the World Bank. They are instead a consequence of understandings of land not seen by the Bank.

### **Chapter 3: Moral Economy, Risk Aversion, and the Process of Social Change**

#### *Introduction*

In this chapter I discuss the World Bank's view of moral economy as risk aversion. I critique the Bank's view of moral economy based on anthropological and sociological data available. I follow that critique with a discussion of the Land Center's view of moral economy as a series of social obligations and as a system of support in which the state plays an integral part. I will finish with a discussion of what happens when these two discourses meet, and the end result of this collision.

It is also worth noting here that moral economy is a theoretical idea based on a set of behaviors exhibited in poorer communities such as the countryside in Egypt. As such, it is absent from Bank and Land Center discourse. However, I will show that the aspects they each deal with imply a particular and limited understanding of moral economy and that this understanding has an effect on their policies, whether they realize it or not. As such, at key points I supplement the Bank and the Land Center's understandings of moral economy with evidence from sociological and anthropological literature in order to provide a wider picture of the effects of Bank-backed policies and projects in Egypt on moral economy.

#### *Moral Economy as Risk Aversion: The World Bank*

The World Bank mostly deals with moral economy in the context of risk aversion due to limited income. They state that “a limited financing capacity is responsible for the significant risk aversion of small farmers and the resulting cautious adoption of agricultural technologies” (World Bank, 2003; p. 63). Rather than dealing with moral economy in the context of risk management, one of its aspects, the Bank sees the operation of a moral economy as recalcitrance, and the avoidance of

risk due to the limited capacity to finance projects.

Therefore, it is worthwhile to take a moment and discuss what kinds of risks that the Bank wishes farmers to take or that Bank-backed policies require farmers to take. It is important to realize that small farmers are not merely being asked to take risks themselves, but are being subjected to increasingly risky conditions. Items such as the removal of input subsidies are not risks that farmers are forced to take, but rather risky conditions that farmers are subjected to. These also require means of mitigation which can take the form of increased loans. They are thus an indirect risk. Conceptually, most investment risks the Bank advocates are long-term risks with substantial calculated benefits if they pay off. Most farming crop cycles mean that investments in new crops such as fruit trees or cut flowers require several years to pay off or that payoffs may accrue over time. Improved drainage such as that advocated in the ongoing drainage projects may take several years or at least several irrigation cycles before damaged soils are drained of poisons. It is important to realize that the only things conceptualized by the Bank as risks are those that can produce a profit in the end. Increased input prices are not conceptualized as a risk because they are not an investment in improvement that can pay off. Instead they constitute a stimulus that is used to increase efficiency and provide market-related impetus. Farmer's reluctance to adopt new crops, make new investments in irrigation, and to borrow are therefore conceptualized as risk aversion. However, the Bank is merely substituting one means of managing risk for another here. Moral economy spreads out risk for any given task, while Bank projects expect one individual or family to bear the risk of the task on their own.

First of all, not conceptualizing unsubsidized inputs as a risk is flawed. Most

commercial nitrogen-fixing fertilizers now in use are based on natural gas (Foth, 1990; p. 221). Therefore these fertilizer prices are subject to fluctuations in the petroleum market. This connection to the petroleum markets contributed to the food crisis in 2009 when the increasing price of oil forced the price of fertilizer to go up (FAO, 2009; p. 1). Since the price of fertilizer is tied to petroleum, a volatile market, then fertilizer prices are also volatile. By asking farmers to assume the full cost of fertilizer, the Bank expects farmers to risk the volatility of the petroleum market on purchase. Moreover, the financial calculations that farmers made prior to this change assumed the cost of fertilizer to be stable, or at least remain within a reasonable range. When it ceased to be subsidized, farmers had to spend increasing amounts of money to fertilize their crops. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that fertilizer purchase provides an indirect risk in the form of the need for increased credit, and that fertilizer purchase at market pricing is both a direct and an indirect risk.

Moreover, moral economy is a means of managing risk through social redistribution of wealth and spreading risk among family members and neighbors (Scott, 1976; p. ). It is also characterized by deeply imbedded social and religious obligations. That the bank sees moral economy narrowly as risk aversion creates a problem, because risk aversion is something to overcome, while risk management is something that must be understood. It is therefore paradoxical for an organization such as the Bank, largely made up of career economists and lawyers, should fail to understand this concept. Moreover, the Bank believes that “to take this risk aversion into account and hence increase the possibilities for adoption by small farmers, the crop and livestock models of the "with project" alternative will require only very limited investment and additional operational cost in cash.” (World Bank, 2003; p.

63). This is also a problem, because actions the Bank sees as risk aversion in this case are more likely related to social insurance. The moral economy in the countryside provides multiple means of social insurance and protection, and replacing them is not an inexpensive or simple matter. Community obligation spread over many sources requires the substitution of a much larger sum of money than what the Bank allows here. Moreover, credit from a bank is a riskier alternative than a loan or gift from a family member or neighbor. Credit does not mitigate risk, but rather increases it. Community funds such as the Bank occasionally suggests are a good idea, but equitable distribution and management of these funds is an extremely complex process, and aside from occasionally suggesting it (World Bank, 2011; p. 119), it is an idea that the Bank has shown little interest in implementing itself. A moral economy and its means of risk management are much more complex than the Bank would allow.

Moral economy operates differently on different levels, and it is therefore useful to discuss Bank policy and its effects on the various social strata in the countryside individually. Small farmers have the most need of the insurance moral economy provides, and suffer the most if it fails. For small farmers, moral economy is not merely risk aversion, but social insurance (Scott, 1976). In a bad year, they may call upon mid-range farmers, or those owning 5-15 *feddan*, and large landowners, who own more than 15 *feddan* in order to provide more support. Moreover, prior to structural adjustment, the state provided protection in the form of input subsidies, government jobs, and permanent land tenure. These protections, in combination with social obligations placed on mid-range farmers, provided a measure of stability. However, the loss of these protections has placed social pressure on mid-range and

large landowners that they are either ill-equipped or simply not desirous of accepting.

Mid-range farmers have incentive to participate in the moral economy because they bear the most risk of slipping down into the ranks of smallholders themselves. They support smallholders because they are only one step above them in the financial ladder and this means that they may need smallholders later on in order to prevent themselves from sliding back down. Moreover, Islamic inheritance laws mean that many mid-range farmers will very likely be returned to the ranks of smallholders within a generation. Eventually, when the owner passes, the land will be divided up among his or her children, creating more smallholders. Given that mid-range farmers are already on the brink of returning to the rank of smallholders, they are already ill-equipped to deal with increased demands. Moreover, they are also affected by the same government cutbacks that smallholders are dealing with. The loss of input subsidies and the lack of permanent tenure put additional financial pressure on mid-range farmers. Rental is now likely out of their range, because they cannot afford the market rates, and they can no longer rely on the government to provide jobs for their children upon graduation. Their opportunities are decreasing just as they are experiencing increased social demands from an ailing smallholder class.

Large landowners have the least incentive to participate in a moral economy because the large size of their landholdings often secures them against financial misfortune and land fragmentation by means of inheritance. They have more land, therefore when it is divided up, it is less likely that the resulting individual holdings will fall below 5 *feddan*. In addition, large landowning enterprises may be insulated from land fragmentation by legal means such as incorporation. Yet even while large landowners have the least incentive to participate, because they are already secure,

they receive the most pressure and have the most obligations to the moral economy. The end result is a moral economy in transition. Smallholders and mid-range landowners can no longer support each other as well as they once did, and must rely increasingly on large landowners, who have the least incentive of all to participate in the moral economy.

At one point, the state took on many of the obligations of moral economy, by providing government jobs, input subsidies, and the legal protection of permanent land tenure. Yet the state, in collusion with large landowners and with the support of the World Bank has withdrawn from this arena and no longer provides the services it once did. NGOs and Islamic organizations can serve to bridge a part of this gap, but given the enormity of the task, it is unlikely that they can solve the problem. There are too many people in need of services and there is not enough money being spent in the right places.

#### *The Moral Economy and the State*

Before going further, it is worth discussing for a moment the state's role in the moral economy so that we can discuss the Bank's view of the state in the context of moral economy as well as the Land Center's view.

The state has not been traditionally considered as a part of the moral economy. However, in Egypt, it can be the case. A key part of the moral economy in Egypt has always been the social redistribution of wealth and the provision of social insurance. This social insurance has been provided by either the state, large landowners, or smallholders. Yet it is the state that concerns us here. Prior to 1952 and Abdel-Nasser, the moral economy in the countryside was in large part extant within the *'Izbah* system. Large landowners were thus responsible for the social redistribution of wealth



by various means (Richards, 1980; p. 5) . The large landowning classes, conceptually at least, provided protection from the state. In turn, they exploited the workers under their protection. After the 1952 revolution, Mohammed Naguib and then Abdel-Nasser went about establishing a “welfare state”, more accurately termed as state-run capitalism (Mitchell, 2002; p. 280). The state provided protection in several forms. First of all, under Nasser's agrarian reform, many of the large landholdings of the old *pasha* class were broken up and redistributed, creating a class of smallholders (Bush, 2002; p.9). In addition, the state established new tenure laws (Bush, 2002; p. 9), input subsidies, and provided government jobs to graduates. In making the new tenant and smallholder classes dependent on the state, Nasser increased his own power at the expense of the *pasha* class (Bush, 2002; p. 9) as well as took functions of the moral economy into the state. Thus the state took a new role in the moral economy, serving as a protector, conceptually at least, of small farmers from large landowners. In the 1990s, with the advent of Law 96 of 1992, the state began stripping away portions of the social safety net and abandoned much of its role in the moral economy. Law 96 transformed tenure and removed the state's role as a protector in that arena. Moreover, the state ended input subsidies (World Bank, 1993; p. iii) and the employment guarantee for graduates. Only the bread subsidy remains. However, the people continue to look to the state as a protector. Right up until Law 96 went into full effect in 1997, people still believed that President Mubarak would intervene and stop the law (Saad, 2002; p. 115). The state, embodied in the president, was seen as a protector from the landowning class and parliament who passed the law. In the end, what the state did was not as important as what it failed to do: it did not protect small farmers and it did not fulfill its role in the moral economy.

*The World Bank and the State: Moral Economy and the “Welfare State”*

The World Bank does not recognize the state's role in the moral economy, or its role in mitigating risk. Instead, the Bank, at least in the beginning, saw the state as a “welfare state” (Egypt Human Development Report, 2005; p. 4) in the sense that they provided too much support to the population, damaging market potential (World Bank, 1994; p. 94). Hence the state role in mitigating risk and serving as a protector is not taken into account. The Bank sees the state as a facilitator of free commerce, and not as a provider of social protection. Therefore the Bank advocates shifting the function of social protection to the private sector, where efficiency can be achieved, thus reducing state debt and expense.

*Land Center for Human Rights: The State as Patron and Protector*

“The LCHR demands from the Minister of Agriculture to interfere to protect the rights of these villagers saving them from banishment.” (Land Center for Human Rights, 2001; p. 2)

The Land Center for Human Rights sees the state as the rightful protector of the people and as their patron. When speaking of Law 96 of 1992, official corruption, and ongoing violence against small farmers, the Land Center calls on the state to protect small farmers from the large landowning classes (Land Center for Human Rights, 2001B; p. 3). They ignore the fact that the state passed laws such as Law 96 in the first place because they see the state as the protector of the people of Egypt. In their eyes, the failure did not lay in the state's rapacious desires, but those of the large landowning class from which the state failed to protect small farmers. Hence, the state failed in its role in the moral economy. Moreover, when dealing with education, the Land Center calls on the state to provide the means for small farmers to educate their

children (Land Center for Human Rights, 2001C; p. 1) and decry its failure to make certain that everyone has a chance to go to school. When dealing with the Agricultural Bank, and its alleged corruption, they also call on the state and not the courts or large landowners to protect them (Land Center for Human Rights, 2003; p. 27). The Land Center views the state as the protector within the moral economy of the countryside.

*Moral Economy and Risk Management: The Land Center*

Moral economy is a means not of avoiding risk, but rather of risk management. In this case, risk is managed both by the community and by individuals in a particular fashion. Risk is spread over multiple members of a community. Moral economy also constitutes a set of preconceptions derived from living close to the margins for a long period of time (Scott, 1976; p. 2). Under a moral economy, risk is calculated not with anticipation of a possible profit, but with consideration of possible loss. Avoiding a loss is seen as preferable to making gains because loss can mean starvation (Scott, 1976; p. 4). In this context, risks will be taken only if one is certain that they can be borne safely. Moreover, it means that logically speaking, if someone engaged in a moral economy is given a choice, they will take a steady meal over a risky venture with a high reward because the consequences of risky ventures are simply too high (Scott, 1976; p. 4). Specifically, the likelihood of innovation or capital risk taking is determined to the closeness of a particular person to biological subsistence (Scott, 1976; p. 19). In Egypt, there is a strong material correlation between land, education, and the propensity to take risk. This means that in Egypt, the likelihood that a farmer will take a particular investment or accept a given risk is dependent on whether or not they possess sufficient wealth in the form of land or education to cushion the risk. The Bank interprets this phenomenon as indicating that

the wealthier and more educated are naturally more innovative (World Bank and OECD, 2008; p. 30). However, risk-taking is more accurately seen as a factor of class, with wealth and education serving as buffers to risk. Because a small farmer is likely to be closer to biological subsistence than a large landowner or an educated person, they are less likely to take on additional risk, because everyday life is already risky enough. It is not that small farmers fail to innovate, but rather that the risk of innovation and investment for them is simply higher than it is for larger landowners.

#### *The Means of Moral Economy in Egypt: Risk Management*

The Land Center does not present a clearly articulated theory of moral economy. However, it does propose aspects of a moral economy. Specifically, the Land Center indirectly alludes to moral economy in the context of outlines of structures of education, cropping, and social justice and reciprocity.

In the case of education, the Land Center argues that the recent policies, including Law 96, have prevented many children from acquiring an education (Land Center for Human Rights, 2001C; p. 4-5). This inability to obtain an education damages the moral economy within households, because within the countryside, agriculture is a profession of last resort. The purpose of education is to get someone out of agriculture and to support those who remain. One person is sent to get a higher education. The cost is covered by work, credit, or other means. These costs are assumed by other family members, including siblings. This risk sometimes fails, but when it succeeds the person earns a degree and then sends money back to the farm if they are able to acquire a job. The graduate is allowed a life outside farming, reducing their personal risk while simultaneously reducing the risk of farming by sending money home. Thus risk is managed within the family unit.

The Land Center conceptualizes one means of managing risk as ownership of a *gamousa* (جاموسة), or buffalo (Land Center for Human Rights; 2001B, p. 17; World Bank, 1993; p. 42). Buffalos are fed *berseem* (برسيم), or clover. The farmer grows *berseem* on his or her own land and feeds it to the buffalo (World Bank, 1993; p. 42). Cash input is thus lowered by the utilization of family labor and the re-use of seed.. Buffalos are a source of milk, butter, and cheese to small farmers but they also provide a crucial link in the social safety net. Excess milk, butter, and cheese can be sold for extra cash, and if a farmer falls upon hard times, the buffalo can be sold. However, selling a buffalo is a contingency of last resort, because by doing so, farmers lose access to a valuable source of protein and fat for their children. Thereafter, they must purchase these things off the open market, if they can afford them. Moreover, keeping a buffalo has become a problem due to disease and increasing poverty (Land Center for Human Rights, 2001B; p. 17; Land Center for Human Rights, 2001A; p. 48). Buffaloes play a major role in the moral economy, providing protein and a source of last resort for cash, and farmers are greatly averse to losing them.

The community aspect of a moral economy is also important, and here I will supplement the Land Center documents to provide a larger picture. In Upper Egypt, marriage within a village or cluster of villages tends to be endogamous (Hopkins and Saad, 2004; p. 5), though this is not always the case. The Delta shares similar patterns. Over time, this means that due to intermarriage, many people within a small village are linked by family ties. In difficult times, these family members may be called upon to provide support for one another. While the inability to help one's family member is forgivable, outright refusal is not so easily pardoned. Shaming, rumors, and

occasionally shunning provide means of enforcement to a moral economy. Help is given not based on nobility or altruism, though this does sometimes play a part, but rather based on the idea that sometime down the line, the people obliged to give aid may need help themselves. Moral economy built through reciprocity is thus a means of spreading out risk and providing social insurance.

### *Zakat (زكاة) and the Religious Aspect of Moral Economy*

In order to better understand the moral economy present in the Egyptian countryside, a discussion of the means by which it is enforced is needed. While shaming and shunning provide a means of enforcement, so does religion. *Zakat* comprises one of the five pillars of Islam. *Zakat* has both obligatory and voluntary forms. Muslims are obligated to give *zakat* on profits, livestock, and agricultural produce. In more recent years, *zakat* has also been paid on stocks, bonds, and other financial instruments (Ali Atia, 2008; p. 60). In Egypt, *zakat* is considered to constitute a flat 2.5% of income (Ali Atia, 2008; p. 60). Thus *zakat* provides religious enforcement of moral economy. By giving *zakat*, a person is considered pious and generous. Failure to give *zakat* then constitutes evidence of greed and impiety. Since obligatory *zakat* is based on profit, livestock, agricultural produce, mines or buried treasure, stocks, and bonds, it is something that is levied on all who are able. Moreover, because the wealthy make more profit, have more agricultural produce, and own more livestock, more *zakat* is expected from them than from others. Moreover, *zakat* is a right of the poor (Ali Atia, 2008; p. 36). *Zakat* is not merely based on the obligation of the rich to give, but a right of the poor to demand. Therefore *zakat* comprises a means of social redistribution of wealth. As such, it is not meant to equalize income, but rather to protect the poor and to ensure social stability

and harmony. Yet because zakat is both a right of the poor and a religious obligation of all who are able, the moral economy inherent in it is enforceable by pointing to religious obligation.

I must stress that moral economy does not mean the absence of exploitation. Moral economy is not a utopian system. It is quite the opposite: a means of surviving in a distinctly non-utopian system of exploitation. The question is not whether or not small farmers in Egypt are exploited, but rather whether or not they see this exploitation as acceptable or equitable. Whether or not something is actually equitable is much less important than whether or not it is seen as equitable. Even prior to Law 96, farmers were still subject to exploitation. The state set prices for crops and demanded crop quotas (Mitchell, 2002; p. 251). The crop prices were artificially low (Mitchell, 2002; p. 251), although there were ways around this problem. Moreover, while land tenure laws favored tenants the entirety of the system made it difficult for small farmers to displace the wealthy class. The difference between the time before and after Law 96 is not the presence or absence of exploitation, but the perception of equity. Small farmers may or may not have seen their exploitation as equitable under the old regime, but under the new regime they see it as distinctly inequitable. The change, however, has not been in the exploitation, but the level of it. Where the state used to provide stability even while it exploited small farmers, now it colludes with businessmen and large landowners to take destroy this stability.

#### *The World Bank and Moral Economy*

Because the Bank conceptualizes moral economy as risk aversion, it does not see the social aspects of moral economy, nor does it conceptualize risk in a fashion that is acceptable to small farmers. To return to the example of the buffaloes , the

Bank conceptualizes buffaloes as uncompetitive because they do not make a significant contribution to the market and they are not insured or invested (World Bank, 1993; p. 42). The ultimate goal for the Bank is to support livestock farms, and to require small farmers buy their milk, butter, and cheese from a commercial supplier, thus contributing to the market (World Bank, 1993; p. 42). The Bank is asking small farmers to stop producing their own milk, butter, and cheese grown on their own farms and to begin buying it elsewhere. Doing so would constitute a risk by itself, especially given the rising price of food in recent years. Finally, also ignored is the safety net aspect of owning a buffalo. Without a buffalo, farmers have no ready source of savings to fall back on in case of crisis, putting them at further risk.

On the community level, moral economy is damaged by land reform. Specifically, moral economy is damaged by the push for land registration and the changes in land rental brought on by Law 96. Moral economy is sustained in part by means of patron-client relationships that facilitate the redistribution of wealth. In a patron-client relationship, wealthy landowners are sometimes relied upon to provide extra support in times of need in exchange for extra services or considerations from their dependent client. However, the altered tenure system and land registration has compromised these sets of relationships. First of all, many large landowners colluded with the state in the passing of Law 96 of 1992 in order to be able to charge higher land rents. By giving the landowners the opportunity to evict tenants from the land without much legal oversight, Law 96 presented landlords with an opportunity to take back their land without regard to the usual social obligations. Settlements were not reached and no respect was given to the rights of tenants because once the legal framework was gone it was more profitable not to engage in negotiation. Moreover,



the improved land registration could make the purchase of land simpler. Since large landowners would be in a position to purchase or rent large amounts of land, they would be less inclined to help smallholders in need. Instead, they could simply buy them out or wait until the property came up for rental. Moreover, due to corruption, opportunities arise to force small farmers to give up their land regardless of ownership rights. Large landowners find themselves in a position where it is possible to bribe the police or manipulate the court systems to achieve their goals. The Land Center has documented the systematic arrest and beating of many small farmers in the efforts to get them to sign over their land (Land Center for Human Rights, 2001B; 9-20). Therefore, the wealthy are an increasingly unreliable source of support for small farmers. They have been provided with a series of opportunities to vastly increase their wealth with few restrictions. The result has been ongoing violence in the countryside as wealthy landowners attempt to acquire land by any means they deem necessary. As pressure increases on small farmers due to rising prices and decreasing social safety nets, violence over other disputes has also increased (Land Center for Human Rights, 2002; p. 134-138). Nonviolent disputes are also likely increasing, though they do not tend to be recorded.

The Bank does not see the importance of *zakat* to the overall social structure. By advocating a decrease in the social safety net, such as eliminating input subsidies (World Bank, 1993; p. 16), removing tenure (World Bank, 1993; p. 32), and continuing pressure on the government to eliminate the subsidies on bread, sugar, and flour, the Bank advocates offloading cost onto individuals. These costs to the budget of the poor must be made up for somewhere, and *zakat* is one such place. Therefore the Bank puts increasing pressure on *zakat* and the wider moral economy to fill in the

gaps. Yet in poor economic times, the rich are no more likely to increase giving than anyone else. In fact, forms of *zakat* such as Ramadan tables have decreased in recent years due to increasing economic pressure. Moreover, Weber argues that under a capitalist system earning profit is seen as a virtuous act (Weber, 1904; p. 232), and profits are hard-earned. This perspective has not been lost on the wealthy in the Egyptian countryside, especially with the means provided to them by a corrupt state to simply take by force what they cannot buy. Because of the importance of piety in Egyptian society, it is very unlikely that *zakat* will disappear, but it is also unlikely to keep up with the current changes. It is odd that the Bank does not recognize such a crucial part of the moral economy, particularly given the underlying neo-liberal assumption inherent in offloading risk onto individuals. If private sector is supposed to take up the protection of the poor in the absence of the state then *zakat* could logically provide an integral part of this process.

Credit presents a problem in the context of moral economy. As a lender, the Bank considers a primary credit a primary solution to everything. One of the goals of creating a land market was to allow farmers to use their land as collateral (Bush, 2002; p. 21). However, the credit that the Bank wishes to offer is of a particular kind. This type of credit is legal, official, and administered through a bank somewhere. It is paid back in installments and charges interest. Loans taken out in this way are given by the World Bank for a particular reason. Most loans are structured with monthly payments over a period of a several years. However, Egyptian farmers often have significant amounts of cash only every few months, after a new crop is harvested. Other sources of cash from off-farm labor for example, provide a substantial portion of income, but they can be irregular. The need to make a monthly payment can drive

farmers into more regular wage-labor and further away from what is already part-time farming to make ends meet.

Farmers have proven reluctant to take this sort of credit for several reasons. First of all, wage-labor in the country-side can be irregular. Second, farmers are already leveraged. When a service is needed in the countryside, it can sometimes be paid in cash or in kind. Credit in this case takes the form of delayed payment (Hopkins, 1987; p. 90). People pay as they are able, but the most reliable means of settling debt is usually the harvest. A farmer is thus leveraged from harvest to harvest on the strength of his or her crop. This leveraging constitutes a means of risk management and a part of the moral economy. If the crop fails, or is less than expected, a farmer still has other options to pay the debt such as selling buffaloes or a small portion of land. The merchant's risk is lower because they can claim their due from whatever there is of the crop, thus reducing their possible losses in the event of the farmer's inability to pay. However, if a farmer is already leveraged in this way, it would seem unlikely that they would be willing to further leverage themselves by taking out a bank loan. Their means of payment are committed elsewhere. Moreover, there is an understandable reluctance present to switch from using a crop as collateral to using land as collateral. Whereas within the old system risk is shared between merchant and farmer, in the Bank's model most of the risk is borne by farmers. The stakes are far higher with land than they are with crops, especially since the value of land is so high. The loans may be larger, but in the event of failure to pay, the farmer has no resources to fall back on. Where the crop may once have been claimed as payment, now the land is payment. Therefore it is understandable that farmers would be reluctant to take out a loan. Third, there are moral injunctions against taking credit

out in this fashion. Both paying interest on loans and receiving interest on deposits has been identified by Islamic law as *riba* or usury, and it is forbidden (Abdullah Mouawad, 2009). Presented with this challenge, the Bank found it useful to charge for management and other related fees instead of collecting interest (World Bank, 2003; p. 61). In addition, in response to the growing popularity of Islamic finance, the government was persuaded by the International Financial Institutions, including the World Bank, to convince one of the sheikhs of Al Azhar, Mohammed Sayyid Tantawi (later the Grand Mufti), to issue a fatwa stating that taking interest on loans and deposits was not forbidden as long as the profits and losses were known in advance (Abdullah Mouawad, 2009; p. 80-81). While religion should not be confused with moral economy, the role it plays here in enforcing a moral economy cannot be ignored and neither can the Bank's manipulation of religion to serve its own ends.

The Bank's view of the state as a facilitator of commerce instead of a participant in the complex system of relationships that creates a moral economy also presents problems. The Land Center views the state as a protector, and farmers in rural Egypt do likewise. Therefore, the removal of the social safety net embodied within government jobs, input subsidies, and land laws, is seen as a violation of the social contract and the state's role as the protector in the moral economy. While the Bank acknowledges the dependence of the people on the state, it does not recognize the social importance or the possible consequences of altering that relationship. Social unrest has been a problem for years in Egypt prior to the January 25<sup>th</sup> uprising. Small farmers blocked up the roads in Dakhalia in 2005 and 2006, and factory workers have been striking for the past few years in Tanta and elsewhere. The options provided by a moral economy have in large part exhausted because the state abandoned its role as

protector and patron and this has resulted in social unrest. Moreover, the Bank was unable to predict these problems because it does not see the state in the same way that organizations such as the Land Center do.

*Discourses of Exploitation: the Bank and Small Farmers*

The Bank did not anticipate the aforementioned failures because it does not consider increasing exploitation or its effect on moral economy. From its perspective, farmers are victims of economic dislocation (World Bank, 1993; p. 71), a necessary evil in a transitioning economy. In actuality, the policies the Bank has advocated have created a moral hazard within the moral economy. The persistent state of corruption within the countryside that had previously been managed by a combination of moral economy and national law has been altered by Bank-backed land reforms. The state is no longer serving its role as the protector. The opportunity has arisen for landowners with sufficient power to force small farmers to either give up their land or sell out. This exploitation can take the form of bribing police to falsely arrest and abuse farmers such as the Land Center describes (Land Center for Human Rights, 2001B), price manipulation such as in the fertilizer monopolies, or the abuse of government ministries for the purposes of gain (Land Center for Human Rights, 2002; p. 132). These actions constitute a moral hazard because the state is no longer protecting small farmers from large landowners and businessmen. Consequently, large landowners are able to bribe police and abuse the court systems with little or no risk to themselves. Legal battles take money or state protection to fight, and every year the poor have less of both. They do not have the means to turn the tables and prosecute landowners, manipulate the prices themselves, or bribe the police, and the state is no longer protecting them. Exploitation increases, and the old notions of social justice and

equity are swept away. Yet new notions of equity and social justice have not yet taken hold while the moral economy is in transition. The Bank characterizes this transition as “sensitizing” farmers to the market and encouraging innovation (World Bank, 1993; p. 12). In essence, though the Bank wants to transform the moral economy, it misconstrues as tradition and risk aversion, into a market economy, again misconstrued by the Bank as innovation and progress.

However, moral economy does not exist in the absence of a market. There has always been a market in Egypt connected to the outside world. What has changed is the level of articulation between farmers and the market. Prior to structural adjustment, farmer contact with the market was largely articulated by the state. The state subsidized most inputs, demanded crop quotas, and set procurement prices. Thus, the state thus served as a shield from the market and as a means of exploitation. After structural adjustment, the contact of small farmers with the market has been mediated by large landowners, corporations, and merchants. The state has withdrawn from market participation in the form of crop quotas, inputs, procurement prices, and land tenure. Landowners, corporations, and merchants have little interest in protecting small farmers from the market because they profit equally from the success or failure of small farmers. Capitalist logic argues that the market creates winners and losers. If small farmers succeed, then they sell more produce to their mediators, guaranteeing more profit for both sides. If, however, small farmers fail, then businessmen or Banks are able to buy up or claim the land of these small farmers and use it to their own ends. An example of this capitalist logic and its relationship to corruption can be found in the Agricultural Bank of Egypt. The Agricultural Bank is responsible for giving out loans to small farmers in Egypt. However, the Agricultural Bank has also

been accused of giving out loans that have not been requested and doubling loans without an additional disbursement (Land Center for Human Rights, 2003; p. 17). The Agricultural Bank reclaims their land or utilizes the police to harass farmers who cannot repay these illegal loans (Land Center for Human Rights, 2003; p. 2). This attitude violates the notions of social justice and reciprocity common in moral economy and allows for an increasing level of exploitation that was not possible prior to reform due to the a number of subsidies and the Abdel-Nasser's tenancy law. The combination of moral economy and land laws in Egypt prior to 1992 meant that in order to maintain their status in the community, the wealthy were better served by responding to the protests of small farmers than by ignoring them. Large landowners could not easily remove tenants (Saad, 2002; p. 109), so they were better served by treating them well. The difficulty involved in land transfer combined with the loss of prestige meant that large landowners had little to gain by attempting to dispossess small farmers. However, with the state protections removed, large landowners can buy land where they once might have helped others to keep it. The danger of loss of prestige is overpowered by the opportunity for gain. As such, the exploitative mediation and articulation of the state has been replaced by the increasingly exploitative mediation and articulation of merchants, large landowners, and corporations. The moral economy that once lent the system stability is shifting to a new form. Market contact has moved from the state, a singular entity whose interest in its own stability mitigated the level of exploitation, to multiple non-state entities that are unconcerned with stability and benefit equally from success or failure. Therefore exploitation has been increased by rising prices and corruption and the moral economy has been disrupted.

In addition to the changing means of exploitation, the Bank also overlooks the human dignity of the exploited and the exploiter. As Freire points out, the ontological problem with exploitation is that it dehumanizes both the oppressed and the oppressor (Freire, 1993; p. 44). Disruption of moral economy goes beyond social upheaval. Moral economy is built on reciprocal exchanges in which perceived social justice is paramount (Scott, 1976; p. 163). The loss of social justice brought on by disrupting the moral economy is therefore dehumanizing to both the oppressed and the oppressor. However, this loss is felt the most strongly by the oppressed. This has been expressed most eloquently in by a worker at the Land Center for Human Rights: “The purpose of the World Bank is to serve the western powers, take from the poor, and give to the rich.” The problem with this statement is not that it is flatly wrong, but that from his perspective, it is perfectly true. What is being described here is a relationship of exploitation where dignity and justice do not matter. The anger it provoked in this particular informant was palpable. As his comment shows, the increasing marginalization and indignity suffered by the poor has not gone unnoticed. People are not just aware that the moral economy has been disrupted or that they have been impoverished, but also that the Bank has played a part in it. Despite the Bank's claims of benevolence, they are seen as an oppressor concerned only with themselves. A view like this would not hold much water if there was not at least some truth to it. Rights or reciprocity such as those found in moral economy are mentioned in Bank reports, but they are given short shrift. Reciprocity is all too often in the form of the most convenient means of payment for the more powerful party while rights are given only so far as they allow the Bank to attain its own goals, such as in the case of the Bank's guidelines for land acquisition, where farmers are offered community



development funds in exchange for their land (World Bank, 2011; p. 119). All of this leads to the devaluation of human dignity as the powerful are allowed to simply take what they want at the expense of the poor.

Yet the Bank holds little in the way of a concept of reciprocity because they do not see the power relationships that are made manifest in the actions of both poor farmers and wealthy landowners. A bit of explanation is required here. Capitalism is built on the concept of equal exchange. However, equal exchange can only take place in a legal framework that enforces it. The Bank defines equal exchange as a fair price for goods made within a framework in which both parties are equally informed about the benefits and risks involved. However, the Bank's own framework violates this principle and denies reciprocity. Take for example equal exchange. The absence of the concept of reciprocity from the perspective of the Bank is evidenced by its willingness to advocate forms of exchange that are inherently unequal. In the Bank's document on land acquisition, they argue for equal exchange. However, they simultaneously argue that the exchange for land can take the form of land in kind or a community fund (Deininger et al., 2011; p. 119). This form of equal exchange is hardly fair. No one piece of land is exactly like another, and it is all too easy to force someone off of a developed piece of land onto an undeveloped one. Thus it is exchange in kind: land for land, but the tracts exchanged are not equal. Of course, this is proposed quite apart from the likelihood that no farmer would willingly give up his or her land in exchange for a community development fund. Such a proposal would necessarily imply coercion, which would deny both reciprocity and the principle of equal exchange and would violate the principles of moral economy. In denying reciprocity and any form of equal exchange, the Bank rules out social justice

and violates moral economy.

*Conclusions: The Revolution and the Severed Social Contract*

In this chapter I have described the increasing exploitation of small farmers by large landowners as a result of official corruption and Bank-backed reforms. I have also described the abdication of the state's function as the protector of small farmers from the market and its effects on Egyptian farmers. Furthermore, I have discussed the social reciprocity inherent in a moral economy as understood by the Land Center for Human Rights and proposed that the Bank itself ignores reciprocity as a critical part of equitable development. The result of these issues is an increasing exploitation of small farmers that the moral economy is ill-suited to account for and mitigate.

After the revolution on January 25<sup>th</sup> 2011, the ability of the landowning classes to maintain this exploitation and install new ideas of social justice and equity now lies in question. The old government has fallen, state security has been shut down, and police powers have been severely restricted. The backing that large landowners once received from the government and police forces is likely weakening as well. Farmers have already begun to organize and demand their own unions. Changes in moral economy that might be enacted on structural adjustment by the subsequent revolution may appear in the next few years.

Moreover, the severing of the old social contract with the state as understood by the Land Center for Human Rights has not resulted in a new one. The state now provides almost no protection to small farmers. Input subsidies are gone, and the state no longer provides a guaranteed floor price for crops. The tenancy system instituted by Abdel-Nasser has been completely obliterated, and even those who own their land have not been secure. Large landowners often bribe the police to torture and imprison

small landowners so that they will sign away their land. Those who lose their land wind up as either day laborers or migrate to the city or an administrative center to live in slums. Cultural shift and poor economic times lead to farmers being increasingly unable to rely on each other. Yet it is difficult to argue that this is not the Bank's goal, or that the Bank's project has been a failure. The Bank wants to “modernize” Egypt. For its vision to be realized, some things have to change, and change is based on pressure. Under the old system, farmers may not have done well, but there was little pressure to force them into a new way of thinking or acting. Yet smallholders do not possess the resources to generate capital in the way the Bank imagines. In context moral economy was devised to support just this type of capital-poor system. Therefore land reform would only be able to cause social change if it was radical enough to render moral economy insufficient. If the Bank's project is to induce social change, and at least until January 25<sup>th</sup>, it was succeeding.

In this process of change, organizations such as the Land Center have had little voice. Despite the Land Center's protestations and requests for state protection, the state seems to be receding from its role as a protector. Moreover, the recent reforms have damaged the ability of small farmers to send their children to school, not only inhibiting the Bank's stated project of “modernization”, but also limiting the social security that the Land Center acknowledges education can provide. The outcome of this process is as of yet unclear, but it would seem that social equity has been violated and the positive role that the Land Center holds the potential to play has been negated.

## Chapter 4: Education

### *Introduction*

In this chapter I propose the Bank's view of education as a means of production that creates social capital and as a way to produce modernity. I follow with a discussion of the neo-liberal reforms enacted in the course of the Bank's educational policies. I then raise questions concerning the production of modernity and social capital through education arguing that the Bank's view of education denies co-temporality. I present the Land Center's view on education, and detail how the Bank devalues local knowledge through its educational program. Finally, I conclude with a discussion of the overall purpose and effect of the Bank's education project in Egypt.

### *The Egyptian Educational System*

I begin with a short overview of the official system of education in Egypt. Education begins in primary school, which extends from grades 1-5. Secondary education begins at grade 6 and goes through grade 8 (Arab Republic of Egypt, 2007; p. 28). Private and religious schools are available for primary, secondary, and higher education. Secondary education is divided into a scientific and literary section followed by technical tracks including agricultural, industrial, and commercial schools (Arab Republic of Egypt, 2007; p. 28). Those who complete secondary education may apply for entrance to higher education by the taking the *Thanaweya Amma* (تتوية عامة) (Arab Republic of Egypt, 2007; p. 28), or general secondary, exam. Passing this exam permits students to apply for higher education. Kindergarten is also available, though this falls outside the purview of government ministries (Arab Republic of Egypt, 2007; p. 28). Despite these broad goals, however, education rarely functions in the fashion officially described.

The educational system in Egypt has far less structure than this description would imply. As accounts of the people who have attended Egyptian schools point out, children do not always go straight through the proper grade system. As Sayyid Qutb describes in his autobiography, wealth and prestige may mean that a student from a wealthier family enters at a higher grade level or receives more attention than other students from poorer families would (Qutb, 2004; p. 10). Private tutoring may also be an option for wealthier families, while the cost may be prohibitive for poorer ones. Moreover, literacy rates indicate that every family that can sends their child to school for as long as it can afford to. The early years of schooling often provide a weeding out process. If the child does not do well, he or she is pulled out and put to work, and girls are often pulled out much faster than boys. Thus dropout rates are reflective not only of financial status, but also of perceived student ability. There are also private schools, and *kuttabs*, or religious schools where Quranic recitation is taught.. It is entirely possible for students to attend *kuttab*, public school, and private school in the course of their education. School is also divided up into primary, intermediate-secondary, and secondary, something that the government's layout does not account for. Students may also alternate between forms of schooling as time and circumstances allow, providing a much murkier picture than the official descriptions would imply.

#### *Literacy and Thanaweyya Amma*

Literacy rates are higher in urban areas than in rural areas (Hopkins and Saad, 2004; p. 7). Moreover, access to primary schools in rural areas remains an issue. Not every village possesses a primary school (Zaalouk, 2004; p. 34). Therefore, some families must send their children to neighboring villages in order to attend school,

while others do not send their children to school at all. In addition, though education is compulsory through secondary school, many people do not complete primary or secondary education, contributing to high rates of illiteracy. Also, the completion of primary and secondary education is not a guarantee of literacy, a problem that becomes apparent when comparing the 90% attendance rate of school-age children (Hopkins and Saad, 2004; p. 8) with overall the literacy rate of 56.6% (Hopkins and Saad, 2004; p. 7). Some of this discrepancy may reflect the older generation who did not attend school at the rates of the younger generation, the problems still remains. Moreover, private tutoring also presents a problem. Teachers involved in private tutoring are often the same teachers that educate these children in the classroom. Therefore, they face immense pressure for their students to pass the *thanaweyya amma*, sometimes leading to teachers helping students pass the exam by giving them answers or correcting their work. This means that *thanaweyya amma* may not be a reliable indicator of educational attainment in all cases.

#### *Education as the Means of Modernization*

The Bank sees education as a means of production that creates human capital and as a machine that produces modernity. Education is meant not only to provide knowledge in the form of human capital, but also to teach people the particular outlook that the Bank characterizes as modern. In the push for education the Bank is at least partially aligned with popular conceptions of appropriate development. Education is necessary for success in a capitalist economy. Therefore, the Bank engages in a broad-based program that invests in public primary schools (World Bank, 2004B), private secondary schools, and public secondary schools (World Bank, 1999). Focus is given to technical skills, the English language, and a broad general

education.

### *Education and the Mind of Modernity*

For the Bank, education is a machine that produces modernity. The Bank argues that education is essential for modernization. Therefore, the Bank strongly associates education with the development of cognitive ability (World Bank, 1998; p. 40). They state that education signals a worker's capacity to learn new skills (World Bank, 1998; p. 40). Moreover, they also state “poor individuals might earn lower returns on the same level of education because individuals with characteristics other than schooling, such as ability and motivation, tend to benefit more from education” (World Bank, 2008; p. 30). This viewpoint shows a strong bias towards educating the wealthy over the poor, and seems to imply that the poor are unable to utilize education effectively because they are somehow inert or less able. Moreover, education serves as a means for the Bank to spread its regime of knowledge and power. Education provides a means for introducing a new order into Egypt. When the dialectic of modernity and tradition is posed, modernity is conceived as existing not only in technology, but also in the mind. The Bank does not just see modernity as a set of technologies that people use. Modernity is integrated into minds and bodies.

### *The Banking Concept of Education, Social Capital, and the Production of Modernity*

The Bank views education as a means of production that creates social capital. More aptly, this is known as the “banking” concept of education. For clarity's sake, note that this is not related to the World Bank itself. Much as knowledge must flow from the core to the periphery (World Bank, 1998; p. 2), and from those who have it to those who do not, students are similarly seen as empty vessels to be filled by teachers. Thus the macro-dialectic is reproduced in the micro-dialectic, and vice-

versa, as knowledge flows from the top down. Moreover, once students as vessels are “full”, or have graduated, then they are considered to possess social capital. This capital results from making connections, meeting new people, developing marketable skills, and gaining the prestige that goes with education. The skills, relationships, and prestige then allow graduates to find jobs.

In order to create more kinds of social capital, the Bank also emphasizes the development of many different educational tracks (World Bank, 1999; p. 5). This emphasis does not exclude vocational tracks, it merely means that everyone is to receive a general education. In addition, the Bank's focus even extends to the general education facilities in Al Azhar (World Bank, 2004B; p. 33). However, it is unclear how much progress has been made in convincing Al Azhar to receive Bank support (World Bank, 2004B; p. 33). The social capital produced from a solid education then allows graduates to develop the structure of the Bank's modernity. The Bank measures its performance by the number of skilled workers produced (World Bank, 1989; p. vi) and placed in jobs (World Bank, 1999; p. 82). In the area of job placement, graduates in the early 1990s found a great deal of success in construction and work abroad (World Bank, 1995; p. 8). The Bank has seen less success in placing graduates in more recent years. However, the purpose of these programs is for graduates to utilize the new skills and relationships they develop in the course of their education to work in factories, large farms, and other industries thus producing the Bank's vision of modernity.

#### *Neo-liberalism and the Problems of Changing Education*

Neo-liberal reforms and the Chicago School of Economics strongly oppose government intervention in favor of an open market. This market-oriented approach



extends to schools as well. The Bank does not support government subsidies in the form of student loans, but rather supports scholarships (World Bank, 1998; p. 52). This appears as somewhat contradictory because despite their binding nature, loans can allow far more people to go to school whereas scholarships are awarded to only a few people. Moreover, if the objective is to integrate people into the economy, then student debt is a far more certain means of doing it. Debts require steady payments, while scholarships require none. A person in debt due to student loans must find a job to pay back the loans. Therefore they have an incentive to leave farming, an unreliable source of cash income, and engage in wage-labor.

The Bank also supports privatizing schools as well as making people pay for school, euphemistically called “demand-side financing” (World Bank, 1998; p. 9). Hence the Bank engaged in an educational project to reform general education in secondary schools, but it focused on 315 commercial schools instead of public schools (World Bank, 1999; p. 31). Yet public funding for primary schools and government subsidies to public secondary education are precisely the means allowing poorer children in rural areas to go to school in the first place. Government provides capital that individuals alone cannot. Moreover, the Bank's advanced agricultural training programs take place in universities (World Bank, 1999; p. 9). Only those with significant means can afford to send their children to tertiary education, even with public funding. Finally, Bank-backed policy in other areas has resulted in small farmers being unable to send their children to school due to lack of funds (Land Center for Human Rights, 2001C; p. 8-9). Instead, these would-be scholars are working the fields, much to the chagrin of their parents.

*The Problem of Producing Modernity*

The Bank is engaged in a process of attempting to educate people into modernity. Education is not only a means to create a modern infrastructure, but to create modern citizens. However, modernity itself is not above question. As Said (1973) and others have pointed out, the West has based its identity not on what it is, but on what it is not. In this case, the West is identified as wealthier nations such as the United States and those in Europe. The West's other is the East. Since the West discursively defines itself as “modern”, innovative, adaptable, and liberal (Long, 1977; p. 28), the East is defined as “traditional”, ignorant, passive, and inert (Long, 1977; p. 33). This problem is reified in the World Bank's notion of education as a banking system. In the banking concept of education, students are mere vessels to be filled. Students are therefore seen as traditional, receptive, and inert, ready to be filled with the ideas of modernity. Teachers are authority figures, but as Freire points out, authority is confused with the authority of knowledge (Freire, 1993; p 73). In this case, the authority of knowledge is derived from a conception of modernity meant not only to fill students with knowledge, but also to reify the authority structure that students will encounter later on in life. Students learn to be passive receptacles for the knowledge of modernity given by their teachers so that later on they will be passive and docile wage laborers.

While land reform and the destruction of moral economy may be a means of transforming geography and breaking social ties, education serves as a means of producing a structure of domination that justifies the actions of the Bank. The discourse contained within modernity that tradition is negative and modernity is positive serves as a justification for the transformation taking place. Since tradition holds people back, then becoming modern is the solution. Education provides the

means to transform traditional people into modern people who accept the changes forced on them as an inevitable part of becoming modern. Yet the tradition/modernity dialectic that underlies the banking concept of education ignores the process that produces the dialectic itself. Tradition and modernity are not in fact realities in the absolute sense, but rather are produced by an interaction of West and East, North and South, and institution and individual. Modernity was created to justify the position of the West as wealthy and powerful, while tradition was accepted at least in part by the East as a means by which to obtain the wealth and power of the West. This is not to say that the power differential played no part, but rather, as Freire would point out, the oppressed has internalized the oppressor (Freire, 1993; p. 63). Because the East does wish to be like the West in the sense of having wealth and power, the East, at least in part, has internalized the discourse of tradition and modernity and made it its own. In the countryside, this internalization is manifest in the form of material acquisition. Acquiring more land can be about becoming a large landowner (Freire, 1993; p. 64-65) instead of becoming better able to support one's family, to improve the quality of life, or to gain prestige, though those may be aspirations as well. The important thing is that the latter things become de-emphasized as material acquisition becomes an end in itself. When individual profit is emphasized over all else, then quality of life becomes individualized instead of being a common value, because the underlying paradigm of capitalist modernity is that by helping oneself first, others benefit. Moreover, if profit is the ultimate goal of capitalist modernity, then the vessels are never full. The production of "modern" individuals created by the banking concept of education integrates people into a reality of alienation that is common to capitalism. By being disconnected from land and others in the pursuit of profit which as petty

commodity producers they cannot attain, farmers are alienated from the land which they work, the products that they produce, their fellow worker, and the owners for whom they work. Therefore, the banking concept of education produces the particular kind of alienation that is necessary for individuals to function in capitalism.

This conception of modernity and tradition has leaked into the predominant paradigm of development, modernization theory. Modernization theory seeks to put traditional societies through the same process that Western capitalist democracies went through on their way to “modernity”. This process goes from tradition to industrialization to modernity (Long, 1977; p. 9-11), and it yields an intense focus on technological advancement and training. Private and differentiated factories are emphasized over older means of production and service industries because the Bank sees such factories as necessary for the progression to modernity. The West, however, did not go through the process of tradition to industrialization to modernity nearly so smoothly as this narrative implies. The process of industrialization was full of stops and starts, elisions and omissions (Foucault, 1982; p. 4-5). Yet when the Bank treats education as a process of modernization, it reifies notions of traditional or inert people and denies them agency. In this model, knowledge must flow from the core to the periphery, from those who have it to those who do not. This assumption of ignorance or lack of ability on the part of Egyptian farmers only serves to reify an already powerful narrative in Egypt that characterizes farmers as untrustworthy and lazy *fellahin*. By treating farmers as objects to be acted upon rather than a full-fledged human beings with intelligence, needs, wants, and desires, the Bank disenfranchises and marginalizes farmers. As a result, the empowering possibilities inherent in education are compromised because the Bank's discourse only serves to marginalize

those who either refuse to or cannot participate in the Bank's project of modernization. Yet it is worth noting that the problem here is not the idea of education itself. Education is highly valuable and provides many benefits. The problem is the particular way in which the Bank sees the people to be educated. By viewing small farmers and the poor as inert or less able, the Bank discounts their ability to both receive and take advantage of education. Moreover, because the Bank sees the poor or small farmers as inert vessels to be filled, it denies them the ability to participate fully in their education and diminishes the chance of customized services or helpful financing options.

However, education is not a reliable means of producing modernity or social capital. Social capital may be created in the form of agricultural knowledge, but it is not being used by smallholders very often. This is the case when, as in Egypt, there are simply not enough jobs available for new graduates. The Bank characterizes the educated unemployed as having “luxury unemployment” (Horton, Kanbur, and Mazumdar, 1994; p. 15). Luxury unemployment can be more clearly defined as education that does not lead to wage labor. However, unemployment is only a luxury if one has a choice in the matter. In the case of smallholders, “luxury unemployment” likely means farm work, not a lack of labor at all. Moreover, there is often a correlation between education and social status. Educated people sometimes refuse to perform tasks or take jobs because the level of education required is beneath their own (Bach, 1998; p. 191-192). Indeed, some employers may be reluctant to hire educated people, because they believe that as soon as a better opportunity arises, the graduate will leave. This is often a correct assumption. Minimum-wage jobs are often viewed as a stopgap measure by graduates until they can find better employment. Moreover,

education is not necessarily transferable. Someone with a degree in manufacturing or engineering may be ill-suited to manage a large farm or work at a bank. Education opens doors, but it closes them as well. Yet neither of these phenomena are unique to Egypt's countryside. People with higher education in the United States and Europe routinely refuse to take minimum-wage jobs out of a belief that they can do better. The Bank should be less eager to reject a decision by Egyptians that many Westerners make at one time or another. Social capital is not a reliable means of producing change or even finding a job.

Finally, the effect of the creation of multiple kinds of social capital through many educational tracks also means that education is not a means of producing a particular kind of modernity. The programs for emphasizing advanced agricultural technology that target the countryside are not an optimum choice for smallholders because as petty commodity producers, smallholders do not possess a great deal of capital for the purchase of expensive farming equipment and have less chance of being able to utilize these technologies. As evidenced by the very small enrollments in advanced agricultural programs (World Bank, 2010; p. 181) and the subsequent lack of jobs for graduates with degrees in agriculture (World Bank, 2010; p. 182), smallholders are aware that they cannot afford these technologies, and instead send their children to obtain other degrees. Moreover, farmers do not send their children to learn about agriculture based on the well-founded assumption that they already know how to farm. Advanced degrees are meant to allow graduates from smallholder families to obtain jobs outside of agriculture. The only people who can typically afford to own advanced agricultural technology are large landowners. The bourgeoisie in this case may be large landowning families or urban families that wish

to maintain a farm outside of Cairo. The social capital and skills obtained by the wealthy are then used to manage large farms that generate capital. The production of capital by the already wealthy does not change the social structure and produce modernity. Instead this situation reinforces the social structure and increases the income gap. Scholars refer to this situation as the social reproductive function of education (Bernstein, 1996; p. 53). In developed countries, education does not just serve to create social capital and workers, but to reinforce the class structure (Bernstein, 1996; p. 53). The profusion of tracks within the primary educational system in the United States, such as gifted and talented or advanced placement programs (which I myself took part in), serve to reinforce class structure much as the Bank's projects are doing in Egypt. Children in advanced programs often attend only advanced classes and do not have much interaction with children in regular education programs. Class sizes are smaller in these programs, so students receive more instruction from teachers and receive stronger support to obtain college degrees. Unsurprisingly, the children in advanced programs usually happen to be wealthier than those in regular education. In the end, children in advanced programs are more likely than children in regular education to receive college degrees and increase incomes, thus reinforcing class structure. By focusing on the privatization of schools and emphasizing advanced agricultural technologies that the poor may only rent, the Bank is inadvertently achieving the same goal and reinforcing the class structure in Egypt.

#### *Education and the Denial of Co-Temporality*

“Il-Haraka Baraka”

The above saying comes from Upper Egypt (Al-Aswad, 2009; p. 58), and

means “movement is a blessing.” This phrase refers to the Upper Egyptian emphasis on staying in motion. Such an active, movement-oriented ideology seems at odds with the denial of co-temporality inherent in the Bank's view of education. In the Bank's eyes, as knowledge must flow from the active core to the inert periphery, so must education. There is a point that needs to be addressed here. There are undoubtedly educational deficiencies in the Egyptian system and outside help in educational reform could well be beneficial. Certain advanced skill sets are a rarity, and the people who do have them are often poorly trained. However, the underlying dialectic in the Bank's perspective cannot be ignored. The very act of powers such as the Bank “bringing down” education to the poor reifies notions of modernity and tradition. In fact, the Bank sees education as the means of “modernizing” agriculture and as a part of a larger modernization project in general (World Bank, 2010; p. 76). Modernity is needed because Egyptian farmers are living in the past. Treating farmers as traditional is extremely problematic in a country where popular discourse already treats farmers as traditional *fellahin* (Armbrust, 2001; p. 38). Reifying the notion of traditional *fellahin* by speaking of education as a pathway to agricultural modernity only reinforces a discourse that is often utilized in Egypt to justify the dispossession of farmers. Under this rubric, since farmers are stubborn and changeless, change must be forced on them, despite the mobility and desire for change present in many parts of Egypt.

Despite the documented resourcefulness of small farmers, Bank ideas of modernity continue to privilege the wealthy over the poor. The Bank assumes that being in the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile of income is an indicator of higher ability, while the poor may earn lower wages with equal education because they lack this motivation and



“ability” (Fasih, 2008; p. 30). Indeed, in the same article, the Bank states that the poor are more likely to use drugs (Fasih, 2008; p. 14) and to engage in violence (Fasih, 2008; p. 9). Yet the poor are highly motivated and make great efforts to educate their children. It is not uncommon in Egypt for children to attend a full day of school only to go home and spend several hours with a private tutor followed by several more hours of homework. Moreover, many of the poor Egyptians I have met have taught themselves skills such as English. But due to the shortsighted treatment of farmers as ignorant and violent, the Bank suggests behavioral and mentoring programs for poorer areas (Fasih, 2008; p. 30). These programs do more than just help under-performing poor students. They are meant to change their “behavior” (Fasih, 2008; p. 30). Ostensibly, this behavioral change is meant to assist them in their education, but it also serves as a means of producing a series of behaviors that are more conducive to Bank policy interests. Finally, by presenting the poor as unmotivated and lacking innate ability, the Bank reifies notions of a traditional peasant class. The Bank sees rural people as inert without outside education, with no agency of their own.

Yet change is constant in the countryside and historically a series of profound changes go back at least 200 years. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Mohammed Ali reorganized the countryside in order to cultivate cotton (Mitchell, 2002; p. 60). Farmers learned, adapted, and persevered. In 1954, Abdel Nasser instituted the first wave of agrarian reforms that were begun under Mohammed Naguib (Bush, 2002; p. 9). Lands were taken from the *pasha* class and redistributed to landless individuals, thereby creating a class of smallholders (Bush, 2002; p. 9-10). Farming had changed again. Tenancy was also institutionalized and rented land was made inheritable. Rent was set at seven times the land tax (Bush, 2002; p. 10). Crop rotations were dictated to farmers, and

the state bought a all or a portion of most crops. Farmers again adjusted. Then in 1992, Law 96 was passed, removing the old institution of tenancy and creating yet another set of changes in the countryside (Bush, 2002; p. 18). The important thing to recognize is that Egyptian farmers adapted to each change with varying amounts of success. New systems of support were devised, and agricultural production continued. The countryside has not been changeless and neither have farmers. They inhabit the same time and space as the rest of Egyptians and indeed, humanity. Though education is important, farmers are not inert without it.

#### *The Land Center and Education*

“In Beni Khalil in Ghayad village there are no primary schools except a one-class school. So, if any family desires to send one of its children to school, they have to send them to Gabal Al-Nour Primary School or that primary school in Naga` Al-A`rab in Ghayad village.” (Land Center for Human Rights, 2001; p. 12)

For the Land Center, education is a key part of development (Land Center for Human Rights, 1999; p. 1), yet there are serious problems with school availability. Education provides a means of employment outside of farming (Land Center for Human Rights, 2009; p. 1), a support to enable its continued success, and a means of obtaining a marriage partner. In many poor families only one child can afford to be sent to school beyond primary education. Families scrimp and save, and then send this child to school, often in a neighboring town or city (Land Center for Human Rights, 2001C; p. 13). The purpose of such a degree is to allow the graduate to obtain a job outside of farming, though this is not guaranteed, and to send money home. When farmers are unable to send their children to school, it is not just an individual loss of

education but a loss of possible future income for a family. Yet education also grants the social capital to marry an educated spouse and demand a higher marriage gift (Bach, 1998; p. 198). In some cases, marriage to an educated partner ensures a double income and its resultant benefits (Bach, 1998; p. 185). In other cases, it simply ensures more educated children as the mother stays at home and uses what she has learned to care for and educate her children. Thus education is also a generational process. If both the father and mother are educated and at least one of them obtains a job with their degree that grants a modest income, it becomes possible for their children to obtain better educations themselves, and leave farming permanently. Education provides a means to positive social mobility. Moreover, these children may then do a better job of supporting those family members who were unable to leave farming, allowing some of their cousins, nieces, and nephews to gain education and advance class as well.

#### *When Discourses Collide: Education and “Stuck” Farmers*

In treating education merely as a means of producing individual social capital and modernity, the Bank is sacrificing an interest it shares with farmers. This sacrifice is made because both parties view education instrumentally, but for different purposes. Farmers also send their children to school because they value education instrumentally. Yet ultimately, education does not serve the same purpose for farmers as it does for the Bank. As mentioned before, farmers expect educated children to find better jobs, and to find their way out of farming. In return, educated children are expected to support their elders and the other children who did not go to school. Thus education is a means out of farming and also a means of enabling family farming to continue. Yet the Bank instrumentalizes education as a means for advancing farming

at the expense of families. Therefore they push programs in institutions such as Cairo University that focus on teaching advanced farming techniques (World Bank, 1989; p. 35). Yet these techniques are not clearly advantageous for smallholders. As discussed before, the Bank's ideal vision of farming is capital-intensive, and smallholders do not have this kind of capital available. Therefore, even if a smallholder goes to school at Cairo University and participates in these programs, the knowledge is likely to be of little use back on the farm. Moreover, in a case of the right hand not knowing what the left hand is doing, Bank policies elsewhere are preventing many farmers from sending their children to school at all due to lack of funds. Increasing pressures from rising input prices, rents, and lost subsidies mean that many children must stay home to work on the farm or find wage-labor elsewhere. Thus poor families are denied not only access to education, but also the chance to advance in class and to improve their quality of life.

Local knowledge of farming is devalued by the Bank when it over-emphasizes advanced technologies in its educational programs. The Bank poses technology as the solution to modernize agriculture. Yet it is difficult to argue that farmers in Egypt do not know how to work the fields because they cannot use a tractor. Farming in Egypt has a history that dates back over 6,000 years. At least since the Arab conquests in 600s and 700s, farming has evolved continuously. Land races have been developed that have withstood the test of time. This knowledge cannot be devalued so easily by agri-business that has arisen in the last 150 years and remains unproven. As Mitchell points out with his study of the Aswan low dams, modern technology is built on a series of failures (Mitchell, 2002; p. 37). Each step in the building of the dams was fraught with failure and near-disaster. Unfortunately, modern farming technologies

suffer from similar problems. In 1916, the benefits of crop rotation were already well-known in the United States (Gardner, 2001; p. 166-167). This was also the period of time when the mass-migration to Oklahoma and the great plains states was underway. Yet despite the known dangers, vast farming enterprises were being created based on monoculture. Farmers in the 1910s and 1920s grew the same crop in the same field without rotation. Yet the 1916 edition of “Traditional American Farming Techniques” predicts that this loss of rotation would eventually lead to disaster (Gardner, 2001; p. 166). Fifteen years later the Dust Bowl years began. The repeated planting of wheat, combined with overuse of fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides, turned the soil to dust and devastated the Great Plains for decades to come. Yet despite the example of the Dust Bowl, monoculture was exactly what the “prophets” of the green revolution advocated 30 years later (Shiva, 1991; p. 34). These practices, though more advanced, are exactly what the Bank wishes to educate Egyptian farmers on the benefits of. The result of such intensified agriculture has already begun to show results. Better and better drainage is needed for increasingly poisoned soils, and Bank-backed water-intensive projects in the New Lands mean that coastal areas of the Nile Delta that have been cultivated continuously for hundreds of years are threatened with returning to marsh (Ayeb, 2002; p. 97). This is because Bank supported projects such as Toshka are responsible for diverting much of the water that once went downstream in the first place. While the technological “wow” factor of the New Lands cannot be denied, they may be ultimately unsustainable. The Bank's deep belief in technological and technocratic solutions is preventing it from seeing the larger picture. While the need to feed the people of Egypt is pressing, more low-tech solutions do have value here. Education in solely high-tech solutions is thus problematic because their benefits are

debatable and they not available to everyone. It is not that formal education is problematic, but that the particular kind of technological education the Bank emphasizes is not necessarily better than the local knowledge that is already present. Bank methods of agriculture can increase production, but they can also cause progressive and difficult to repair soil damage and strain increasingly scarce water resources. The old ways are not necessarily better, but the damage possible from the methods the Bank advocates cannot be discounted. There is a need to search for solutions that lie between what the Bank is advocating and traditional methods of farming. These methods, such as no-till or minimal tillage, are both lower-cost and easier on the land. Therefore the Bank's desire for everyone to have an education is not flawed, but its methods are.

Moreover, it is important to take note here of some of the positive aspects of Bank educational projects in Egypt. Acknowledging the problem of rural illiteracy, the Bank has been involved in building primary schools in multiple governorates (World Bank, 2004B; p. 2). It has also engaged in projects of teacher's education in order to further improve the condition of primary schools in the Egyptian countryside (World Bank, 2004B; p. 2). These schools do help to alleviate the problem of illiteracy in Egypt, and despite problems elsewhere, their contributions must be acknowledged

#### *Educating English as Educating Modernity: The Devaluation of Arabic*

In Bank's push for modernization a larger attempt to cause a cultural shift can be seen in the emphasis on teaching English (World Bank, 1989, p. 22; World Bank, 1999, p. 72; World Bank, 2003, p. 78). English, as the lingua franca of international business, is seen as a gateway to the modern world. Moreover, English is extremely

important for those who work in the tourism industry. However, certain linguistic issues also arise here. Language contains a number of assumptions about the way the world works and the way people think. By emphasizing English, a child gains a greater understanding of the world as seen by the country from which the dialect of English being taught is taken. Therefore, the emphasis on English can be seen as an attempt to “westernize” the educated class. Moreover, within the context of its projects, the Bank wishes to emphasize English for the purposes of communication. The Bank has little proficiency in colloquial or modern standard Arabic, and it is easier for the Bank to communicate in English than it is in Arabic. At best, this is a reluctance to learn on the Bank's part. At worst, it is an attempt to colonize the minds of Egyptians and make them more amenable to Bank policies and projects. Arabic is hardly inadequate to the task at hand and devaluing Arabic devalues the culture that it is associated with. Moreover, it is difficult to see what maintaining a tractor has to do with speaking English. Adequate Arabic terms exist for almost all of the technologies that the Bank wishes farmers to utilize in Egypt. Farmers are perfectly capable of meeting their day-to-day challenges and using the Bank's new technologies without needing to learn a second language to explain it. English may have value for tourism and business, but it is hypocritical for the Bank to demand farmers learn a second language whose necessity for their industry is in doubt even as Bank officials fail to learn their language. Ultimately English provides a part of a system of inducing cultural change in the countryside that should not be overlooked.

*Conclusions: Education and Building a New Egypt*

In the course of discussing land and moral economy, it becomes clear that education is the most important factor. Land reform is meant to bring consolidation.

Land reform and other economic policies cause shifts in moral economy. The result is a socially and geographically chaotic transition. Land changes hands, lines are redrawn, and the old social order is disrupted. Education remakes the chaos into something new. This remains possible because the importance of education does not lie so much in the curriculum, but rather in the particular order and ways of thinking that students learn in school. Yet these new ways of thinking about themselves and the world would not stick without an illustration of their superiority as opposed to previous ways of thinking. Education devalues the old order. Hence education may be used *ex post facto* to justify the chaos and the damage done and to convince people that reforms they might have found distasteful are actually for their own good. The educational system under the Bank's rubric serves not only as a place to learn to build a new Egypt, but it also provides a place where the Bank's actions and policies can be justified to entire generations of people. Moreover, with their new educations, certificates, and degrees, students will be well-suited to building the Bank's vision of a modern country.

However, whether or not this scheme is working is debatable. It is difficult to tell whether or not land reform has resulted in any form of consolidation. The moral economy has been disrupted, but it is unclear what the ultimate result of this disruption will be. Moreover, recent reforms have hampered small farmer's ability to educate their children effectively, make it even more difficult for the Bank to achieve some form of new order. In addition, the Bank's educational projects remain scattered across multiple sectors and purposes, and a clear objective beyond vague "educational improvement" has not emerged. Possible contributions to the debate by organizations



such as the Land Center have often been overlooked by the Bank, as have the Land Center's efforts to elucidate the problem of obtaining an education after the new reforms. A more deeply integrated and reflexive view of education is needed on the Bank's part. There is a need to understand the purposes of education beyond jobs and enlightenment. Education is also a means of class-climbing, a part of the moral economy, and a means of obtaining a more affluent marriage partner. Knowledge may be power for small farmers, but only if they possess the means to access and utilize it and the Bank must take this into account.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusions: The Revolution, Alternatives to Adjustment, and a Recap**

### *Bank Goals and How the Projects are Sustained: Tying it all Together*

In the course of this project I have described how Bank projects and policies resulted in increasing pressures on small farmers. Bank policies have included the end of input subsidies and a push for land registration. Though Law 96 was not the Bank's idea, they did back it as well. Bank agricultural projects have included irrigation, new crops, and factory and large farm development. Bank education projects have emphasized the development of a broad general education, engineering, construction, service, large-scale farming, and factory skills.

The pressures created by Bank policies and liberalization in general have resulted in the displacement of many small farmers and shifts in moral economy due to pressures on those small and midrange farmers who remain in the countryside. Access to basic and higher education has also decreased among small farmers. I also described the Bank's use of education as both a means of achieving its goal of technological “modernization” and cultural change. Furthermore, I have described how the Bank has used its power and influence to emphasize its own system of understandings about land, education, and moral economy to force change in the countryside in Egypt. The result has been economic stagnation and an increase in the income gap. Those already wealthy and well-placed have reaped large benefits from structural adjustment, while the poor and marginalized have become poorer and more marginalized.

Many attempts have been made to assert that the Bank's goal in Egypt is to move small farmers into factory work. Yet the greater goal being sought is somewhat

obscure. The Bank never gives a specific goal to reform, aside from a set of neo-liberal directives. Yet the totality of the projects they have engaged in seem to imply that such a goal can be surmised, if not proved conclusively. It can be surmised that the World Bank is attempting to transform Egypt into a docile, cheap, and flexible client state that provides labor and services for more wealthy nations. Under this scheme, Egypt would be an exporter and contractor of legal labor, as opposed to the currently more common and risky means of illegal immigration. The labor force's docility is achieved by education, which transforms agricultural moral economies into wage-labor moral economies, and cheapness and flexibility are achieved by land reform and policies which increase pressure on small farmers with the aim of displacement and consolidation.

Yet the outcome of the Bank's projects in Egypt remains in question. It is debatable whether land consolidation has been achieved by ownership, rental, or at all. Moreover, while the increasing pressure on small farmers has resulted in displacement in some cases, many remain in the countryside or move to administrative centers because there are few jobs in the city. Small farmers are having difficulty receiving even basic education due to financial constraints, so the Bank's educational project has been stymied. Egypt is a long way from providing a source of cheap labor and services to the rest of the world, if this a desirable goal at all.

The justification for the Bank's project is made through a series of paradoxes. Any colonialist implications are masked by "development". Meanwhile, the capitalist empire is built under the mask of modernization. Yet many of the problems are plain to see. The obviousness of the 2011 revolution notwithstanding, one need only take a seat in a coffeehouse somewhere in Egypt and strike up a conversation to find severe

discontent. Yet the Bank has sustained this project through a series of misleading statistical measures. First of all, most of the Bank's figures are admitted estimates. These admissions litter Bank documents (World Bank, 1994, p. iii; World Bank, 2003, p. 66; Adams, 2001, p. 35; World Bank, 2001; p. 36; World Bank, 2010, p. 30; World Bank, 2004A, p. 13; World Bank, 2008, p. 29), yet they are accepted as fact because they benefit the Bank's projects. Moreover, the devaluation of local knowledge allows the Bank to believe that it is helping the ignorant rather than forcing its project on the unwilling and unhappy. Yet the Bank projects remain unsustainable, and often result in consequences that are entirely unforeseen. Moreover, when failure becomes impossible to ignore, the Bank resorts to blaming its interlocutors, including the government of Egypt. The World Bank pays little heed to political or equity considerations, going even so far as to pressure the government of Egypt to remove the bread subsidy. This pressure continues despite the fact that the last time the subsidy was removed is still remembered as the bread riots of 1977. Yet when the bread subsidies are remembered at all only political considerations are made. Equity and social justice are not even on the table. A disregard for equity and social justice, and a relentless drive to produce a docile nation of workers has resulted in impoverished Egyptians and caused the failure of numerous Bank projects.

Moreover, the Bank fails to understand organizations like the Land Center or even Egyptian farmers because of a lack of real contact. On so-called community-driven development projects, as averaged from its documents, the Bank makes visits to these sites twice a year. The Bank directs mostly top-level organization and does some of the initial planning. The remainder of the project is handled by intermediaries about whom the Bank complains frequently. Yet without real face-to-face contact on a

regular basis, it is difficult to see how the Bank can accomplish anything that is actually beneficial to Egyptian farmers. Face-to-face contact is essential, and cannot be made up for by any number of intermediaries, now matter how good they are. Moreover, the Bank needs to work with organizations, such as the Land Center, that are conceptually closer to Egyptian farmers. Though there is no listing of such NGOs in Egypt, they are numerous and can be discovered easily by those who are sufficiently motivated. These organizations can provide insight, contacts, and support which the Bank would otherwise find difficult to acquire.

#### *Structural Adjustment, Bank Policy, and the 25<sup>th</sup> of January Revolution*

The Bank seems to see capitalism as creating winners and losers, and seeks to create a docile Egypt. Yet if this is the case, the result of the Bank's project in Egypt is political instability.. Neither the winners nor the losers are docile. Though the revolution cannot be entirely attributed to structural adjustment or Bank policy, their part in it cannot be denied. Increasing income gaps and mistreatment of the poor from the 1980s onward resulted in years of increasing worker and citizen protests. Then on January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011, the revolution began. Three weeks later Hosni Mubarak stepped down. Prominent businessmen are being prosecuted for corruption, while there is talk of rolling back many of the measures that had been taken by the Egyptian government under Bank advice.

Nevertheless, the revolution should not be seen as a negative. Many of the reforms have been problematic, damaging, and full of thinly disguised colonial ideas about cultural change and local inferiority. The revolution has provided a means to finally respond to some of these ideas. Some of the reforms will no doubt be transformed, hopefully providing greater equity and ensuring future stability.

### *Alternatives to Neoliberalism and Bank Policy*

Neoliberalism has been promulgated since the end of the Cold War as the best means of reducing poverty. However, the increased income gap and subsequent revolution in Egypt have shown us otherwise. Neoliberalism is inequitable, unfair, and extremely vulnerable to local corruption. Its application in the environment of totalitarian dictatorships where the rich are often cronies of the leadership is questionable at best. Indeed, the Bank would find it extremely difficult to push these policies within a wealthier, democratic context. The use of dictatorships is arguably required by neo-liberalism because no democratically governed people would tolerate having their industries devastated and their social safety nets stripped away. Moreover, neoliberalism arguably serves core nations far better than it does the periphery, by providing them with cheap manufactured goods and labor to answer the needs of capital. A better more equitable alternative is required.

### *Cooperatives and a More Equitable Alternative*

Means of development that incorporate the equity of a moral economy are available. The World Bank advocates farmers giving up their buffaloes, and then buying their milk, butter, and cheese from private sources (World Bank, 1993; p. 42). Yet this need not be so. Community-based buffalo farms are also a possibility. If aggregated into a community buffalo farm, then everyone can have enough milk, butter, and cheese to satisfy their needs, and the excess can be sold at a profit. Everyone can be required to provide a certain amount of feed or to care for one animal. In turn, the community shares the profits. The possibilities and problems here are likely to be many, but the point is that people need not simply give up their own buffaloes and commence buying milk and cheese from the market simply because it

does not suit the Bank's conception of competitiveness, whatever that might be. There are more equitable and profitable opportunities here.

Moreover, farmer-led cooperatives provide a great deal of potential, and this is something that the Land Center for Human Rights has been pushing for. Under Abdel-Nasser, the co-ops favored wealthier farmers over poorer ones, and dictated almost every aspect of agriculture. After Law 96 of 1992, many farmers were forced out of these co-ops as the owner's name was now on the *hiaza*, or landowner card required to sell crops and receive benefits (Bush, 2002; p. 19). Yet these kinds of coops, if truly free, do have the capability to provide many benefits. A viable alternative can be found by creating a structure in which farmers sell their crops through the co-op and share profit and risk. By combining their resources, however small, farmers stand a chance at surviving in an open market. This scheme can be achieved in a number of ways. Farmers can put money into the co-op to buy seed, fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides collectively, thus reducing their individual risk by buying from larger suppliers with bulk rates. Moreover, the size of a co-op would give additional bargaining power to small farmers, giving them a chance to acquire supplies at lower rates and to sell crops at more favorable rates. A co-op could remove farmers from the mercy of merchants and large landowners and make them able to buy and sell with larger more regulated sources. Co-ops are not a perfect solution, but they do provide a better one by allowing farmers to act as a single, stronger collective as opposed to weaker individuals.

#### *Land Reform and Counter-Reform*

Much of the damage from Law 96 has already been done, and it will be difficult to reverse. However, it is possible to protect small farmers from further

encroachment. Small farmers define their rights to ownership in part by how long they have held a particular piece of land. There is a great deal of value in the government's allowing small farmers to lay legal claim to land based on length of time and improvements that have been made. While this can be tricky to prove, recognizing local land rights is the first step in protecting small farmers from further encroachment. It is of note that simplifying land titling is a major issue here. As it stands, the process goes through three separate ministries (Bush, 2002; p. 21). This must change. There is also no reason that the government cannot take some of this responsibility itself by subsidizing the process by more bureaucrats or local centers where land may be registered. Moreover, some regulation of the remaining rental market is necessary to protect small farmers from paying exorbitantly high hunger rents and to enforce rental contracts. Enforcement and corruption continue to be challenges.

Moreover, the removal of subsidies has been damaging to small farmers. Other countries routinely subsidize their farming sectors, and Egypt should as well, despite Bank contentions. The government can provide incentives to small farmers for cultivating certain strategic crops such as wheat instead of simply requiring their growth. Offering incentives is more profitable to small farmers and less risky than trying to enforce prohibitions or dictates. If a smallholder stands a chance to make more money off of crops, then he or she is more likely to grow them.

#### *Education, Counter-Revolution, and Counter-Counter-Revolution*

There is little question that primary and secondary education must remain free and publicly funded. Bank ideas about demand-side financing, a convenient euphemism for making parents pay to send their children to primary and secondary



school, overwhelmingly favor the wealthy and must not be enacted. Schools should be built in areas that do not have them. Moreover, education should be sensitive to local norms and the needs of operating in a wider world. Additional funding should be made available so that everyone has a chance to reach higher education, not merely those with the means. The underlying assumptions concerning tradition and modernity must be re-examined and the circumstances under which this dialectic is sustained must change. This is an abstract and difficult project that may not be entirely possible, but the process must begin. Education must become more reflexive. Focus should not only be given to technical skills, but to the liberal arts as well. The critical thinking skills and intense self-examination involved in the liberal arts can provide a great deal of value to the ongoing process of education. Liberal education can support ongoing democratization following the revolution.

#### *Moral Economy and Cultural Norms*

Unfortunately, there is little that can be done about the changes that have taken place in moral economy. Yet culturally sensitive projects are important. The Bank's knowledge of the countryside is incredibly limited and its projects have suffered as a result. For further projects to have any chance of success, the Bank must learn about the people that they claim to serve. First, Bank personnel must learn Arabic. The Bank's lack of knowledge in this area is incomprehensible given its own wealth and power. Second, before any project is performed, it must be preceded by a study of local conditions that goes beyond the mere collection of social facts. True community-driven development must be encouraged at the individual and household level, while simultaneously paying attention to pre-existing relationships. Future projects must pay attention to the way things already work if they wish to have any chance at all of

making improvements.

### *Final Thoughts*

Here I return to the title of my thesis and the idea of contested meanings. The Bank sees land as a means of production and as a commodity, while the Land Center's more expansive view also incorporates land as a means of security, authenticity, and a legacy. The Bank mostly recognizes moral economy in the context of risk aversion and education as a machine that produces modernity and as a means of producing human capital. The Land Center, however, sees education as a means of security that is fast fading from small farmers. Overall, the Bank's policies that treat land as a means of production and a commodity elevate smallholders unfairly to the level of the bourgeoisie and place demands on them that they cannot handle. This irresponsible demand can lead to small farmers losing their land and decrease their ability to educate their children. In any case, it almost certainly leads to a decrease in the quality of life of small farmers in the countryside. When moral economy is only known as risk aversion as opposed to risk management it leads to a neglect of the social structure of the countryside and ultimately to its disruption. Education was and is the key. By seeing it as both a means of producing human capital and a machine that produces modernity, the Bank has begun to use the disruptions its view has led to to transform the Egyptian countryside into its vision of modernity. Education has been used in an attempt to transform displaced and socially disrupted farmers into docile citizens who quietly provide services to wealthier nations. This process has overwhelmingly favored the wealthy and further marginalized the poor in part by devaluing their ways of life and the meanings they attribute to land, education, and moral economy. This process has led to a violent and inequitable process of social

change that is far from resolution. Ultimately, it may well end in failure. Given the 25<sup>th</sup> of January revolution and the growing backlash against structural adjustment, it is reasonable to assume that the Bank's project has been put on hold at least until the government stabilizes. Under a more democratic and equitable government, it will be difficult for the Bank to push through socially inequitable reforms, because they must first go through debate in parliament by officials who will ultimately answer to the citizens of Egypt. Inequitable and inaccurate meanings will likely be more difficult to propagate as well, because the open process of public debate in a democracy has the potential to allow small farmers a more powerful voice. Perhaps, in time, a more equitable arrangement will be found. Organizations such as the Land Center for Human Rights which are currently active in working towards more equitable arrangements for farmers, can provide a start. The World Bank needs to forsake its opposition to alternate meanings and make an effort to work with these organizations for a more equitable and less colonial future.

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