

Local identity in globalized world - The Western Desert' Oases: Siwa, Bahriyah, Farafra, Dakhla, Kharga (Egypt)

Introduction

Globalization can be considered as part of a process of integrating by lowering costs of transport and communication. In globalized world local identity is as important as freedom has given by relatively global network and access to knowledge, various cultures and places. Are the comparatively small isolated societies able to preserve their identity and benefit from globalisation process in the same time? Why does one society is resistant to external influence, and another is pliable? How they could take advantage to globalisation impact?

Bases of the research which has been made in the Institute of Developing Countries Warsaw University the concept of development for the group oases (Western Desert Of Egypt) will be presented. The group consists of: Siwa, Baharia, Farafra, Dakhla i Kharga.

The concept includes: a diagnosis of situation and susceptibility to globalisation in the oases, potential possibilities to develop and the way to execution them. The diagnosis was based on the following problems: social, cultural and economic structures which form and consolidate the local identity of oasis inhabitants. For the sake of peculiar dynamic nature to identity issue (demography) the diagnosis have been made in historical depiction.

The potential possibilities to develop the five oases result from environmental features as following: a distance from the Nile Valley, a lack of rainfalls, a strong evaporation, and fossil water and desertification processes. The Western Desert includes areas, which differ considerably one from the other. Rock desert, flat plateau, fertile depressions, chains of dunes, large mountains creates different types of desert landscape each with its own inhabitants.

There are cultural differences between the oases. Kharga i Dahla form one cultural group, Baharia i Farafra another. In comparison with the other oases, Siwa is absolutely different and form peculiar and individual culture.

The possibilities to develop the five oases are consist in to make the most of their unique character made by peculiar isolation the inhospitable areas of the desert. One of the instruments resolving problem is to develop tourism, handicraft and specific for this region date production. It means we must research a specific solution crossing the three diagnosed issues (social, cultural and economic structures) with the three possibilities to develop (tourism, handicraft and dates production) for each

The oases were known to the Dynastic Egyptians: *Siwa* was known to them as "Sekhet Amit" or the field of date palms; *Baharia* was known to them as "Ouhat Meht" or the oasis of the north; *Farafra* was known to them as "Ta-ahet" or the land of the cattle; *Dakhla* was known to them as "Desdes" or the seat of the moon god; *Kharga* was known to them as "Kenmet" the oasis of the south.

The "New Valley" project was planned to cover the chain of oasis depressions running from Kharga via Dakhla, Farafra and Baharia to Siwa.

1. Diagnosis

The potential possibilities to develop the Egyptian oases: Siwa, Baharia, Farafra, Kharga and Dakhla result from the following conditions:

- environmental;
- social;
- cultural;
- economic structures.

The diagnosis presented below are concern the historical „traditional” way of living in the oases.

1.1. Environment

The Egyptian part of the Libyan Desert, (the vast land west of the Nile Valley to the border with the Libya) called by egyptian geographers The Western Desert embraces area of 700 square kilometers, or more than two-thirds of the whole area of Egypt. It is one of the most arid regions on earth. Some of the highest temperatures on the world have been recorded there. Rare rainfalls, heavy insolation and considerably evaporation make the existence in these desert areas depends on the underground water supply within it many places hundreds of kilometers apart. The water of the oases is true artesian water and have nothing to do with the Nile. It is „fossil water” inasmuch as it has been imprisoned in the rocks for thousand of years.

There is a high plateau of Nubian sandstone in the south, extending from the mountains if 'Uwayanat (over 1.800 metres) which descends slowly till it reaches the depression containing the oases of Kharga and Dakhla. To the north of depression, a limestone plateau (500 metres above sea level) extends to the depressions of Farafra and Bahariya. The surface of this plateau slopes northward and ends in a great depression, some parts which are below sea level, such as the depressions of Siwa and Qattarah. To the north of the last depression rises a third plateau, averaging 200 metres above sea level, which slopes northward toward the coast of the Mediterranean between Alexandria and Sallum.

The main depressions are those of: Dakhla, Kharga, Farafra, Bahariya and Siwa. The are other depressions containing only alt lakes and salt marshes and consequently uninhabitable. The largest is the Qattarah.

At some places in the depressions of the Desert are long parallel lines of high sand dunes, which extend in a north-south direction, here and there for great distances (to the south of Kharga they are about 700 kilometres in length). The largest and the most dangerous dune field of the world, so – called Great Sand Sea, able to swallow and cancel anything which crosses its path. Many of these already have covered parts of the existing villages, at Kharga and Bahariya.

Siwa is the westernmost of the five major oases, close to the Libyan border and over 500 kms from The Nile Valley. It is closed basin which occupies part of a long trough running approximately parallel to the Mediterranean coast at a distance of 300 kms. The depression has a length of 75 kms and breadth varying from 5 to 20 kms. There are the several salt lakes, that diminish in size during the summer. In the winter all the area around them becomes marsh impossible to travel. The large part of the floor of the depression is covered by „sabakha” (mixture of sand and salt). The problem of Siwa is too much water and not enough drainage. The average annual rainfall amounts 11 mm, and the daily temperature of July amounts 28.8°C (max. 38,9°C). The floor of depression averages 17 metres below sea level.

Baharia differs from the other oases which are open on one or more sides, in being entirely surrounded by escarpments, for the most part steep and difficult to ascend. The general

shape of the excavation is that of a large oval, and with a narrow blunt pointed extension at each end. The extreme length is about 94 kms and the extreme width is 42 kms. In Bahariya sand accumulations cover more tracts as in the other oases. Besides the some small dunes around the cultivated lands the most striking feature in the topography of Baharia is the large number of dark hills within the depression. Some of them appear black because it is composed of dolomite and basalt. The average annual rainfall amounts 4 mm, and the daily temperature of July amounts 28.6°C (max. 36.8°C).

The depression of **Farafra** is the largest among the depressions of the oases. The distance between east and west cliffs is about 90 kms. The depression has a triangular shape and flat floor and monotonous in character except for a few isolated hills on the western side. It is bounded by steep cliffs on three sides and it is opened to the south extends for almost 200 kms until it ends at the edge of the escarpment that bounds Dakhla in the north. The floor is being composed of horizontal beds of white chalk generally covered with a thin carpet of sand. At some places the sand carpet is mixed with a deposit of fine chalk dust and forms a soft surface which a large proportion rises up during a high wind that the air becomes loaded with an impalpable powder and may not settle for hours or days. On the southern part of the depression there are occasional lines of dunes, which farther south increase in size and number and its southern extremity the whole area consists of steep-sided peaked dunes. The average daily temperature of July amounts 29.9 °C (max. 37.6°C). The rain practically never falls in the oases.

Dakhla lies 120 kms due west of Kharga or about 300 kms due the west of the Nile Valley. The bold escarpment facing southwards running for at least 200 kms and on the north side being about 350m above floor of the oasis. The floor consists chiefly of red clay, covered in many parts by alluvium and sand. To the south as well as to the east and west the ground gently rises for a short distance and red clay disappears under sandstone which forms the surface of the whole desert near by. In the whole oasis only one hill is to be met with. The rain never falls in Dakhla (once a few years). The average daily temperature of July amounts 30.7 °C (max. 38.5°C).

Kharga is situated about 150 kms west of the Nile Valley. It is separated from Dakhla by a barren tract with large sand dunes and many small hills. Kharga depression forms an immense natural excavation hollowed to a depth of 350 to 400 metres below the level of the Libyan Desert Plateau. It is relatively narrow through 185 kms long (N-S) and from 15 to 30 kms broad (E-W). The floor is covered with blow sand. In the south there are large areas of alluvial clay deposit, which are more similar to the Nile Valley soils than the sandy soils in the rest of the oasis. In Kharga there are many regular hills and curious clay ridges, which may each extend over several square kms. But the large area of the oasis floor are covered by sand accumulations in the form of dunes, commence in the north to the west. These dunes are in fact part of the great sand dune belt of Abu Mohariq (that runs for hundreds of kms on the surface of the Libyan Desert). The rain never falls in Kharga (once a few years). The average daily temperature of July amounts 31.1 °C (max. 39.3°C).

1.2. Demographic structure

The oases of Western Desert form five groups of villages. The inhabited places consist of a considerable town, capital of the homonymous oasis and small villages or hamlets scattered along the valleys and near different wells with some hundred or less inhabitants. The settlements have developed as agriculture centres or along the trade routes.

Some villages have developed as a agriculture centre depend on the potentialities of the soil and the amount of available water-supply. In the past when the digging wells were very difficult villages were built in places where the water-bearing stratum was not deep or where there were water flowed up to the surface (artesian wells). When one patch and well were owned by more than one family, the farmers used to migrate with their families to spots a few

kms away from villages during the season. Some of the patches were their new settlements at least.

Some have developed as a trade center along the old desert routes which were crossed by caravans. People who looked after wells and charged for supplies of water would settle down in their vicinity. It would stimulate the exchange of trade between the caravaners and the settlers. It depended on amount of traffic passing it and on the trade relations between the countries which lie on the sides of the desert and between which the caravans move.

Some of the trade centres have attained a agricultural importance but the first stage in the development of any settlements is the well. The oases from the 7th century were used as a stations along the northern pilgrimage route from Moghreb to Mecca.

An examination of the table 1 reveals an increase in the population of Egyptian Oases between 1882 and 1960 about 70% (30% between 1947-1960). In the same time the population of whole Egypt increase four times (280%). The explanation for it is that until the end of the 1950's. the oases were areas of migration. When the number of family-members outgrew the capacity of cultivated land, first one, later more and more members of the poorer families decided to leave the oases to search for work in the towns of the Nile Valley or abroad. It has been increased after communications had been modernised by building of railway lines and the introduction of car transport into the Western Desert. The emigrants, being entirely males, caused a great disproportion in the distribution of sex in the oases.

The trend of population in oases between 1882-1986
Source: According to references

| Rok | 1882 | 1897 | 1907 | 1917 | 1927 | 1937 | 1947 | 1960 | 1966 | 1976 | 1986 |
|---------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Oaza | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Siwa | 3346 | 5200 | 3884 | 3267 | 3 795 | 4 044 | 3768 | 3839 | 5169 | 7200 | 8000 |
| Baharia | 882 | 6081 | 6773 | 6497 | 6 323 | 6 394 | 7180 | 7730 | 10293 | 15217 | 17000 |
| Farafra | 300 | 542 | | | | | 741 | 1010 | 1147 | 1515 | 2424 |
| Dahla | 15293 | 17090 | 18368 | 17699 | 16809 | 19476 | 20641 | 25688 | 32687 | 4044 | 60000 |
| Kharga | 6166 | 7220 | 8383 | 8160 | 8587 | 9633 | 11121 | 14630 | 25605 | 33197 | 39000 |

The Great War was also an important factor conducive to decrease in the oases population. In 1916 the followers of the Senoussi, the dwellers of the oases of Tripoli and Fezzan, were incited by the German and Turks to raise war against Italy in Libya and England in Egypt, they attacked the western frontiers of Egypt and occupied the Egyptian Oases except Kharga. Some dwellers joined their armies, but also the many others who died of starvation after the Sennussi had consume the available food. Since the Great War the military posts have become needed in the oases.

When the „New Valley” project was initiated in 1960s, migration from the oases almost stopped and even more important element than returning emigrants was the influx of workers and specialists to develop the reclaimed land and to administrative and welfare posts. In addition to the growth of the old villages after the project began the settlement area have been expanded by building new villages. However, some of the settlements established by the development authorities remain empty and houses are gradually covered with sand.

Siwa-town, in former times „ash-shali”, in which live majority of the inhabitants, is a capital. In addition there are a few villages scattered through the depression, each having a small

population: al-Maraqī, Khamishah, Abu Shuruf and al-Zaytun are more important. The Siwa oasis has been populated at least since the Ancient Empire, but the origin of these former inhabitants is unknown. They must have been felahin, some Berber clans, some Beduin families from Libya. One of the ethnical differentiation is the fights between the Easterns and the Westerns. Because of the neighbouring the Libyan boundaries Siwa villages were in the past exposed to raids of nomadic tribes and the oasis people had to defend themselves against such raids. The people have suffered during the wars too, by migration and lack of food supplies. Siwa was occupied by Senussi during the Great War, by the Italian, German and Aliants during the II War the by rotation. When in 1962 the discovery of the oil field in Libya enticed many of the young men to go and work there.

The capital of **Baharia** is Bawiti, other bigger vilages are Mandishah, Qasr and Zabw. Besides this some dozen of „izab” constitute the areas of al-Haiz, al-Hara or Qabala. For the people of Bahariya there were bed time, when as between 1938 and 1960, the springs and wells drying up. It has caused the great escape from the oasis and during only 10 years (1947-1957) over one thousand people had to migrated to Cairo. Most of them unskilled labourers leave in the slums in one of the quaters of Cairo. After 1960 the great majority of the recent migrants returned to the oasis together with the others who had migrated many years before.

The inhabitants **Farafra** are spread over two biggest places Qasr-Farafra and „izab” Shaikh Marzuk and some new smaller areas. There is no traces from the first inhabitants of the oasis. The families arrived not more than 500 years ago from the west, i.e. from Cyrenaica and via Kharga and Dakhla from the Nile Valley.

Dakhla is the biggest from the Egyptian oases. The capital is Mut, the main villages are Rashda, Hindaw, and „izab”: Qasr, Mawhub, Mushiya, Qalamun, al-‘Awena, Teneda, Asmant, Ma’sara, Shaikh Wali an Budkhulu. In oasis some old families immigrated around 16th century and lived in their houses forming a wall outwards protected the quaters of each clan against the other. The immigrants have come from Cyrenaica, Marocco, Libya.

The center and the political capital of the New Valley Governorate is al-**Kharga**. Besides the calital the older villages are: Munira/Mahariq, Ginah, Bulaq, Baris. The latter hamlets are: Dush, Maks al-Qibli, Gaga and the new villages have been built after 1960s: Falestin, Baghdad, al-Gaz’ir. The history of settlement in oasis has ben handed down through some old papers in the possessions of several shaikhs. According to one manuscript some „Roman” families lived there in the ancient village. The first Islamic immigrants arrived from Tunisia and in the 11th century Turkish reached Oasis. The ancesor of people od Kharga were nomadic Saharian clans and people of Sudanese origin too.

1.3. Culture structure

Social life of the oasis dwellers is a communal unit formed of several family groups which are generally closely attached to one another. Families and sub-families of one kinship are always considered as a single group. In an oasis village there may be as many as 10 famili group each consist of about 100 to 200 persons. Each group has a sheikh, generally an elderly man who act as a chief and who represents them in the village council. He is renowned for his efficiency in settling the disputes. The oasis dwellers accepted the Arab rule and adopted Islam without any bloodshed and the Government orders were carried out by the Chief Sheikh is known as the Omda, elected by the villagers or appointed by the government. In all the oases except Siwa, the system is idencical with that applied in the villages of the Nile Valley. In Siwa the village council couldn’t be reconciled to any system and till the early years of the 19th century was enjoyed home rule untill it was force by Egyptian government

In the communal unity the individual has many obligations in numerous activities as: building of mosqus, the cutting of drainage canal, the clearing the old well, the digging new ones, the defence of the village against raids.

The oasis dwellers are peaceful and infringements of law are very rare. Crime in its serious form is not known and the chief misdemeanours are petty thefts of food from gardens and fields. Squabbles about the water rights sometimes lead to assault. The character of the oases exposed the people to raids of nomadic tribes before the latter were completely subdued by the government. The people suffered greatly and were subject to all terrorism and it has been reflected in the suspicion of visitors.

The character of the oases as isolated centres has kept the conservative life of the inhabitants. They follow customs which have long since become obsolete in the Nile Valley and some of them may never have existed elsewhere. The dwellers practise the old methods of irrigation and cultivation used in ancient times. The gauge used for irrigating rice fields, the system of distributing irrigation water by rotation, the telling of the time by means of the sun and stars, the method of threshing cereal.

The contacts with the outside world have been normally limited to intercourse with the nomads who frequent the oases for purpose of trade. As a result of improvements in communication people have grown to appreciate emigration and seek the happier life of the Nile Valley.

The usual and traditional form of habitation is the mud-brick house common all over Egypt, but it is rare that a single house stands itself in isolation. Available materials for building sun-dried bricks or simply bricks of soil limit the height of the house to no more than two floors. The house serves as a shelter for people as well as a store for their supplies. As a protection against the heat of summer, the cold of winter and penetration of sand, villages are compact, streets are roofed and narrow, doors and windows are made very small.

While four of the oases have much in common **Siwa** is different. Its outlook, the architecture of the houses, the clothes and features of its inhabitants, their dialect, their attitude towards strangers and their way of life inside and outside their houses all remind that it is no longer the Nile Valley. Siwans are generally a conservative people. They are a proud people and it is obvious that they are also proud of their language. There is no written language. It survives by being passed down through generations—through women, who teach it to their children and so on. They were very restricted in security. Nobody was allowed to build a new house outside a strong girdle wall, which for purpose of defence, had only one entrance. The heads of the families held their daily meetings near it. The walls of the houses were built with *karshif* (the mud taken from salt-impregnated soil) after drying, it becomes almost like cement. Their houses rose to seven and eight storeys. Siwa was known as an important station for caravans and market for the negro slave trade. They used to engage labourers “*zaggalah*” in the service of the landowners. They were unmarried young men who took care of the gardens and fields during a day. They were a kind of militia and night guards and sleep outside the walls. The *zaggalah* have their own privileges and with time no agreement could be made without their approval. There were feuds between the two groups the Easterns and the Westerns and the Siwans had their own rules which they respected.

In **Baharia** women were more familiar and have more freedom than in other oases. They used to go with the men to drink tea and to visit the holy places where they sing to the glory of the Saints. The Baharians love music and they have the special songs which they sing during the ordinary occupations as the mill songs “*mawwali*”. It is very interesting from the archaeological point of view. More than one archaeological site has been discovered in the oasis. There have been found over one hundred mummies beautifully decorated, some covered with a layer of gold, statuettes, pottery, jewels and coins in the cemetery to the Graeco-Roman period.

When the Sanussi movement began to expand its influence in many places in the desert, the people of **Farafra** were among the first to welcome the new religious order. The Sanussi had great appeal to them, who are by nature pious, non-aggressive and very decent people. The first travellers found them to be friendly and hospitable despite their poverty and backward way of life. Another, *Rohlfs*, could call them bigoted, fanatic and inflexible—as a

result the unfortunate for his and his large caravan who began to fire their rifles in the air to announce their arrival. The inhabitants have to be always on guard against the danger of attack in this isolated oasis. They are known as a correct and serious people and they are rarely seen. The alcohol and smoking is considered a bad habit. They were famous for their complete knowledge of the stars no limited as in the other oases to certain families. In the late 30s there were no telephone, telegraph or radio, or any mechanized transportation yet. One of the method social organisation was the storing their grain in one communal (for 12 village granary where each household has its own separate store-room. The inhabitants of Farafra have a distinctly different dialect from those of Bahariya and Dakhla.

In **Kharga and Dakhla** people were more hospitable and less ignorant and bigoted than other oases. There have strong connection with the Nile Valley. Their mud-brick houses and narrow lanes seems to be a typical for oases. They have loose their original character because the New Valley project.

1.4. Economic structure

In the oases there has been concentration on date cultivation. The palm groves cover large areas of the oasis floors. Date palms in the oases exist on all types of soil from the sand of **Baharia** and salt of **Siwa** to the clay of **Dakhla** and **Kharga**. They are met with in the form of gardens. The trees are different varieties.

In the oases artesian wells have flowed and irrigation was carried out without any need of lifting machines. As the sinking of a well costs a relatively large amount of money, the dwellers used to join together and to contribute their labour and in some cases, money towards the expense. There were nearly always more than one owner of the well. For a single well there may be 50 or even 100 owners each of whom claims his share in its water and the right to use it. In this periodical watering system the allotment of water is the number of days for each owner that will form the rotation. The method of distributing the water were carried out by the people themselves. Sometimes the spring have a book which records the exact quantity of water, or rather the time of watering.

As each well is owned by more than one person it becomes the question of the ownership. Often one person owns about 10 pieces of land which were small in area and several kilometers apart. Sometimes when the minute size of the holding does not allow each individual farmer to cultivate on his own they used to adopt a communal system. It consists in cultivation the whole plot around the well together and dividing the crop among the owners.

There were the other, quite different type of spring known to oases. Long galleries were cut in the water bearing strata of rock, with the small cylindrical shafts at short distances varying from fifteen to forty metres. Each shaft is covered with a stone slab, notches are cut down to the galleries for cleaning purposes. This system was known in **Kharga, Farafra** and **Baharia**.

The date trade is one the most important of any in the oases. They were packed in bags braided from the date leaves which constitute a load for camel. Among the products exported from the oases, olives come next in importance to dates. The cultivation of the olive tree has long been neglected in the oases. **Siwa** was the only oasis which was renowned for cultivation of olives and production of olive oil. The economic value of olives lies in their oil whose extraction of oil by stone press.

The people in the oases ordered everything they need from Beduins who also bought the dates in exchange. During the date season they visit the oases with their camels loaded with sugar, tea and many other commodities. Sugar and tea have featured on the importation list ever since old times. There is a specific monopoly and the rule that follows trade and customers respect. Each trader has a number of customers among the oasis dwellers people with whom he deals every year. If a trader fails to visit the oasis during the season, his trade of dates is kept for for him by his customers until he calls and collect it.

2. The local identity and potential of development

Through the ages the oasis' dwellers have developed the certain rules, which express the life in a desert. Definition of the local identity of the Egyptian oases is based on conservative way of life inherited methods of the cultivation, traditional handicraft and terms of trade. The essential features of the situation of social life, culture and economy of the oases: **Siwa**, **Baharia**, **Farafra**, **Dakhla** and **Kharga**, presented above, are the impressions of visitors i.e: Ahmed Fakhry, W. J. Harding King or Mohamed Mittwally during their journeys in the first half of the XX century. Therefore it can be said the oases preserved their local identity longer than the another rural society.

It could be said that it has been determined by the peculiar isolation of this place. In such not much numerous societies, in most cases, separated one from another it would appear that in such places the time has been stopped ages ago.

The main conditions, which have been responsible for isolation, are the following environmental factors:

- location in the desert without accessible routes, besides of camels and cars with four wheel drive;
- unfavourable climate conditions;
- lack of the water supplies or not enough drainage;
- problems of maintaining soil fertility;
- blowing sand and sand dunes which swamp cultivated land and houses.

All these conditions have a great influence on the oasis dweller manners, even the methods of the building houses or communal systems of drilling wells. It has determined the way of economy, focused attention on date production. They used to live in dependence on the merchants came with the caravans and make themselves the necessities. In terms of economy oases were almost self-sufficient. They have an excellent experience in irrigation and maintaining soil fertility each plot of the depression's floor. The method of distributing the water according to the crop and allotment of water in time proportion has required the strict rules and discipline. Oasis dwellers have to erect fences to stop the blow sands or dunes.

These not easy term of living conditions were never attraction for numerous and moreover during the crises many of the oasis inhabitants had to emigrate. Moreover isolation has a crucial effect for oasis dwellers in rather infrequent occasions to contact with strangers. The first foreign traveller in an Egyptian oasis was French doctor, who reached **Kharga** in 1698 only by accident. The first non-Muslim entered **Siwa** was Englishman Brown in 1792. Since this time there are only very few books or articles which have a value profound knowledge about oases. Rohlfs, Harding King, Beandell, Stanley, Steindorff and Fakhry are the most important authors which are always quote.

In general isolation is the best way to preserve the tradition and society ties. According to this thesis the question must be put in this moment: "What will happen if the isolation is broken and what could be the impact of it? How long the place could be separated in globalized world? What is the benefit and what the threatenences of the opening.

The oasis dwellers have felt the very big impact of external factors when the government decided to start the „New Valley” project in the early 60s. The **Kharga** and **Dakhla** was the first and the priority polygon of the activity. It extremely ambitious project planned to convert i.e. approximately 850 000 ha of desert into farm land along the chain of oasis depressions. Simultaneously the land planned for cultivation was surveyed, leveled, provided with irrigation channels and reclaimed. The new connections have been constructed, new settlements have been established and many new lands have been allocated to the settlers. In many areas a benefit was offset by setback caused by rising groundwater, salinization and reduced extraction of water from the old wells as well as an increasing shortage of seasonal

workers. Some of the new settlements established by the development authorities remain empty and have been covered with sands.

Besides of many negative impacts, the "New Valley" project has opened the Egyptian oases dwellers, has gave an experience in contact with strangers and innovation, which has broke their isolation. For example because the oases are no long isolated people are changing the suspicion and dislike strangers. The education procces have been started particularly for the girls. Besides usual program of the education could be stimulated development the traditional craft.

The Egyptian oases have great economic and environmental potentialities but no as a production centres on the Nill Valley level. The are three sectors, which could be developed the oases and preserve their local identity:

- turism;
- handicraft;
- date production.

These three mentioned sectors are combined and should be complementary to each other. The turism needs the souvenirs, made of the oasis dwellers. The traditional, often forgotten handicraft does not need modern and expensive machines and materials. And the date producton is the most traditional and favourable in this condition. All the oases: **Siwa, Baharia, Farafra, Dakhla** and **Kharga** offer the conditions, which are a great potential as following:

- beatifull natural environment, for example White Desert near Farafra;
- oryiginal architecture of the houses, particular in Siwa and Farafra
- individual tradition;
- rich history and many antient monuments;

The Western Desert includes areas, which differ considerably one from the other. Rock desert, flat plateau, fertile depressions, chains of dunes, large mountains creates different tipes of desert landscape each with its own inhabitants. They belong to the Egyptian national culture and their former traditional way of life should be put on record for scientists and people not only in Egypt. The solution is tha investing in the nature of the oases to produce a new tourist product, which combines traditional tourism with desertsafais, adventure. Adventure travels in now a big industry within Egypt, which travelers could camp out underneath the stars. Tourism can provide young people with a lot of job oportunities and return the previous and stop emigrations accumulate capital. The Oasis customs and traditions, which are different, agriculture, local industries such as the manufacture of rugs, straw bags, agriculture products could be main activities.

Until some 30 years ago, **Siwa** was a restricted ares bordering Libya. That's why it was untouched by modern development till 1980s when rectriction on travel were lifted. In 1997 started new concepts in desert sustainable ecology tourism planning to desing properties in line with traditon. Siwans opened their oasis to tourists, started simple restaurant, built a few modern hotels and arranged tours to the desert. Many visitors find it far more appealing to travel through those parts of the oasis still untouched by "development". They prefer to visit restaurants that cater for ordinary people, rather than trourists in modern hotels and to being cured in the open air, in insolation, not in some hospital with reception desks and nurces.

Dry hot sands are beeing promoted as health centres for their health-giving properties for the alternative medicine and natural cures at Siwa. Tt is a traditional metod of cure rheumatic pains and skin diseases. The people of **Siwa** have been particularly prone to rheumatic because the salty soil *karshif* in Arabic and *ererig* in Siwan. It is used to build the traditional mud-brick houses, but it causes the walls to retain damp, which result in reumatic pains. After just a week of treatment in a "sand bath" are eased.

Architecture in the **Farafra** oasis follows a unique and traditional style. The old buildings, paintings on the walls, decorations round the doorways. Farafra has a fascinating physical feature of Qasr Farafra, through is the fortress which tops the low hill in the town. In Fafafra the old ladies are wearing tatoos, a colourful dress, and scarf.

Kharga lies not far away from the Nile Valley could become a popular weekend destination. There is a five star hotel.

3. The impact of globalization - benefits and threatness

It is affairs that the magnificent old houses will be collapsing, traditional clothes and ornaments sold to tourists, individual pottery production is being taken over by industry and rich verbal tradition, stories and tales is being sacrificed from day to day increasing to radio and TV. At the same time the oases dwellers is being losing their individuality.

It is imposible to order people live in a "ancient standards" as they ancestors. In globalized world everybody should have a chance to be part of it and have a chance to experience the moder living condition. In many places, innovations have ruined tha tradition, but scanario above could not be unavoidable if the tradition and individuality makes a profit. It is all over the world that people earn money making their tradition way of life.

The breaking the isolation has offered benefits by stimulation the enterprise and the inherent aptitude for co-operation durring the oasis dwellers.

Access to markets and technologies bring increased, especially on the oportunity for date and handicrafts trade.

New technology (Internet) gives a possibility to develop tourism just only by information and booking the hotel room in oasis.

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