

Intra-Household Conflicts in Migration Decisionmaking: Return and Pendulum Migration in Morocco

Hein de Haas
Tineke Fokkema

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Since the mid-1960s, and following the signing of agreements with northwest European countries to recruit guestworkers, Morocco has experienced large-scale emigration of mostly unskilled migrants. Moroccan migration was initially mainly oriented toward France, but also increasingly toward Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, and, since the mid-1980s, Italy and Spain. Contrary to expectations and despite the economic recession after the 1973 oil embargo, relatively few Moroccan migrants returned, and many ended up settling in their new countries. This process was accompanied by large-scale family reunification. The unfavorable political and economic prospects in Morocco, combined with the discontinuation of the “return option” to Europe through increasingly restrictive immigration policies, explain why many migrants decided to stay in Europe. So, paradoxically, the freeze on recruitment of new guestworkers beginning in the early 1970s stimulated settlement rather than discouraging it (de Haas 2007; Entzinger 1985; Fargues 2004).

While family reunification was largely complete at the end of the 1980s, family formation gained significance as a major source of new migration from Morocco over the 1990s. At least until recently, a large proportion of first-generation Moroccans and their descendants preferred to marry a partner—preferably kin—from the region of origin (de Valk et al. 2004; Hooghiemstra 2001; Lievens 1999; Reniers 2001). In addition, restrictive immigration policies led to increasing irregular (i.e., undocumented) labor migration to the classic destination countries in northwest Europe and to Italy and Spain. The combined effects of family reunification and family formation, natural increase, undocumented migration, and new labor migration to Italy and

Spain explain why the official number of persons of Moroccan origin living in Europe has increased more than sevenfold, from 300,000 in 1972 to an estimated 2.4 million in 2004. Moroccans now form one of largest and most dispersed migrant communities in Western Europe (de Haas 2007).

The first generation of Moroccan migrants is now approaching retirement age. The majority of this generation is not currently working because of early retirement, unemployment, or incapacity to work. Close to retirement age, the question whether to stay or return arises again. While many do not return (Schellingerhout and de Klerk 2007), some migrants return to Morocco after the end of their active working life. More striking is the increasing

proportion of migrants who adopt pendulum migratory strategies, spending several months a year in Morocco while maintaining official residence in Europe—a practice that can be classified as neither permanent settlement in Europe nor return to Morocco. This raises a question of broader theoretical interest: how can we explain such patterns of residential mobility and the decisionmaking processes underpinning them?

By analyzing the migration behavior and transnational residential strategies of first-generation, aging migrants in a particular Moroccan sending region, this study focuses on the role of intra-household power inequalities, tensions, and conflicts of interest in migration decisionmaking. In addition, we explore the consequences such migratory strategies may have for intra-household power relations.

This study contributes to a conceptual critique of migration theories that identify the household as the most relevant decisionmaking unit. Such theories typically conceptualize migration as the outcome of collective household decisions based on consensus and mutual benefit. Focusing on a particular Moroccan setting, we argue that by disregarding intra-household conflicts of interest along the lines of gender, generation, and age, conventional household approaches cannot explain many of the patterns of return and pendulum migration. Theoretical background: Introducing conflict into household models

Consensus seems to be increasing in the literature that migration is part of livelihood strategies pursued by *households* to spread income risks and, if possible, to generate income and remittances that can be used to improve living standards or to invest in housing, education, or commercial enterprises. This particularly applies to developing countries, where credit and insurance markets often fail and many people are poor (de Haan 1999; de Haas 2010; Stark 1991; Taylor 1999). This perspective, which has been particularly explored within the “new economics of labor migration” (cf. Stark 1978; Stark and Bloom 1985), represented an advance over theories that conceptualized migration as the result of a cost-benefit calculation of income-maximizing *individuals* operating in perfect markets (Harris and Todaro 1970; Todaro 1969).

The conceptualization of migration as part of a family or household strategy creates analytical room to move beyond the income-maximizing paradigm and to include motives such as risk-avoidance and risk-sharing. In addition, such perspectives allow migration to be seen as an investment in which household members pool resources to facilitate the migration of one member and shed light on the reasons migrants send remittances beyond pure altruism. Conceptualizing individual migration as part of broader household strategies to improve well-being, increase income, and raise investment capital also compels us to reinterpret return migration. Return migration has been commonly viewed as a failure of migration strategies or, at best, as a stage following retirement. However, if the main motive for migrating is to improve the situation at home, migrants will return once they have succeeded in amassing, saving, or remitting enough financial and human capital to realize their investment plans. Failure to achieve this goal due to low income, unemployment, or high costs will prolong the stay in the receiving country. This means that return migration can under certain circumstances also be associated with *successful* migration and integration strategies (cf. Constant and Massey 2002).

Notwithstanding their more realistic character, the inherent flaw of household-centered migration theories is that they tend to “reify” the household, that is, to construct it as an entity, with clear plans, strategies, and aims, one that makes unanimous decisions, based on

equality of power and commonality of interests among household members, to the benefit of all. This characterization is likely to mask significant intra-household inequalities along gender and generational lines. Particularly in patriarchal societies, of which Morocco is one, women lack an equal stake in migration decisionmaking, while children are almost inevitably in a weaker position vis-à-vis their parents. Hence, it is likely that women and children have generally less agency with regard to migratory behavior. This pertains not only to migration by fathers and male spouses, but also to women's and children's own migration: they can either be put under considerable pressure to migrate (alone or in the context of family migration) or be excluded from access to mobility against their will.

What is often presented as *the* household strategy can alternatively be seen as the outcome of a struggle for domination between male and female, old and young, powerful and powerless (Rodenburg 1997). There are also instances in which decisions on migration are taken entirely individually, without consulting and sometimes even without informing other household members. Moreover, when migration decisions reflect intra-household power inequalities, this makes it likely that powerful household members benefit most from migration-generated resources such as remittances and educational opportunities for themselves and, particularly, their children. Migration can under certain circumstances reinforce and reproduce gender inequalities (Day and İçduygu 1997; de Haas and van Rooij 2010; King and Vullnetari 2006).

It would be erroneous, however, to depict women and children as passive victims. Although generally not as powerful as men, women and children (especially adolescents) do exert a certain influence on household decisions. General processes of women's emancipation explain why an increasing share of "independent" labor migrants are women, even from predominantly patriarchal societies such as Mexico or Morocco (Chant and Radcliffe 1992; Fadloulah et al. 2000; Jureidini and Moukarbel 2004; Salih 2001). Moreover, women's migration is likely to increase their negotiating power by improving their access to employment, education, residency, and citizenship rights abroad. Such acquisition of social, human, and material resources may shift the intra-household balance of power and generate substantial intra-household conflict pertaining to (return) migration decisionmaking.

This study explores the causes and motives for return and pendulum migration by focusing on the Todgha valley, a region of emigration located in the province of Ouarzazate in southern Morocco. Data were collected through quantitative, qualitative, and participatory fieldwork conducted by the authors on several occasions between 1998 and 2008. Data and methods are described in the Appendix.

Although both quantitative and qualitative data informed the analysis for this study, most findings are based on the semi-structured interviews. These interviews were primarily designed to obtain detailed information on migration decisionmaking; the household survey provided the contextual setting of general patterns and trends of migration from this region. The interviews did not aim to achieve statistical representativity, but rather to explore the range of different experiences and motivations among different types of migrants. The use of qualitative methods is particularly appropriate to address and explore issues that are not easily quantifiable: in our case the motives and decisionmaking processes underlying return and pendulum migration strategies.

Results

The Todgha valley is an oasis with an official population of some 68,500 inhabitants in 2004 (of whom 36,400 are classified as urban). The population has participated intensively in labor migration since the mid-1960s, primarily to France, Morocco's former colonizer. Significant secondary destinations are Belgium and the Netherlands. Following general Moroccan patterns, migration to Europe has been perpetuated since the recruitment freeze in 1973 through family reunification and new marriages between migrants' offspring and non-migrants. After family reunification was largely completed in the 1980s, family formation through new marriages with children of the first generation of migrants has become virtually the only way to enter northwest European countries legally. Our survey data show that, while most labor migrants left Morocco in the 1960s and 1970s, both new labor migration (to Italy and Spain) and return migration (from northwest Europe) increased markedly since 1990. General migration characteristics of the Todgha valley

Migration has become a widespread occurrence in the Todgha valley. Of the surveyed active male population (aged 15–65 years) 15 percent have been or are involved in international migration. Only 35 percent of all households have no migration history. Taken together, some 40 percent of all surveyed households are involved in international migration and/or receive international remittances.

Whereas most international migrants from the Todgha valley still living in northwest Europe have eventually reunified their families at the destination, most migrants who left their family in Morocco have eventually returned. Returnees account for 4 percent of the total active male population, while current international migrants represent 11 percent of all active males. Our data indicate that over 70 percent of the surveyed international migrants who returned to the Todgha valley stayed more than seven years abroad before their return, and the average stay abroad was 18 years.

The average age of the surveyed international return migrants to the Todgha valley is 48 years at the time of their return. However, if we take the mode as the measure of central tendency, 60–64 years is the most typical age of return. Two-thirds of the returnees returned in the 1990s. This corresponds to the aging of the first-generation migrants, who left for Europe during the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Twenty-four percent of current international migrants stayed in Morocco for three months or longer in the year prior to interview. The lengthy average stay in Morocco can largely be explained by the extended period spent each year in Morocco by elderly international migrants who officially reside abroad but no longer work. Whereas among migrants aged 15–29 years only 7 percent spent at least three months per year in Morocco, this proportion increases with age, amounting to 20 percent among those aged 30–44 years and 33 percent among those aged 45–59. Among migrants over age 60, 56 percent spent at least three months per year in Morocco, and 22 percent (almost exclusively male) at least six months per year.

The tendency for unemployed, retired, and (partially) incapacitated migrants to stay for extended periods in Morocco becomes even clearer if we examine those households participating in international migration in which all household members were declared to be living in Europe. In 12 percent of those “empty” households one of the, usually older, “commuting” household members was in fact present at the time of the survey. While many

migrants who maintain official residence in Europe stay in Morocco for extended periods, 55 percent of all self-declared return migrants have traveled to Europe at least once since their return to Morocco.

Drawing on interview data, the following section explores the motivations and decisionmaking process underlying migration from and return migration to the Todgha valley. Our central research aim is to explore the role of intra-household power conflicts and inequalities in migration decisionmaking. To gain insight into these dynamics, relevant dimensions and stages of the life course of the returnees and pendulum migrants are reviewed, starting with migration to Europe.

Motivations and decisionmaking underlying migration to Europe

Largely consistent with the new economics of labor migration, migration from the Todgha valley to Europe has been a significant part of livelihood strategies pursued by households. Although most of the migrants did work before migration, mainly in agriculture, their emigration was essentially prompted by economic motivations: improving the living standard of the household, especially for those barely surviving financially, was the main driving factor. For example, one of the interviewees said:

Why I did leave? Do you think that life here was comfortable? If there was no sea between Morocco and Europe, the cows would not stay either. It was the misery that pushed us to Europe, like birds leaving their children in the bird's nest in search for food. It was difficult to go to Europe and leave the family behind but we had no choice, we had no money, I had to support the family. Before leaving, I was working for 7 dirham¹ per day. Do you think I could have built this house if I stayed here?

Emigration of one or more household members to Europe functioned as income insurance for households. While Europe faced a relative labor shortage, there was a high likelihood of finding a relatively well-paid job (compared to Moroccan standards). As one interviewee stated:

At that time [mid-1960s–early 1970s], it was easy to go to Europe and find a job, not like now. Europe needed workers to build Europe, we were the tools. There were a lot of jobs on the one hand and few workers on the other. Bosses were competing for workmen. You could find four jobs in one day. You were working for one [employer] until another one was offering a higher salary.

In general, the household migration strategy coincided with the personal interest of the migrants. Influenced by the positive experiences of those who had already migrated, other Moroccans were generally eager to emigrate.

Those who did not emigrate by themselves were happy to be selected by labor recruiters, although the recruitment process was sometimes humiliating:

They were coming here to look for those who could do the heavy jobs. I was lucky that I was selected by Mogha [a renowned French recruiter]. He came here to select those who could work in the French mines. All the men had to undress and he was looking at them. He put a stamp on the ones he thought could work hard. You had to be at least 170 cm tall. We were with 22 from my village, he selected only four and I was among them. We were like sheep. He

refused the rest of our friends because some of them were too short, others were not strong enough to work in the mines.

With an abundant supply of jobs, those entering the destination country without a job contract easily found work. However, the living conditions migrants found on their arrival were generally less favorable than expected, and the working conditions were difficult and sometimes dangerous. Most worked in mines, car factories, hotels/restaurants, or the construction industry. They frequently worked double shifts to earn as much money as possible. In the early years, migrants often stayed in overcrowded boarding houses.

Decisionmaking related to family reunification

Before leaving Morocco, almost all interviewees lived in extended family households. A sizable proportion was already married and some had children; none of the interviewees, however, initially migrated together with their family. The initial plan was to go abroad to work for some years and return with the savings. Because of the persistent adverse economic and political situation in Morocco and the increasing difficulty re-entering European countries as immigration policies grew more restrictive, many decided to prolong their stay. Eventually, many stayed two or more decades.

Consequently, their emigration was followed in many cases by family reunification in the country of immigration. A sharp contrast emerges between those still living in Europe and the eventual returnees. Migrants who decided not to reunify their families in Europe often cited fears that their wives and offspring would become “Westernized” and lose their religious faith. As one migrant put it:

I did not want to do so because it is not an easy place to raise your children. You are in their country so you have to respect their rules. The system there is teaching children to be Europeans. If they are young and not thinking about Morocco and their religion, that's not good. There is a lot of freedom which is normal for Europeans but difficult for Moroccans. Moroccans always understand freedom in a wrong way, they turn everything upside down. I am not generalizing the case because there are some young people who succeed. There are engineers, doctors, but the percentage is not that high. I saw so many cases of problems between parents and children and one of them was going to prison. I wanted to raise my children in my own way. That's why I did not bring them to France.

Having experienced the problematic economic position of migrants and mounting racism in Europe over the recession-prone 1980s, many returnees also argued that it would be better not to expose their children to potentially humiliating circumstances.² Instead of bringing them to Europe, they reasoned it would be better to invest in the higher education of their sons in Morocco, which often leads to a secure and comfortable life as a civil servant. As one of the respondents stated:

I thought that it is better for them to be in Morocco. In Europe, there are no rules, and we will never really be accepted. I thought I will let them finish school in Morocco and send them to university. Here in Morocco everything is cheaper and you are with your people. If you get a good job as a civil servant in Morocco, you have a lot of money and nothing to worry about. So I thought it is better if they stay in Morocco.

The above-mentioned motives might suggest that the decision not to reunify their families was exclusively taken in the supposed interest of the household. However, these socially acceptable responses sometimes conceal other motives. Failure to fulfill the financial (i.e., sufficient income) and legal (i.e., status as a permanent resident) conditions for family reunification are important reasons that migrants were reluctant to admit. Other, more personal motives opposing family reunification are marital conflict, estrangement, and fear of losing freedom of movement and control. As two migrants stated:

If you try to control their lives, it is not easy because you are not in Morocco. At school they teach them that they are free to do whatever they want, to come home with whom they want, so you can't control their life anymore. The European system is always trying to drive a wedge between you and your children if there is something wrong. I know, for example, that if my son would do something wrong and I would beat him, they would arrest me because it is not Morocco.

No, it was not difficult to leave my wife behind, because I have experienced what women are doing there. They have too much freedom. If you want to control her, she will go to the police.

Although most interviewed women stated that they agreed with their husbands' decision to migrate, several women also indicated that they had "no choice other than to agree," which reflects the domination of men in household decisionmaking regarding migration to Europe.³ On the one hand, thanks to remittances, women left behind tend to live in much better material circumstances than their neighbors. On the other hand, they experience the separation as very difficult. Besides the perceived burden of carrying double (male and female) responsibilities and the social and psychological stress this might involve, conflicts between migrants' wives and their in-laws over the use of remittances were frequent, especially for those women living in extended families. The wives and children missed their husbands and fathers. One of the children we interviewed expressed his feelings as follows:

We were satisfied with his financial support, we were living comfortably compared to non-migrant families, but the father role was missing in our family for so many years so we suffered as well. I missed him because I need my father as I need my mother. He was coming once per year, in the summer, for 1.5 months. For us, as children, it was not enough. When you started to know and get used to him he left for France again. That was hard because most of us were born when he was abroad. Everyone was crying when he left because you knew that he would go for a long period.

The large majority of women wished to join their husbands in Europe, pressuring, often successfully, for family reunification. The children interviewed invariably expressed the wish to be reunited with their fathers in Europe. However, they did not have any voice in the family reunification decision:

My father was 100 percent against the idea to bring his family to France. He was always speaking about Europe in a negative way. He told us: "If I am taking you there, you will behave in a bad way, it is so easy to be spoiled. I don't want to be guilty, because if you are doing something wrong, I'm responsible." When we were young we could not be against our father. You know, our tradition, culture is that you have to respect someone who is older. When we became teenagers and wanted to discuss with him, he always escaped. He did not like when we started to talk about this subject.

Most of the interviewed migrants who did not return in the 1970s and 1980s ended up reunifying their families. Some return migrants applied a strategy that has been referred to as “relay migration” (cf. Arizpe 1981). In this case of partial family reunification, the migrant did not reunify his entire household at the destination, but allowed only one or two unmarried sons to come to Europe before their age of legal adulthood.⁴ These sons then take over their father’s role as the migrant breadwinner after his active working life ends or he returns home. Sometimes, families can be torn apart through “now or never migration.” One young man we interviewed, 20 years old, was left alone in Morocco.

My father worked in Nice since 1969. He never wanted to take his family to France. He was afraid that we would become *Nsara* [Christians] until he suddenly changed his mind when he realized there was no future in Morocco for us. But I was already too old. My mother, brothers, and sisters left me here alone. I do not know what to do. I see no solution.

The young man now lives alone in the family’s large house. He put all his hopes on obtaining a scholarship to a French university, which would allow him to join his family.

The role of migration in improving livelihoods and investment

From an economic point of view, the migration of one household member to Europe was generally a wise decision. Remittances have come to play an important role in the region’s economy. The average income of remittance-receiving households is more than double that of other households, and international remittances account for about one-third of the income of all surveyed households. While remittances have increased income inequality, migrants’ expenditures on housing and other investments have stimulated the diversifying and urbanizing regional economy of the Todgha valley (see de Haas 2006).

Most of the interviewed migrants provided substantial support to family members left behind. They sent money on a regular basis, which confirms the notion that migration is part of an implicit social contract and co-insurance strategy of households. The additional income was used for daily necessities, to construct a house, to finance children’s education, or, sometimes, to set up a small business. In addition, most of the migrants brought home goods (including clothes, electronics, food items, and toys) during their yearly visit. Most households have been able to dramatically improve their income and standard of living as a result of remittances and investments.

The interviewed children of returnees considered the supportive role their fathers fulfilled as obvious: after all, the purpose of emigration was to improve the living standards of the household. At a young age, they noticed their privileged position compared to non-migrant households:

When he was coming in the summer, most of the neighbors visited our house. Besides presents for the neighbors, like tea and coffee, he brought clothes, things for the house, radio, television, and toys. We were one of the first families in our town that had bicycles. All my brothers, everyone got their own bicycle.

The lasting and unyielding support was also seen as obvious by the migrants themselves. Nevertheless, some of them regretted that their focus was limited to their country of birth. In this respect, one of the interviewees said:

At that time, there was competition between us. We were not wasting money. We were always buying things second-hand and eating in cheap places, just to be able to build a house in Morocco. We saved money and we lost it in Morocco. In those days, houses were not expensive in France. I could buy five houses for letting out. But we were always thinking about Morocco, we built houses here, and they are now useless.

After their return, only a few migrants realized the investment projects they initially contemplated. Besides a lack of money, experience, and interest, administrative and institutional constraints were the main reasons for not pursuing such projects.

Motivations and experiences of return migrants

Almost all returnees declared that they came back to Morocco on their own initiative, that their return has been relatively unproblematic, and that they do not regret their decision, at least not for themselves. As we noted before, supporting the family was the main driving factor behind migrants' departure to Europe, and most of them did not reunify their families. Hence, after their working life ended, there was no reason for those who did not reunify their family to stay in Europe. They had longed to return to Morocco and expressed happiness at being home to enjoy their retirement and be reunited with their family. Almost none of them wish to settle in Europe again. One of the interviewees described the return decision as follows:

Why did I return? I am old, I can't work anymore. Do you want me to die there? I went to France to work and I had always in mind to return. Morocco is my country, my land, and my home. I'm now old and retired and all I want is to relax. Living in Europe means living in nostalgia, it's hard to live far from the family. I am happy to be home, to live with my family.

In order to explain the returnees' statements about the unproblematic character of their return, it is important to stress that the sample is biased toward those migrants who maintained strong links with Morocco and who returned voluntarily.⁵ The fact that the large majority of them did not reunify their families in Europe obviously facilitated the return process. However, the statements by male returnees might reflect a degree of self-justification and might also conceal the lack of agency of their spouses and/or children in the return migration decision and, in the case of those returning as a family, the sometimes less voluntary nature of the return of the other family members.

Relatively few returnees expressed concern about their future financial situation. Their state pensions or social (e.g., disability) benefits, sometimes supplemented by earnings from one or more investments, are generally sufficient to live comfortably in rural Morocco, where costs of living are much lower than in Europe. As two interviewees stated:

I worked many years and now I am retired, *hamdulillah*. It was a good experience although we had hard times. You have to sacrifice if you want to live in good conditions. When I was in Europe, I built some houses here and now I have sufficient money for the rest of my life and my family.

I'm retired and happy to be home. With the amount of money I now receive, it is difficult to live in Europe. Everything is expensive, you cannot buy anything for one euro, you have to pay a lot just for the house. In Morocco daily life is cheap, I can live here like a king.

Although the returnees generally experienced a fairly smooth re-adaptation, this does not mean that their return was simply a matter of “going home.” As other studies on return migration have shown, feelings of belonging needed to be renegotiated upon return, both at the community and family level (Albers 2005; de Bree et al. 2010). Migrants’ decades-long stay in Europe nurtured social norms and expectations that often led to some disappointment upon their return. Some returnees complained about lack of trust, the sharp socioeconomic inequalities, the poor work ethic, and what they perceived as the selfish, materialistic mentality of Moroccans in general and public authorities in particular, as the following statements exemplify:

If you want to succeed in life, you need to be patient with people. I learned how to be honest with people but it is not working here in Morocco. If you want to practice what you learned there, you will be the enemy of the people here. So you have to swim with the current, not against the current.

The main problem I have is with the administration. What I was used to in Europe is totally different than what I see here. In Europe, you can fix your papers just in one day, they serve you in a nice way and people are treated equally. If you are standing in a queue, the first one is the first one, no matter if you are an immigrant or native. The opposite holds in Morocco, there are no rights, rich people are dominating, that’s what I don’t like here. If you want to have just one document, it takes many days. They don’t appreciate human beings. Here in Morocco, keep your dog hungry and he will follow you, this is the policy of Morocco.

The negative experiences of the interviewed returnees with the Moroccan public authorities in particular have to be put in perspective, as such feelings are obviously not exclusive to returnees. Additionally, exposure to European media and public discourse is likely to have influenced migrants’ attitudes toward Moroccan lifestyle and bureaucracy. Also, migrants might attempt to present themselves as more modern and superior by dissociating themselves from Moroccan authorities and society. Furthermore, returnees were explicitly asked about the main problems they faced after their return and the main differences between Europe and Morocco.

At the family level, returnees sometimes experience difficulties regaining a position in the family. The mother–child relationship evolved during the father’s long absence. For some sons the father’s absence entailed more rights and greater freedom of movement. Unpleasant moments and irritations occur when the father wants to regain the pivotal role in the family. As one of the interviewed children stated:

We are not free anymore to act as we did with our mother. He is thinking in another way, he executes his orders and he is like a dictator in his arguments. He thinks he is the only one who knows more about the family. In reality, he doesn’t know us well but we have to respect him because he has the financial power. He also doesn’t like that he gets less attention than my mum. For example, sometimes we have fun with our mum in the kitchen and he is sitting alone in the living room. Then, when we sit together for the dinner, he becomes angry, leaves the room to sleep because there is no conversation with him like we have with our mum.

Although most of the interviewed children were happy their father had finally come home, this decision has frequently not been to their own benefit. The most common conflicts seem to revolve around the father’s previous decision not to bring his family to Europe. As we argued above, many fathers had thought it would be preferable to offer their children a better, often higher education, with the expectation of greater employment prospects in Morocco. However, this strategy often failed because it has become increasingly difficult for Moroccan university graduates (*licenciés*) to find a job as a consequence of budget cuts in the public

sector, the general economic recession, misguided educational policies, the mediocre quality of higher education, and the rise in the number of young people holding higher degrees. Unemployment rates among more highly educated people in households of international migrants range from 18 to 25 percent.

Many jobless university graduates returned from the cities where they studied to the Todgha valley to live with their families. This is generally perceived as an extremely frustrating if not humiliating experience. The graduates find it dishonorable to remain dependent on their parents and to be unable to marry. Boredom and bitterness often characterize their existence. The unemployed sons (and sometimes daughters) of return migrants tend to resent their fathers for not allowing them to join them in Europe, and are often obsessed by the wish to migrate themselves, as these two comments indicate:

What is hurting me, and I still remember, is that one time my father came with his boss to Morocco and the boss said: "I will arrange everything so that you can bring your family to France" but my father refused. He was always giving the same reasons: "There is nothing to do in Europe, it is hard to live there, difficult to find a good job, I don't want to see you suffer as I did. It is better to stay here, to focus on education, I am sure you will get a good job here in Morocco." It was easy to convince us when we were still young. But those reasons are now making me upset because I'm looking to my generation that is living in Europe. They have a well-paid job, especially those with a diploma, not like here. I regret all the years I spent here without any result, always quarrels at home. I also want to have a good life and safe future. Life here is dead, nothing to do. Spain or France, it doesn't matter, I just want to be out of Morocco.

My father told us about the hard time they were having in Europe, how they sacrificed in order to give their family a better life. At that time, we thought that he knew what's the best for us. But as you can see, there is nothing to do here, no jobs, low salary. As a child I was proud of my father. Now I realize that he was making a big mistake not to bring us to Europe. We are like cat and mouse, every time arguing and trying to avoid him. The quarrels and discussions about this subject will always be there.

Confronted with the frustrated ambitions of their children, who find themselves in a situation of "involuntary immobility" (Carling 2002), some returnees regret their decision not to reunify their families in Europe:

To be honest, I regret I did not take my family to Europe, we did not know that life would change in such a fast way. If I did so, my sons could have a good job and be out of the misery. Now they have a diploma and they are doing nothing. Those who brought their children enjoy four or five salaries. If you have a job and respect their law, life in Europe is much better than here.

The majority, however, stick to the opinion that their decision to leave the family behind was the right one. In justification, they cite problems faced by reunited migrant households in Europe, the increased discrimination in the labor market, racism (particularly toward Muslims), the current less favorable employment opportunities in Europe, and the sharp contrast between expectations young people have of Europe and migrants' own experiences:

The problem of young people is that they think Europe is paradise. They are only dreaming and looking to nice cars and they think that immigrants have a lot of money, but they don't realize that it takes a long time and hard work. When you see that someone is having something, a car or a house, you should ask yourself how he managed to get those things. I

was patient and working hard. Those two characteristics make one's future, also here, no matter whether or not you went to school. If you want to go from the first floor to the second floor, you have to use stairs. But the problem is that they are not listening to us.

Some of the interviewed returnees held a pessimistic view of the chances of success in Europe among Moroccan jobless youth, but also complained about young people's refusal to work in Morocco:

How can they be successful in Europe if they are not working here? Over there, it's hard, you have to wake up early in the morning, you have to be on time, but they are sleeping here till 10, having breakfast and going to the [town] centre. During lunch time they are coming back home to eat, take a nap, and then they are going out again till they want to eat couscous. If you work here, you will work there as well. But if you are a loser here, you will be a loser there, I saw so many cases.

Despite these assessments by their fathers, a large proportion of adult children want to emigrate. They believe that it is now their turn to experience life in Europe. If they cannot go to Europe through a job contract or marriage, they frequently try to emigrate illegally, sometimes with financial help from the family. Many young men (and, increasingly, women) who now emigrate to Italy and Spain, often irregularly, are children of relatively well-off, elderly return migrants who decided not to reunify their families.

Patterns and rationale of emerging pendulum migration

In contrast to migrants who did not reunify their families, migrants who did so typically do not return to Morocco toward the end of their working years. The main reason is the reluctance of migrants' spouses and, in particular, children to return. This observation indicates that migration to Europe (in the case of women) and the transition from youth to maturity (in the case of children) have strengthened women's and children's position within the family and, hence, their negotiating power with regard to subsequent moves—including the decision not to return. Women often do not want to return owing to fear of restriction in their freedom of movement and their wish to live close to their children and grandchildren in Europe. Migrants' children generally oppose the idea of returning because they anticipate only limited prospects and problems of integration in Morocco. While mothers and children often form a "non-return" coalition, most migrants themselves also realize that return of their children is not viable in view of the superior educational and job opportunities in Europe.

Instead of definitively going back to Morocco, a substantial and apparently growing group of elderly "non-permanent returnees" have developed multi-local residential strategies, in which they spend several months per year in Morocco, while retaining legal residence in Europe. The restrictive European immigration policies imply that migrants have little incentive to give up their residency rights. Maintaining residency in Europe is often also required to maintain access to various social benefits. In practice, obtaining dual citizenship is perceived as the surest way to secure residency and other rights. The majority of these pendulum migrants are men, who typically leave their spouse and children behind in Europe for shorter or longer trips back to Morocco. However, aging migrant women with grown children seem to increasingly join their spouses for extended "holiday" stays in Morocco, which might last several months.

While social ties, nostalgia, and perceived health benefits (such as the warmer climate in the case of rheumatism, which is often cited by migrants) play an important role in migrants' long stays in Morocco, some of these "transnational commuters" are active in trade in which they bring consumer goods or cars from Europe, and take back from the Todgha local products such as olive oil. Other migrants give people paid rides back to Europe or sometimes smuggle new migrants across the Gibraltar Strait in their vans.

It is worth noting that pendulum migration is not confined to migrants who reunified their families in Europe. Some aging migrants who did not reunify their families and have not returned commute between the destination country and their families left behind in Morocco. Moreover, a substantial proportion of the elderly returnees go back to Europe on a regular basis, to visit family and friends or to do business, but also to satisfy a legal requirement to maintain residency and social security rights in Europe.

Conclusion

This study has explored the role of intra-household power inequalities and conflicts in migration decisionmaking, as well as the effects of migration decisions on inequalities. Insight was gained through a qualitative case study among first-generation, aging Moroccan migrants born in the Todgha valley. While drawing on a variety of empirical sources as well, the methodology of this study contains some shortcomings. This particularly pertains to the potentially biased sample of return migrants in Morocco. Because interviews were conducted in Morocco, the sample is biased toward those migrants who returned and misses most migrants who permanently settled in Europe and return only occasionally. Assuming that the nature of migration decisionmaking is linked to the return rate, this study cannot identify all aspects of migration decisionmaking. Ideally, future research should aim at interviewing matched samples of migrants at the origin and the destination.

Despite the limited scope of this study, our findings clearly highlight some weaknesses and contradictions in the existing migration literature and suggest challenges for future research. The evidence presented here seems to support the general hypothesis of the new economics of labor migration that migration from developing to developed countries is often part of broader livelihood strategies pursued by households that tend to benefit collectively from migration through significant improvements in standards of living. From a non-material point of view, however, emigration appears to be less beneficial to some or all household members: while the family members left behind miss their husbands and fathers, the migrants often lead a solitary existence. Moreover, although all household members reap some material benefits from migration, this does not mean that these benefits are equally distributed within households or that labor migration and possible subsequent moves by other household members are the outcome of consensus among all household members. To the contrary, migration decisions often seem to reflect intra-household inequalities along lines of gender and generation.

Some migrants who left in the 1960s and 1970s believed they would do better to invest in Morocco and in their children's education there. For this reason, along with fear that their wives and offspring would become Westernized and lose their religious faith by living in Europe, they did not reunify their family. The majority of these migrants also decided unilaterally to return home toward the end of their working life. However, their unilateral decision to return also blocked legal entry into Europe for younger family members, an

outcome that has generated considerable intergenerational tensions within families. Because of large-scale unemployment and the lack of prospects in Morocco, the unemployed sons (and sometimes daughters) tend to resent their fathers for not bringing them to Europe.

The majority of labor migrants, however, *did* bring their families to Europe. Although they had always cherished the wish to return after retirement, most of them do *not* return permanently, not least because their children (who were mostly raised and educated in Europe) and spouses (who generally enjoy more legal rights and social freedoms abroad) generally oppose the idea of returning. The limited social and economic opportunities in Morocco and the integration of migrants' children in European societies may explain why the expectation of returning as a family has vanished for most migrants who reunified their households in Europe.

Instead of a definite return, a growing number of aging Moroccan migrants developed specific forms of pendulum migratory behavior. While officially residing abroad, and often living on social security benefits and pensions, they return to live in Morocco for several months per year. Pendulum migration by elderly Moroccan migrants can be interpreted as a strategy to reconcile the reluctance of children and spouses living in Europe to return to Morocco and the interest migrants have in maintaining social and economic ties with Morocco while maintaining a firm legal, social, and economic foothold in Europe to avoid falling back into poverty. This emerging form of transnational mobility defies conventional migration categories since these migrants can be classified neither as permanent settlers nor as returnees, and are usually ignored by official migration statistics. Because of these mobility patterns of transnational commuting, classic distinctions between permanent and return migration are becoming increasingly blurred.

In fact, a striking reversal of residential strategies has evolved over time. Whereas in the 1960s and 1970s a sizable proportion of male guestworkers left their families behind in Morocco and visited them during their summer holidays, we now witness the re-emergence of transnational, multi-local households after a phase of reunification in Europe, in which elderly migrant workers leave their spouses and children behind in Europe for part of the year. In both cases, it is the migrant's spouse who maintains the domestic and kin-keeping role. There is one major difference, however. While women and children have an inferior position vis-à-vis their spouses and fathers as well as in the decision concerning their own migration to Europe through family reunification, they do exert substantial influence on the decision to stay in Europe, balanced by visits to Morocco for shorter or longer trips instead of returning permanently.

The results of this study are relevant to migration research and theory. First, they suggest that more attention has to be paid to the non-material consequences of migration. While this study provides support for the hypothesis that migration is part of livelihood-improvement strategies pursued by households, it has also shown that migration decisionmaking is typically not egalitarian. In particular, unilateral decisions by migrants not to reunify families can have negative consequences and can be the source of conflicts and tensions. On the other hand, family reunification can empower women and children, who generally oppose return, and it seems to have pushed many men into strategies of pendulum migration. Without rejecting the household as a unit of research, our findings point to the need to also take into account intra-household power inequalities, tensions, and conflicts of interest related to migration behavior.

The exploratory findings presented in this study also lead to new research questions. For instance, are our findings exclusively applicable to guestworker migration or to other types as well? While migration to Europe was part of broader household strategies, which family members dominate which type of migration decisions? Which types of migration are most associated with intra-family conflicts? And will pendulum migration be a sustainable alternative to either permanent settlement or return, or is it a temporary phenomenon that will persist only as long as income and health allow migrants to carry it out?

Appendix

Data and methods

Following an initial participatory appraisal, survey data were collected by the first author between September 1998 and June 2000 among 507 households containing 3,801 individuals, including 237 international (150 current and 87 returned) migrants, in conjunction with continuous participant observation (see de Haas 2006). The household survey was conducted in six villages located across the Todgha valley. The respondents were selected on the basis of a spatially clustered sample, such that the survey covered the different migratory, ethnic, agricultural, and geographical settings in the valley.

The questionnaire contained precoded and some open-ended questions on demographic household composition, individual migration histories, educational levels, activity status, as well as household-level questions on land and livestock ownership, remittances and non-remittance income, expenditures, and investments. Because of the importance of trust, the survey was largely conducted by research assistants from the same ethnic groups as the respondents. We determined that, in this context, the advantages of using “insiders” outweighed the potential disadvantages of such an approach. Given local ethnic rivalries, the quality of responses would probably have suffered from appointing “outsider” assistants from other ethnic groups. Interviewers were trained and supervised in the field by the first author, and the questionnaire was tested and revised numerous times. Most interviews did not last longer than one hour, in order to minimize respondent fatigue. Some questions that proved to be too sensitive or difficult to answer had to be omitted. Surveys were conducted with self-declared household heads, overwhelmingly men. The non-response rate was 5 percent.

In 1999, open interviews were conducted with 20 migrants aged 30–65 years who were on return visits during the summer holidays. Additional qualitative data were collected through 27 open interviews (25 men, 2 women) among prospective and return migrants in 2003. These interviews were conducted in French and Moroccan colloquial Arabic by the first author, regularly aided by assistants if translation was needed. Chance meetings during participant observation (1998–2000) and snowball sampling (for other interview rounds) were used to identify respondents for the open interviews. The goal of the open interviews was to gain further insight into the respondents’ migration histories, their motives for migrating, their experiences, and future plans concerning migration. It offered the opportunity to develop a more complete understanding of why migrants make certain migration decisions. Because almost all interviews were conducted with men and because we sought insight into the gendered impacts of migration, in 1999 semi-structured interviews took place with 12 women (aged 26–50) married to international migrants and 20 women (aged 22–60) married to non-migrants in one village (van Rooij 2000). Respondents were approached informally through local contacts. Because most women did not speak French, these interviews were conducted with the help of a local female interpreter. During three months of fieldwork, the female interviewer stayed with a guest family in the village. All interviews were conducted in the women’s homes in the absence of men. The interviews focused on women’s daily lives, tasks, and responsibilities, their involvement in migration decisionmaking, and how their lives had changed after the migration (and/or return) of the husbands.

In 2007 and 2008, semi-structured interviews were guided by the second author with 25 male return migrants (aged 54–73) and 26 sons of return migrants (aged 20–31). The participants were recruited using the snowball method and through personal contacts of the interviewer.

To ensure the quality of data, they were interviewed by a local male community member in their Berber language (Tamazight) with regular debriefings with the second author. The questionnaire was circulated among several local community members in advance before drafting a final version. All interviews were recorded and, after translation into English, transcribed verbatim. These interviews covered a range of topics related to three stages of migrants'/fathers' migration history—the situation before emigration, settlement in Europe and linkages with home country, and the situation after return—with a particular emphasis on experiences, attitudes, and perceptions related to intra-household tensions and conflicts of interest.

Notes

The recruitment of respondents and translation of the interviews were done by Jamal Ouahi, a local graduate student who is fluent in English. We are very grateful for his generous efforts.

1 In 2008, one Moroccan dirham was equal to about 0.10 euro.

2 However, there is likely to be a selection bias because migrants who have not reunified their households also tend to have more negative experiences living and working in Europe.

3 The dominance of men in household decisionmaking does not automatically imply full consensus among male adult members. Power inequalities, conflicts, and competition might exist both between generations and between siblings. However, these topics were beyond the scope of this study.

4 Adult children generally do not have the right to immigrate to European countries on the legal basis of family reunification.

5 This contrasts with the situation of migrants who returned as a consequence of failing to find work or with the experiences of women and children, who often had little say in the return migration process (cf. de Bree et al. 2010).

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