

**Migration and Development:  
Lessons from the Moroccan Experience**

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## **Introduction: The migration and development debate**

After decades of pessimism and concerns on brain drain and disbelief in the development role of remittances, since 2000 there has been a truly remarkable renaissance in optimism and the overall interest in the issue of migration and development among governments, development agencies such as the UK Department for International Development international financial institutions such as the World Bank. Also governments of developing countries have put renewed hopes on migrants as potential investors and actors of development. Surging remittances, in particular, are often believed to be a more effective instrument for income redistribution, poverty reduction and economic growth than large, bureaucratic development programs or development aid (de Haas 2010; Jones 1998; Kapur 2003; Ratha 2003).

This raises the fundamental question whether the recent shift towards optimistic views in policy and academia reflects a veritable change in development impacts of migration, the use of better or other methodological and analytical tools to analyse this impact, or rather reflects a general paradigm shift in research and policy away from dependency and state-centrist to neo-classical and neo-liberal views (de Haas 2010). In fact, it seems hard to deny that ideological factors have played a major role, and it is certainly not the first time that the pendulum has shifted between pessimistic and optimistic views, and that these were driven by parallel ideological shifts.

Over the past five decades, the impact of migration on development in migrant sending communities and countries has been the subject of heated debate, opposing views of the “migration optimists” and “migration pessimists” (cf. Taylor 1999). This divide in views on migration and development reflects deeper paradigmatic divisions in social theory (i.e., functionalist versus structuralist paradigms) and development theory (i.e., balanced growth versus asymmetric development paradigms). To a considerable extent, this also reflects ideological divisions between state-centrist and what is usually referred to as “neoliberal” views.

The debate on migration and development has swung back and forth like a pendulum, from optimistic views in the 1950s and 1960s, to neo-Marxist pessimism over the 1970s and 1980s, towards more nuanced and pluralist views in the 1990s. Such shifts in the migration and development debate should be primarily seen as part of more general paradigm shifts in development theory. However, it is important to note that shifts in academic thinking have been paralleled by ideological shifts; which questions the ‘scientific’ underpinnings of what can be characterized as mood shifts in migration and development thinking.

Within regards to this new migration and development optimism, Kapur (2003) has pointed at the ideological roots of recent “remittance euphoria”. He argued that remittances strike the right cognitive chords, and fit in with a communitarian, “third way” approach, exemplifying the principle of self-help: “Immigrants, rather than governments, then become the biggest provider of “foreign aid” (Kapur 2003:10). This has certainly increased the attraction of remittances for neoliberal development ideologies prescribing less state intervention and more room for market forces. Curiously, the idea of migrants helping themselves also fits well within ideas about

“development from below”, which is traditionally more associated with left-wing agendas.

On the other hand, the quality and quantity of empirical research on migration, remittances and development has enormously improved over the past decade. New evidence has challenged prior work, which has been “unduly pessimistic about the prospects for development as a result of international migration, largely because it has failed to take into account the complex, often indirect ways that migration and remittances influence the economic status of households and the communities that contain them” (Taylor et al 1996a; b). Over the previous decades, a growing number of empirical studies have countered pessimistic views on migration and development. Earlier (Taylor et al 1996a; b) and more recent (cf. Agunias 2006; de Haas 2007c; Katseli et al 2006; Özden & Schiff 2005; Rapoport & Docquier 2005) reviews of the literature have pointed to the *potentially* positive role of migrants and remittances in social, economic and political development in origin communities and societies.

For instance, the universality of the brain drain hypothesis has been seriously questioned, making room for a much more nuanced picture. Not all migrants are highly skilled and the brain drain seems to be truly massive only in a minority of, generally small and/or very poor, countries. Furthermore, a brain drain *can* be accompanied by a significant brain gain, because the prospect of moving abroad may stimulate the incentive to study among stay-behinds (Lowell & Findlay 2002; Stark et al 1997; WorldBank 2005). Also remittances do not *necessarily* lead to dependency and economic decline in origin communities and countries, but under favourable circumstances, remittance expenditure can not only improve living standards but also stimulate broader economic growth in origin countries.

If anything, the accumulated evidence points to the diverse nature of migration impacts and in particular their contingency on *more general development conditions*. While in some regions and countries, migration has reinforced already positive development trends, elsewhere migration might have contributed to sustaining and even improving the livelihoods of migrants and their families, but has done little to encourage national development or has even reinforced sluggish economic growth and maintained the political status quo frequently dominated by authoritarianism and misguided development policy.

This chapter will use to Moroccan migration and development experience to further explore and illustrate this point. The international debate on migration and development is mainly based on the Mexican experience and, to a lesser extent, the experiences of some Asian countries such as the Philippines, China and India. This is unfortunate, because Morocco is an emigration country and emigration state *par excellence*. Since the 1960s, Moroccan migration has gained momentum, and since the late 1990s Morocco has overtaken Turkey as the *prima source* country of migrants to Europe (see figure 2). Over 3 million people of Moroccan descent (out of a total population of about 32 million) are currently believed to live abroad, although this includes the second generation holding Moroccan citizenship. Receiving an estimated \$6.9 billion in remittances in 2008, remittances account for about 7.8 percent of Morocco’s GDP and cover over half of the country’s trade deficit. This is why it is somehow surprising why the Moroccan case has been relatively neglected in the international migration and development debate.

The Moroccan experience is also interesting because migration has been an integral part of the Moroccan government's national development strategy since decades. Since the 1960s, the Moroccan state has integrated migration in its national development policies, including policies aiming to increase remittances, migrant investments and create ties with the burgeoning Moroccan diaspora. What makes the Morocco-EU case also interesting is that, since the 1970s and 1980s, many EU receiving states also have taken an active interest in the migration and development. These policies, which are also known as *co-development* policies (cf. Lacroix 2005), have taken diverse forms, but generally link return and return and temporary migration to development. Unfortunately, the successes and, particularly, failures, of such past policies are systematically ignored in the current migration and development debate. This chapter will assess the diverse ways in which Moroccan migration have impacted upon and interacted with wider processes of social and economic development, and, in particular, how public policies of receiving and sending states have affected development impacts in positive, negative or perhaps rather insignificant ways.

### **Moroccan migration: From 'Guest Workers' to Settlers**

Over the past four decades, Morocco has evolved into one of the world's leading emigration countries. Since the mid-1960s, Morocco has experienced large-scale migration of mostly unskilled migrants to Western Europe. Moroccan labour migration to France was rooted in migration patterns that emerged in colonial times. The French occupation of Morocco (1912 to 1956) marked the beginning of migration to France. Yet this colonial migration was only modest compared with the 1962-1972 decade, when the magnitude and geographical scope of Moroccan emigration dramatically expanded. Strong economic growth in Western Europe in the 1960s resulted in great demand for low-skilled labour. Morocco signed labour recruitment agreements with the former West Germany (1963), France (1963), Belgium (1964), and the Netherlands (1969). This was the onset of a spatial diversification of Moroccan emigration, increasingly away from France.

Although the Moroccan state, most receiving states, and most migrants themselves expected that this migration was temporary, many 'guest workers' did not return, but ended up settling permanently. The 1973 Oil Crisis radically changed political and economic conditions in Morocco and receiving countries. Morocco suffered even more than the European countries from the global economic downturn. The economic situation in Morocco deteriorated and, following two failed coups d'état against King Hassan II in 1971 and 1972, the country also entered into a period of increasing political instability and repression. Simultaneously confronted with a progressive tightening of immigration policies in Europe, many migrants decided to stay on the safe, European, side of the Mediterranean. Large-scale family reunification marked this shift towards permanent settlement. The recruitment freezes and restrictive immigration policies following the 1973 Oil Crisis and economic recessions in the early 1980s did not curb immigration. Ironically, immigration restrictions have rather led to decreased return and circular migration and have effectively pushed migrants

into permanent settlement. To illustrate this, return migration rates among Moroccans are among the lowest, and naturalisation rates are among the highest, of all immigrant groups in Europe (de Haas 2007b).

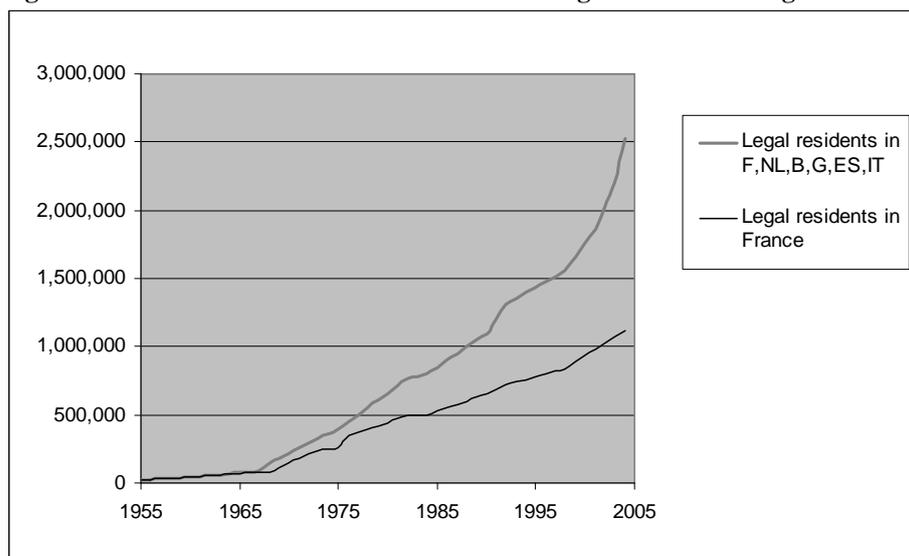
A second consequence of the restrictive immigration policies combined with renewed economic growth in Europe in the 1990s was an increase of undocumented migration after 1990s, which was particularly directed at the new destination countries of Italy and Spain, where there was a high demand for unskilled migrant labour. An increasing proportion of independent labour migrants to Southern Europe are women who work as domestic workers, nannies, cleaners, or in agriculture and small industries. Undocumented migrants often managed to obtain residence permits through legalisations or marriage with partners in the destination countries. Between 1980 and 2004, the combined Moroccan population officially residing in Spain and Italy increased from about 20,000 to 650,000.

While family reunification was largely complete at the end of the 1980s, family formation as the result of new marriages between the second generation and native Moroccans gained significance as the major source of new migration from Morocco to the classic destination countries in north-West Europe over the 1990s (Reniers 1999; Reniers 2001). While networks continued to facilitate family and undocumented migration, there is sustained demand for labour migration, particularly in Italy and Spain. These factors help to explain why policies by receiving states aiming to curb migration seem to have had only limited effect.

The combined effects of family reunification, family formation, natural increase, undocumented migration, and new labour migration to southern Europe explain the tenfold increase of the number of Moroccan citizens living abroad from 300,000 in 1972, on the eve of the recruitment freeze, to at least 3 million at the turn of the century. This does not include undocumented migrants as well as the at least 280,000 Moroccans living in Arab countries and the approximately 700,000 Jews of Moroccan descent living in Israel. Figure 1 illustrates the remarkably increase of the Moroccan migrant stock living in the main European receiving countries since the late 1960s as well as the decreasing spatial focus on France. Between 1974 and 2004 Moroccan expatriate communities in Europe have increased at an average rate of 72,000 people per year in defiance of the increasingly restrictive immigration policies; although part of this increase represents natural growth.

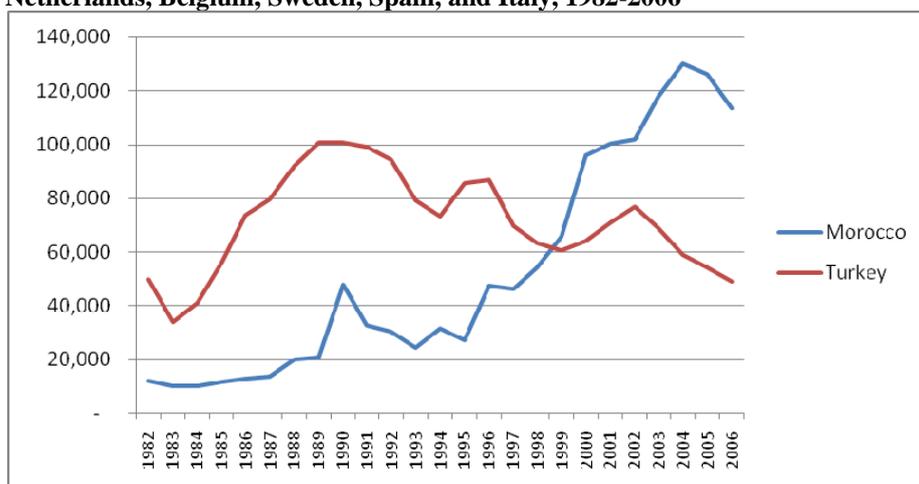
Nowadays, Moroccans form not only one of largest, but also one of the most dispersed migrant communities in Western Europe. In 2004, France was still home to the largest legally residing population of Moroccan descent (more than 1,100,000), followed by Spain (424,000), the Netherlands (300,000), Italy (299,000), Belgium (293,000), and Germany (102,000). Smaller but rapidly growing communities of higher-skilled migrants live in the United States (100,000) and Canada (78,000) (consular data cited in Fargues et al 2005).

**Figure 1. Evolution of Moroccan descendants living in main receiving countries 1955-2004**



Source: Various sources in de Haas 2007b

**Figure 2. Registered immigration from Turkey, Morocco and Egypt to Germany, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Sweden, Spain, and Italy, 1982-2006**



Source: United Nations Population Division: International Migration Flows to and from Selected Countries: The 2005 and 2008 Revisions (inflows until 1993 exclude France)

**Table 1. Moroccan citizens residing abroad (2004)**

<i>Country</i>		<i>Country</i>	
France	1,113,176	Algeria	79,790
Netherlands	300,332	Libya	120,000
Germany	102,000	Tunisia	25,637
Belgium	293,097	Other Arab countries	57,345
Spain	423,933		
Italy	298,949	US	100,000
UK	35,000	Canada	77,713
Other European	50,384		
		Other	11,734
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,616,871</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>472,219</b>

Source: Consular data; in Fargues 2005: 231-232.

## **Morocco migration and development policies**

### ***Migration and remittances as a national development strategy***

Ever since the start of large-scale migration, Morocco has pursued a persistent policy of openly or tacitly stimulating migration as a development tool. Throughout the post-independence period, the Moroccan state has actively stimulated international out-migration for political and economic reasons. International migration was seen as a “safety valve” to prevent political tensions in certain rural, predominantly Berber areas (Rif, Sous and south-eastern oases), which have a rebellious reputation vis-à-vis the central ‘Arab’ state. These policies were mainly pursued through selective passport issuance policies and directing recruiters to these areas (de Haas 2007a; De Mas 1978).

Besides a political instrument, migration was also seen as a tool for national economic development. The utility of migration was primarily seen through the skills and knowledge that migrants were expected to acquire by working and studying abroad. Migration which was initially thought to be temporary, and return migrants were widely expected to play a key role in modernising the Moroccan economy and triggering investments. However, the belief that migrants would be particular actors of change gradually faded over the 1970s. Efforts to stimulate returned migration and migrants’ investments programs generally failed, mainly because of an unfavourable investment climate and a general distrust among migrants in government agencies (Berriane & Aderghal 2009; Fadloullah et al 2000; Obdeijn 1993). This declining faith in migrants as development actors echoed a broader international mood shift, characterised by increasing scepticism leading public officials to acclaim that “migration and development, nobody believes that anymore” (cf. Taylor et al 1996a: 401).

This did not take away the fact that, in the meantime, remittances had become increasingly important in sustaining livelihoods of millions of Moroccans, particularly in rural areas. The Moroccan state saw this as vital to maintaining political stability and preventing popular unrest. However, because the Moroccan government gradually realised that most migrants would not return, Moroccan policies have increasingly focused on policies aiming at securing remittances, stimulating investments by migrants as well as aimed at fostering bonds between migrants and the real or imagined Moroccan “homeland”.

In contrast to policies aiming to stimulate investments by migrants, policies to increase remittance transfers through the creation of a network of consulates, post offices and bank branches abroad over the 1970s and 1980s have been rather successful. At the same time, the Moroccan state attempted to maintain a tight control on migrant communities in Europe through a network of a control and spying networks abroad. Until the early 1990s, the state actively discouraged migrants’ integration in the receiving countries, out of a fear that migrants would form a political opposition “from outside”. Integration was also perceived as endangering the vital remittance transfers (de Haas & Plug 2006).

### ***From controlling emigrants to courting the diaspora***

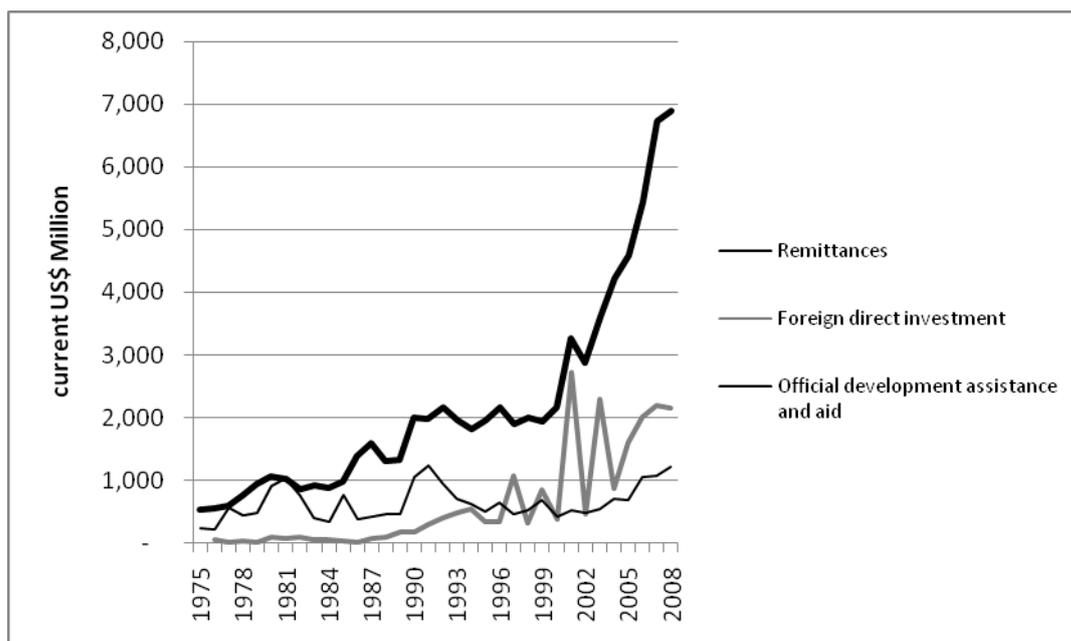
However, an ominous stagnation in remittances in the 1990s and a growing consciousness that repressive policies alienated migrants rather than bound them closer to the Moroccan state prompted the Moroccan state to adopt a more positive attitude (de Haas & Plug 2006). This concurred with a process of relative political liberalisation and a substantial improvement of Morocco's human rights record. Furthermore, a neoclassical turn in economic policies implied deregulation and opening up of the Moroccan economy. After years of scepticism, this also created renewed hope in the role migrants may play in encouraging foreign direct investment.

This broader political shift towards liberalizations also has created room for more positive attitude towards naturalization, dual citizenship and debates about voting rights for migrants abroad. In a rather striking reversal of views, integration of migrants is no longer officially seen as a danger, but as a potentially beneficial process which enables migrants to send more money home and to invest. Increasing general civic liberties also implied more freedom for migrants to establish Berber, cultural and "home town" associations (cf. Lacroix 2005). However, the Moroccan state has not given up a number of policy instruments to exert a certain level of control. This is most evident in Morocco's systematic opposition against Moroccan descendants in Europe relinquishing Moroccan citizenship.

Besides establishing a ministry for Moroccans residing abroad, the Moroccan state the *Fondation Hassan II pour les Marocains Résidant à l'Étranger*, which aims to reinforce its links with Moroccan emigrants. In the 1990s, the state also started to clamp down on the long delays, corruption and harassment by state officials migrants-on-vacation used to experience at the borders and inside Morocco. This is likely to have contributed to the enormous increase in the number of migrants entering Morocco's northern harbours during the summer holidays from 848,000 in 1993 to 2.2 million in 2003. On the economic side, new monetary policies have been applied in Morocco since the end of the 1980s, involving the lifting of restrictions on exchange and on the repatriation of money. Remittances have further been encouraged through fiscal policies favouring migrants (Refass 1999).

At first glance, the new Moroccan policies towards migrants and remittances seem to have reversed the earlier stagnation in remittances. In 2001, a spectacular increase in remittances occurred to \$3.3 billion from \$2.2 in 2000. After a minor relapse in 2002, remittances have shown a continuing steep upward trend in subsequent years, to reach an unprecedented level of \$6.9 billion in 2008 (see figure 2). However, the structural solidity of Moroccan remittances should *primarily* be explained by the unforeseen persistence of migration to north-western Europe; the strength of transnational links between migrants and 'stay behinds'; and, last but not least, new labour migration towards Spain, Italy and North America. Also the huge increase in the number of migrants visiting Morocco is likely to have contributed to increasing remittances, as Moroccan remittance figures include cash changed against Moroccan Dirhams by migrants during visits to Morocco.

**Figure 2. Total volume of official remittance, ODA and FDI flows to Morocco (1960-2003)**



Source: World Development Indicators database, World Bank.

### *Remittances policies as a safety valve*

Thus, for the Moroccan government, encouragement of new out-migration and stimulating holiday visits and other forms of largely circular mobility have turned out to be effective instruments for also securing remittances. While the Moroccan government has been encouraging new outmigration since the 1980s through lifting restrictions on passport issuance, it has also encouraged migrants to obtain foreign citizenship while retaining their (dual) Moroccan citizenship as a strategy to optimise circulation while simultaneously preventing the alienation of migrants and their descendants. Also the targeted policies to attract remittances, the expansion of financial services, low inflation and the absence of a large black market for foreign exchange have stimulated remittances. This explains why Morocco has been relatively successful in directing remittances through official channels.

For the Moroccan state, remittances are a crucial and relatively stable source of foreign exchange and have become a vital element in sustaining Morocco's balance of payments. Remittances have proved to be a substantially higher and less volatile source of foreign exchange than official development assistance (ODA) and foreign direct investment (FDI) (see also figure 2). However, the observation that Moroccan emigration *and* remittances have steadily increased over the last 50 years does not say anything about the *impacts* of remittances. We have already seen that the general migration and development debate offers to diametrically opposed hypotheses. After all, from a theoretical point of view, migration and remittances can lead to positive and negative development outcomes. On the one hand, one can argue that remittances and migrants' investments stimulate economic growth or national development. Alternatively, one might also argue that remittance dependency can postpone necessary reform and highlights unfavourable investment conditions.

However, in reality the development impacts of migration and remittances are likely to be more diverse across places, regions, social groups and through time. In order to understand the factors explaining this diversity of impacts for the case of Morocco, we have to turn to the empirical literature.

## **Empirical evidence on Moroccan migration impacts**

### ***Migration as an accelerating force in regional economic development***

For migrants and their families, international migration is often an extremely effective way of improving their financial situation and living conditions. It has been estimated that 1.17 million out of 30 million Moroccans would fall back to absolute poverty without international remittances (Teto 2001). In regions with high international out-migration, the contribution of remittances to household income growth can be far higher (Berriane & Aderghal 2009; Schoorl et al 2000). In several communities in Morocco's three main migration belts — the Rif Mountains, the Sous valley and southern oases — between one fifth to over a half of all households have at least one member who has migrated abroad (Berriane & Aderghal 2009; de Haas 2006; Schoorl et al 2000).

As in the international literature, pessimism has long pervaded the Moroccan literature. It is often stated that remittances are primarily used for daily expenses, conspicuous consumption and 'non-productive' investments, such as the construction of palatial houses — and, most importantly, that such expenses spur inflation and do little to generate employment and economic growth. In many instances, it is argued, migrant households even withdraw from productive activities in and outside agriculture. This is believed to lead to a dangerous, passive dependency on remittance income (Fadlollah et al 2000; Hamdouch et al 1979; Lazaar 1987; Mezdoor 1993).

However, the empirical and analytical basis of such assertions seems to be rather shaky. Claims that remittances are mostly spent for conspicuous consumption (e.g., luxury houses, videos, television, satellite dishes, cars) are often not based on systematic data collection and analysis (cf. Ait Hamza, 1988; Kagermeier, 1997). If we look at the pertinent empirical data that *is* available, a considerably more positive picture arises.

Several surveys have indicated that among migrant households the willingness to invest is higher than among non-migrant households (de Haas 2006; Hamdouch 2000; Heinemeijer et al 1977; McMurray 1992; Nyberg-Sorensen 2004). It has been commonly argued in the literature that international migration has contributed to agricultural decline. The 'lost labour' of able-bodied (migrated) men is ascribed a key role in the process of agricultural decline (De Mas 1990b; Ferry & Toutain 1990; Kerbout 1990). However, this pessimistic perspective is challenged by empirical work showing that although the 'lost labour effect' might initially have a disruptive effect, particularly in the longer term international remittances can also play a key role in facilitating agricultural investments and an intensification of agricultural production. A key observation is that such impacts are not uniform across different sending regions, and seem mainly to occur in favourably located regions with road

connections to main population centres and favourable institutional and agro-ecological conditions (Bencherifa 1996; Bencherifa & Popp 1990; 2000; Bonnet & Bossard 1973; de Haas 2003; Pascon 1985; Popp 1999).

Over the past decades, and parallel with changes in the national economy, there has also been a diversification in the economic activities of migrants, partly shifting away from investments in subsistence agriculture, small-scale commerce and housing towards investment in commercial agriculture, enterprises in the tourist sector, trade, transport and small and medium-size industries in food-processing and the supply of building materials (Bencherifa & Popp 1990; 2000; Khachani 2009; Nyberg-Sorensen 2004).

### ***Remittances, housing and urban growth***

The recent literature has also questioned traditionally negative judgements about migrants' priority for investment in housing. The majority of researchers lament housing investments, which is seen as a form of "irrational" and "unproductive" investment behaviour which does not contribute to development (Agoumy 1988; Aït Hamza 1988; Ben Ali 1996; Kaioua 1999). However, there is ample reason to question these assumptions. The importance attached to housing should primarily be explained by the legitimate and wellbeing-enhancing quest for space, safety, privacy, fewer conflicts and better health (Hajjarabi 1988). It also enables women to live in nuclear families and to be more independent from their in-laws (Aït Hamza 1988; 1995; Berriane 1996; de Haas & Van Rooij 2010; De Mas 1990a; Hajjarabi 1988). In fact, dismissing such aspects of well-being as 'non-developmental' reflects rather narrow views of development. Housing can also be seen as a relatively secure investment in an insecure investment environment (cf. Adams 1991), through which households can potentially generate income through lease arrangements (Ben Ali 1996; Charef 1986).

In migrant-sending areas throughout Morocco, a remittance-fuelled building fever has transformed certain villages into towns, where migrants also prefer to locate other investments (Berriane & Aderghal 2009; Fadloullah et al 2000). In this way, migration and remittances have also accelerated (albeit not initiated!) the more-general long-term trends towards livelihood diversification, decreasing dependence on agriculture and urbanisation. This can be seen as a largely positive development, as it has made peoples' livelihoods less dependent on vagaries of the climate and agricultural markets. Partly due to remittances, in large parts of rural Morocco agricultural activities have now become an activity of secondary economic importance. In other words, migration has accelerates the already ongoing process of decreasing importance of agriculture for Morocco's national income. At the macro-economic level, diversification of the Moroccan economy away from the one-sided dependency on agriculture is seen as one of the cornerstone conditions for creating the conditions for rapid and sustainable economic growth.

This process of "de-agrarisation" has coincided with the rapid growth of urban centres *within* rural areas, in which more and more internal migrants and returning international migrants increasingly settle and invest in non-agricultural enterprises. The urban allocation of migrants' investments and the fact that many return migrants

prefer to resettle in towns in their native regions have spurred the development of new urban centres and ‘migrant boomtowns’ within or near to migrant-sending areas themselves (Agoumy 1988; Berriane 1996; Berriane & Aderghal 2009; Bounar 1993; Lazaar 1989; McMurray 2001). Through urban-based housing and business investments, international migrant households simultaneously capitalize on, and actively contribute to, the accelerated urban growth and concentration of economic activities in existing urban centres and migrant boomtowns (de Haas 2009) and the overall process of what Berriane (1996) has aptly termed the “micro-urbanization” of rural Morocco.

In this light, there is also reason to put migrants’ expenditure on housing and consumption in a more positive light. Provided that most goods and services are produced regionally or nationally, consumption and so-called non-productive investments in housing and the service sector can have multiplier effects and create employment and income among non-migrants as well. Although there is no hard micro-level empirical evidence that can shed a more precise light on the economy-wide, indirect multiplier effects of remittance expenditure in Moroccan sending research, we know from research conducted in Mexico and elsewhere that such positive effects can be considerable (Adelman et al 1988; Taylor et al 1996a).

There is ample descriptive evidence which suggest that similar processes have affected several Moroccan sending regions (de Haas & Vezzoli 2010). In regions such as the Sous and Rif, urban-oriented consumption and investments by international migrants have created a surge in the demand for labourers, particularly in housing construction, which cannot be met locally or even regionally. In fact, the cumulative effect of decades of remittance expenditure and investments has transformed established regions of international out-migration into thriving destinations for internal migrants coming from poorer areas (Berriane & Aderghal 2009; de Haas 2006).

### ***Migration, demographic change and education***

The traditional policy and research focus on migrants’ business investments has coincided with a lack of attention for the effects of migration on children’s education. This is unfortunate in the light of the crucial role of education in development processes as well as the rather poor performance of Morocco (in comparison with other countries in the region) with regards to literacy rates and overall levels of schooling. Although more research is needed on this issue, the available evidence suggests that international migration participation has positive effects on higher school enrolment rates and that international migration might have played an accelerating role in closing the gender gap in education (Bencherifa 1996; de Haas 2003).

It has been frequently argued that migration has contributed to a slowdown in population growth or even depopulation of rural areas (Kerbout 1990). However, the commonly employed metaphor *exode rurale* to indicate this process is misleading, since absolute rural depopulation only seems to occur in particularly marginal, isolated areas (de Haas 1998). Leaving aside the question why population stagnation or decline should necessarily be interpreted as negative – certainly given the fact that

the same observers lamenting the *exode rurale* also commonly express concerns about rural *overpopulation* – several studies have indicated that international migration and remittances have often enabled families *to stay* in rural areas, and have actually prevented the depopulation of regions such as the Rif, Anti-Atlas and the southern oases (Berriane & Aderghal 2009; De Mas 1990a; Fadloulah et al 2000; Heinemeijer et al 1977; Mter 1995). This is in line with the new economics of labour migration, which have interpreted migration not as an individual income-maximizing strategy, but as a livelihood strategy pursued by household to diversify household income and income minimize risks (Stark & Bloom 1985; Taylor 1999). As Heinemeijer et al. (1977) put it aptly; migration is a form of family behavior aiming at “partir pour rester”.

### ***Migration, remittances and inequality***

Migration has also changed the social and ethnic structure of sending communities. Migration is not only an economic attempt to secure better livelihoods, but also a clear avenue of upward social mobility and to decrease relative deprivation. This shows that it is somehow artificial to separate the social and economic functions of migration. Migration and the associated access to remittance income have also accelerated the breakdown of ancient socio-ethnic hierarchies and the emergence of a new social stratifications in migrant-sending communities (Fadloulah et al 2000; Mter 1995), with international migrant households often forming a new kind of “migration elite”. The new socio-economic dividing line in Moroccan migrant-sending communities now is often between households with and without international remittance income (de Bree et al 2010; de Haas 2003).

However, from this we should not conclude that migration has “thus” increased inequality in migrant sending communities, as this depends on the nature of historical inequalities. In this context, it is important to realise that “traditional”, pre-modern agrarian communities tended to be intrinsically unequal (de Haas 2003; Ensel 1999; Ilahiane 2001). What has often happened is that new forms of inequality, based mainly on access to monetary resources, which are to a considerable extent defined along lines of access to international migration and remittances, have been largely superimposed upon the traditional forms of structural, hereditary inequality based on kinship, complexion and land possession.

By offering new livelihood opportunities, migration and remittances have thus enabled member of formerly subaltern socio-ethnic groups to escape from the constraints that traditional society imposed upon them. In some cases, this has coincided with a declining relative status of traditional landed elites (de Haas 2003; Ensel 1999; Ilahiane 2001). Formerly landless migrants now often earn wages that allow them to buy land and gain increasing influence in local affairs (Crawford 2001; Otte 2000). This exemplifies the ambiguity and subjectivity in judging whether such migration-induced shifts should be regarded as positive or negative, also because any judgement will partly depend on the weight attached to distributional versus mean income objectives (cf. Stark et al 1988: 309). It is also important to realise that such shifts are usually part or more general processes of social change. So, they are not the unique result of migration, although migration often has an accelerating role in such processes

Nevertheless, the middle and higher income classes profit relatively more from remittances than the lowest income groups because migration itself has proved to be an (increasingly) selective process (Schiff 1994; Teto 2001). This is directly linked to the increasing migration restrictions that European states started to implement over the 1980s and 1990s. Rather than curbing migration, this has rather appears to have coincided with an increasing selectivity of migration. In the “guestworker” era, when direct recruitment took place and Moroccans could travel more or less freely to Europe, relatively poor (although generally not the *poorest*) peasants and workers were able to migrate, which also explains evidence that in the 1960s and 1970s migrants from rural areas were not better educated or wealthier than the population average within their age groups (de Haas 2003; Heinemeijer et al 1977). However, due to tougher immigration restrictions, access to international migration has become increasingly selective on wealth and dependent on access to largely kinship-based international migrant networks. This is likely to have significantly reduced the poverty and inequality reducing potential of migration.

### ***Migration and the position of women***

Large-scale out-migration has also affected the position of migrant and nonmigrant women. While migrant women have generally been able to improve their social, legal and economic status vis-à-vis men through migrating internationally (de Bree et al 2010), the impact of male migration on women left behind is much more more ambiguous. Traditionally, migrants leave their wives and daughters behind with their extended family (De Mas 1990a). However, nuclear family households have increasingly become the norm over the past decades. In Morocco, migration-related tensions on remittance use between migrants’ wives and their in-laws have played an accelerating role in the breakdown of extended families and have accelerated the more general processes of nucleation of family life (de Haas 2003; Fadloullah et al 2000)

It is commonly asserted that migration has encouraged the emancipation of women. In the absence of their husbands, women’s responsibilities, autonomy and power are said to increase (Aït Hamza 1988; Bouzid 1992; Fadloullah et al 2000). Nevertheless, a limited number of available targeted studies have challenged this hypothesis (de Haas & Van Rooij 2010; Steinmann 1993). The lives of migrants’ wives often remain largely confined to housekeeping, child-rearing and agricultural work. Although they tend to have more control over the use of their husbands’ earnings and in child-rearing, this gain in authority was mainly temporary, since migrants tend to resume their position as patriarchs as soon as they return. Furthermore, migrants’ wives do not necessarily appreciate the sudden increase in responsibilities and tasks, which were not theirs within the normative context of traditional society and to which they do not always aspire (de Haas & Van Rooij 2010; Hajjarabi 1995). Migration itself apparently has no direct influence or only a limited one on such norms, and gradual changes in these and the improving position of women therefore reflect general processes of cultural change within Moroccan society rather than the particular effect of migration<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Until recently women migrated almost exclusively in the context of family migration. However, it should be noted that, since the 1990s, an increasing proportion of independent labor migrants to Europe and North America are female, which also seems to be the result of general cultural change.

However, there might be some more indirect positive effects, as international migration and remittances have the potential to particularly encourage the schooling of girls in migrant families. Furthermore, there is evidence that that – besides factors such as higher age of marriage, increased female labour force participation and improved education – the migration of Moroccan families to European countries has contributed to the diffusion and adoption of European marriage patterns and small family norms, and so has played an accelerating role in the demographic transition (Courbage 1994; Fargues 2006). This exemplifies the potentially developmental role of what Levitt (1998) has coined ‘social remittances’.

### **The need to reframe the migration and development debate**

Which lessons can we draw from the above review of the Moroccan migration and development case? First and foremost, it has illustrated that the impact of migration on development processes is complex and multi-faceted. Second, the nature of this impact is highly dependent on the general institutional context and investment conditions. For instance, it is not surprising that migrants prefer to invest in towns and rural areas which already boast favourable development conditions. This directly leads us to the third lesson: despite their considerable positive significance for the livelihoods of families and communities, migration and remittances cannot independently set in motion more general, nation-wide development processes.

The evidence from Morocco and other emigration countries such as Mexico points to the diverse nature of migration impacts and in particular their contingency on more general development conditions (de Haas & Vezzoli 2010). This exemplifies the need to see migration as an integral part of development processes rather than an “exogenous” force impinging upon development processes which can change the overall direction of development. The specific role of migration and remittances is unlikely to be a radical course-shifting one, but they rather seem to accelerate or deepen pre-existing, more general development trends, whether this is one of rapid growth, stagnation or decline. Therefore, migration can trigger a vicious as well as a virtuous development circle.

After all, depending on the general investment and development conditions, migration may enable people to retreat from, just as much as to engage and invest in, social, political and economic activities in origin countries. After all, it is the very capabilities-enhancing potential of migration (which can be seen as micro-level development) that also increases the freedom of migrants and their families to effectively withdraw from such activities. It is therefore not very surprising that in countries affected by violence, insecurity and dismal investment conditions, few migrants will invest. However, if general development trends takes a positive turn, if trust in governments increases and economic growth is high, migrants are likely to be among the first to recognize such new opportunities, join in and reinforce these positive trends through investing, circulating and returning to their origin countries. Such mutually reinforcing migration-development processes seem to have occurred in several former emigration countries as diverse as Spain, Taiwan, South Korea, and, recently, Turkey.

The inference is that the development impacts of migration are highly *context-sensitive*. Although this might sound like a rather commonplace generalisation, this idea is worth emphasising, because, all too often, migrants and remittances still get quite casually blamed for a lack of development (cf. the critique by Cohen et al 2005), while the real cause should be sought in generically unfavourable investments conditions which are not the consequence of migration. In designing sensible and realistic policies, it is important to keep in mind that *legitimate* individual and family needs primarily drive migrants' remittance expenditure. Only secondarily are migrants interested in promoting the development of entire communities or regions, and it would also be highly naïve to expect that they would be able to trigger nationwide development, and any policy attempting to shift the responsibility of national development onto the shoulders of individual migrants is therefore doomed to fail.

The context-dependency of migration impacts also explains why migration does not have a pre-determinant “impact” on development. It is important to stress that what is involved is a development *potential*, not an automatic mechanism. The extent to which migrants will spend, invest in and return to their origin countries depends on general investment conditions, political stability and overall trust in future development. Paradoxically, development is therefore a *prerequisite* for investment and/or return by migrants rather than a consequence of migration. This provides a warning against naively optimistic views on migration and development by pointing at the real but fundamentally limited ability of individual migrants to overcome structural development constraints (de Haas 2010)

Unfavourable economic and political conditions make investments and development projects difficult to design and implement, and often lead to their failure. In Morocco, studies have indicated that although migrants do generally not indulge in conspicuous consumption and that they are more prone to invest in non-housing sectors of the local economy than was previously assumed (de Haas, 2003; Khachani, 1998; Refass, 1999) – investment opportunities remain limited. So, we may conclude that the development potential of migration is not fully realized due to several structural development constraints.

In the 1970s, Heinemeijer *et al.* (1977) already concluded on the basis a large-scale survey in two main migrant-sending areas (the Rif and the Sous) that although migrants actually had a relatively high *propensity* to invest, the investment opportunities for migrants in their regions of origin are often limited (see also Bonnet & Bossard 1973). This combined with the insecure political situation and the severe curtailing of civil liberties in Morocco over the 1970s and 1980s explains why many migrants chose not to return and to cancel or at least downsize their original investment plans.

The Moroccan experience also suggests that it can take many decades before positive development impacts of migration and remittances gain full momentum, that ‘integrated’ and settled migrants possess greater capabilities to remit and invest, and that migrants possessing residency rights or (double) citizenship have a higher propensity to return and circulate. This casts serious doubt on the common policy assumption that temporary migration programmes – *if* states would succeed in enforcing return – will favour development in sending countries.

The Moroccan case also shows the importance to distinguish between impacts on the individual/family, regional and national level. In general, impacts tend to be more positive on lower levels of aggregation, while the potential role of migration and remittances in stimulating national development is much more ambiguous. While international migration and remittances have the real capacity to substantially improve livelihoods and economic activity in migrant sending regions, it would naïve to expect that migration alone can lead to structural reform needed for nation-wide development.

This shows the need to reframe the debate on migration and development. Because development is a condition for attracting migrants' income-generating investments rather than a consequence of it, policymakers would be wise to reverse their perspective on migration and development. Rather than asking what migrants can do to support development, governments would be better off identifying how to make investment and general development conditions attractive for migrant investments. In many ways, governments of sending and receiving countries have become overly obsessed with maximising remittances while they have generally ignored the basic necessity to first create a fertile soil where the remittance seeds can be sown.

Again, the Moroccan case provides a useful illustration of this more general point. While Moroccan policies to increase remittances have been very successful, this does not mean that the impact of remittances has necessarily become more positive, as this will depend on the way money is ultimately spent. In that sense, the wider economic reforms in Morocco aiming at improving investment conditions and the implementation of national development plans over the 1990s and 2000s seem to have had more effect than targeted migration and remittance policies. This *might* explain the apparent recent increase in investment activities by Moroccan emigrants and their descendants (Khachani 2009).

The crucial point is that public policies which improve the functioning of social, legal, economic and political institutions, the access of ordinary people to basic amenities and markets and which restore trust in governments, are crucial not only for creating a fertile ground for development *in general*, but also for compelling more migrants to return and/or invest in origin countries. Policy and scholarly discourses celebrating migration, remittances and transnational engagement as self-help development “from below” shift attention away from structural constraints and the real but limited ability of individuals to overcome these. This exemplifies the crucial role *states* have to play in shaping favourable conditions for human development to occur.

While migrants can potentially accelerate development at home, they can neither be blamed for a lack of development nor be expected to generate development in unattractive investment environments. Destination countries have an important role here as well. During the most recent global economic crisis, European countries in particular have attempted to encourage the return of migrants. But when return policies require migrants not to come back, destination countries are actually pushing migrants into semi-permanent settlement. By deterring the relatively poor to migrate, and by marginalising migrants and impeding return and circulation, restrictive immigration policies also damage the poverty alleviating and overall development potential of migration.

From this, we can draw clear lessons for policy. First, targeted remittance and 'diaspora' policies will have limited effects if they are not accompanied by general reform and progress. The only way of genuinely releasing the development potential of migration and migrants resources is to create attractive investment environments, generating economic growth and building trust in political and legal institutions of sending countries, along with sensible, demand-driven immigration policies that do not unnecessarily deter migrants from circulating or push them into undocumented migration.

This also reveals that the stated development intentions of newly advocated temporary, return or "co-development" migration policies are discursive tools to justify an agenda of marginalising and depriving migrants of their rights and to forcibly expulse irregular immigrants and rejected asylum seekers. Such policies are misguided, because they not only fail to stop migration but will also considerably decrease the potential of migration for development in origin countries.

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