Cultures of Mobilities in Morocco: Agency, Networks and Gender

Rachid Touhtou (INSEA, Rabat)

Abstract

Based on a fieldwork of 90 in-depth interviews with return migrants and family members of current migrants in the Greater regions of Rabat and Nador in Morocco, we attempt at highlighting the interrelatedness of various and conflicting categories of the migratory trajectories in order to highlight the role of agency in the production of the migration culture, its sustainability and its alterations. We opted for the analysis of the narratives of current migrants, returnees and family members to try to capture the deep self reflection of the actors themselves on their own experiences. Our findings confirm generally our hypotheses, meaning that agency interferes and alters the migratory trajectories, regimes and cultures; second, mobility or immobility are heavily influenced by intersectional aspects where the individual, the family and other macro-level influences produce various forms of staying, moving or returning. And finally that gender is has relational dimensions with individuals and households decisions to stay, to migrate, or to return.

Introduction

Recent trends in the migratory trajectories of individuals in Morocco reveal new forms of migration regimes as well as new migrant subjectivities. Most importantly, Feminization of migration in Morocco[1] has produced new forms of female forms of migration, such as women migrating and becoming "breadwinners" and married servants, seasonal migration to Spain working in agriculture, networks of prostitution recruitment, old women migration and the arranged "white" marriages[2]. The question here: does the migratory process create an "upheaval" which amount to "a rupture in migration orders[3]"? In these migratory flows, migrants were making a courageous decision to place their families' well-being above their own happiness and their need to be with their loved ones. Bringing "subjectivities" back into the debate on international migration has to be considered in terms of intergenerational relations, gender relations and of migration as a household strategy where agency is placed as a pattern of new forms of migration flows. So, how does human agency explain migratory processes in Morocco?

It is only recently that migration studies recognized the gendered dimension of international migration[4]. Women were portrayed as passive followers in family reunions or passive waiters for a husband in family formations[5]. A recent survey conducted by HCP[6] in Morocco on

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[1] - According to HCP statistics, women make about 50% of migrants abroad, (CERED, 2005). See Khachani Mohamed, « L'Emigration Au Féminin: Tendances Récentes au Maroc », CARIM, 2008 and "Genre et Migration au Maroc", CARIM, 2011.

[2] - During the fieldwork in the framework of THEMIS project between 2011 and 2012, we met various respondents representing some of these forms of female migration networks. See Khachani Mohamed, Ibid, 2008 and 2011.

[3] - Nicholas Van Hear, 1998, p.24.

[4] - Anastasia Christou, "Migrating Gender: Feminist Geographies in Women's Bioghraphies of Return Migration", in Michigan Feminist Studies, Vol. 17, 2003. See also Jayati Ghosh, "Migration and Gender Empowerment: Recent Trends and emerging Issues", in UNDP research Paper 2009.

[5] - see khachani Mohamed, Ibid, 2011 and Sadiqi Fatima and Moha Ennaji, 2008, Migration and Gender: The Impact on the Women Left Behind. Red Sea Press.

[6] - It is a survey conducted between 2003 and 3004 on a sample of 1467 return migrants; the survey entitled "La Migration de Retour des Marocains Résidant a L Etranger". See the HCP publication entitled: *La Reinsertion des Migrants de Retour Au Maroc : analyse des resulats de l'enquete sur la migration de retour des Marocains*

return migration showed that only 2% of women among the surveyed population are concerned with return migration. The largest waves of international migration mainly started in the 60's with the first guest-workers hired to work in various industries in Western Europe followed by waves of migration including family reunions and marriages. International migration was helped by the government being conducive to the process of migration, creating employment and supporting families with remittances.

Return Migration in Morocco is a recent trend in the migration landscape[7]. The Latest Survey on Return Migration in Morocco conducted by the High Commission of Planning (HCP) in 2003 and 2004 resulted in a new conceptualization among economic contribution of return migration, sociological factors conducive to reintegration of returnees and obstacles to investment; the survey delimited its analysis to four main aspects of return migration, mainly, the socio-demographic characteristics of return migrants, their trajectories of migration, push factors of return and the reintegration process, and the contribution to development and investment obstacles. The survey did not take into consideration the dynamics and the transnational aspects of migration, meaning that return can take many forms and not only return for good.

Our paper argues that return migration in Morocco is not a new wave of international migration but only internal dynamics of transnational migration relocating the migratory system in between two homes; part of an international project[8], we conducted 90 qualitative interviews among return migrants and family members of current migrants in both greater Rabat and greater Nador in Morocco in 2011 and 2012.

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resident a l'etranger de 2003-2004 : exemple des regions du Grand Casa et de Sous-Massa Draa. CERED, 2006, Rabat, Morocco.

[7] - See Jean-Pierre Cassarino (ed), "Return Migrants to the Maghreb Countries: Reintegration and Development Challenges" MERIM Report, 2008.

[8] - THEMIS.

The interviewing was conducted based on a guiding questionnaire; they were all recorded, transcribed and translated into English. The paper is based on the analysis of 62 interviews, both returnees and family members. Our analysis focuses on female returnees and current migrants' family members as aspects of the changing face of international migration and gender in Morocco.

We analyze return from the women's perspective and its impact on transnational ties, belonging and gender as agents of change. The majority of women interviewed confirm the idea that the decision to return or not is linked with the woman as children keeper. Moreover, Men have a stronger desire to return as part of a patriarchal system as shows some recent cases of divorce if the woman refuses to return. Also return is strongly associated with retirement and old age; it is worth noting that culture and religion play sometimes an obstacle to migration or a conducive to return. Some cases support the idea that migration and return are strongly motivated by factors of failure, success, and family breakdown. The social expectations dimension to succeed pressurizes migrants and produces women as agents of change in their families and in their society (intersectional dimensions of gender and social practices). The fieldwork confirmed the weak investment dimension of return migration.

Our paper rests on the following hypotheses:

1-   Agency interferes and alters the migratory trajectories, regimes and cultures;

2-   Mobility or immobility are heavily influenced by intersectional aspects where the individual, the family and other macro-level influences produce various forms of staying, moving or returning.

3-   Gender is a relational dimension in individual and household decisions to stay, to migrate, or to return.

A Theoretical Framework

How to capture the multidimensional layers that influence the migratory regime is a question that is now being addressed by scholars from different disciplines (Oliver Bakewell, 2013, Berriane Mohamed and Hein De Haas, 2012). In the same line of reasoning, Stephen Castles (2012:30) argues that

A key dimension of migration theory lies in conceptualizing the way social transformation processes act at different spatial levels (local, regional, national and global). Analyzing the mediation and transformation of global forces by local or national cultural and historical factors can help overcome the division between top-down and bottom-up approaches. This implies that attempts to create a 'general theory of migration' are unlikely to be helpful, because such a theory would be so abstract that it would give little guidance to understanding any real migratory processes. Rather migration theory needs to be historically and culturally sited, and to relate structure and action.

Micro analysis provides depth in understanding the logic underneath decisions to stay, to migrate or to return. We also deem it of paramount importance that added to the micro level analysis, migration research should take into consideration that "intersectionality" (Patricia Hill Collins, 1988; Catharine A. Mackinon, 2013) examining the interrelatedness of gender, race, class and nation not as distinctive social hierarchies but using intersectionality as a means of examining how they mutually construct one another.

Nicholas Van Hear (1998) talks about two main aspects as part of the approach to understand the migration regime:

1- **Individual decision-making and motivation** where the nexus cost-benefit judgments are made in economic terms; also, social and cultural motivations to enhance status are at play.

1- **Household decision-making and strategies** where the household as the key locus of decision-making interacts with the agent.

However, Nicholas Van Hear (1998) is not satisfied with only these aspects but adds that human agency shapes such decisions through force and choice as elements of change. Oliver Bakewell (2013) used the concept of "iterative agency" to argue for an expansion of the agency model in order to integrate with the migration system. In the same vein, Russel and Teitelbaum (1992:5) that, "International migration trends are rather like aggregate fertility rates, which although heavily influenced by societal and governmental forces, ultimately are determined by the rather intimate decisions of individuals.

For a sociological understanding of agency, we refer to Saba Mahmood (2005:09) who argues that

Agency,… is understood as the capacity to realize one's own interests against the weight of custom, tradition, transcendental will, or other obstacles (whether individual or collective). Thus the humanist desire for autonomy and self-expression constitutes the substrate, the slumbering ember that can spark to flame in the form of an act of resistance when conditions permit.

According to Saba Mahmood agency, is defined, as a form of action and not resistance to a homogenizing culture that handicaps the individual to achieve and flourish in the Society. Katherine Frank (2006:294) studied the notion of Agency and reflected upon Saba Mahmood conceptualization of the term. She argues that:

…it is clear that we cannot simply analyze agency as a metaphorical ping-pong game between repressive social norms and discourses and a rational individual with perfectly transparent motives and desires…After all,…we are still left with the same ghostly figure lurking in the background of her analysis: the person negotiating these discourses, making choices, debating ethical modes of living, strategizing, practicing and developing their bodily capacities, living and experiencing with unique(but not irreducibly unique) sensibilities, affects, desires, and sentiments.

However, Frank Catherine (2006) captured this dilemma in the action of the human being torn between his/her psychological drives and the society with its chaining values and norms. The argument stresses that the agent in action is in fact negotiating how he/she can inflict change into society and at the same time getting liberated in the process of change. In the same line of reasoning, Katherine Frank argues quoting Saba Mahmood that agency should not be analyzed as resistance but as "a modality of action" (p. 295); in a way as a performative act where various structures interfere to make an action a part of the agent of change.

The agency perspective recognize the female migrant or the returnee as socially embedded, active, intentional agents who influence as much as they are influenced by the social context in which they are located. It is an approach which highlights the process of self-reflection of migrants and returnees and attempting to relate their actions, feelings and thoughts to the wider socio-cultural context of their changing place and positionality. Migration and return migration should be understood as dynamic processes within dynamic circumstances.

The migratory project is a manifestation of agency in the interactive process between actors and structures. The changing context of the return migrants' own lives is the active participation of participants in all phases of the research. Beliefs about the social world at large are assumed to be constructed and altered by our dialogue and experiences with others. Life experiences and accounts of individuals' interpretation of such is a reflection of the

society they reside and fully live in. This is the reason why it is imperative to listen to the participants' own voices in studying return migrants' constructions of their identities.

Data and Methodology

The data used are from the interviews administered in phase three for the THEMIS (Theorizing the Evolution of European Migration Systems) project[9] whose main objective was to determine how patterns of migration to Europe were developed to induce either mass-migration or otherwise lower migration to certain destinations (e.g. The Netherlands). By focusing on the determinants of migration among groups of individuals belonging to different countries of origin (Brazil, Morocco and Ukraine) the project aims to identify the similarities between the behavior of its migrants to the following destinations (Great Britain, Norway, Portugal and low country).

Intergroup comparative studies have since been conducted and identified the role of migration networks and social networks in the decision to migrate. However, group differences are noticeable: between different ethnic groups, mainly between men and women belonging to either a region of strong or weak migratory tradition. This paper is based solely on interviews with return migrants in Morocco or current migrants (via their relatives); it aims to trace the entire migratory trajectory of the individual including the decision to migrate, the actors involved in such a decision and the changing relationships of the migrant with his/her family surrounding in the country of origin and the citizens of the country of destination.

As Brettell and Hollifield (2000: 11) declare: "While it may not be the basis for extensive theory construction, the life history method has been employed to access the rich texture of

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[9] - See the website of the project : http://www.imi.ox.ac.uk/projects/themis

the lived experience of being a migrant and the cultural context of decision making." Qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews and narratives are much better suited than quantitative methods to address and further explore meanings, processes and experiences of individuals' lives. These methods are consistent with social constructionism as they provide the participants with the opportunity to account for their own experiences in their own words and further to account for how the social world is reflective of their own perceptions of that world.

Benmayor and Skotnes (1994:15) are very clear in presenting the way personal testimony "speaks...to how im/migrant subjects constantly build, reinvent, synthesize, or even collage identities from multiple sources and resources, often lacing them with deep ambivalence. Knowing something of the utter uniqueness of particular individual migrant experiences certainly enhances our generalizations about the group experience, but it also elicits humility about the adequacy of these generalizations and a realization that few actual individual lives fully conform to the master narratives".

We conducted 90 interviews between August 2011 and April 2011 in the urban areas of Rabat and Nador with its rural surroundings. These two regions were chosen to portray the diversified migration flow from Morocco to the Netherlands. Between both regions and the Netherlands, significant migratory links exist. Interviews were conducted with return migrants, people who had resided in the Netherlands for at least three months, and family members of current migrants in the Netherlands such as parents, siblings, aunts, uncles and cousins. We made sure to interview respondents with a relatively close bond to their migrant family member, as part of the interview dealt with their knowledge of the current migrant.

An analysis of 30 interviews with returnees (including 11 women) and 32 current migrants (15 women) revealed discrepant behavior between the various respondents according to their belonging to a generation of migration , gender and the main driver of their migration experience: work, school or family reunion.

The sample was drawn using a non-probability sampling because the population base is not easily identifiable and the method used is called «snowball ". It asks first a subgroup of the population, which identifies other group members which, in turn are interviewed, and designate other persons in the population, and so on.

Though this method remains not expensive, fast and easy to use, it does not allow for the statistical margin of error and thus the accuracy of the estimates produced is unknown, hence we cannot extrapolate the results to all the population and individuals interviewed represent only themselves. This sampling method is particularly suited to our research objectives: individual motivations to migrate outweigh the degree of the phenomenon itself and its characteristics and will also enable us to grasp the meaning and interpretation of the migration experience explained by individuals belonging to various strata.

Analysis and Discussion

1- Determinants of the Migration Regime

How does belonging to a particular generation affect the success of the migration experience or not?

Based on the fieldwork conducted, it is highlighted through our respondents that the first generation of migrants in the 60's and in the 70's has generally a positive outlook on their migration experience, thinking that they could not have improved their living conditions

without migration. Most of these migrants left Morocco because there was a need for guest-workers in the destination where the only requirement for applying was to be healthy, and for those who do not qualify or who were simply unaware of the existence of such contracts they were assisted in their departure formalities, welcomed and supported in their job search process by migrants on site.

These migrants were members of their family, town or tribes. Migration networks were strong and played a key role in the migration; almost all people who migrated were supported by the pioneers as they could not migrate on their own. These links even transcended the scope of the tribe, the village or the family to "strangers": many migrants did not hesitate to enter into marriages called "whites" with strangers who guaranteed them a free legal status in the country of destination. Thus, if both the improvement in their financial situation and in their contribution to improving the living standards of their families via transfers was undeniable, social mobility was not achieved particularly for migrants of the first generation.

The first generation worked in bad conditions and did hard work; these trades practiced in the bottom of the social scale in the host countries and do not require special know-how. These trades were well paid compared to their wages in Morocco and allowed them to accumulate capital which was directed to "safe" investments in country capital (purchase of land, and building houses); all jobs are good for a living and maintain the illusion of a person leading a comfortable life in the eyes of relatives in Morocco.

The second generation has benefited from the social gains of the host country including free and quality education, meritocracy in access to managerial positions and free health services.

However, recent generations of migrants have been affected by the economic crisis and the scarcity and the instability of jobs and the thrust of the right-wing extremists who see the arrival of Muslims as a threat to their way of life in a context of an aging population where migration is seen as a necessary "evil".

2- Assessment of the migration Experience:

The experience of migration is generally perceived by the migrant as an opportunity to improve his or her economic situation, to open up new horizons and allow their children to receive a good education and health system that will allow them to succeed. Although this experience is challenging and has usually much more benefited the second -generation migrants and not the pioneers; it goes without saying that the first wave of migrants who left Morocco in the 60's and in the 70's are mostly uneducated migrants who were recruited to perform manual occupations requiring great physical effort , and in some situations they were forced to work two jobs to support themselves so they have suffered in order to send transfers to their families in order to provide a way of living adequate for their children and to accumulate financial capital to invest in assets (land, housing ...) .

This first wave of migrants generally preferred to spend their retirement in Morocco even if their wives and children refuse to follow them, they can opt for divorce or live between two countries. In both cases the migration has an impact on the survival of the extended family model: elderly parents who migrate during the twilight of their lives when they most needed the assistance that compensates for the loss of mobility and the deterioration of their health due to their high age can be a heavy burden on the community.

In the same vein, the second generation of migrants does not seem to have the same attachment to Morocco, compared to their parents; they usually do not see their future outside their country of adoption even if their annual visits to Morocco during the summer holidays mark them with strong and nice memories. Finally, recipients of remittances believe that these transfers have enabled them to significantly improve their living standards; they oppose a permanent return of current migrants firstly because they will no longer receive the transfers and on the other hand they are hopeful that it will help them migrate as they wish.

3- The Migration culture and Agency:

The migration culture existing both in the Household or the location where the interviewee lives is a push factor for migration. Migration culture intermingles with individual decision and Household decision produce a permanent migratory process with one family but with diverse extensions to family members, relatives and neighbors. The migratory regime when it demonstrates through cases motivations to non-migrants, it then launches the system. Farid (34, from Al Hoceima and now he lives in Rabat) narrates his migratory trajectory in the following words:

(02 RM M) I decided to migrate in 2001. I travelled illegally with my brother's spouse and his children, driving his car acting as if it were mine, so the trick succeeded and I reached the Netherlands easily as an illegal migrant with no documents. I have a big family in Holland. My brother helped me and I lived three weeks with him, then I got a job, a house, a car and I was settled. I was happy that I have a family there otherwise it would have been difficult. The moment you think that you have a family there, you become relaxed because you know that somebody is there to help at times of distress. I moved to another city to work with the owner of a Dutch restaurant. Then I worked in a cleaning agency. I was a driver; I also worked in building houses as a mason. With the cleaning agency, I became like the boss. And at the same time, I used to go to school to learn the Dutch language.

Farid migrated because of first family networks and a will to enhance his status; explaining why he migrated, he said,

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To look for a job, to better my living conditions and also because there was a big wave of migration flow from Al Hociema to Europe. My father went to the Netherlands in the 60's. Once you have one member in Europe then the whole family want to migrate".

These are migration motivations he grew up with. The feedback mechanisms (Hein de Haas, 2007; Oliver Bakewell, 2013) works in the process of producing conducive motivations because of the availability of information and help on the migration project. The system perspective here works through creating a "unified space" (Nickolas Van Hear, 1998) between origin and destination. Added to this, Farid was jobless before migration and had little education in Morocco. Farid has been a migrant in the Netherlands for about five years and decided to return. Does the system perspective explain the decision to return?

Systems change over time because of feedback mechanisms (Oliver Bakewell, 2013; Nicholas Van Hear, 1998). States and networks play here a crucial role in informing migrants on either advantages or disadvantages of staying, going back or moving. Farid decided to return because he judged that he can have a better living condition in origin.

I learnt the Dutch quickly and easily. I was driving the car with no driving license. I was in a comfortable situation. I have never been caught by the police; though sometimes they stop me while I was driving. I could speak Dutch fluently so they never doubted that I was an illegal migrant. I lived six years in this situation. Subsequently, the idea of acquiring Legal documents came to mind. I must have Legal papers. I tried to look for a Dutch lady to get married to but I failed. Deep inside, I always refused the idea of marrying only for papers. I lived six years, got a job, and accordingly I became indifferent to the idea of marriage. I was unlucky, because the six years I lived in the Netherlands between 2001 and 2006, the World become a bad place, the twin centre bombings, in 2002 a right wing Dutch was murdered; in 2OO4, the film director van Gogh was assassinated. These events made life difficult and very challenging for me though this does not mean that I had a bad past in the Netherlands. On the contrary, I was happy and leading an easy life there. But I was aware of these events that negatively impacted the migrants' life.

Despite the help available for Farid and the fact that he earns his living, the origin networks were more conducive than the attractions of migration; the "migration system in this sense lacks explanation of the novelties that can occur and alter migration regimes. We believe that the individual as agential deciders on their fate create their own spaces between the system itself as it unfolds and the outcome of the system. Nicholas Van Hear (1998, 23) argues for conceptualizing the system at times of "crises", taking the example of forced migration. At times of "crisis" or foreshadowing it, the system launches a negotiation process culminating

in a decision of moving in the case of Farid. Farid has returned to Rabat; he earns well his living; he got married and Works hard to achieve his dreams. He now can travel to Europe wit no pressure and enjoy it.

Farid narrative is a self-reflection on the migration experience; Farid experience fluctuates between failure and success; the social and the cultural practice of migration as a success model is questioned; human agency here play a decisive role in altering the process (Godfried, E, Snel, E and Masja, V. M, 2013). Individuals as agents in the migration system rationalize their decisions when other options are available. Ibrahim (40) explains:

(12 CM M) The impact, just taking my family as a case study, of migration is that it takes out of poverty and this in turn influences their families because it opened their eyes to the way life should be, to democracy and to freedom. Migrants and their families speak languages; they are more open-minded; they live a decent life a standard. Their houses are clean and comfortable. Migration first impacts people and then people impact their environment. I have never been influenced by the migration of others because I chose to stay here, and raise my kids as pure Muslims and Moroccans.

Any migration system must account for notions of "mobility" and "immobility" (Nicholas Van Hear, 1998:38). Why are some individuals influenced to move and others not to choose to move despite the existence of the same migration culture and motivations? Non-movement (Nicholas Van Hear, 1998: 41) is an aspect of agency where rational, cultural and economic calculations are made to counter migration as a choice.

At the intersection of the choice not to move, there is the wish to move despite little chance and there is also the desire that those who are "there" should not return in order not to force those "here" to stay. The logic of movement or non-movement are intertwined in the migration regime and produce alternatives in the cultural make-up of family members or returnees. In this case, return creates a crisis of not moving as Qurya (27) argues:

(15 CM M) There is a big difference between old migrants and their children. The old ones want to come back to Morocco and revive the family ties while their children think that Holland is better than Morocco. The young can have fun and enjoy themselves-going to night clubs is easy and common place.
I don't want them to come back. It isn't in the benefit of neither my family nor my uncle's. If he comes back he will have nothing to do here and he will negatively affect the future of his children who are doing well at school. For my family, or rather for me, it will be losing a chance to migrate to Holland.

I think they are better than us financially and we are better than them in the sense that, unlike my cousins who are looked down upon, we live with our dignity. It is like an Amazigh living among Arabs. He is always perceived as inferior.

No, I don't want them to come back. It isn't in the benefit of neither my family nor my uncle's. If he comes back he will have nothing to do here and he will negatively affect the future of his children who are doing well at school. For my family, or rather for me, it will be losing a chance to migrate to Holland.

When the migration system is durable, individuals create their own trajectories and choices; despite the crisis that can occur, individuals alter the dynamics of migration into various forms of movement. Stagnation of the movement or the difficulty to move is only a momentum to agency to perpetuate migration10.

Return is negotiated against the information available for the migrant from the network. The flow of information from origin are bargained at the individual level and then they impact the decision. Younes (31) explains;

(16 CM M) This feeling can be attributed to fear of failure if he would come back, his children will not benefit from the high quality of learning and education that the British government offered to its citizens in addition to the best health care services two major factors which he believes are lacking his country of origin; he despises the idea of bribing people every time he needs an urgent and a certified document from the municipal councils. He hates dealing with corrupted people; and for this reason, he does not want to return because corruption is still prevailing and there is no political will to combat it.

Disparities between destination and origin are a deterring aspect of return; it creates fear from failure. The destination as a place of opportunities can motivate individuals to migrate or can deter them from going back for fear to lose those advantages.

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[10] - During the fieldwork, we interviewed informally many cases of individuals who chose not to migrate until they saved some money to enable them to migrate and support themselves without relying on anyone, cases to Spain, Italy, Belgium, USA and Canada. These individuals have stable jobs here and the decision to migrate was only congealed; some cases have migrated and returned and remigrated again. And the majority of returnees now in fact live between two countries.

4- Gender and the Migration Trajectories

Men and women do not migrate for the same reasons; among the respondents in our sample women appear as passive actors in the migration process. Pioneers are generally men and women migrate mainly as part of the family reunification. The second generation of migrants (born in the host country) seems more emancipated including their rejection of the decisions of the father who wants to settle in Morocco to retire and is not usually accompanied by his children and even his wife. These migrants capitalize on their achievements in the host country with higher studies and well-paid jobs in order to reject social norms.

Despite the incomplete nature of their emancipation, these women continue to marry within the family circle or choosing a Moroccan Muslim man to start a family, so their integration is gradual and never complete. As narrates Nabila (36)

I migrated to Norway in 1998 through marriage; it was my cousin who asked me for marriage and I accepted and I migrated with him. He was already in Norway as a migrant; he migrated first to the Netherlands and then changed to Norway because he found a better job there. I have never thought of migrating; it was sort of destiny; I did my studies here in Nador and I got my BA in Biology but I did not find a job so when I got married I thought that maybe I will carry on my higher studies there in Norway and work. I returned because of my husband decision to return. He decided to return to invest here and also I was ready to return because at least here I can go out and see family and the sun is all the time.

This behavior cannot be generalized to men although still rare: it is less taboo for a Moroccan man to marry a "Western" woman. This can be explained by the strong presence of the Islamic upbringing of the father who has a greater influence on his children so much to influence the choice of a religion other than Islam or - as pointed out by some respondents - the high risks of the failure of mixed marriages.

Fatima (38) narrates her story:

(04 RM W) I travelled to the Netherlands as part of family reunification. I went there for the purpose of pursuing my studies in the faculty of Medicine. In the Netherlands if you want to study Medicine, there is a system of quota because the posts are limited. There is a drawing lots system and you have to be lucky. I was unlucky because four years I could not be selected in the drawing lots. Then I chose to study Mathematics in a high school of pedagogy in the Netherlands to become a teacher of Mathematics. However, I did not continue in this school. I travelled to Belgium to study Medicine. This time the drawing lots was successful. I studied one year there. Then I succeeded in the drawing of Medicine in Erasmus University in Rotterdam. Again I did not finish for serious family problems. My father was very ill so I could not carry on my studies. I travelled in 1990 to the Netherlands as part of family reunification. I exercised teaching for three years.

Fatima's trajectory is an example of how much effort should a migrant invest to achieve her dreams; she seized every opportunity to succeed in the destination but when the force of origin imposes its norms, the subject is faithful to the social norms; She continues and explains the reasons for return by saying,

I decided to return to join my husband in Morocco. My husband used to work in the Netherlands; we lived in the Netherlands about two years. My husband's work is with the ministry of foreign affairs and he moves lot from one country to another. He spent seven years in the Netherlands and after finishing his mission he has to return to Morocco.
No never till I married; I have never thought of returning to Morocco. Marriage was the main reason behind my return; we discussed this before marriage and we agreed to return. I have no problem for return because I am used and familiar with Morocco.

We find these same resentment among some respondents who chose not to migrate " to raise their children in a Muslim country and according to the precepts of Islam" they think migration perverted offspring by making people more "free" and therefore less subject to the patriarchal authority and heavily influenced by the traditions and customs of the host country

that are considered by some respondents as contrary to our culture and Islam. Kamar (41) tells her story,

For me I was born here in Morocco. My father was already in the Netherlands. My mother preferred to stay here in Morocco because there were no family relations in the Netherlands so she decided to give birth to all of us here because for her Moroccan rituals and traditions should be only here in Morocco. She used to stay in the Netherlands for about six months for example and then come back to Morocco. And it was my aunt who looks after us but this way we grew up independently; this was during my childhood because there were no mosques and Moroccans were few, that is why my father insisted that we stay in Morocco to learn Arabic and to know Islam.

The women portray themselves as good mothers, good wives, good sisters but also honorable and obedient daughters. When asked to describe themselves in connection to their family, kin and personal relations, they produced identity narrations relevant to gender and family roles. Education, work and careers also figured prominently in the discourse; they were all central for them as female returnees and Moroccan Muslims.

This is a process of redefinition, a self-defining strategy that is forged in a context of dialogue with structures of the nation-state. The women participating in the study have learned to self-identify as women living in the ancestral homeland, at times a different culture, and therefore had to negotiate their roles but have all found it a liberating experience, a vision of both personal and social history that motivates the homeland return. We realize that identity is a concept that figuratively combines the intimate or personal world with the collective space of cultural forms and social relations. The conscious decision to return to the motherland is often articulated as a planned process of belonging.

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The family is a major site of belonging and the source of other frameworks that assign meaning to groups through their aspirations and ideological rhetoric. The family unit is a central component of the female returnees' narratives of return. These women pioneers confirm the idea that migration is fraught with challenges to subjectivity, culture and society as a whole.

Hakima (66) narrates her migration trajectory:

There was a British man who visited the city of Meknes looking for to men and women to recruit them migrate and work in the UK mainly in hotels or in hospitals. This woman, my father's family member, got a work contract for her and for her brother and migrated because they were very poor and worked only for people in a farm in the rural areas of the city of Meknes. My father told them about me and asked for their help and they gave him their address so that when I arrive in London I will ask for them.
The first cause is retirement; when I retired I felt I had nothing to do there. The second cause is divorce because I felt very lonely.

Migration for a woman used to be a real challenge to her and to social norms. khadija (58) explains how her adoptive mother ventured into migration at times when only men migrate and women are left behind;

My mother feared that she will end up alone and no one will care about her once she became so old. Migration used to have a bad image and they call it alienation. So it is a shame and a social stigma that a man leaves his country to live in another country let alone a woman. This used to be the clichés about migration in the past.

Malika (42) also tells her story of migration and how her dependence on her husband made her suffer because she could not meet the needs of her family:

Of course it was my husband who paid for everything, from documents, the Embassy visa and also for the flight to Lisbon. My parents could not because we were poor and that was one of the reasons I was always feeling week in front of him because a girl in Morocco is supposed to take something to her new house, to buy furniture

at least to be respected within the surrounding of her husband. My family did not have and I felt as if they sold me to this man who was abroad which was already a powerful status in Morocco; when we started fighting in Portugal he was always saying to me that it was him that took and it is thanks to him that I eat well now and have seen Europe. But in fact I have seen only one city and my Europe was home because I did not enjoy it.

The migration of the women of the household have also an impact on the male left behind; this is the story of Mohamed (51) whose eldest sister migrated to the UK; she is among the pioneer to the UK.

My nieces have married my nephews and they took them to England; so all my sisters now have their sons in Britain thanks to my first sister who migrated there. My first niece Bouchra fall in love with my nephew Hamid and they got married in 1996 and then she took him with her to London to live and work there; after three years of marriage they divorced because she discovered that he was only interested in migrating to England and not to have a life with her. She then married another Moroccan man who was living already living there from her father's family. She has now three children with him.

This narrative of a dynamic migratory system which unfolds and produces social meanings to the migration experience relocates the debate on networks within the agency dimension. Human agency here interferes and creates its own dynamics away from macro underpinnings in destination and in origin. Fadma (55) is the creator of a migratory trajectory that we name "the migration labyrinth" where various and conflicting interests met to produce a unique experience of migration, of return and of transnationalism; Fadma narrates:

My uncle is the first one who migrated to the UK; he has been now in the UK for 46 years in London, St Albans. It is my sister's husband who talked to his British boss in Meknes to give him a work contract to migrate to the UK. This is the story of one family who migrated in the beginning of the sixties to the UK to work and through their migration network and family links more than 50 person are migrants now in Britain. This British used to be called Jack; he used to own a ranch in a village near Meknes. They visited us in Meknes and talked to my

uncle and agreed on the work contract. The contract used to cost 300 DH; I was myself involved in selling the contracts to people from our neighbor with this price. When my uncle migrated to London; he used to send contracts to people and it is one old postman who brought them and it is me who give them to the ones who paid 300 DH; this sum of money used to be our only source of survival.

These testimonial narratives of women reveal creative and strong women who saved hundreds of individuals from poverty and created a history for them, their families and their tribes or cities; these illiterate women who sacrificed for big extended families and made strong social capital which initiated the migratory process compel researchers to review their own tools with which they approach migration.

Conclusions

The paper is an attempt to analyze migratory narratives from an agency and gender perspective, mingling intersectional dimensions of migration to capture the whole trajectory of the migrant and to make the migrants and their families highlighted as agents of change in the migratory system. We are aware that our sampling is not representative of realities of migration and of return migrants and their families, and we are also aware that our analysis is not exhaustive and does not follow a unique approach; however, we opted for a broader perspective as an experimental method in order to highlight the complexities of the lives of these individuals and how they bargain for transnational and "locational" subjectivities in their quest for a successful model of migration.

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