

# **The complex role of migration in shifting rural livelihoods: a Moroccan case study**

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## **1. Introduction**

There is a certain tendency to portray migration as the antithesis of ‘development’ both in its causes and consequences. This coincides with a dominant anti-migrationist current in public perceptions and policy making. The dominant narratives in most policy and some academic circles (cf. Golini 1996:338) tend to be based not only on the assumption that migration is at an all-time high, but also that migration is a threat to social cohesion, economic growth and even security. In particular South-North migration tends to be seen as a problematic phenomenon caused by a poverty and a general lack of development (which, it is believed, makes people move) in the countries and regions of origin and as a potential threat to development in both the sending (e.g., the ‘brain drain’) and receiving societies. Rather than migration *and* development, it often seems there can be only development *or* migration.

It is striking that many scientific studies and most policy documents aim – sometimes explicitly, but mostly explicitly – at stopping or at least decreasing internal (rural-to-urban) and international migration (Todaro and Maruszko 1987:111; McDowell and De Haan 1997). For instance, the aim of many rural development programs is to reduce migration. However, this anti-migrationist objective is rarely justified and, in fact, taken for granted. Migration is typically seen as a ‘problem’ that needs to be ‘solved’, and this solution usually implies a form of migration management aimed at combating this phenomenon. This exemplifies that migration tends to be put *a priori* in a strongly negative light.

Poverty and oppression are commonly seen as the root causes of migration. However, popular images of massive flows of migrants do not only magnify the actual magnitude of migration, but seem also theoretically ungrounded, since they arise from an inaccurate analysis of the root causes of migration. Although migration evidently emanates from the desire to improve

one's livelihood, it is rarely the poorest and most destitute who migrate most (cf. Skeldon, 1997)<sup>1</sup>. Migration involves considerable costs and risks, and also requires, besides knowledge and social networks, the necessary aspirations. This explains the paradox that socio-economic development in the form of rising incomes, educational levels, and access to information tends to be initially associated with *increasing* migration. Rather than absolute poverty, a certain level of socio-economic development, combined with *relative* deprivation in the form of spatial inequalities in life opportunities, seems to be the more fundamental cause of migration.

While recognizing the historical uniqueness of each specific migration experience, the processes of social and economic development or “modernization” seem to be universally associated with the increasing concentration of economic and social activities in urban areas, and, hence, increasing migration. In many ways, this process of development and urbanization is even conditional on rural-to-urban migration (De Soto 2000; McGee 1994:iii; Skeldon 1997:196; Todaro 1969:139). In this light, it is not surprising that attempts by governments to turn the tide, that is, to stop the *rural exodus* and to “fix” rural populations on their homesteads, typically fail (Bebbington 1999; De Haan *et al.* 2000). In fact, rural development and infrastructural projects can have the contradictory effects of *stimulating* migration (cf. Beauchemin and Schoumaker 2005; Rhoda 1983).

In order to conceptualise migration as part of broader transformation processes, it useful to discuss the main theoretical approaches explaining migration occurring from developing countries. Neo-classical migration theory has tended to see migration as the result of spatial inequalities of income. From the assumptions of neo-classical push-pull and equilibrium models, income-maximising individuals are expected to respond to geographical differences in the supply and demand for labour by migrating from low-wage, labour-surplus regions to high-wage, labour-scarce regions. In a perfectly neo-classical world, this process of “factor price equalization” (the Heckscher-Ohlin model) will eventually result in growing convergence between wages at the sending and receiving end (Harris and Todaro 1970; Lewis 1954; Ranis and Fei 1961; Schiff 1994; Todaro and Maruszko 1987). Migration will cause labor to become less scarce at the destination and scarcer at the sending end. Capital is

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<sup>1</sup> Also in the case of “non-labour”, refugee migration from areas stricken by famines, wars or natural disasters also, it is generally not the poorest who tend to migrate (see Skeldon, 2002).

expected to move in the opposite direction. In the long run, this process would remove the incentives for migrating.

A radically different interpretation of migration was provided as of the 1960s by the historical-structural paradigm on development, which has its intellectual roots in Marxist political economy (Castles and Miller 1993:22-23). Historical structuralists have criticized neo-classical migration theory, stating that individuals do *not* have a free choice, since they are fundamentally constrained by structural forces. Within this perspective, migration is not a matter of free choice, but people are forced to move because traditional economic structures have been undermined as a result of their incorporation into the global political-economic system.

Historical structuralists have not developed a migration theory as such, but perceive migration as a natural outgrowth of disruptions and dislocations that are intrinsic to the process of capitalist accumulation. Andre Gunder Frank (1966; 1969), the frontrunner of the “dependency” theory, argued that global capitalism contributed to the “development of underdevelopment”. Likewise, structuralists interpret migration as one of the many manifestations of capitalist expansion and the increasingly unequal terms of trade between developed and underdeveloped countries (Massey *et al.* 1998:36). In the perspective of the related world-systems theory (Wallerstein 1974; 1980) the incorporation of peripheral regions and countries into the capitalist economy is associated with putting a (migration) drain on them. Consequently, migration would therefore ruin stable peasant societies, undermine their economies and uproots their populations, which become part of the urban proletariat to the benefit of the core areas that rely on cheap (immigrant) labour.

However, both neo-classical and structuralist migration theory seem too rigid and determinist to deal with the complex realities of migration and development interactions. Both approaches tend to see migration as the outflow of the interplay between macro-forces. Whereas in a neo-classical world, migrants are seen as homogeneous, income maximising individuals ‘automatically’ reacting to wage differences, historical structuralists tend to perceive individuals as passive ‘pawns’ or ‘victims’ that passively adapt to macro-forces. In fact, both approaches basically rule out individual agency.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the emerging new economics of labour migration (NELM) offered a more subtle view (cf. Stark 1991; Taylor 1999). Instead of perceiving migration as an individual endeavour, NELM perceives migration as the risk-sharing behaviour of households or other social groups, which are better able than individuals to diversify resources like labour in order to minimize income risks. NELM theory integrates motives other than individual income maximization that play a role in migration decision-making. Migration is primarily perceived as a household response to income risks, since remittances serve as income insurance for households in the country of origin (Lucas and Stark 1985, 902). In addition, migration may play a vital role in providing a potential source of investment capital, which is especially important in the context of the imperfect credit (capital) and risk (insurance) markets that prevail in most developing countries (Stark 1991; Taylor 1999).

NELM has striking conceptual parallels with the “livelihood” approaches which have evolved as of the late 1970s among geographers, anthropologists and sociologists conducting micro-level research in developing countries. A growing body of empirical work has raised awareness that the poor are not only passive victims of global macro-forces—whose existence they generally did not deny by the way—but try to actively improve their livelihoods within the constraining conditions in which they live (Lieten and Nieuwenhuys 1989). This points to the fundamental role of human agency.

A *livelihood* comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources), and activities required for a means of living (Carney 1998). A livelihood *strategy* can then be defined as a strategic or deliberate choice of a combination of activities by households and their individual members to maintain, secure, and improve their livelihoods. For many, but certainly not all, social settings, the household was recognized as the most relevant social group and hence the most appropriate unit of analysis, acknowledging that the “forms of households vary across time, space, and socio-economic groups” (McDowell and De Haan 1997:3).

Bebbington (1999) stressed the need to broaden our understanding of rural livelihoods in the developing world, without automatically restricting the analysis to agriculture or natural resources. In most rural areas of the developing world, households tend to increasingly draw on multiple activities inside and outside agriculture. Rural livelihoods should therefore no longer be equated with agrarian livelihoods.

In this context, migration can be seen as one of the main strategies to diversify, secure and, potentially, durably improve livelihoods, often in combination with other strategies, such as agricultural intensification and local non-farm activities (McDowell and De Haan 1997:1-3). Instead of just a short-term survival or crisis-coping strategy or a flight from misery, migration is seen as a deliberate decision to improve livelihoods, facilitate investments (Bebbington 1999:2027) and help to reduce fluctuations in the family income, which has often been entirely dependent on climatic vagaries (De Haan *et al.* 2000:28; McDowell and De Haan 1997:18). Migration can then be seen as a means of acquiring a wider range of assets to insure against future shocks and stresses (De Haan *et al.* 2000:30). In fact, if we see migration as part of a broader, multi-local *household livelihood strategy* to diversify income and overcome market and other structural-institutional development constraints, this comes very close to the premises of NELM.

## **2. Aims and methodology**

However, there is still a limited understanding on the precise role of migration in broader livelihood strategies of households and, on the macro-level, its role in broader contextual transformation processes. In particular the interaction between poverty and migration dynamics is poorly understood and often contested. This is partly related to a *general* lack of pertinent micro-level empirical data. First, the relation between poverty and migration choice is yet unresolved. Whereas poverty is likely to increase incentives to migrate, poverty can coincide with a lack of resources to migrate. Second, although migration might stabilise household income, there is limited evidence to examine whether migration and remittances can *durably* improve livelihoods and do not lead to a one-sided remittance-dependency of sending communities. Third, the analyses of migration as part of livelihoods tend to be rather static. There is limited attention for the different roles migration might play in different stages of household life cycles. For instance, certain types of migration might particularly occur in specific moments of time, and these different forms of migration might be functionally related.

Finally, the rather different roles that internal and international migration may have in livelihoods are rarely put in a comparative perspective, as studies tend to focus on either internal or international migration. Although both movements are intrinsically and

functionally interrelated (cf. Fawcett 1989; Martin 1992), and although they are believed to be part and parcel of the same general transformation processes (Skeldon 1997; Zelinsky 1971). Therefore, a simultaneous analysis of how both forms of migration affects household income and wealth may shed light on the potentially distinct role of both forms of migration in households' livelihood strategies.

In order to contribute to understanding of the role of migration in livelihoods of households in rural areas of the developing world, the remainder of this article will examine the reciprocal role of internal and international migration in shifting household livelihood strategies in one particular sending area in south Morocco: the Todgha valley<sup>2</sup>. First, the analysis will focus on the developmental context from which migration has emanated. It will examine how the interrelated phenomena of internal and international migration from this particular migrant sending area are part of the more general historical process of structural change affecting Moroccan rural areas since French colonial intrusion in the Maghreb. This entailed the progressive incorporation of this rural area into the modern state and the national and international monetary-capitalist economy. We will examine the structural root causes of migration through analysing historical, spatial and socio-ethnic differentiation in migration patterns within the study area.

Subsequently, we will focus on the micro-level through examining how internal and international migration are connected to broader livelihood strategies over the course of household life cycles. This dynamic household approach will also allow analysing how internal and international migration are reciprocally related. This is achieved through developing an ideal-typical conceptualisation of how household migration trajectories evolve across time and space. Through analysing the place of migration in shifting livelihoods of households living in this particular area, we hope to answer the question to what extent internal and international migration should be considered as "survival" or "crisis-coping" strategies that sustain or even increase dependency or rather as 'investment strategies' that allow households and their members to secure and durably improve their livelihoods.

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<sup>2</sup> The social and economic impacts of internal and international migration and remittances on regional development of the Todgha valley are addressed in another paper (De Haas *forthcoming*).

Data collection by the author took place between September 1998 and June 2000. Following a participatory appraisal, a socio-economic household survey was conducted among 507 households containing 3,801 individuals, including 237 international (150 current and 87 returned) and 457 internal (292 current and 165 returned) migrants, in six villages. These villages were located across the Todgha valley and were selected on the basis of a spatially clustered, non-random sample, such that the survey covered the different migratory, ethnic, agricultural and geographical settings prevailing in the valley. In addition to continuous participant observation, open interviews were conducted on migration, agricultural practices, investments and socio-cultural relations. In 2003, additional interviews were conducted among prospective migrants.

### **3. The mobility transition of the Todgha valley**

The Todgha is an oasis river valley located on the southern slopes of the High Atlas Mountains in Morocco. The Todgha is a medium-sized river oasis, with a cultivated area almost 40 km in length and varying in width from 100 m near the sources to 4 km downstream. In 2000 the valley housed approximately 70 000 inhabitants living in 64 villages and the booming town of Tinghir.

The Tamazight (Berber) speaking population of the Todgha valley is composed of two main ethnic groups: the sedentary Aït Todoght (“children of the Todgha”) in the water abundant upper Todgha valley and members of the formerly semi-nomadic Aït ‘Atta tribe who have settled in the downstream, water-scarce part of the valley over the past two to three centuries. These groups live in neatly segregated zones of the valley, whereby the Ait Todoght have historically monopolized access to river water, forcing the Ait Atta to rely on underground water resources. Although both groups speak Tamazight Berber a strong antagonism prevails between the Aït Todoght and the Aït ‘Atta. Their distinct ethnic identities are reflected in the taboo on intermarriage. The Aït ‘Atta villages in the lower Todgha are relatively isolated and deprived of public amenities.

Within the Aït Todoght, a distinction can be made between the “casts” of the comparatively “White” *imazighene* on the one hand and the relatively “Black” *ismakhen* (ex-slaves) and

*haratin* (usually sharecroppers and/or smallholders) on the other hand. Other groups include the *shurfa* (descendants of the Prophet Muhammad), *igurramen* (descendants of local saints), and, until the 1950s, Jews. The White oasis dwellers generally possessed the lion's share of land and water resources. As landless sharecroppers and/or smallholders, the black oasis inhabitants of *ismakhen* (ex-slaves) and *haratin* occupied the lowest position in the ethnic hierarchy. In contrast, the Ait Atta villages are ethnically homogeneous. Among both Ait Todoght and Ait Atta, the basic traditional unit of socio-political organization on village level is the so-called *ighs* (pl. *ighsan*), or the ethnic patrilineal lineage consisting of a group of extended families all sharing one common ancestor. Depending on their population size, most villages comprise two to eight *ighsan*.

Compared to surrounding mountain and desert areas, the central Todgha oasis valley occupied by the Ait Todoght disposes of a relatively well-developed infrastructure and public amenities. Especially in the late 1980s and 1990s, also the relatively marginal (downstream, off-road and predominantly Ait 'Atta) parts of the valley have been increasingly opened up, with an almost completed electrification, an expanding drinking water system and extensive telephone network, and the establishment of a markets and administrative services. Over the past decades, the number of primary and secondary schools has rapidly expanded and spread over the valley. In the 1990s, a veritable 'media revolution' took place, with 80 and 44 percent of all households possessing television sets and satellite dishes in 1999, respectively. Road connections and transport facilities to destinations outside the Todgha have also been improved in the past decades.

Until colonization the oasis dwellers were largely dependent on irrigated subsistence agriculture, which was enabled by the perennial flow of water in the Todgha. Like most of rural Morocco, the Todgha valley remained largely free of central sultanic state power based in the cities west of the High Atlas until the 20th century. Due to fierce resistance from inland tribes the French only gained control over most parts of the valley in 1931, 19 years after the formal establishment of the French protectorate over Morocco. The French were able rapidly to establish a modern administrative structure in the valley, which remained largely intact after Moroccan independence in 1956. The second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was marked by the development of the region's infrastructure linking the Todgha with other parts of Morocco.

On the one hand, the incorporation of this formerly stateless society of “free Berbers” in the modern French, and – after independence – Moroccan-Arabic state, implied loss of tribal autonomy and, the decline of regional and trans-Saharan (caravan) trade networks as well as and nomad-peasant trade relations. These processes including the dramatic population increase following the introduction of modern health care have played a role in undermining traditional livelihoods predominantly based on subsistence agriculture. On the other hand, transformations of the political-economic macro-context through the incorporation of the Todgha into the modern state and the capitalist economy along with the concomitant expansion of infrastructure and means of transports created entirely new livelihood opportunities through wage labour outside traditional subsistence oasis agriculture within, but in particular outside, the valley.

These processes have culminated in increasing labour migration from, within, and towards the Todgha. Traditional migration patterns have been drastically modified, extended, and partly replaced with new forms of essentially ‘modern’ migration. Migration from the Todgha is not a new phenomenon. Seasonal and more long-term migration by harvest workers or occupational specialists (notably well diggers) towards northern and western Morocco has existed for centuries (cf. Büchner 1986). Nevertheless, incorporation of the Todgha into the modern Moroccan state and the capitalist economy have changed the character and radically enlarged the geographical scope of population mobility in the form of remittance-based *wage labour* migration to the cities along the Atlantic coasts and, later, to Europe.

Migration from the Todgha valley has occurred earlier and more massively than from the surrounding, more isolated Saghro and Atlas Mountains. Also within the Todgha, the relatively centrally located, opened-up parts of the valley witnessed more intensive internal and international migration than the more isolated and poorer (Ait ‘Atta) villages. Not poverty and marginalization, but rather the development processes in the form of demographic transition, improved education and income, and mental change have broadened horizons, increased aspirations and enabled people to better their life through moving elsewhere. This triggered a process somehow reminiscent of what Zelinsky (1971) called the “mobility transition”.

This mobility transition set off well before French occupation of the valley with the French colonization of neighbouring Algeria in 1830. In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, people

from the Todgha went to work in the cities and on the farms of French *colons* in Algeria. This early form of international migration was an extension of even earlier forms of seasonal and circular migration within Morocco. Algeria remained the principal destination for Todgha's international migrants until the 1950s. The instauration of the French protectorate over Morocco (1912-1956) and the concomitant urbanization created increasing possibilities for internal migration, which was mainly directed at coastal cities like Rabat and Casablanca.

In the 1960s and 1970s, however, the combined effect of Algerian independence (1962) and the economic boom in Europe caused a reorientation of international migration flows, which shifted towards France and, to a lesser extent, Belgium and the Netherlands. A minority went as temporary labourers in oil countries like Libya, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq. In a way, Algeria was the platform from which early labour migrants directly "leapfrogged" to France. The end 1960s and begin 1970s were the "Golden Age" of migration, when workers were directly recruited, costs and risks of migration were relatively low, and a large number of Todghawi migrated abroad. Labour recruitment was only important in the early phase of migration. Whereas 53 percent of the labour migrants that went abroad in the 1960s were directly recruited, this percentage fell to 17 percent in the 1970s. In the 1980s and 1990s, all migrants went on their own force, mostly assisted by already migrated kin.

Increasingly restrictive European immigration regulations as of the 1970s did not lead to a dramatic decrease in out-migration. The 1980s and 1990s were characterized by a diversification of migration strategies and destinations. The recruitment freeze had the unintended effect of stimulating permanent settlement of migrants and subsequent family migration. Most 'guestworkers' decided not to return and this led to a wave of family reunification in the 1970s and 1980s, followed by family formation in the 1980s and, especially, the 1990s. The expatriate networks of Todghawi have clearly played a facilitating role in perpetuating migration from the valley. Many Todghawi are able to enter Europe legally each year through family reunification and marriages with family or acquaintances living abroad. Family migration partially serves as labour migration 'in disguise', through which households maintain their stakes in the international migration market over the generations.

Another consequence of restrictive European immigration policies has been a significant increase in undocumented migration. Another development was the geographical

diversification of migration flows between 1985 and 2000, during which Italy, Portugal and particularly Spain emerged as new destination countries for both legal and undocumented migrants from the Todgha. Through legalization campaigns, many “illegal” migrants have obtained residency papers. In fact, after a relapse between 1975-1990 – when family migration dominated – a surge in new primary *labour* migration to southern Europe has occurred in the 1990s. Although France remains the main focus for international migrants (accounting for 62 percent of all surveyed international migrants who left between 1950 and 2000), destinations like the Netherlands (8 percent), the Arab oil countries (6 percent), Spain (13 percent) and Italy (4 percent) have grown in relative importance since the onset of European-bound migration.

Rural-to-urban migration further increased in the post-colonial era to the detriment of the historically-rooted seasonal migration of harvest workers, for instance to the Middle Atlas. In addition to the traditional destinations of the Atlantic coast (e.g., Rabat, Casablanca), smaller towns and the boomtowns of the northern Rif (e.g., Nador, Tétouan) have also become important destinations. Internal migration tends to function as a precursor to international migration. Many Todghawi first moved to the cities, where they worked, saved money, and informed themselves, before ‘leapfrogging’ to Europe.

In 1999, internal migrants typically worked in construction (28 percent) or do service jobs (24 percent). A distinct, relatively wealthy and educated ‘elite’ of internal migrants comprises civil servants and private-sector professionals (7 percent) as well as the rapidly growing category of student migrants (22 percent). These students tend to eventually settle in cities as civil servants and professional workers or move abroad. International migrants typically do unskilled jobs in industry, agriculture and services.

Labour migrants from the Todgha tend to be young and male. Although an increasing number of Moroccan women have been migrating to southern Europe since the 1990s, few women from this culturally conservative region are migrating independently. Internal migrants tend to be younger than international migrants (average age *on departure* 23.3 and 27.5 years, respectively), but internal return migrants also stayed away for shorter periods compared to international returnees (8.2 years and 17.1 year, respectively). This difference explains that the average age of current internal migrants was 29.9 years against 40.9 percent among current international migrants. This can be explained by the fact that the economic, social, and

legal obstacles to internal migration are comparatively low, and this is in line with our observation that internal migration often precedes international migration.

International migrants from the Todgha are not significantly better or worse educated than nonmigrants of the same age category. By contrast, internal migrants are significantly better educated than nonmigrants, also when excluding the “endogenous” group of student migrants. This seems related to the fact that most job opportunities for higher educated people (i.e., ex student migrants) are found in the large towns and cities, and that they therefore tend to stay away. The incidence of landlessness is 22 percent among nonmigrant households and 19 percent among internal migrant households, compared to only 4 and 2 percent among international and returned migrant households. Only few international migrants are from landless households. This suggests that the poorest have generally not been able to migrate abroad.

Migration network theory predicts that the costs and risks of migration will fall over time due to the facilitating role established migrant communities play in the migration of other community members. In this way, migration would become less selective over time and migration experience is diffused throughout communities. However, the survey data do not sustain this hypothesis. Only four (out of 35) ethnic lineages (*ighsan*) representing 6 percent of the total surveyed population account for more than 21 percent of all the international migrants who have left since 1980. 14 lineages representing 17 percent of the population do not contain any international migrants at all. The distribution of international migration participation measured at the lineage level did not become less unequal after 1980. For migration before and after 1980, the Gini indexes are 0.463 and 0.471, respectively.

Access to international migration through marriage migration and various kinds of ‘migration assistance’ is largely determined by the access to largely kinship-based migrant networks. Restrictive immigration policies in Europe have increased the costs and risks of international migration – especially to the classical destination countries. This has led to increasing dependency on this form of social capital. Outside networks, considerable financial resources are needed to move abroad—for instance, to pay for bride prices, the increasingly complex, costly, and uncertain visa application procedures, or sums to be paid to smugglers to cross the Strait of Gibraltar. This is reinforced by the preference for consanguineous marriage, through which ‘migration capital’ is monopolized within the same ethnic group.

Therefore, in the Todgha, migration networks are clearly facilitating to people belonging to lineages (*ighsan*) and extended families containing international migrants, but tend to be exclusionary for people not belonging to such groups. This case of the so-called “downside of social capital” (cf. Portes and Landolt 1996), points to the limitations of migration network theory. In the Todgha, networks do not extend *ad infinitum* as particular lineages tend to monopolize access to migration.

#### **4. From nomads to migrants**

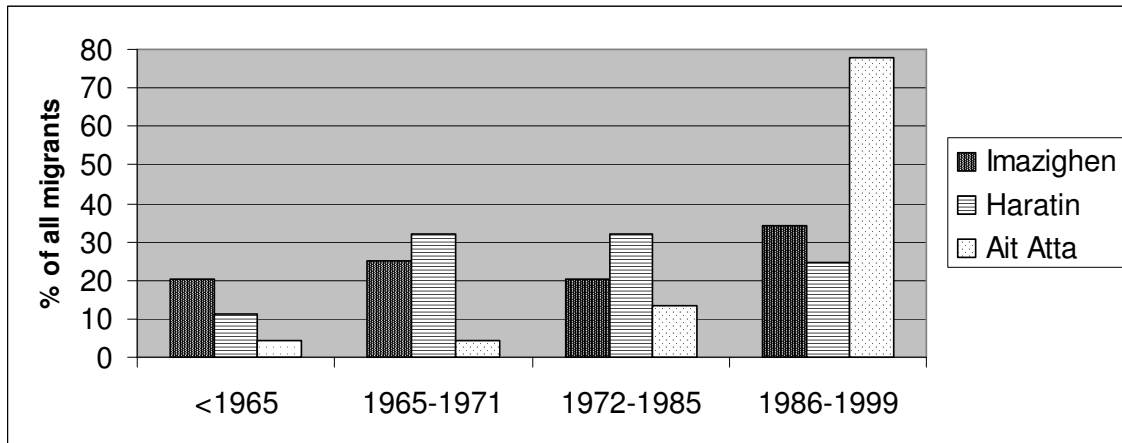
To further examine the impact of broader transformation processes and ‘development’ on mobility patterns and migration participation, it is useful to examine the strikingly different migration participation experiences of the sedentary Ait Todoght and the semi-nomadic Ait Atta tribe. This analysis exemplifies the importance of ethnic and spatial factors in explaining the selective character of migration patterns.

Until recently, the Ait Todoght have participated far more intensively than the Ait Atta in both internal and international migration. The Ait Todoght participated intensively in migration to Algeria. In 1954, the mean migration participation rate for the Ait Todoght was 8.2 percent, which is in sharp contrast with the low migration participation rate of only 1.9 percent among the neighbouring sedentarising Ait Atta. They were also predominantly involved in colonial migration to Algeria and in the migration boom of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Whereas the Ait Atta hardly participated in Algerian migration, they partly caught up in the 1970s, with their international migration participation rate rising to 4.5 percent in 1975, compared to 8.5 percent among the Ait Todoght. This was mainly due to the increased migration participation in the less isolated Ait Atta villages located along the main road. Only few people from more remote Ait Atta villages migrated abroad. However, it was only in the 1980s and 1990s that the Ait Atta started to participate intensively in international migration.

Figure 1 shows the period of departure of international migrants within the research population, differentiated for the main ethnic groups of *imazighen* and *haratin* (both

belonging to the main Aït Todoght group) as well as the Aït ‘Atta. First, the figure exemplifies that *imazighen* and, to a lesser extent, *haratin*, migrated relatively early, and that 78 percent of the surveyed Aït ‘Atta migrants moved abroad after 1985.

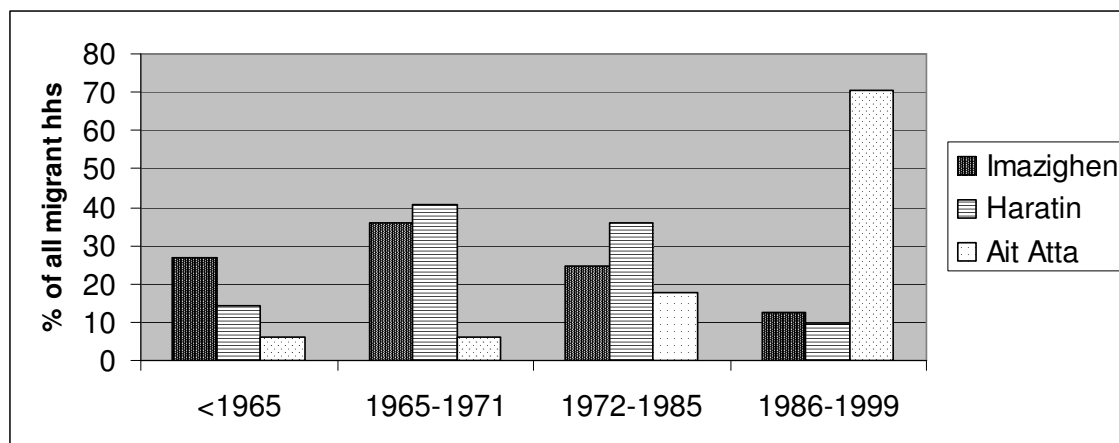
**Figure 1. Year of departure of international migrants within main ethnic groups**



Source: Household survey ( $\eta(\text{year of departure dependent})=0.326^{**}$ )

The differences between Aït Todoght and Aït ‘Atta become even more significant if we focus on the household level. Figure 2 displays the year of departure of the first international migrant within all the households participating in international migration. In this way, we exclude network and intergenerational (relay) migrants and focus on the year in which households first became involved in international migration. It confirms that *imazighen* from the Aït Todoght exhibit the most mature international migration history and that the Aït ‘Atta migration boom is comparatively recent. Generally, the same pattern seems to hold for internal migration. In 1954, only 0.7 and 2.7 percent of the Aït ‘Atta participated in seasonal and rural-to-urban migration, respectively, compared to 7.6 and 6.5 percent of the Aït Todoght. Thus, both internal and international migration were low among the Aït ‘Atta in the 1950s.

Figure 2. Year of departure of first international migrant within main ethnic groups



Source: Household survey;  $\eta(\text{date of first departure dependent})=0.478^{**}$

In 1975, participation in internal migration was almost equal between the two groups. This was in the time before international migration gained momentum among the Ait ‘Atta. This suggests that internal migration is a *precursor* to international migration. This illustrates the importance of adopting a dynamic, longitudinal perspective in migration analysis.

The data presented in figure 3 equally point to the relatively late participation of Ait ‘Atta in internal migration, although the association between ethnicity and year of departure is less strong compared to international migration. In contrast to the Ait ‘Atta, the Ait Todoght started to participate in both internal and international migration at an early stage. It is only since the 1980s that the Ait ‘Atta have caught up, and now participate even more intensively in labour migration than the ethnic groups belonging to the Ait Todoght. The low number of international return migrants<sup>3</sup> also indicates that Ait ‘Atta migration is still in the build-up phase or, in Jones’ (1998) terms, the ‘early adopters’ stage of its migration cycle.

Furthermore, the Ait Todoght and Ait ‘Atta have developed rather distinct migration itineraries, with the Ait Todoght focusing on classical destinations in northwestern Europe and the Ait ‘Atta focusing on new Moroccan migration destinations in Spain and Italy.

This all suggests that internal and international out-migration constitute functionally related ‘communicating vessels’, in particular in the longer term. Both forms of migration seem

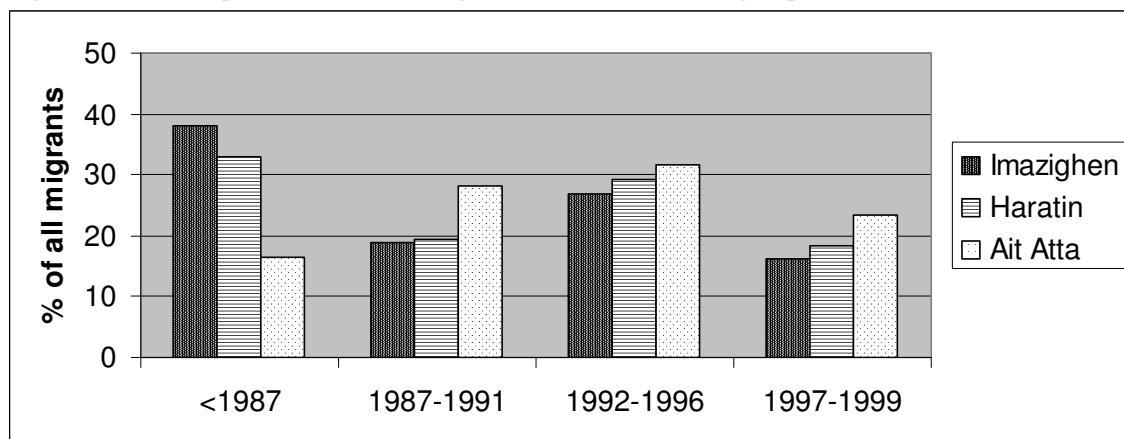
<sup>3</sup> International return migrants represent 0.6 percent of the total population among the Ait Atta, against 3.5 and 2.1.percent among *haratin* and *imazighen*, respectively.

positively correlated, and part of the same general process leading to a general increase in mobility, in which internal migration seems to function as a precursor to international migration.

There appears to be a relationship between the relative isolation of most Aït ‘Atta and their “lagged” participation in contemporary forms of labour migration. Since colonization and in the first decades after independence, most Aït ‘Atta remained relatively isolated compared to most Aït Todoght, which opened up to the outside world earlier. While the Ait ‘Atta resisted violently against colonial intrusion, the French colonisers fostered political alliances with the conquered Aït Todoght and the also located the valley’s administrative capital Tinghir as well as most roads on Aït Todoght territory. This association between the central state and the Ait Todoght persisted into the post-colonial era.

The infrastructurally and politically marginalized Aït ‘Atta held on longer to their traditional semi-nomadic livelihoods. Their stronger tribal cohesion, inward orientation and their generally hostile attitude towards other ethnic groups and the Moroccan state partly explains their low and delayed propensity to participate in wage labour migration. The concomitant lack of social networks with migrants, aspirations to migrate as well as high levels of poverty seems to explain their initially low capability and inclination to migrate. This sustains the idea that the hypothesis that the most ‘marginalised’ people are not prone to migrate most, but those with access to certain material, social, political and informational resources.

**Figure 3. Year of departure of internal migrants within main ethnic groups**



Source: Household survey ( $\eta(\text{year of departure dependent})=0.176^{**}$ )

It is important to note that among the semi-nomadic Aït ‘Atta, mobility as such has always been a constituent part of their livelihoods. What the Aït ‘Atta have been experiencing is the transition from a pre-modern form of intensive mobility (*transhumance*, settlement, and resettlement through tribal warfare and conquest) to a strikingly different form of mobility—labour migration—which is a modernist phenomenon *per se*. The Aït Todoght of the upper and middle Todgha were incorporated into these modern migration systems at an earlier stage than the Aït ‘Atta of the lower Todgha experienced their transformation from nomads into migrants.

## **5. The place of migration in household life cycles**

Internal and international migration tend to occupy distinct positions in the household life cycle. Two thirds of internal migrants are unmarried, compared to only one fifth of all international migrants (see table 1). Considering the position of migrants within the household (see table 2), 49 percent of international migrants are household heads themselves, whereas 69 percent of internal migrants are the son of the household head, and only 18 percent the head himself. Furthermore, that the average age on return is 32 for internal returnees and 48 for international returnees, and that the modes were in the 25-29 and 60-64 age categories, respectively.

**Table 1. Marital status of current internal and international migrants**

Migrants	Marital status (%)					Total	<i>n</i>
	Single	Married	Divorced	Widowed			
Internal	63.7	33.6	2.1	0.7		100.0	292
International	20.0	78.0	2.0	0.0		100.0	150
Total	48.9	48.6	2.0	0.5		100.0	442

Source: Household survey (C=0.391\*\*)

**Table 2. Position within household by migration status of individuals above 15 years**

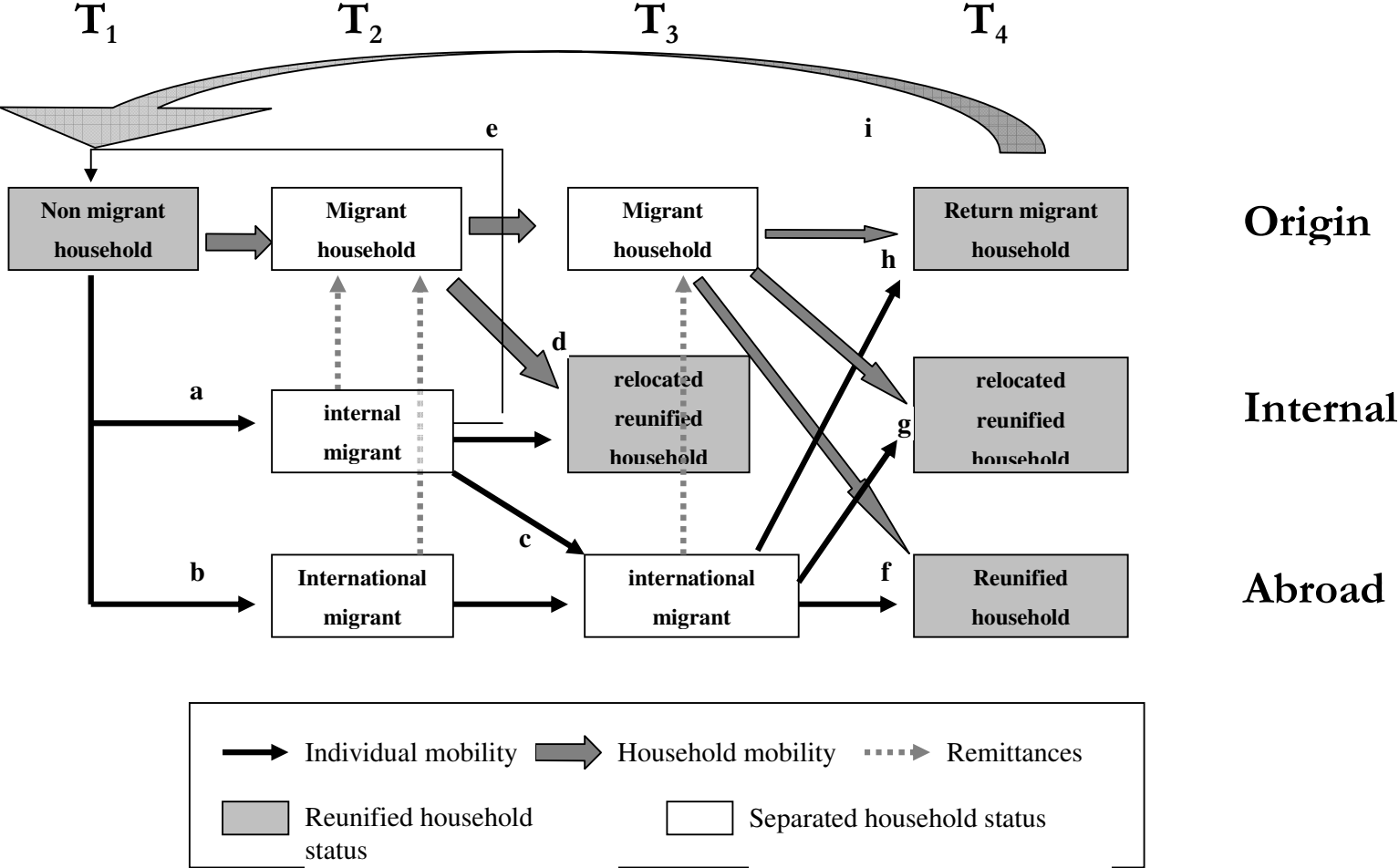
Relation to household Head	Migrants (%)					
	Nonmigrants	Internal	Returned internal	International	Returned international	Total
Head	14.5	18.6	37.0	50.0	75.9	20.9
Spouse	24.8	0.0	2.4	0.0	2.3	18.1
Child	39.1	70.0	47.9	32.9	11.5	41.9
Child in-law	8.0	1.1	0.0	3.4	0.0	6.1
Brother/sister	3.8	6.8	9.7	10.3	5.7	5.0
Grandchild	2.1	2.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.7
Other	7.7	1.4	3.0	3.4	4.6	6.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>N</i>	1,741	280	165	146	87	2,419

Source: Household survey (C=0.437\*\*)

To systematically analyse the place of migration in household livelihoods across time and space, figure 4 is an ideal-typical graphical representation of the different and reciprocally internal and international migration trajectories or ‘migration careers’ that Todgha households can pursue. The underlying assumption is that these trajectories are linked to the different phases of the household life cycle.

At T<sub>1</sub>, the household consists of young parents with young children. At a later stage, T<sub>2</sub>, there is more room for income diversification and migration with the growing number of adults in the household. The typical internal migrant is the grown-up son who moves to town (*arrow a* in figure 4) to gain additional family income. On average, this migration lasts 7 to 9 years. Doing often irregular, badly paid work in the cities is generally considered as a temporary stage, upon which to go further or return.

Figure 4. Ideal-typical household migration trajectories within the household life cycle



The critical age at which internal migrants and their households decide what to do afterwards lies currently somewhere around the age of 30, which more or less represents the threshold between  $T_2$  and  $T_3$ . This is the age of marriage for men and the age of return for the majority of return migrants. The ultimate ambition of most internal migrants is to gain access to international migration through saving enough money either to obtain a passport, a visa, and other paperwork, or to cross the Gibraltar Strait illegally, or through “network marriages”. Normally, and certainly nowadays, considerable financial resources are needed to fulfil the dream of going abroad for those lacking access to social migration capital. Each year several Todghawis succeed in ‘leapfrogging’ (*arrow c*) to Europe, legally or illegally.

Others move directly to Europe (*arrow b*). In the 1960s and early 1970s, such direct international migration was achieved through direct recruitment, the procurement of labour contracts through family or community members, or spontaneous migration. Nowadays, such direct migration is achieved either through marriage migration (family formation) or through undocumented migration. Nevertheless, as such migration often involves rather high costs, such migrants tend to be relatively old compared to internal migrants—and often have already migrated internally.

Internal migrants who do not migrate abroad, but who have succeeded in finding more or less stable employment in towns and cities, may go on to live separated from their newly married spouses, but generally end up transferring their wife and children (*arrow d*) after suitable housing has been found. In this case, the entire household functionally disappears from the oasis.

If internal migrants do not succeed in migrating overseas or finding stable employment in the towns or cities, many return to the Todgha (*arrow e*). This moment of return migration generally more or less coincides with marriage. Nowadays, the typical age of marriage for men lies between 25 and 35. The money saved during migration often serves to pay for the bride price, festivities, and other costs associated with marriage. In line with ancient traditions of circular migration, many internal migrants return to set up their own families. However, they may migrate again for longer or shorter periods if not enough money can be earned locally. However, staying away from one’s family is generally considered as undesirable, and the proportion of internal migrants above 40 years is very limited. When their own children grow up, the cycle of migration may start again.

International migrants tend to stay away much longer than internal migrants. Whereas returned international migrants stayed away 18 years on average, this is 8 years for returned internal migrants. Although migrants typically move abroad with the intention of coming back, most international migrants tend to stay away for (almost) their entire working age ( $T_2$  and  $T_3$ ), provided that a permanent residence status has been acquired at the destination. Once they have accepted the *de facto* permanent or long-term character of migration, many international migrants tend to reunify their families in Europe (*arrow f*). This family reunification moment generally lies 5 to 15 years after the initial separation, and entails the factual disappearance of the household from the oasis. However, households that settled in Europe often fulfil a function in enabling ‘stay-behinds’ to migrate through marriage migration, which is partially a form of labour migration ‘in disguise’.

Despite the magnitude of family reunification, a considerable proportion of Todgha migrants have continued to live in Europe alone, while maintaining their families in Morocco via remittance transfers. There are several reasons for not reunifying families at the destination. Most respondents said that they feared that their wives and children would become too “westernized” and lose their religious faith in Europe. Many migrants also argued that—back in the 1970s and 1980s, when migrants were confronted with rising unemployment and racism in Europe—they estimated that their children would have a better future in Morocco in the expectation that higher education would procure them secure, civil-servant jobs.

However, other reasons might play an important role behind this official, socially acceptable discourse. Failure to fulfil the legal (i.e., status as a permanent resident) and financial (i.e., sufficient income) conditions for family reunification also seem important reasons, which most migrants are, however, not willing to admit. Other, more personal reasons opposing family reunification are marital conflict or estrangement, divorce, or marriage to a second wife in Europe or Morocco.

Long-term international migrants who do not cut ties with the household of origin typically return towards the end of their working age, at  $T_4$ , in their fifties or early sixties, to form returned international migration households (*arrow h*). Subsequently, their children may start the cycle

again (*arrow i*). Some migrants return far earlier, often with the intention to invest their money in their own enterprises. Most of the international migrants who left in the late 1960s and early 1970s migration boom had either reunified their families or returned home at the turn of the century. However, classic distinctions between permanent and return migration are becoming increasingly blurred. We have witnessed the emergence of transnational Todgha communities that maintain intensive contacts with either side of the Mediterranean. A sizable number of retired and unemployed migrants are ‘commuting’ between Europe and the Todgha, living for a part of the year in each place. These typical ‘pendulum’ migrants often combine this commuting with commercial activities (see De Haas 2006).

Other migrants have opted for the strategy of relay migration, in which only one or two children (traditionally sons) move to Europe prior to their father’s return. In this way multi-local households are able to maintain their stake in the international migration market over the generations without reunifying the entire household in Europe. Finally, some international migrants decide to relocate their households from their village to Tinghir or towns elsewhere in Morocco while abroad or upon their return (*arrow g*). Such relocation is often a flight from asphyxiating social pressures to share remittance-derived financial wealth with family and community members and the conflicts this often entails between migrants’ wives and the extended family.

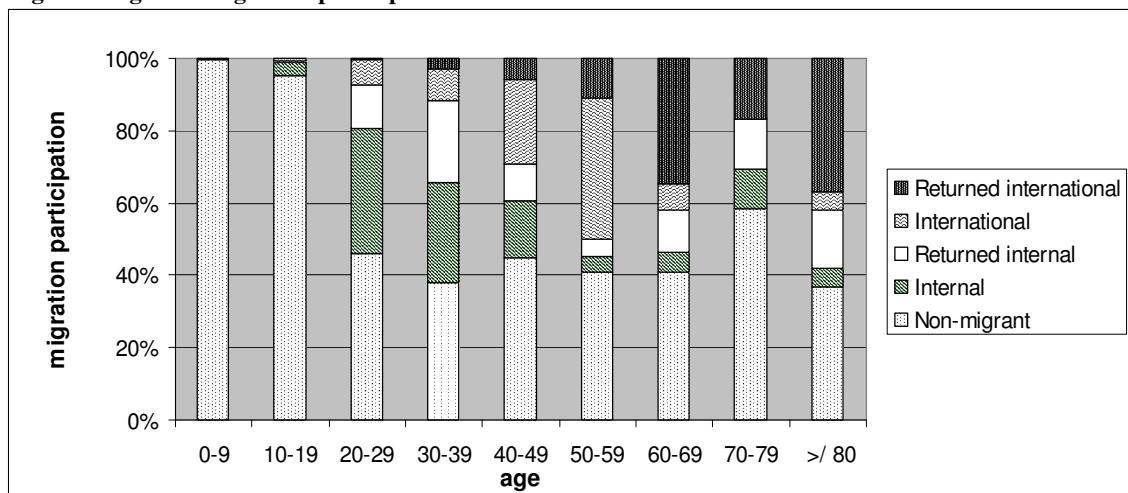
## **6. The significance of internal and international migration in households’ livelihoods**

Figure 5 illustrates the high incidence of migration among Todghawi men. All the age cohorts between 20 and 70 contain more than 50 percent current or returned migrants. It equally confirms that young men are mainly involved in internal migration compared to relatively older men, who are more involved in international migration. These data also appear to suggest that there is a persistent, but decreasing participation in international migration among younger generations. Since people tend to migrate abroad in their late twenties, it is not very useful to compare the 20-29 cohorts with older cohorts. Nevertheless, also when comparing the 30-39

cohorts with older cohorts, the differences in international migration participation remain too large to be explained by age alone.

The decreased participation in international labour migration can be explained by the increasingly restrictive immigration policies in Europe and the increasing reliance on family migration to the detriment of primary labour migration among the Aït Todoght. The increased costs and risks of international migration explain why relatively more people remain stuck in internal migration, being unable to make the move to Europe, or to leapfrog abroad from the towns and cities. Nevertheless, the data also reveal that the overall tendency to migrate (internally or internationally) has not decreased, and has remained constant at levels of around 60 percent.

**Figure 5. Age and migration participation of men**



Source: Household survey

Nowadays, most households in the Todgha have been in some way affected by internal and international migration. Many households count two or three generations of migrants. More than 40 percent of all the surveyed households are involved in international migration and 25 percent in internal migration, and several households are involved in both types simultaneously. Only one third of all households have not been directly affected by some kind of migration. Yet also nonmigrant household tend to be *indirectly* affected by the general social, economic and cultural impacts of migration. Moreover, on the basis of the prior analysis of spatio-temporal migration trajectories that households pursue over their life cycles, one might hypothesise that many

nonmigrants household that currently do not participate in migration are likely to do so in the near future.

Over the twentieth century, oasis households have progressively moved away from predominantly agricultural livelihoods to an increasingly diverse portfolio of activities and sources of income. Stimulated by population growth and increasing aspirations, this diversification process has been enabled by the increasing possibilities to gain an additional non-agricultural income, initially mainly through migration, but in recent decades also increasingly from within the Todgha valley itself.

As table 3 indicates, only a small minority (6 percent) among all households are active in only one economic sector and 1 percent have no economic activity at all. The first group mainly consists of exclusively agricultural households, while the latter group consists of either passive receivers of remittances (mainly indirect international migrant households) or extremely poor and landless household that have to live on charity. 58 percent of oasis household depend on three, four, or even more economic activities simultaneously. The average number of economic activities per household tends to be higher among internal and, in particular, international migrant households. About 45 percent of all international migrant households are active in four or more economic sectors<sup>4</sup>, compared to 14 percent among nonmigrants. This is an indication that migrant households do not tend to rely solely on remittances but instead tend to continue or even extend the number of economic sectors in which they are active.

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<sup>4</sup> The following sectors have been distinguished: agriculture, agricultural labor, construction, commerce, industry, civil servant / professional, and 'other'.

**Table 3. Degree of livelihood diversification by household migration status<sup>5</sup>**

Migration status	Number of economic activities outside household work (%)					Total	Mean	<i>n</i>
	0	1	2	3	≥ 4			
Nonmigrant	1.1	8.6	47.4	28.6	14.3	100.0	2.51	175
Internal	1.6	2.4	27.6	39.4	29.1	100.0	3.03	127
Indirect international	5.3	13.2	21.1	21.1	39.5	100.0	2.87	38
Current international	0.0	2.0	30.4	22.5	45.1	100.0	3.36	102
Returned international	0.0	6.2	30.8	26.2	36.9	100.0	3.05	65
Total	1.2	5.7	34.9	29.2	29.0	100.0	2.91	507

Source: Household survey (C=0.374\*\*;  $\eta$ =0.270\*\*)

Members of international migrant households are more frequently involved in agriculture than other household types (see table 4). On the contrary, nonmigrant households have the lowest involvement in agriculture. This seems to run counter to the idea that international migrant households would become passive remittance receivers. One third of all households are active in the construction sector, and the same percentage in the service sector. There is a strong labour division between men and women, in which most adult men either work in the expanding non-agricultural sectors in the Todgha, or have migrated outside the valley. The quasi totality of women work in the household and agriculture. The de-agrarization of men's activities seems to have increased the agricultural burden of women, in addition to their housekeeping and child-rearing activities.

Contemporary oasis livelihoods are increasingly characterized by multi-activity and multi-locality, in which we can witness a general diversification and partial de-agrarisation of activity patterns, especially among young men. This applies both to migrant and nonmigrant households, although migrant households tend to have more diversified livelihoods than nonmigrant households.

<sup>5</sup> Five household categories have been distinguished. Non-migrant households have never been involved in international migration and are currently not involved in internal migration. Internal migrant households only contain internal migrants. Indirect international migrant households are not directly involved in international migration, but have family members working abroad by whom they are financially supported. Current international migrant households have at least one member of the household currently living abroad. Returned international migrant households with at least one international return migrant, but do not currently contain members living abroad.

**Table 4. Economic activities by household migration status**

Economic activities	Household migration status (%)				
	nonmigrant	Internal migrant	indirect international	current international	returned international
Agriculture <sup>6</sup>	45.7	51.2	78.9	57.8	47.7
Construction	32.6	51.2	23.7	67.6	33.8
Commercial	18.3	23.2	13.2	14.7	24.6
Industrial	13.1	15.2	5.3	26.5	24.6
Civil servant/professional	5.7	11.2	2.6	2.0	10.8
Service sector	24.0	44.8	39.5	40.2	35.4
<i>n</i>	175	125	38	102	65

**Source:** Household survey

If migration were a livelihood strategy to diversify and increase the income of the households left behind we would expect migrants to send considerable amounts of remittances back to their households, and that their incomes would be substantially higher than those of nonmigrant households. The data indicate that international remittances tend to be far more important than internal remittances in terms of their mean contribution to household income. Whereas households involved in international migration tend to receive between 2,000 and 3,000 dirham<sup>7</sup> per month, internal migrant households receive an average of 860 dirham in remittance payments. Between 10 and 20 percent of the households without internal migrants nevertheless receive internal remittances from non-household members. For the total population, the average household received about 1,090 dirham per month in international remittances and 326 dirham in internal remittances.

Table 5 reveals the income structure of households by showing the two most important sources of household income per household migration category. The table indicates that the vast majority of households have various sources of income outside agriculture, either from migration or from local non-economic activities. The number of households that completely rely on subsistence agriculture is small (4 percent), and seems to be disappearing, reflecting the general tendency

<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that the figures mainly represent the activities of men. Most women have important agricultural duties, which are seen as an integral part of their household tasks. Therefore, most women have not reported agriculture as a distinct activity.

<sup>7</sup> In 1999, the average value of 1 US\$ was equal to 9.8 dirham.

towards diversification of economic activities and risk spreading. One quarter of all households live on a combination of local agricultural and non-agricultural income. Half of all nonmigrant households live on such a combination, and one quarter of this group live on non-agricultural income only. Even in terms of local cash income, non-agricultural sources of revenue seem to have become dominant.

Three quarters of internal migrant households live on a combination of internal remittances and local sources of income, while remittances seem most important in their contribution to total income. All categories of international migrant households tend to live primarily on international remittances, although they usually have additional sources of income. About 10 percent of international migrant households have simultaneous income from international and internal remittances.

**Table 5. Sources of income by household migration status<sup>8</sup>**

Sources of monetary income	Household migration status (%)					
	Non	Internal	Indirect intl	Interna- tional	Returned intl	Total
No source of income from own labour	1.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.6
Only agricultural	12.0	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.3
Agriculture>local non-agricultural	4.8	1.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.0
Agriculture<local non-agricultural	44.0	21.0	0.0	1.0	19.4	23.0
Only local non-agricultural	27.7	8.1	0.0	0.0	3.2	11.9
Internal remittances<local	4.8	25.0	0.0	0.0	3.2	8.4
Internal remittances>local	4.8	43.5	0.0	0.0	1.6	12.9
Internal and intl rem.<other sources	0.0	0.0	5.6	1.0	0.0	0.6
Internal and intl rem.>other sources	0.0	0.0	11.1	11.0	8.1	4.1
International rem.<other sources	0.0	0.0	36.1	15.0	11.3	7.2
International rem.>other sources	0.0	0.0	47.2	72.0	53.2	25.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>n</i>	166	124	36	100	62	488

Source: Household survey

Figure 6 gives an overview of the monthly household income for different household migration categories. This includes internal and international migrant remittances, locally earned salaries, income from renting, and agricultural income. The table reveals a positive association between participation in international migration and household income. The average income of households directly involved in international migration is more than double that of nonmigrant

<sup>8</sup> The “<” and “>” signs indicate which sources of income is highest.

and internal migrant households, a difference that largely reflects the income effect of cash remittance transfers.

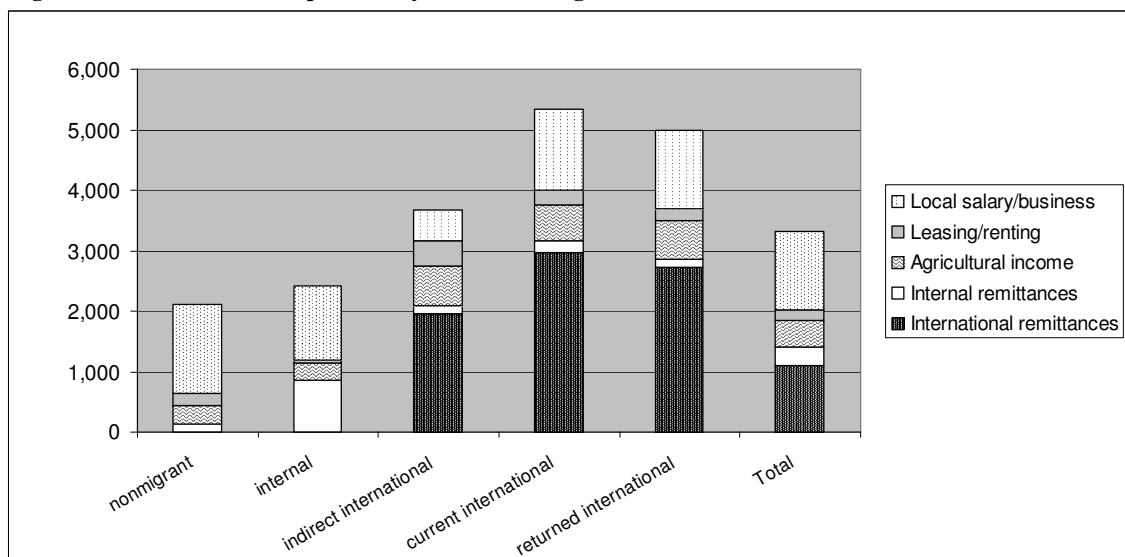
Internal migrant households earn only slightly higher average incomes than nonmigrants, although the proportion of extremely poor households is far higher among nonmigrants. 37.0 percent of non-migrant households live on less than 1,000 dirham per month, against 18.5 percent among internal migrants. This might be partly related to the fact that, also in the case of internal migration, it is not the poorest who migrate, as they cannot afford the risks and costs of migrating, although it might also be the partial effect of the income-stabilizing effect of income diversification through migration—it is difficult here to disentangle causes and effects.

International migrant households tend to earn higher on average local incomes than other households, in particular from agriculture. Average agricultural cash incomes of households involved in international migration are about twice as high as in nonmigrant households. Indirect international migrant households tend to have a relatively high income from leasing land and houses. Internal migrant households, on the contrary, tend to have lower local earnings than nonmigrants. This suggests that it is mainly through international migration that households can substantially improve their livelihoods<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> In another article, we have demonstrated that international migration and remittances have enabled households to overcome local capital constraints in order to invest in agricultural as well as non-agricultural sector. This has significantly contributed to economic development in the Todgha, improved standards of living and enabled the partial emancipation of subaltern ethnic groups. Remittance expenditure and investments have stimulated the diversifying and urbanising regional economy, from which also nonmigrants profit, and have triggered a counter-flow of “reverse” internal migration. However, several structural constraints such as corruption, bureaucracy and political and economic insecurity prevent the high development potential of migration from being fully realised (de Haas 2006b *forthcoming*)

**Figure 6. Mean income composition by household migration status**



Source: Household survey

## 6. Conclusion

At the macro level, rather than the independent cause of livelihood diversification, migration is first and foremost a constituent part of broader transformation processes. The substantial internal and international migration that occurred from the Todgha over the 20<sup>th</sup> century should primarily be seen as an integral part of the more general processes of incorporation of the Todgha into the wider context of the Moroccan state and the capitalist economy.

At the regional level, ethnic groups living in the central parts of the Todgha have migrated earlier and more massively than ethnic groups living in more marginal areas. Rather than the result of poverty, it is a certain degree of development – which increases capabilities and aspirations – that has enabled and motivated people to migrate. The analysis of how household migration trajectories evolve across time and space indicates that internal and international migration are reciprocally and functionally related over household life cycles. Internal migration tends to function as a precursor to international migration because it shapes the mental, social and material conditions for migrating abroad.

On the micro-level, migration is part of a more *general* tendency of households to diversify and improve their livelihoods. International migration is positively selective for land possession; internal migration for educational achievement. This shows again that it would be erroneous to portray migration as the result of poverty and misery.

Increasing labour migration has coincided with the increasing multi-activity and multi-locality of contemporary oasis livelihoods, which are characterised by a general diversification and partial de-agrarisation of activity patterns, especially among young men. Although agriculture remains important as a source of cash and in-kind income, its role has changed from being the pillar of the oasis economy to now being just one of the many sources of income. Nowadays, there are only very few oasis households that base their livelihoods on agricultural resources only. This corroborates the point raised by Bebbington (1999:2021) that we should cease to “crunch rural livelihoods into the category of agricultural and natural resource-based strategies”.

International remittances have allowed for significant improvements in household income and living conditions. Migrant households tend not to rely passively on remittances, but intensify local economic activities through remittance investments, and also tend to have higher non-migratory incomes than other households. However, this only seems to apply to international migration. On the short term, internal migration does generally not allow households to improve livelihoods. Spreading income risks therefore seems to be the main rationale behind internal migration.

However, it is important not to jump to the conclusion that internal migration is thus merely a survival or “crisis coping” strategy and not an accumulation strategy. The picture is considerably more complex: In several ways, and especially on the longer term, internal migration can potentially be a strategy that improves livelihoods in a more durable way: besides being a potential precursor to international migration, internal migration increases the chances of obtaining better paid urban jobs and can facilitate higher education of younger siblings. Internal migration can also be the consequence of international migration through household relocation and migrants’ investment in the education of their children. This corroborates the notion that internal and international migration are part of the same general process that has increased mobility *in general*.

Migration has had a positive impact on economic development in the Todgha valley. However, the poorest and marginal groups lacking financial resources and social capital in the form of migrant networks tend to be excluded from internal migration and, in particular, increasingly costly and risky international migration. Although nonmigrants may indirectly profit from remittance-driven investments, this raises some scepticism about the potentials of migration to reduce absolute poverty. There is an apparent contradiction between the argument that migration is a poverty-reducing strategy and the observation that poorest are likely to have less capabilities and aspirations to migrate.

At a more fundamental level, it would be erroneous to depict migration as the one and only cause of livelihood changes as such. Rather than the independent cause of livelihood diversification, migration seems to be part of a broader strategy of oasis households to diversify and improve their livelihoods. Migration is an integral part of a general process of political, infrastructural, economic, and social integration of the Todgha valley into a changing national and international context, and the concomitant increasing flows of products (e.g., trade), money (e.g., remittances), people (migration), and information (e.g. education, the media revolution) between the Todgha and the outside world. The fact that migration is a constituent part of broader transformation processes – which are usually labelled as ‘development’ – makes it difficult to disentangle causes and effects of migration.

Finally, because migration is an part and parcel of such structural transformation processes, it seems an illusion that policies can stem this phenomenon. Migration can not be ‘combated’ as if it were an isolated phenomenon, because it is part of structural shifts in increasingly diverse and multi-local livelihoods across the world. Therefore, policies to “keep migrants down on the farm” (cf. Rhoda 1983) seem bound to fail because of a general inability to understand the fundamentally developmental root causes of migration.

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