

KATHOLIEKE UNIVERSITEIT LEUVEN

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**BECOMING A
DEVELOPMENT AGENT**

Return migration of highly skilled
Moroccan workers

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Abstract

The interrelations between migration and development are a hot topic in contemporary economic and political studies as well as in policy making. Especially the potential of return migration of highly skilled migrants from developing countries to bring about social and economical change in their respective home countries is considered a promising tool both in migration management and development cooperation between the European Union and third countries. However, the recent scholarly and political debate on this topic takes place on a macro level which almost fully excludes the perspective of the migrants themselves. This thesis provides an anthropological investigation of the migrants' perception of their return. Which are the imaginaries, objectives and strategies guiding the action of the returnee? How do these concepts relate to the experiences the returnee gains? What is the relationship between the individual returnee and the political concepts on return migration and development? In order to find pertinent answers to these questions, I carried out ethnographic fieldwork in a post-return setting with Moroccan return migrants, all of whom participants in a state-funded return program of German development cooperation for highly skilled returnees. By mirroring the individual returnee's perception of the return with the macro economic and political concepts on migration and development, two aims are pursued: firstly, providing a deeper understanding of the meaning of the return for the actors themselves, and secondly, highlighting the implications of the ignorance inherent in policy concepts concerning micro perspectives.

Key words: migration, development, return, Morocco, Germany

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List of abbreviations

BA	Bundesagentur für Arbeit (German Federal Employment Agency)
CIM	Centrum für Internationale Migration und Entwicklung (German Centre for International Migration and Development)
EC	European Community
EU	European Union
GTZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (German Development Cooperation)
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
UN	United Nations

"Migrants are part of the solution, not part of the problem."
Kofi Annan, former UN Secretary, in a speech to the European
Parliament in January 2004

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I. Studying Moroccan return migration and development

Introductory remarks

“There’s still a lot to be done for us here”

“Look at these pillars here. And now have a look at the pillars over there.”¹ Ahmed’s forefinger points at the building shell of a multi-level house on the other side of the street that cuts through the housing estate.² In his dark sunglasses the glare of the afternoon sun reflects back at me. “Just like matches. Pure decoration. No single static use.” While we walk around the dust-dry construction site to get back to the car, the tall Moroccan man tells me that this project, easily visible from the main street coming from the city of Nador, functions as a signboard for his little engineering company. “This construction attracts a lot of attention, because it doesn’t comply with the local aesthetic taste. But after the floodwaters of January [2009], when a lot of buildings in this neighbourhood had to be pulled down, I’ve been able to save this house. That boosted my reputation in town. People understood that earthquake and flood resistant constructing pays off.” While riding through the outskirts of Nador, he directs my attention to modern buildings and new boulevards. “One, two years ago, none of these buildings existed. Can you imagine? It’s a veritable boom! This region is heading towards a bright future.” Ahmed’s German is marked by the soft, melodious dialect of the Rhine Main area where he had studied engineering for almost seven years. We are heading for the mountains south of Nador, to the village Ahmed has left for Germany in his early twenties. When we get off the main road to enter the village, Ahmed has to go round potholes in the dirt road. The Rif region has been neglected for decades by the Moroccan kings, “we’ve been starved, we’ve been bled to death”. Rumbling through the village, Ahmed points at several houses: “Everyone to Norway. Two brothers to Italy, one to Spain. Germany and Norway,

I think. And here lived an uncle of mine, he's in Germany for more than thirty years now." We get off the car some hundred meters outside the village and walk alongside an olive grove. It is here that Ahmed will construct a small biological wastewater treatment plant that will provide the village of about one hundred inhabitants with a sewage system. After his return from Germany, he has started to get involved in the village council and convinced the villagers to invest in this project instead of continuing to wait for the central government to take action. "You know, you have to come back, and you have to grow with the people here. There's a lot in this country that I don't like. So, there's still a lot to be done for us here."

Why studying migration and development?

Both migration and development issues belong to the core of contemporary anthropological studies (for migration studies in anthropology cf. Brettell & Hollifield, 2000; Brettell, 2003; Vertovec, 2009; for development studies in anthropology cf. Edelman & Haugerud, 2005; Hagberg & Widmark, 2009). With one of the biggest diaspora communities in Europe, Moroccan migration figures prominently among the scientific interest of diverse disciplines, from economics to political science and sociology.³ Hence, a master thesis on migration and development among Moroccan highly skilled returnees seems to fit neatly into this elaborated research framework. Yet, things are not that straightforward. How come that there seems to be a mutual agreement between the different disciplines that Moroccan migration patterns deserve more attention than those of other nationalities? What is the relationship between scholarship and place? Why am I writing my thesis on this topic and not on Moroccan cuisine, dancing or music?

Arjun Appadurai (1986) remarks that "what anthropologists find, in this or that place, far from being independent data for the construction and verification of theory, is in fact a very complicated compound of local realities and the contingencies of metropolitan theory" (p. 360). Thus, according to Appadurai, what we see in a place is not objective but a product of our disciplinary background

combined with visible local reality. But not only what we perceive is subject to constraints, but also what we think about it. When studying complex realities,

a few simple theoretical handles become metonyms and surrogates (...), gatekeeping concepts in anthropological theory, concepts, that is, that seem to limit anthropological theorizing about the place in question, and that define the quintessential and dominant questions of interest in the region.” (Appadurai, 1986, p. 357)

Lila Abu-Lughod (1989) calls this phenomenon “politics of place” (p. 278).

What is the impact of these “gatekeeping concepts” on anthropological research? Firstly, scholars are inclined to perceive as relevant topics that have already been studied before them and that have experienced a certain academic institutionalisation. Secondly, the very complexity and variations of topics within a certain setting tend to be overlooked and reduced to some key concepts. How can this reductionism be avoided when carrying out ethnographic fieldwork? Once again, it might be crucial to listen to what the informants really have to say instead of importing one’s own idea of what they are supposed to say according to academic traditions and previous research.

Yet, this selective perception of the researcher in the field is not only prejudicial to the quality of the research results. It is also based on a - mostly unconscious - embedment of the researcher not only in his or her social and cultural context but also in power relations, or in what Edward Said (1989) calls “the imperial setting” (p. 217). Two years before the end of the Cold War, Said warned his fellow researchers that “as citizens and intellectuals within the United States, we have a particular responsibility for what goes on between the United States and the rest of the world” (ibid., p. 215). Power relations might seem more subtle today and, frequently, neo-colonial projects pass unnoticed under the cover of bilateral agreements and political rhetoric. Yet, awareness of the “relationship between anthropology as an ongoing enterprise and, on the other hand, empire as an ongoing concern” (ibid., p. 217) is still crucial in the self-reflection and self-understanding of the Western researcher. One step further than being critical about the problematic of “representing the Other” and the position of the researcher in the field (cf. Friedman,

2001; Pels, 1997), attention to the political meaning of the persistent inequalities between the Western ethnographer and the non-Western informant as well as the awareness of differences in social class or educational background are vital.

Frequently, when speaking about this research project, I received suspicious reactions from fellow students and persons I met in the field. Return policies of the European Union, state-funded programs aiming at facilitating the return of migrants, so-called “mobility partnerships” between the EU and developing countries: is there not a hidden agenda behind all that “migration and development” rhetoric? How does this match with the often cited image of the “Fortress Europe”? Is it not indicative that particularly right-wing parties, for example in Denmark and Ireland, advocate for the financial support of voluntary return migration (cf. Stalfort, 2009, p. 4)? Are these initiatives nothing more than the well-known restrictive policies trying to limit immigration into the EU to a minimum, this time in the friendlier disguise of humanitarian action and development cooperation? Is it, in the end, not a quite colonial undertaking to urge highly skilled migrants in the European Union to return to their countries of origin in the hope that they will bring progress and civilization “made in the West” into these “Third World countries”? Which answers can a German student expect to receive when interviewing participants of a German state-funded return program? Is there a risk that anthropological research in this field will be abused by policy makers in ways unintended by the researcher, and which implications does this have for the responsibility of the researcher?

These are questions to struggle with throughout the whole research and probably beyond. No doubt that the current policy debate on “migration and development” drew my attention and distracted it from other, maybe even more relevant topics. No doubt that the strong presence of governmental and non-governmental projects on return migration in Morocco influenced my decision to carry out my fieldwork there and not somewhere else. No doubt return migration is not only seen as a development tool but also as a way to “get rid” of unwanted guests. However, having learned about the relevance that the return continues to have for the lives of my informants, encouraged me in continuing my investigation while

being aware of the theoretical and ethical pitfalls certainly contained in the topic.

Clarification of key terms

I will use some key terms in this thesis that I want to clarify here in order to avoid misunderstandings and also to stress their relevance for this research. These are: cities, culture, experience, ignorance and development.⁴

First, the city as the site where the vast majority of my fieldwork has taken place definitely shaped the outcome of this research. The relationship of the return migrants with the cities they live in have been key topics in almost all conversations I had. From their discourse it becomes clear that many returnees think the city both as a material and imagined space, or as Brenda S. A. Yeoh formulates it, the city is a “economic node or hub, a centrifugal point for the collection of resources, a crucible of ideas and innovation, the locus of imagined communities, and a source of identity and security” that results out of a “consolidation of power” (Yeoh, 2006, p. 150). Besides the perception of the city as a site of power struggles, the idea that cities are “as much spaces of flows as they are spaces of place” (Yeoh, 2006, p.150) is equally recurrent in the returnees’ statements.

Culture is maybe the most difficult term to delineate in a research, as everyone has slightly different understandings of the content, the limits and even the practicability of the concept (cf. Bruman, 1999). I do not intent to enter in this discussion but rather want to state my key understandings of the term as I will use it in this text. First, “culture is not equivalent to identity” (cf. Hutnyk, 2006, p. 354). Second, culture is increasingly seen as a resource that can be managed and that circulates globally (cf. Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009; Yúdice, 2003), it “becomes ever more a matter of administration” (Hutnyk, 2006, p. 355). Third, all culture is always changing and dynamic, everywhere. Fourth, culture is “a package of largely unacknowledged assumptions” and “in spite of its self-critique, Anthropology can only study the self-conscious part of cultural systems”. Hence, we should understand “the study of

cultures” as “part of culture”: “Culture is its own explanations” (Spivak, 2006, pp. 359-360). Fifth, culture and class are strongly related when it comes to differences and change (cf. Spivak, 2006).

I furthermore want to highlight the double understanding of the term “experience” as utilised in this text. Both in statements of informants and in text analysis I discovered the co-existence of *Erfahrung*, the epistemological, cognitive side of experience as used by Kant, and *Erlebnis*, the ontological, poetic, aesthetic and emotional side of experience as used by Heidegger (1971), Husserl (1991) or Benjamin (1979).⁵ It is helpful to understand this ambiguity of the term when, for instance, one wants to understand the difference between the statement “I gained a lot of professional experience and skills when working in Germany” and “I experienced racism during my stay in Germany”. As “we can only experience our own life” (Bruner, 1986, p. 5), anthropology uses “expressions”, i.e. representations of personal experiences or “encapsulations of the experience of others” (Turner, 1982, p. 17), in order to understand an experience made by an informant (cf. Bruner, 1986). This understanding of experience is of course never complete and always mediated, or as Clifford Geertz formulated it: “It’s all a matter of scratching surfaces” (Geertz, 1986, p. 373).

“Ignorance” is a term that also needs some further explanation. I use it in this text to describe the power that can lie in a situation of not knowing. While in a Foucauldian reading knowledge and power are strongly interrelated, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1988) describes the power that lies in a state of ignorance. She argues that “those who benefit from a range of inequitable relations (economic, material, educational, technological, etc.) can generate systems of knowledge production predicated on ignoring the premises upon which their power is based” (Bishop & Phillips, 2006, p. 181). In that sense, I will argue, a policy maker’s ignorance of the situation “in the field” is neither innocent nor condemnable, but in the first instance an expression of power.

Finally, when speaking of “development”, I am applying the deliberately broad understanding as Thomas Hammar and Kristof Tamas present it:

In our view development may be regarded as a multidirectional process rather than something which can be defined in terms of

subsequent stages and levels. (...). The changes that take place are valued subjectively by each individual or each community. Development takes place when members of a society or a community experience an enhancement of their chances of social, economic and political well-being. (Hammar & Tamas, 1997, p. 18)

Thus, when speaking of development or social change through return migration from industrialized to developing countries I do not base myself on an ethnocentric-evolutionist model of Western skills and values being superior to those of “the Other”. I am using “change” in the sense of “becoming different” in a way that is considered positive by the participants of this process themselves.

The migration-development nexus

Historical development

The current praising of combining migration and development policies is, besides some references on the fringes of 1960s’ developmentalism debate, a quite new discourse in the political and academic world (cf. De Haas, 2009a, p. 1573; Weitzenegger, 2008). As Karsten Weitzenegger (2008) points out, the relation between these two fields has for a long time been rather antagonistic: development actors, on the one hand, perceived migration as detrimental for sending countries’ socio-economic development (the so-called “brain drain” effect), while migrants and their advocates on the other hand denounced the western arrogance of development cooperation which they perceived as heavily motivated by domestic and security interests. This mutual suspicion has not been resolved by a constructive dialogue between the two fields, but rather by dramatic evolutions in social reality: it has been the impressive increase in financial remittances and thus the growing potential of migrant communities to contribute to the economic development of their countries of origin that finally forced both sides to realize the complementary aspects in their respective activities (cf. Weitzenegger, 2008, pp. 1-3). In this sense, it is not correct to

interpret the current hype on the developmental potentials of migration as being an old-wine-in-new-skins kind of debate as some commentators did. The latter referred to the incentives offered to the so-called guest-workers by several EU member states after the migration stop of 1974 in order to make them return to their countries of origin. When considering the explosive growth of remittances over the last two decades, both adapted data analysis and contextual changes regarding globalisation processes and increasing transnational relations have to be taken into account. Since the beginning of the new millennium, research and policy debate on the topic of migration and development have been increasing on bi-national and international level, with a Global Commission on International Migration being implemented in 2003, a first United Nations high-level dialogue on the topic in 2006, the initiation of an intergovernmental dialogue in the form of annual Global Forums on Migration and Development (Belgium 2007, Philippines 2008, Greece 2009, Mexico 2010) and, generally, a higher importance ascribed to this topic by several multilateral donor organisations such as the OECD, ILO and the World Bank (cf. GTZ, 2008; Weitzenegger, 2008). For the EU⁶, the Communication of the European Commission on migration and development from September 2005 (Commission of the European Communities, 2005a) as well as its contribution to the UN high-level dialogue on the topic (Commission of the European Communities, 2006) are key documents that underline the positive stance the EU takes in this field: “Indeed, the Commission believes that the links between migration and development offer significant potential for furthering development goals, without of course constituting a substitute for or an alternative to Official Development Assistance” (Commission of the European Communities, 2006).⁷

Given the complex entanglement of different security, political, economical and social interests on different levels (European, national, regional), it might be fair to say that the migration-development nexus is a child of globalisation, the spread of neo-liberal capitalism and institutionalised discourse and research. But what does it actually comprise?

Content and fields of application

The migration-development nexus departs from the idea that migration and development are interrelated and influence each other. For instance, in a region where living conditions are precarious, people tend to emigrate if they have the possibility. When the level of socio-economic development rises, emigration numbers first increase, then decrease again (the so-called “migration hump”, cf. Nyberg-Sørensen et al., 2002; de Haas, 2006). At the same time, migration influences development, the prime example for this being remittances sent by diaspora communities to their countries of origin. The objective of the migration and development approach is then to use these interrelations in order to meet certain interests, be it financial, political, or developmental ones.

The three main fields where measures of the migration-development nexus are applied are the so-called “3 R’s”: recruitment, remittances and return (cf. Nyberg-Sørensen et al., 2002; van der Wiel, 2005). “Recruitment” designates the complex whole of circumstances which produce migration, i.e. what is widely known as “push” and “pull” factors, existing migration networks, the actual ability to migrate as opposed to the mere aspiration to migrate (cf. Carling, 2002), and so forth. Remittances are supposedly the by far best known and most extensively studied aspect of migration and development policies, while it is often forgotten that they have existed already long before western development policies discovered them as “their” tool. However, it is fair to say that remittances represent the most widely used policy instrument in migration and development politics. Finally, return as the “successful end product of the migration/refugee cycle” (Nyberg-Sørensen et al., 2002, p. 17) is considered to provide positive effects as regards financial investments and socio-cultural development.

Supporters and critics

Hein de Haas (2009a) traces a line from the contemporary supporters of the migration-development nexus back to the developmentalism of the 1950s and 60s, which argued that “migration and the flow of

remittances, as well as the experience, skills and knowledge of returning migrants, would help sending regions in developing countries in their economic take-off (...). He sees “a remarkable renaissance” of this “migration optimism” in recent years (de Haas, 2009a, p. 1573). Indeed, while the developmentalist rhetoric has fallen into disrepute in the meantime (cf. Hylland Eriksen & Sivert Nielsen, 2001), today’s arguments of the advocates of the migration-development nexus sound similar. An illustration of such a positive reading with regard to return migration is provided for instance by Koen Jonkers:

An increasingly prominent group of returnees returns with the intention to use the material, human, and social capital, which they accumulated during the time spend abroad to bring positive (socio-economic) change to their home countries (...). If successful, returnees who acquired desirable skill sets abroad may have higher positive impact on their home system than the recruitment of foreign consultants/employees, as they tend to have an advantage in terms of cultural and linguistic knowledge as well as domestic social capital. Short term as well as permanent return of entrepreneurs and scientists can lead to more sustainable growth in socio-economic development. (Jonkers, 2008, p. 2)

Supporters of policy strategies combining migration and development aspects thus assume that an increasing number of return migrants from disadvantaged areas are both willing and able to contribute to the well-being and, in the long-term, to the development of their home countries, with “development” comprising different interpretations.

Critics of the concept comment on the form, the objectives and the realization of policy programs based on the migration-development nexus. Firstly, some scholars feel reminded of colonial times and interpret the training of migrants from the “South” in countries of the “North” as a “continuation of the colonial policy”: “As a matter of fact, the creation of a core of indigenous professionals in the colonies, potential national leaders but in all other aspects beholden to the metropolitan country, was part of the colonial strategy” (Bjerén, 1997, p. 239). Secondly, it is argued that migration and development programs do not target the “root causes” of underdevelopment and migration, favouring curing instead of

preventing. Yet, the “root causes discourse”, as Kenneth Hermele (1997) points out, is rather inclined to consider internal reasons in the countries of origin of migrants to provoke emigration and underdevelopment, while ignoring the North-South gap and unequal power relations for example in trade policies. Thirdly, there is equally a lot of critique on the effectiveness of migration and development projects realized so far: return migration is more frequently accomplished by old and unsuccessful migrants than by real transmitters of development (cf. Nyberg-Sørensen et al., 2002, p. 20), the changes brought about by migration might lead to the destruction of “traditional communities” and to an increasing dependency on remittances (cf. de Haas, 2009a, p. 1573), and an unfavourable context in the country of origin limits the possibilities of return migration to induce development (cf. Jonkers, 2008, pp. 2-3). Critics more generally accuse the concept to be too theoretical, too distanced from social reality:

In an ideal world, well organized labour migration might lead to flows of worker remittances which would improve the national accounts of the sending country, and at the same time lead to investments which would improve productivity and infrastructure. Returnees would bring with them valuable skills and experiences, which would support the development process. The real world is not like this. Much migration is irregular and leads to insecure and exploitative employment, which gives few benefits in terms of training and investment. Many migrants go abroad to gain the resources to maintain their existing mode of production and lifestyle, rather than to precipitate change. (...) The loss of skilled and active personnel can inhibit development, and many of the most skilled migrants never return. (Castles, 1999, p. 16)

Both sides have appealing arguments and probably there is no clear line to be drawn between right and wrong. Neither is it the task of this thesis to make a judgment on this question. What interests me here is: in what way can anthropology contribute to this debate?

The case of Morocco and Germany

Already in times of early mass emigration in the 1960s, migration was perceived as potentially beneficial by Moroccan authorities in terms of fuelling national economic and social development. While in the late 60s emigrants have still been regarded as “actors of change”, “innovative actors who would help Morocco in its economic takeoff” (de Haas, 2005b, p. 16), this optimism quickly faded due to failed development programs. From the early 70s on, the quantitative developmental aspect of migration in the form of remittances and financial investment has taken centre stage. The Moroccan policy concerning remittances has been quite successful as it succeeded in installing official channels for the sending of remittances and to facilitate a steady increase of the money transfers (cf. de Haas 2007a, pp. 14-16). Against many concerns, the level of remittances has not declined with increasing integration of the migrants in the respective countries of destination as transnational ties proved to remain strong (cf. de Haas, 2005b, pp. 16-20). Today, it is fair to say that compared to other national economic activity, development assistance and foreign direct investment, “remittances are a crucial and relatively stable source of foreign exchange and have become a vital element in sustaining Morocco’s balance of payments” (de Haas, 2005b, p. 18). There has been a more or less steady increase in remittances transferred to Morocco from 23 million U.S. dollar in 1968 to 5,6 billion U.S. dollar in 2006 (cf. de Haas, 2007a, pp. 30-32; de Haas, 2009b, p. 7). Without a doubt these immense sums have a huge impact on socio-economic developments in Morocco. Remittances save about 1.170.000 Moroccans from absolute poverty (cf. Teto, 2001 in de Haas, 2005b). In the traditional emigration regions like the Rif and the Sous, investments especially in the real estate sector have caused the emergence of “migratory boom-towns” (de Haas, 2009b, p. 8, my translation), which, in turn, became destinations for Moroccan internal migration. Yet, it has often been criticized that remittances are used in non-productive investments and conspicuous consumption and create a dangerous dependency on the side of the receivers (cf. de Haas, 2007a, p. 15). In each case, the potentials of the financial transfers is not fully used due to a generally unfavourable investment climate, “lacking

infrastructure, corruption, bureaucracy and a perceived lack of legal security” (de Haas, 2007a, p. 40).

Maybe this could explain why, in recent years, the spirit of the 1960s with the optimism as regards migrants as actors of development seems to be reintroduced in the public debate. Moroccan migrants are, again, increasingly seen as potential investors and businessmen in their home country and are encouraged to become active in the development of the Moroccan economy. The shifting historical relationship between Moroccan authorities and Moroccan emigrants is well described by Hein de Haas who identifies the existence of a tension between “courting” and “controlling” (cf. de Haas, 2005a, pp. 4-6; de Haas, 2007a). Until the early 1990s, the Moroccan state tried to keep tight control on the communities of Moroccan emigrants in Europe, for instance by “explicitly addressing migrants as its subjects and actively discouraging their integration and political participation in the receiving countries” (de Haas, 2007a, p. 17). The authorities feared the formation of a political and cultural opposition by the Moroccan, especially by the Berber communities in Europe, and spied on and harassed many supposedly “troublemakers” both in Europe and when they returned to Morocco during vacations. Equally, the continuation of remittances transfers has been regarded as endangered if emigrants started to integrate and identify with their respective destination countries (cf. de Haas, 2007a, pp. 17-20). In the early 1990s, however, in a period of a general change towards more civil liberties and economic stability in the country, when the level of remittances stagnated and European governments took an increasingly critical stance towards the Moroccan state’s anti-integration rhetoric, Moroccan authorities began to accept the permanency of Moroccan migration to Europe and changed their attitude towards the Moroccan communities abroad. The official designation of emigrants has been changed from “Moroccan Workers Abroad” (*Travailleurs Marocains à l’Etranger*, TME) to “Moroccan Residents Abroad” (*Marocains Résidents à l’Etranger*, MRE), the controlling and repression of Moroccan migrants abroad and on vacation in Morocco has been reduced and the double citizenship has been encouraged. The attitude towards emigrants changed from suspicion and potential threat to an idea of potential benefits: “The

symbolic shift has been remarkable. Instead of potentially subversive elements, migrants are now publicly celebrated in official discourses as national heroes furthering the cause of the Moroccan nation” (de Haas, 2007a, p. 23). A lot of public effort is put in maintaining the link with the Moroccan communities abroad in order to safeguard the continuation of the flow of remittances from Europe to Morocco. Hein de Haas even speaks of a “charm offensive” (de Haas, 2005a, p. 1). The *Foundation Hassan II pour les Marocains Résidant à l'Étranger*, founded in 1995, for instance, organizes the annual *Operation Marhaba* (“Operation Welcome”) that facilitates the summer vacation returns of the Moroccans living abroad (cf. de Haas, 2007a, pp. 20-27). However, the Moroccan state is not poised to completely give up control of Moroccans living abroad. It is for example still almost impossible for Moroccan emigrants to get rid of their Moroccan citizenship (cf. de Haas, 2009b, p. 7). In a nutshell, the politics pursued by Moroccan authorities as regards migration can be described as “openly or tacitly encouraging migration” (de Haas, 2007a, p. 47), because, as Hein de Haas formulates it, one wants “to keep the hen with the golden egg alive” (de Haas, 2005a, p. 7; cf. de Haas & Plug, 2006).

Sectors where Moroccan return migrants can be found today are diverse and include retail, agriculture, real estate (cf. Gubert & Nordman, 2008a, p. 15) and the tourist industry, including rural tourism (cf. Gentileschi & Pisano, 2006). Lacking structural improvements in investment conditions, however, the state-initiated efforts directed towards the return of Moroccan migrants have not been particularly successful yet (cf. de Haas, 2007a, pp. 29-30) and there is a certain disappointment among government officials on “the low extent to which migrants seem inclined to start enterprises in Morocco” (Hoebink, 2005, p. 54). As has already been indicated, there is a significant lack of data on the concrete return process, its determinants and impacts, particularly from the migrants’ point of view. However, there exist already some macro level sociological studies such as the large-scale quantitative survey of the MIREM project (Cassarino, 2008)⁸, that can serve as a contextual frame for more qualitative findings to come. This study for instance stresses the particular importance of distinguishing a voluntary from a forced return, since reintegration processes in these two types differ largely.

Other findings include the main reasons motivating a voluntary return to Morocco (managing or setting up a business, homesickness and family problems in the family left behind in Morocco), the main difficulties faced by Moroccan returnees (particularly administrative constraints) and general satisfaction with the return decision (almost 70% of the voluntary returnees and 30% of the forced returnees declared “to be happy to be back in Morocco”). While from an anthropological point of view the methods and scope of such a survey can be criticised as too generalizing and tendentious, it is however interesting to see many of these findings coming back in the narratives of the returnees with whom I cooperated in this research.

On the German side of the nexus, the German Centre for International Migration and Development (CIM) constitutes only one element of the practical realization of the German and European policy with regards to migration and development and, more concretely, the facilitation of return migration. There are more influential, international players like the International Organization for Migration (IOM) or ecclesiastic actors such as Caritas, the humanitarian agency of the Catholic church, which look back on a long history of programs on assisted voluntary return on a worldwide scale. In contrast, CIM, which has been founded in 1980, is clearly a national organization, representing actually a cooperation of German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) and the German Federal Employment Agency (BA) and being mainly financed by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (cf. CIM, 2008b). CIM currently runs two programs: the integrated experts program aimed at German professionals, and the return and reintegration program which, in their own description, “assists professionals from developing countries who are employed or are being trained or educated in Germany, but who would like to return to their home country to take up a position significant to their country’s development” (CIM, 2008b, p. 3). In the latter program, the one I cooperated with for this research, CIM has assisted 1271 highly skilled migrants with their return in 2009, among which 12 from Morocco (cf. CIM, 2010). The non-financial assistance includes the provision of information and individual advice for persons interested in returning to their countries of origin and support in (re)constructing a professional network in the country of origin by

providing business contacts. The Casablanca office of CIM, for instance, is situated within the local German Chamber of Foreign Trade, which allows for direct contacts and networking possibilities with German and Moroccan employers. The financial support includes a grant for special work place infrastructure (PC, machines, technical equipment, etc.) and for transport and travel costs up to 10.000 Euro per returnee. Besides this, a grant of about 300 Euro on the monthly wage for up to one year can also be awarded to a returnee, a measure that is meant to make a return financially more attractive (cf. CIM, 2005). For Morocco, the majority of the participants in the program are to be found in the professional fields of sustainable development of the business sector (*mise à niveau*), environment and energy (cf. CIM, 2008a, p. 9).

A field for anthropology?

What anthropology can contribute

As has become clear from the previous brief overview on the migration-development nexus theory, the recent debate takes place on a quite abstract level, as little empirical data specifically on the nexus that could strengthen or reject certain arguments has yet been collected. What can anthropology's role within this debate then be? Telling from the very small amount of anthropological literature produced on the topic so far, questions concerning the migration-development nexus do not seem to interest many scholars in anthropology. What is it that shies away anthropologists from intensively studying this concept? Is it the potential political application as a policy tool, or rather the development discourse alluding to dark times of evolutionism and ethnocentrism? Is the predominance of economical and political sciences in this field the reason that keeps anthropologists from contributing to this discussion? Or is the topic just too distanced from the "classical" fields of anthropological research? Gunilla Bjerén (1997) sees the

reasons for the reluctance of anthropology to contribute to the field of migration and development in the following:

The contentious, fragmented and contradictory character of development and the dependence of migration on it are partial reasons why anthropology offers no grand theories of migration and development despite the large number of empirical studies focusing on migration and development in the discipline (...). Other reasons are based on the reluctance of many anthropologists to formulate any kind of theories divorced from actual contexts, a reluctance based on anthropological research practice. (Bjerén, 1997, p. 220)

In my opinion, however, anthropology actually is very well equipped to positively contribute to academic and practical knowledge in this field for at least three reasons, namely its theoretical concepts, its method and its critical perspective.

Firstly, anthropology can provide new perspectives on questions of migration and development through its theories and concepts. Anthropologists can for example contribute to the redefinition of terms frequently cited in the debate such as development, social change or capital. These are widely used in the contemporary debate on migration and development without proper explanations of their content and limits and in a supposed common sense understanding. “Human and social capital” are, for instance, terms that are often used to describe the developmental impacts of return migration beyond financial investments, but besides some vague references to professional skills acquired in the host country these terms remain rather suggestive (cf. Cassarino, 2008; Jonkers, 2008; Lomborg, 2009). Making the effort to critically revise the use of these concepts as well as creatively using anthropological theories emanating from other thematic fields might help us find out about questions that have not been asked yet, “blind spots” of the previous research interests as it were.

Secondly, besides theories, anthropology can yield different empirical results with its method, ethnography, than the large scale surveys commonly used in previous researches on migration and development.⁹ Ethnographical studies could be a way to fill the knowledge gap that clearly exists as regards certain aspects of the migration-development nexus and that is becoming even more blatant when compared to the huge amount of data available on other

aspects: “While there is now a sizeable literature on the welfare implications of migration and on the use and impact of remittances, the determinants and impact of return migration have so far been comparatively under-researched” (Gubert & Nordman, 2008b, p. 1). While the sending of remittances is countable and objectively observable, the “developmental impulse” supposed to be triggered by return migrants or circular migrants is very difficult to grasp by science. Likewise, while the more macro level oriented disciplines try to tell from quantitative data what return migration implies, anthropology can actually investigate in what it means to the actors themselves: why do people return? How do return migrants perceive their return? Which meaning-making processes are at stake in the re-orientation in the country of origin? The answers anthropology might find will probably be not as operative and applicable as those of other disciplines, as they mirror the complexity of reality and the multi-faceted nature of human action. Or as Gunilla Bejéren (1997) formulates it: “How is migration related to the development process? However frustrating, the only possible answer to this question from an anthropological perspective is that it 'depends'. It depends on the kind of 'development' process and how that process affects regions and groups within regions in the South” (Bejéren, 1997, p. 245). But it might bring us closer to understanding how development through migration actually works – if it works.

The third reason which in my opinion qualifies anthropology to contribute to the interdisciplinary discussion on the migration-development nexus, is its capacity to take up critically informed positions. Ethnographic research enables anthropologists to acquire fresh, nonconformist ideas on what social reality is all about, off the beaten track of common sense and mainstream knowledge. Being in the field enables us to generate questions that are usually not asked, such as: what does development mean to a returnee? Do really all or most of the returnees want to become active in contributing to the development of their home country? What does it tell us about ourselves if we expect return migrants to act as “development agents”? I am convinced that the same critical work that has been done by anthropologists as regards migration and mobility (cf. Friedman, 2001; Pels, 1997; Salazar, 2010; Wolff, 1993), efficiently contesting mainstream discourse on these topics, can be done in the

field of migration and development, and in the field of return migration.

Equally, anthropological knowledge gained through profound ethnographic research shapes a critical attitude towards discourses. The debate on the migration-development nexus as it has been depicted so far, is an outspoken, documented and public one, both in the political and the academic world. Supporters and critics confront each other in plenary discussions in the European Parliament or in articles published in scientific journals. Discourse analysis helps us to find out about epistemological underpinnings of both of them, making their origins and objectives more transparent. But there is also a discourse that remains muted in this whole discussion, namely the voice of the migrants themselves, the privileged emigrants, the highly skilled immigrants, the returnees. Without making the mistake of “speaking for” and (mis)representing these persons, anthropology can play an important role in bringing the actor back in. Furthermore, the discipline can bridge the gap between political and academic discourse on the one hand and daily lived reality on the other hand, ideally to the benefit of both and in an ambition to learn more about social reality and human world making.

The evolution of the research question

At the outset, my main interest concerned the practical processes that bring about “development through migration”, i.e. social change triggered by return migrants. The positive impact of return migration of highly skilled workers on the country of origin is mostly measured in large scale macro level studies in economic and political science by investigating the number of enterprises launched by returnees, their investment behaviour or the number of jobs created by them. Positive cultural and social effects that the returnee might bring about are mentioned, but never investigated in depth.

Yet, I had to refrain from this initial idea for several reasons. My idea of accompanying returnees in their daily work sphere in order to find out more about social change brought about in daily interaction with colleagues due to the experiences made abroad turned out to be impracticable. Participant observation at the workplace is a sensitive

issue, especially given the fact that most of my informants have been young professionals in the beginning of their careers, and thus not in a position to justify to their employers being followed by a student at the office and during meetings. On the practical side, also the time period of two months which I had at my disposal to carry out the fieldwork was too short to realize this project. Finally, my contact person at the Casablanca office of the German Centre for International Migration and Development (CIM) took a sceptical stance towards this idea since he was afraid that this endeavour could burden the relationship with the respective employers.

Hence, I chose to change the focus of the research from the supposed developmental impact returnees might have on their post-return environment to the *personal* change they have gone through due to their migration experience. Many of the returnees turned out to be much more open than I had expected them to be as regards personal issues, conflicts in their private lives and even identity crises in the aftermaths of their return. These self-reflective, identity related issues also seemed to be more of an interest to them than interactions with their environment in terms of development or social change.

As individual experiences of the return process, strategies, perceptions and imaginaries in the return and reintegration process oftentimes diverge from or even contradict the general view on return migration as conceptualised in policy and developmental rhetoric, it seemed interesting to compare the two in order to find complementary and opposed aspects. How do these highly skilled returnees give meaning to their life trajectories, their current situation and their future perspectives? To which degree does this discourse correlate or conflict with policy discourses on the role of return migrants within the migration-development nexus? Hereby, this study strives at linking the macro models on return migration with the returnees' perspectives, thus filling the gap of micro data in large scale models.

II. “And so I just went to Germany”: understanding emigration

Taking decisions: the pre-emigratory stage

The objective of this research is to understand in a holistic way the living situations and perceptions of return migration processes of highly skilled return migrants in contemporary Morocco. In order to achieve this aim, it is necessary to learn more about the respective migration trajectories, the motivations informing emigration and return, the experiences made while being abroad and the explicit and implicit strategies underlying the biographies which led to the current living situations of the returnees. This is why the following discussion of the data gathered through ethnographic fieldwork will include descriptions of the pre-emigratory stage in which the decision to go abroad has been formed, the professional and private experiences in Germany as well as the different forces relevant in the formation of the return decision. These different steps are closely intertwined with the way many respondents have described how they lived and perceived their lives with regards to their personal and professional reintegration in Morocco.

Methodological reflections

In the ideal case, a researcher can freely adopt those methods that will lead to the most comprehensive answering of the research questions. As already mentioned, practical, but also ethical circumstances can however constrain or even prohibit the use of certain methods. In the following I will give a short overview of the methods I adopted in the preparation of the field stay, during the field stay itself and in analysing the data in order to provide transparency on how I obtained the ethnographic material this study is fundamentally based on. Subsequently, I will reflect on the advantages and problematic aspects of the methods used.

As I did not have previous travel experience or profound theoretic knowledge of Morocco at my disposal, I began the research process with a literature search, covering Moroccan migration, migration policy and development cooperation in the EU and in the Moroccan context. The focus has been on anthropological literature on these topics, but economic, political, legal and sociological sources have also been included. In order to prepare the stay in the field in a more practical way and to get to know my contact person at CIM Casablanca, I participated in “Forum Maroc”, an annual fair on investment opportunities in Morocco organised by Moroccan diaspora members in Frankfurt am Main, Germany, from May 7 until May 10, 2009. The fair represented a good occasion to make first contacts, getting to know the target group of CIM by observing the counselling interviews my contact person held with Moroccan diaspora members interested in returning to Morocco, and already have some informal conversations with potential returnees. The highly communicative and open atmosphere at the fair provided a good opportunity to learn more about the group of potential returnees and to test my preliminary research question to such an extent that after this first short field experience I have already been able to re-adapt the focus of my research. Also with regard to my relationship with CIM the participation at the fair proved to be important, as it provided me with impressions how others, especially diaspora organisations, see the work of CIM. This made me more critical on the role of the organisation within the vast field of development and migration.

My fieldwork in Morocco during July and August 2009 was mainly based in Casablanca, the economic heart of the country where many highly skilled returnees live and work. However, I also worked with returnees in the cities of Fes, Nador and Marrakech, which constituted a good opportunity to erase some biases caused by one-sided fieldwork in a single city. Practically, I had been provided with contact information (e-mail addresses or mobile phone numbers) of recently returned participants of the development program by CIM Casablanca. The choice of informants relied thus on a non-probability judgement sampling as it is typically carried out in intensive case studies (Bernard, 2006, pp. 189-191). I was able to conduct eighteen interviews with returnees and seven interviews with

“experts” (employers and development agents) during these eight weeks. In most cases I met my informants in a public space such as a café, but also at their workplace (mostly the case for self-employed returnees and experts) or at their homes. Conversations lasted for one to three hours and have been tape recorded. I adopted a semi-structured approach during these interviews, using a list of questions and topics in order to be sure to cover chronologically the pre-emigratory, emigration and post-return phase as well as several key topics central to my research questions, such as professional and private life and the returnee’s attitude towards development. This way of interviewing worked out fine and seemed to fit well the taste of the informants, as Bernard also remarks:

Semistructured interviewing works very well in projects where you are dealing with high-level bureaucrats and elite members of a community – people who are accustomed to efficient use of their time. It shows that you are fully in control of what you want from an interview but leaves both you and your respondent free to follow new leads. (Bernard, 2006, p. 212)

Thus, I would describe the method used as a “condensed” life history approach focussing on several key stories that the informants advanced themselves within a chronological structure provided by myself through guiding questions. The distorting nature of these questions has certainly to be taken into account as well as other methodological problems, such as the consequences of the choice of presenting a life history in written form and the question of how to combine “registering” and theoretical analysis of what has been said (cf. Behar, 1990; Bourdieu, 1986, pp. 69-72; Davies, 2008, pp. 204-209; Shuman, 2006). In this thesis, I am following Ruth Behar’s understanding of the life history approach as “a story, or a set of stories, that have been told to me, so that I, in turn, can tell them again, transforming myself from a listener to a storyteller” (Behar, 1990, p. 228). The denomination “storyteller” includes an enhanced self-reflexivity of one’s own complex role in the dialogue with the informant.

Carrying out participant observation has only been possible with one informant who allowed me to share two intense days of his working life and leisure time with him. I however equally tried to learn more about the context in which the return takes place, i.e.

contemporary urban Morocco marked by fundamental societal changes and rapid developments in the work sphere. On the one hand I accomplished this task simply by living in the city centre of Casablanca during most of my stay in Morocco. The daily little conversations and observations drew my attention to certain topics and allowed me to get a first feeling for the “hot issues” relevant at the moment. On the other hand I had the possibility to talk to several key figures or “experts”, such as two employers of return migrants, the director of a long-established consultancy agency and the responsible of a project of German development cooperation on diaspora investments in the region of Nador. Besides being experts in their subject, all of them provided me with crucial information and discourse on the general context.

In order to bring out the contrasts and parallels between policy programs and reality lived by the returnees, I undertook a second literature research on migration and development policy concepts as well as on academic research in this field. Both text and discourse analysis have been used in a grounded theory approach (cf. Bernard, 2006, pp. 492-503) in order to identify themes and interrelations between different themes that seemed relevant in answering the research questions.

When assessing the use of methods in this research critically, the main practical limitation of this research has been the lack of time in the field. Two months is hardly long enough to build a relationship of mutual trust with the informants, to come closer to the emic point of view and to test the new knowledge gained in other contexts. This is especially the case as the returnees I have been working with all faced a very heavy workload, both in the case of young professionals at the outset of their careers and among the self-employed persons. Besides the time constraints, working with highly skilled, ambitious informants brings up several problems of “studying up” as described by Barbara Czarniawska (1998) and Helen B. Schwartzman (1993): for instance an unequal power relationship between researcher and informant, sensitive aspects that informants are not willing to expose to the researcher and a continuous and sometimes highly critical evaluation of the research project by the informant him- or herself. While especially the busy agenda of my informants sometimes complicated the practical carrying out of the research, I learned to

appreciate the short-term re-arrangement of plans, hasty interviewing during the lunch break or being interrupted many times during a conversation by mobile phones and secretaries as a part of the emic experience, a part of the pressure and haste most of my informants undergo on a daily basis. Hence, these relatively short but sometimes quite intense encounters after a heavy workday or just in between two meetings might be even seen as matching better with the life worlds of my informants than, for instance, in-depth and long-term participant observation. On different occasions an expression of trust occurred during the interview and several informants obviously seized the occasion to talk about what moved them with an “external” person in a conversation not implying any kind of obligation. In this sense, it could also be argued that the weakness of this research, i.e. its short field stay and the hence limited amount of data, can also be seen as a strength, a method adapted to the fast way of life of the people it is studying. Certainly, the results of this study can only provide a first attempt to try and understand the meaning these highly skilled return migrants give to their biography, their professional and private situation as well as the general context of migration and development. Further study will be needed to come to a deeper understanding of these questions and to real “thick description” (Geertz, 1988).

The genesis of a desire: the emigration context

The individual motivations that have led my respondents to study and work in Germany are very diverse. For some participants, the access to the field of study they had been interested in after having completed their *baccalauréat* had been denied, which forced them to pursue their studies abroad. This has particularly been the case for future engineers for which only a small number of places are offered in Moroccan universities. Some others told me that they have just been looking for some adventure: “I wanted to see something else than Morocco, other cultures, just something different, how people think in other places” (Karim). Some declared that they had no choice but leaving the country given the lack of opportunities in Morocco at the moment they left. Yet, for the vast majority, studying

abroad meant an obvious step that most of them had not thoroughly reflected upon before leaving. It seemed a natural logic to go abroad to study if you had the opportunity, i.e. especially the contacts, the financial means and the language skills. Even now, ten to fifteen years later, this decision seemed so self-evident to them that many returnees felt no need to verbalize the relation between “going abroad” and the prestige and social mobility related with it, unless I directly asked about it. The “imagined mobilities” at work in many of these emigration decisions are still so powerful that they are considered self-explanatory.¹⁰

As can be deduced from the previous statements, the social backgrounds of the group of informants diverge but are however quite specific compared to other groups such as for instance family reunification candidates or low-skilled labour migrants. Thus, what are the precise contextual patterns in which the individual emigration decisions have been taken? Most of my informants have been born or have at least spent most of their youth in large Moroccan cities such as Casablanca, Rabat or Marrakech. It is noticeable that most of these city dwellers have been motivated by social mobility and adventure reasons, while persons having grown up in the province have faced a stronger urge to emigrate because of a lack of opportunities. However, while definitely not belonging to the socio-economic elite, most of the respondents come from a generally privileged background where education is valued high and little pressure has been put from the side of the family to financially contribute to the household. While most returnees I spoke with have left Morocco right after their *baccalauréat*, some however studied for one or two years at a Moroccan university while at the same time taking German language classes in order to prepare for their stay abroad.

Given this social background and motivation to study abroad, how did the decision to go to Germany come about? As has been demonstrated in many other cases, transnational family ties and social networks play a decisive role not only in the general motivation to emigrate, but also in guiding the direction the movements take. Almost every returnee I spoke with had one or several contacts in Germany at the time of emigration, most of the times a brother, sister or an uncle, but also friends and other

acquaintances. Only a small number has gone to Germany without an address in their pocket, a reliable contact which could facilitate the first days abroad and on which they could fall back during harsh times, for instance during illness or in financially difficult periods. Several respondents had already followed German language courses in high school and showed a certain affinity to Germany. In order to prepare for their stay in Germany, all of them have been in contact with either the Rabat- or Casablanca-based *Goethe Institut*, the international German cultural institution that promotes German language and culture worldwide. In the institute, they took German language courses, completed the language admission test for foreign students in Germany and received information on study subjects and universities. However, most of the returnees knew little about Germany before their emigration.

Perceptions guiding the emigration decision

Besides the choice of the destination country and linguistic preparations, neither profound strategies on how to organize the emigration nor clear ideas on the objectives of the stay abroad have been formed before leaving Morocco. The vast majority of my respondents acknowledged that they had little idea about what living and studying abroad would mean:

I had no single clue what I wanted to study or where. My only concern was to get away from here, from Morocco. I had a friend who had registered at the university of Darmstadt and so I also registered there without any idea what I should study there. (Ahmed)

Yousef admitted that he knew nothing about Germany beforehand: “I didn’t even know that Germany was an industrialised country. I thought that it would also be such a chaotic country [like Morocco]. I had no idea, I just decided spontaneously.” The term “spontaneous” marks many descriptions of the emigration decision, and even if there had been an initial plan, for instance “studying quickly and returning to Morocco as soon as possible” (Hafeza), reality often turned out differently. Interestingly, informants who now professionally or privately deal with youngsters emphasized that, also in today’s generation of graduates, the aimless desire to study

abroad is stronger than clear conceptions of one's personal and professional future. In that regard, it is symptomatic that the majority of my informants told me that they had preferred to go to France, which had not been possible for one or the other reason. Salima, for instance, initially wanted to go to France: "That's normal, I speak French, why should I lose several years just in order to learn German?!" However, as at that moment no male family member had been present in France who could have guaranteed her safety, the only possibility left had been Germany where she could stay with one of her uncles. To others, Germany was more accessible than France in terms of immigration regulations.

This status of Germany as a kind of "second choice" destination might help explain the often quite negative images held by many returnees before their emigration. Yousef for example acknowledged that, back then, he thought "if I go to Germany, I might get killed or something. I have heard many scary things. That it would be a dangerous place. That you could not move freely as a foreigner and things like that." At the same time, having in mind the preference for France, negative assessments of the decision to pursue one's studies in Germany become more comprehensible. In some comments, an enduring bitterness is reverberating, revealing a continued frustration of having "only" been able to study in Germany. Some, for instance, emphasized that, in the meantime, university education in Morocco equals Germany's and that in order to receive a real "elite education" one had to go to the United States, Canada or France. Especially returnees whose current professional life is unconnected with Germany sometimes slightly regretted their choice to go to Germany:

One had to be crazy to study in Germany, learning German, attending the *Studienkolleg* [one year preparatory course for foreign students] – 2 years of your life, you know! That's a lot! Today, it's ok, I don't think about it anymore, but anyway, it's a lot. (Salima)

It is needless to say that there have also been very positive evaluations of the decision to study in Germany. Returnees who left Morocco with the vague wish to "encounter new cultures and meet new people" have mostly been highly satisfied with their stay abroad: "You get to know other cultures, not only the German culture but, what I liked very much, I also made friends from all over

the world: France, Africa, India, Guatemala... that's amazing, really, that's really an opportunity" (Yalda).

Staying in Germany: study, work and private life

Professional life in Germany

All of my respondents have been obliged to follow a one-year preparatory course in a *Studienkolleg* before being admitted to higher studies at a German university.¹¹ While some criticized this period as an obligated waste of time, others treasured very good memories of this experience, particularly the exchange with foreign students from other countries. Most respondents chose a subject either in the field of economics and management or in engineering. The latter included later specialisations in hydraulic engineering, telecommunications and construction. There have also been some individual exceptions among the male respondents such as computer sciences, architecture and geography. "Soft" disciplines like journalism, pedagogy or social sciences have not been represented at all. Almost all informants needed more time to finish their studies than actually foreseen both by themselves and by the study program. One explanation can be found in the difficulties many encountered especially during the first semesters with regard to study content and language. Equally important, however, is the double burden of studying and jobbing, as most of the parents could only partially vouch for the financing of the stay in Germany. Once the studies have been completed, almost everyone I have talked to had been eager to stay and work in Germany.¹² Yet, only about half of the respondents had actually found work in a German enterprise and stayed for another one to ten years. The others kept on trying up to three years (i.e. before the introduction of the twelve months limitation), but mostly not longer than several weeks or months before giving up and focussing their search for work on Morocco. Those who have been able to stay and work in Germany have been placed both in municipal institutions

and private companies, in the fields of water purification, the automobile and aviation industry, banking, consulting, IT and construction, including big names in German industry such as Siemens, BMW and Daimler. Some of the respondents have worked in different companies, while the majority stayed with one employer.

When looking at the study choice and work experience from a developmental angle, one obtains a rather distinct picture of the motivations guiding this group of returnees. The vast majority played it safe by opting for a technical or a business related training. First, Germany is known for the quality of its education in these disciplines. Second, both fields seem to relate to the demand of the Moroccan labour market and therefore represent reasonable study choices. However, when looking at the work experience of many of my respondents I sometimes observed a kind of over-qualification; an impression that many of them shared with me. Still, as the returnees I have met had probably passed through a kind of selection process by CIM, I suppose them to be a group of rather successful individuals from a professional point of view. For this reason I assume that engineering and economics actually do help pushing a returnee's career in Morocco. Yet, development issues apparently did not play a considerable role in most of the study and work decisions, neither have they been raised as such in the conversations I had with the returnees. Two exceptions include a female civil engineer and a male geographer who already during their studies cooperated with German development organisations and who actually continued working in the field of technical development after their return to Morocco. The engineer had even conducted a one year project on irrigation in Tunisia in the context of her master thesis research and in cooperation with the German development agency GTZ.

What can be concluded from these specific study choices and work experiences with relation to professional objectives and strategies guiding the whole of the stay in Germany? As has already been discussed in the sub-chapter on the pre-emigration stage, pronounced objectives and clear strategies have been rare. Some respondents stated that most of their professional trajectory in Germany has been guided by "chance" and described the evolution of their professional career in Germany in a sometimes demonstratively nonchalant way. Hasan, for instance, answered my

question why he had decided to study in the city of Bochum as follows:

Actually, I only got there by chance (*laughs*). I've met somebody in Bonn who came from Bochum and who told me that you can study engineering there. Well, so I went to Bochum.

Kamal also took a pragmatic stance on his study choice:

I've found this program on international business on the internet, and I said to myself, 'ok, if it works out, it's ok, if it doesn't work out I'll go back to Morocco'.

As regards the decision to stay in Germany after the completion of his studies, Rachid declared that he wound up staying in Germany without having planned to do so:

Originally, I just went to Germany in order to study and, well... immediately after my studies this opportunity arose to work with that company, and, well, that's the way life goes (*laughs*)...

Some others, in contrast, already had a clearer picture on what they expected from their stay in Germany or developed this idea while studying. Several respondents for example told me that the idea to gain some work experience after their studies before going back to Morocco just came up while studying. To be able to demonstrate some work experience in Germany has often been described as an "ideal situation", "helpful in finding a job in Morocco", "accommodating demand", "making the difference between 'just' a study experience and 'real' experience". One respondent even told me about another returnee I had met before and who had worked for several years in German companies: "He has gained very important experiences in Germany. Now, he can for example work as a minister here in Morocco!"

While this second group already had a clearer picture of what is desirable to them and more or less successfully tried to find a way to gain some work experience in Germany, some other respondents had very pronounced priorities guiding their actions. For instance, some of those who had returned to Morocco immediately after the completion of their studies told me that they had known beforehand that they did not want to stay in Germany for a longer period. Others emphasized the fact that studying had been their priority while work experience should be limited to student jobs in order to finance one's study. Younès, for instance, told me:

If you say, “ok, I work, I slog away, and then I go back” or if you say “no, I want to complete my studies” – you have to clearly separate the one from the other.

It can be concluded that, while some respondents relied on mere chance or have been led by opportunities arising accidentally at the side of the road, others had clearer visions of their personal desires, but only a small number seemed to have clear objectives and practicable strategies.

A last thing to be discussed in this chapter is the returnee’s perception of the professional side of the German experience. Interestingly, negative evaluations of certain aspects of study and work life abroad highly outnumbered positive assessments. Many complained about having lost precious time by having to wait for admission, taking language courses and preparatory classes. Studying at a university has been experienced as very difficult by many; several returnees told me about various subjects in which they had failed because of language difficulties but also because of the complexity of the subject. Besides these study related aspects, some respondents emphasized the hardship they had to go through as regards their financial situation. Especially badly paid internships and the double burden of studying and jobbing during exam periods has still been borne in sometimes bitter remembrance. Discrimination at the workplace has been a big issue in many conversations, particularly with regard to the unsuccessful search for an employment in Germany after the completion of the studies.¹³ Many of my informants have been in Germany during the September 11 terror attacks which the vast majority held responsible for the difficulties they experienced when trying to access the German labour market. Also more general discrimination against foreigners in certain sectors has been cited as a clear problem:

In Germany it is very difficult to find work as an architect, but also as a foreigner. That means, you have to work three times as hard as a German in order to just sort of get a recognition for your work.
(Younès)

Yet, someone also stated that foreigners as them had no right to claim an employment in Germany: “We went to Germany in order to study, not in order to work, so, one shouldn’t claim this from Germany. In fact, we received everything from Germany”. On the

positive side many have been highly satisfied with the quality of their studies and treasured this period. As most of the returnees have stayed in Germany between their 20s and 30s, some informants emphasized the importance of this phase of life in which personalities are being influenced and shaped. Many feel grateful for having been able to make this experience, for the opportunity “to broaden one’s horizon” not only in one’s field of study but also as regards intercultural competence: “We’ve learned languages, we’ve learned other mentalities, we have friends in Europe, we’re flexible. Now, we have a double mentality, we are, how to say... we are jokers!” (Hicham).

Private life in Germany

As already mentioned, I have been surprised by the openness many of my informants displayed when it came to questions concerning private life. Aspects as for example the maintenance of relations with the family in Morocco, new relations made in Germany and the general assessment of the stay in Germany are relevant to the research of return migration as they strongly relate to the perception of the own emigration process, the return decision and the reintegration process in Morocco.

Concerning social relations in Germany, the opinions have been differing. While some found it very difficult to get to know new people and to make friends, others had encountered no problem at all in that regard, which, obviously, is also a question of personality. All returnees I have talked to shared a reserved attitude towards what they called “the Moroccan guest workers”, which generally belonged to an older generation and a different social background.¹⁴ However, it has been interesting to see that some explicitly avoided to socialize with other Moroccan students, while others were very happy to share this experience with fellow countrymen. For some, keeping a distance towards other Moroccans has been based on the wish to speed up one’s integration process:

There are a lot of Moroccans who have been in Germany and who speak German very badly, because they haven’t been integrated, they have always lived in isolation. (*Proudly*) Me, I didn’t have one

single Moroccan friend in Germany! I had been forced to talk German. (Yousef)

Those who sought the company of other Moroccans argued that they felt more at ease with them than with German students.

It's all about this solidarity between fellow countrymen. So, back then, whenever I saw someone with black hair and dark skin, I thought, "maybe he's Moroccan?" I've got to know many Arabs, Palestinians, Syrians... (Hasan)

There has always been sort of a wall between me and those German students. I realized that we Moroccans, we're on the same wavelength, somehow that worked out much better. (Aziz)

Concerning romantic relationships more than half of my respondents had made experiences during their stay in Germany. Four male respondents got married in Germany and have been accompanied by their German and French wives when returning to Morocco. Other relationships failed because the respective partner did not want to accompany the returnee back to Morocco: "My girlfriend already had a good job, so she didn't come with me. She didn't want to go on an adventure." Some of the younger male respondents had very clear ideas about German women in general and the kind of relationship they were ready to assume:

I like German women, I like their spontaneity. I mean, they have no secrets, they tell you what they think and what they want. That makes things easy. I had many girlfriends in Germany, I had many opportunities to get married and stuff... Well, to be honest, I didn't want to. If she comes back with me to Morocco, what does she want to do here, do I have to support her financially? She has another living standard and all that. (Kamal)

Romantic relationships have not been limited to the male respondents, though. Some female returnees also have had relations with German men, none of them having been long-lasting however.

No matter how well integrated and how dense the social network in Germany has been, almost all of the respondents admitted to have suffered from homesickness, at least during certain periods. Visits to Morocco have been a widely used tool to soothe the pain. Depending on the financial means, visits took place in rhythms of at least once every three years and up to two times a year during the study period. Once employed and salaried, many increased the frequency of the

visits to several times a year. An experienced accountant with whom I had a longer conversation on emigration issues argued that modern communication technologies and cheap transport have resulted in less hardship for the Moroccans living abroad. Today, he commented, the latter can easily keep in touch both with their families and with the social developments in their home country. Yet, I actually still listened to a lot of stories of hardship and homesickness, and a general impression that an annual visit cannot replace being in the country and among one's family. A staff member of a German development project in Morocco told me that emigrants oftentimes manage to sustain family ties, but that "they sooner or later all lose touch with reality in the country."

Private experiences made in Germany thus differed widely among the returnees. Many respondents appreciated the contact with German culture outside university walls, when travelling the country and spending time with German friends, such as for instance Ahmed: "I always say: it's 40% studies, 60% culture (*laughs*). I still miss the Christmas markets and my German friends". Others did not share this affinity with Germany and felt rather unwelcome, a feeling that they regarded as something circumstantial and not related to the attitude of German society towards foreigners:

I've always been the stranger. It wasn't my country, it weren't my holidays, it wasn't... it was not my mentality, not my culture! No, I liked to be there, I accepted it, I adapted myself, but it wasn't my culture. (Kamal)

While the impression of "always being the stranger, the foreigner" has been shared by many of the returnees, several among them went a step further and spoke of discrimination and racism, especially those who have pursued all or part of their studies in smaller cities in Eastern Germany:

In Köthen I really felt like a foreigner, because everybody knew you. Foreigners are minorities, and people think that we don't have houses, that we're poor. People don't know that there are foreigners with nice cars who work and stuff. They only know those asylum seekers from the Balkans. They don't know that we study, that we're something special and so on. (Yousef)

On the other hand, returnees having passed all of their career in big cities generally said not to have encountered racist or discriminatory attitudes and behaviour at all or only very rarely.

Epistemological reflection: the position of the (female) researcher

How do the methods and the practical context of the fieldwork described in the previous sections relate to the epistemological implications of the research? What is “the basis on which one imagines” (Geertz, 1973, p. 13)? What can be said about the implications of the researcher’s position on the research process and the results stemming from it? Many post-modern scholars have argued that “objective” knowledge is impossible and that every research is biased by the situatedness of the researcher (cf. Davies, 2008). Is there thus any sense in doing anthropological research now that we start to understand that its results will always be incomplete, ethnocentric, distorted by the very design of the research and, as already mentioned, embedded in unequal power relations? Kloos (1996) gives a solution that I find quite convincing: “We should (...) take such a research design for what it really is: a beginning of a dialectically structured process of the production of knowledge, rather than a blueprint of an investigation” (Kloos, 1996, p. 182). I have tried to realize this idea for instance by giving my informants the possibility to focus on the issues they personally perceived at that moment in time as most crucial to their lives. Still, I am aware of the fact that certain aspects of my personal identity and of my position as a researcher have influenced my perception and the evolution of my fieldwork in ways that I might not be able to grasp fully.

For instance, as regards gender relations, it has been obvious that I have been dealing mostly with male respondents (only four returnees I worked with have been female) and that many conversations concerning professional occupations have been situated in traditionally male spheres (engineering, building industries, technology, etc.). I believe that working with a mainly male target group entailed both advantages and disadvantages for my research. Being a female student studying young male professionals

mainly in their thirties or early forties oftentimes made my respondents perceive me as “the young, interested student, posing a lot of questions” and made them, in turn, adopting a kind of teaching attitude towards me in the sense of “ok, I’ll tell you what return migration is all about”. While this patronizing stance towards me and my research has not always been comfortable for me personally, it however provided me with data and a generally easy access to most informants who very openly told me about their story out of a wish to help me with my research. On the other hand, doing fieldwork among mainly male respondents as a woman also implied some practical disadvantages. For instance, meeting an informant at his home or agreeing to accompany him by car have repeatedly been difficult decisions to make, in which my gender identity (“don’t get into a car with a man you don’t know at all”) came into conflict with my researcher identity (“don’t reject this opportunity to collect data”). Also the issues addressed during interviews have sometimes been influenced by gender relations. Strikingly, for example, many male respondents have been eager to tell me about the love affairs they have had with German women. This in some cases turned the conversation for a moment into something as a flirting relationship, since, by telling me about how they think German women are (open, permissive, “easy to have”), this of course also implied an indirect comment on how they saw me. These experiences have been confusing but also instructive, as they reminded me of how I have been perceived by my environment and how my informants constructed my personality in a way that made sense to them.

III. “I felt like the time had come to give something back”: return decision and reintegration process

“Today, I would do things differently”: deciding to return

Returning: reasons, circumstances, desires, strategies

The reasons for the decision to return to Morocco can be distinguished in those making Germany a less attractive place to stay and those making Morocco a more interesting option, the “push” and “pull” factors so to speak. In reality, in most stories I heard from returnees, the return decision seemed to be based on a multitude of different factors and oftentimes took a certain period of time rather than being taken at a clearly definable moment. As describing the specific aspects of each individual return decision in their whole complexity goes beyond the scope of this thesis, I will list the reasons returnees have identified and then describe different strategies that emanated from these motivations.

Firstly, a clear distinction has to be made between, on the one hand, those returnees who have been forced to leave Germany because of financial or legal reasons, both of which being related to an unsuccessful search for employment, and, on the other hand, those who took the decision to return to Morocco out of free choice. However, the grey zone between those two poles is large, with many respondents citing several reasons for their return, of which the inability to find an employment in Germany is only one. This can be seen as a rhetorical strategy used to downplay one’s inability to find an employment in Germany, but can and, in my opinion, should also be accepted as actually reflecting the complexity of the context in which the return decision has been taken. Interestingly, return reasons related to Germany have been rare, including language problems, racism and, obviously, the inability to find an employment or to work one’s way up in the company where one has been employed. Most of the motivations to return are related to Morocco:

spending one's life in Morocco is considered "the right thing to do" and a central part of one's future perspectives because identification with Morocco and Moroccan culture is high. Generally, opportunities seemed to be better in Morocco, and there has been a consensus that "it was the right moment to go back" due to the recent political and economic developments in the country. Others felt a certain pressure from the side of their families in Morocco to return and support their ageing parents, while still others mentioned the wish "to give something back". To many, the quality of life in Morocco and pragmatic aspects such as climate, the Mediterranean *savoir vivre* or being able to afford a better way of life have been decisive.

Strategies that emerge from this wish or need to return to Morocco have been described to me by the director of a large Casablanca-based human resources agency as taking two forms. He distinguished a first group of returnees who first carefully "test" their return and keep an option for re-return to Germany in case of failure, and a second group who burns all of the bridges and returns "once and for all". Again, for many respondents it has probably been something in between these two extremes. Some indeed left Germany more or less head over heels, without disposing of a labour contract in Morocco nor having any clue about the opportunities in their home country. Others did not search actively but encountered a working opportunity in Morocco while still working in Germany and decided to seize it somehow spontaneously. The vast majority of my respondents, however, invested at least some time (from two weeks up to three years) to inform themselves, observe the Moroccan labour market, reactivate old contacts and to seek advice of family members, friends and experts. Depending on the pressure they felt to return, their behaviour has been either rather active or rather passive. Interestingly, the four married men all went to Morocco without their wives and children in a first step in order to search for an employment independently, with the rest of the family joining them only later, when work and living accommodation had already been settled. Although this more careful way of organising the return seems to be helpful in diminishing the risk of a failure, the number of professionally less successful or generally unsatisfied returnees has been equally high among those who had returned without any preparation and those whose return has been well organised.

Lessons learned and good advice

Departing from their own experiences I have asked the returnees to formulate practical advices they would give other Moroccan migrants in Germany who are in the phase of the formation of the return decision; i.e., something that they would do differently if they had to go through this situation once again. “Preparation” is the key term in these discourses, ranging from practical arrangements and specific preparation strategies to ways to gather information and a general emotional and psychological attitude towards the return process. With regard to practical preparations, frequently mentioned aspects have been the saving of a certain amount of money in order to guarantee one’s financial independence during the first months after return, improving one’s knowledge of French, and, for returnees originating from Berber regions, Moroccan Arabic, already while staying in Germany, trying to gain work experience in Germany before returning to Morocco and organising the arrangement of formalities such as the translation of one’s diploma already in Germany. Concerning specific strategies many returnees advised not to burn all the bridges when leaving Germany, only to return to Morocco with a labour contract in the bag and trying to find a first employment with a German company in Morocco in order to avoid a “cultural shock”. There has also been an advice from a female returnee directed specifically at women, who should not wait too long with their return in order to be able to start a family back in Morocco. Informing oneself about the labour market situation in Morocco, the general social and economic developments in the home country but also about the living circumstances in the city one wants to live in after return is considered to be crucial. Many different ways have been identified to do so. Respondents for instance suggested to pay a visit to the companies one is interested to work with during one’s holidays in Morocco, reading the newspapers or talking to Moroccan business people. Also regarded as useful is to get to know a city better by living there for a more prolonged period of time, also outside the regular holiday periods, for instance for an internship or when compiling one’s master thesis. Taking an active stance in this process of informing oneself is equally highly valued, for instance by addressing companies, contacting institutions such as ministries,

CIM or the German chamber of foreign trade. As regards the general emotional and psychological attitude towards the return process, many respondents emphasized the importance of being prepared to go through hard times and to keep calm whatever might happen. “Being relaxed”, “not to lose one’s head”, “keep cool” are expressions that have frequently been used in this context. At the same time, being committed to one’s return and convinced of the decision taken should guide all of one’s actions. In order to maintain a positive attitude towards the return project it is considered essential to be open for Moroccan society as such, to have the will to re-integrate and not to continue comparing aspects of Moroccan life with Germany.

I also addressed the question of how to improve the return process to some experts in the field of migration and human resources in Morocco, who all in all gave answers similar to those of the returnees. Yet, they also mentioned some additional points, such as the importance of re-building a professional and private network in Morocco, not to overestimate the value of a foreign diploma on the Moroccan labour market and to be aware of the competition with other returnees from France or the United States. Again, informing oneself about the demand of the Moroccan labour market as early as possible in order to be able to adapt one’s study or work trajectory if necessary has been mentioned. And finally, according to these experts, an involuntary return should be avoided at all cost.

Being back home: the reintegration process and the question of development

Epistemological reflection: the cooperation with CIM

Besides the implications of my externally prescribed and self-ascribed position as a researcher also the cooperation with CIM has certainly had epistemological implications for this research. The cooperation with an organisation in the field of migration and

development seemed necessary to me in order to be able to realize the research given the little amount of time and my lack of contacts in this field. The German Centre for International Migration and Development (CIM) as the organizer of the state-funded program “Rückkehrende Fachkräfte” (engl: “Returning Experts”) with an office in Casablanca seemed an interesting case and a reliable partner for carrying out a research. The program is aimed at highly skilled Moroccan diaspora migrants in Germany wanting to return to their country of origin and provides them with financial and organisational support, provided that they will contribute in one way or the other to the development of Morocco. The Centre agreed to provide me with contact details of recently returned participants in the project and during my field stay I met several times with my contact person in the project in order to clarify and evaluate the research progress. In several cases, my contact person at CIM contacted the potential informants beforehand in order to sound them out on their availability and willingness to participate in the research. Especially for “difficult cases” such as chief executives and people with very little time resources this method proved helpful, as these returnees felt a certain relatedness and gratefulness to the program as such and to my contact person in particular and arranged for a meeting despite their tight schedules. In this sense, working with CIM provided me with the possibility to have a high number of encounters in a quite short amount of time in the field.

Yet, from the outset I had been aware of the fact that the cooperation with an organisation, be it non-governmental or state-funded, implied a risk to my independency as a researcher. Furthermore, the thematic focus on development cooperation also involves the whole problematic of the relation of anthropology and development discourses and practices, a relation that Per Brandström described as “uneasy marriage” (Brandström, 2009, p. 46; for the general problematic see Hagberg & Widmark, 2009). Aware of the dangers inherent in “practical anthropology” or “anthropology of development”, I however stick to the Malinowskian view:

Those of us who advocate 'practical anthropology' insist only on the study of vital, relevant, and fundamental problems. That such problems affect practical interests directly is not our fault. That a question does not become less scientific because it is vital and

relevant will only be denied by one who imagines that academic pursuits begin where reality ends. (Malinowski, 1939, p. 38)

With Per Brandström I want to add that a critical position on the one hand and (moral) involvement in developmental questions on the other do not necessarily exclude each other: “If we, as anthropologists, do not share the excessive optimism of others about governability and the possibilities of social engineering, and anthropologists rarely do, this is not to say that we necessarily have to take a position of non-involvement and denial of practical and moral responsibilities” (Brandström, 2009, p. 48).

However, aware of the possible dangers of mingling developmental engagement with anthropological research, I tried to limit the cooperation and, thus, my obligations towards CIM to a minimum. In exchange for providing me with the contact details of returnees I agreed to summarize my research findings in a handbook of good practices that the project will be able to use to inform potential returnees. However, I still think that the cooperation with CIM led to several biases in the research. Firstly and most obviously, working exclusively with participants in the “returning experts” program funded by German state development cooperation implied working with a highly specific group of people and did not allow for comparisons with returnees from other countries or who organized and funded their return themselves. Secondly, the contact details I received from CIM have probably been selected according to criteria that I can only speculate about. As I have been supposed to compile a handbook on best practices with the data gathered I can imagine that especially “successful” participants, for instance occupying high positions within a company, have figured prominently among the people with whom I have been put in contact. Thirdly, I observed several negative reactions when conducting field work at the fair “Forum Maroc” at Frankfurt from the side of Moroccan diaspora organizations in Germany engaged in development projects in Morocco towards the CIM program and my contact person, who himself is Moroccan. The program has been considered by some of them as a German state development project probably pursuing (hidden) German state interests and not an originally and “pure” Moroccan initiative really only wanting the best for the country and its people. This again recalls the remarks made in the beginning of

this thesis on imperial settings and unequal power relations in which both researcher and informants partake.

Working life after return

The majority of my respondents have been employed in advanced positions in private companies at the moment of my fieldwork. Remarkably, about half of these have been working in a French or German company or have at least been working under the direct supervision of a French or German superior. There have been four self-employed persons, all males between 35 and 49 years of age. Those entrepreneurs working in the field of construction and architecture had small enterprises with two to four employees, while one entrepreneur had a technology company with more than 15 employees. Two respondents have been doing internships when I met them, hoping that they would be employed by the respective company at the end of the internship. There have been two persons working in the development sector, more particular in the fields of water and waste management both in public institutions and private companies. As there has been a remarkable difference between employees and self-employed returnees as regards experiences made in the working sphere, they will be discussed separately in the following.

The case of the employees

Talking about the experiences of every day working life after their return has been an important concern for many respondents. During the conversations I remarked that this was an issue that fundamentally preoccupied many of them, being discussed over and over again also with other returnees, partners and friends. To many, returning to Morocco in the first place meant reintegrating in Moroccan labour market and work life, an endeavour that took various shapes depending on one's personality, the position within the company and the professional environment. On the one hand, several respondents described themselves as being "well integrated"

into Moroccan working life after having gone through a short phase of adaptation. Salima for instance, head of department of a French branch bank in Casablanca, told me:

The first thing I did after my return was to organise a meeting at 2 pm – nobody came. That was a shock to me. And when the people finally arrived, they shouted at each other, they argued... I've talked to my boss about it and he said: "Don't worry, that's no problem". So I also started shouting at the others (*laughs*). Today, when I'm in a meeting and things don't go well, I also shout. If there's a meeting at 2 pm, I'll come at 2:30 pm. I've decided to return to Morocco, now I have to adapt myself.

Those returnees who described their professional reintegration as successful also emphasized that their German know-how and way of working is highly appreciated among their colleagues and superiors. "At work, they call me 'the German'" is an expression I frequently heard from satisfied returnees, accompanied by a gesture of pride and a smile.

However, for many the professional reintegration has not always been that smooth. Terms frequently used to describe the first months at the new work place include "shock", "stress" and even "panic". Problems with what has been called "Moroccan working culture" rank high among the complaints: hierarchic and authoritarian work relations, the value of time, "chaotic structures", intransparent internal communication, inefficient ways of working, a lack of discipline and cleanliness at the work place itself and the absence of motivation and approval from the part of the superiors. These points of criticism have often been raised in a direct comparison with what has been called "German working culture", which is frequently seen as the complete reverse. Hafeza, for instance, told me:

The mentality at work is very difficult for me. I'm used to working in Germany, the sincerity... I mean, when I write an e-mail, I know that the receiver reads it and performs the task, you know. Here, you always have to check, 'hello, did you get my message?' In contrast, when I have been working with BMW in Germany, when you hadn't replied ten minutes later, you got a second mail reminding you to answer! First, I thought that was horrible, but now I think it's wonderful! (*laughs*).

Apart from work culture related aspects, also the broader working context is considered to be problematic by many returnees. For

instance, the ubiquity of the French language in business had been a problem for many: “I’ve stayed in Germany for nine years, I haven’t spoken one word of French. That was really a problem after my return” (Yousef). Adjusting to (oftentimes French) technical methods and programs largely diverging from what the returnees had learned in Germany, to much longer working hours and to the bureaucratic system has neither been easy for many.

The case of the self-employed

The self-employed returnees seemed to have less difficulties with questions of working culture, as they could be their “own boss” as they frequently stressed. Interestingly, when asked how they would describe the way they work, all of the four emphasized the German character of their work attitude in contrast to Moroccan companies. Not only using German programs, literatures and standards distinguished them from the Moroccan competitors, but also their “discipline”, “punctuality”, “honesty”, the fact that they take their time in order to deliver high quality to their clients and only collaborate with “serious partners” marked their difference.

Here in Morocco, many companies still have this “I don’t give a shit” attitude towards their clients. They only want money, so they do 120 projects per year. We do 15 projects per year, that’s enough for us. It’s quality that counts. And when I say, ‘in one week the job is done’, I keep my word. And people like that, also Moroccan clients like that. (Younès)

All of the self-employed returnees preferred to work together with German clients. They have been convinced that their creativity to find new solutions and their precise and reliable work is what clients, both Moroccan and foreign clients, most appreciate in their work. As regards staff, all of these self-employed returnees were currently searching for Moroccans having been trained in Germany or otherwise, as it apparently was not easy to find these, decided to train young Moroccan graduates themselves. The quality of Moroccan university education was considered insufficient for graduates to start working with them immediately. Concerning the working sphere, all of these self-employed returnees emphasized the importance of clear

communication, measuring work with relation to output instead of working hours, trust, motivation, flat hierarchies and the possibility to delegate responsibility to their employees. Hasan, who had founded a technology company in Casablanca together with his elderly brother and a friend who both had equally studied in Germany, told me:

We try to be like a family here. You see, the door is open – I’m a colleague, not the boss. I’m here to help the employees. Anyhow, we don’t work like the Moroccan enterprises, which are much more hierarchical. I believe that if we motivate our staff, if we succeed in creating a good atmosphere inside the company, that’s great! Transparency, friendliness, talking with each other in the case of problems – that’s the German mentality!

Obviously, also self-employed returnees have no complete liberty in shaping at will the way they work as they are dependent on the institutional and business environment. Oftentimes cited example in this regard are corruption and the widely spread practice of *baksheesh* or bribing. However, all of them said to try to avoid this by “turning a deaf ear”, “acting the fool” or just being patient:

I’ve never paid someone. But I always took my time. I don’t go there and tell them ‘I want to have this document within two days!’ You don’t have to bring them in this situation, to force them to ask you to pay for their coffee, if you know what I mean. That’s not Germany, and it never will be. (Ahmed)

However, none of the four has been satisfied with the business environment in Morocco, with all of them stressing the need to improve education and reducing bureaucracy.

Plans, desires and anxieties for the future career

Asked about their future plans concerning their professional careers most of the respondents had clear plans and objectives, as the vast majority also only stood at the beginning of their careers. Advancing inside the company and pushing one’s career by working hard, maybe even working abroad for several years have been recurrent themes in the visions I have been told, combined with a frustration of not yet being accorded the responsibility one would like to have.

Interestingly, several male respondents explicitly stressed the desire to become self-employed in the future, particularly out of financial interests - “having your own business means more money, it’s as easy as that” (Yousef) - but also out of other reasons: “When you have your own business, you have peace in your life, that’s important. You work for yourself, you do what you want” (Kamal). Very striking is the widely spread wish to work for a German company and to collaborate with German clients and colleagues in order to be able to use what one has learned during one’s stay in Germany. An architect returnee for example told me that he was “always happy to be able to work with German clients” as they “like modern architecture” and are “less conservative” than Moroccan clients.

The majority of the respondents saw their professional future in Morocco. Obviously, the self-employed returnees planned to grow further and to establish themselves at the level of the respective city they worked in or even on a national level in one case. Most returnees working as employees in private enterprises equally wanted to stay in Morocco, while several also expressed their doubts and anxieties about their professional future in Morocco. Those working for French or German companies feared not to be able to work for a Moroccan company in case they should lose their current employment:

That’s been my big fear during the last months. If my [German] boss quits and we maybe get a Moroccan one – I’m worried that this will happen. I don’t know what it’s like to work with a Moroccan boss.
(Hind)

There have been several respondents who told me that, eventually, they could imagine going back to Germany. While some think that their career might advance faster in Germany than in Morocco, most of these had personal reasons for considering this option, such as the German partner who did not manage to integrate in Morocco or the personal inability to feel happy in Morocco, which will be discussed in more detail in the following.

Returning and private life

The reintegration after return as regards private life, i.e. reconnecting social relations, orientating oneself in one's new living environment and making sense of one's life, is certainly a tedious process that takes very different shapes with different returnees. Yet, several motives have been recurrent in the conversations I had. Concerning social relations, almost all of my respondents said to have a good relationship with their parents; several of them even moved back into their parents' house. However, as regards friends, the picture has been less clear. While several returnees told me that it would be no problem at all to get in contact with people in Morocco because of their "southern temperament", others said to have major difficulties to make new friends. After return, most tried to reconnect with old friends from school and university times, but nobody had been successful with that, as both them and their friends have changed and drifted apart.

That has also been a shock for me. I mean, sometimes, I also felt lonely. I needed social contacts, but nobody was there! Besides my family, thank God. My parents, they also got older, that was also a shock. (*Pause*). You know, sometimes, you are... you are a little bit... scared. Scared to stay alone, to lose your parents, that you don't have the time to make friends in this country. (Hind)

While male respondents oftentimes had a Moroccan fiancée or wife, the female participants seemed to have particular difficulties in establishing a love relationship after their return. Yet, only one respondent referred to cultural and gender-related differences between Germany and Morocco when explaining her difficulties to establish love attachments in Morocco:

If you see, as a woman, that you will be undervalued, like... like a *femme soumise*, I mean, like a woman who has to obey her culture, and you know you have removed yourself emotionally from all that religious and cultural stuff, then you will get into trouble. Because, now, you're back in Morocco, you have to adapt to the traditions. (Hind)

Those returnees whose German partners lived with them in Morocco all deplored that their wives – as these were all male respondents – did not manage to integrate in Moroccan society to a degree that

would make them feel at home in the country. Several of them were afraid that these tensions might lead to a forced return to Germany if they did not want to lose their respective partners. There has been a significant problem for those returnees who had children, as all of them wanted their children to learn German. Yet, much to these returnees' regret, there are no German schools or kindergartens in Morocco, which has been considered a major lack.

Besides social relations, the relation with the city one lives in has also been a central issue in the returnees' accounts. An important difference can be seen between the respondents in Casablanca and those of other cities such as Fes, Nador or Marrakech. Those living in Casablanca, Morocco's biggest agglomeration, had an overall negative picture of the city, while respondents from other, less "busy" cities have been more positive or even strongly identified with the place they lived in. The complaints concerning life in "Casa", as the city is colloquially called, concern the tremendously high cost of living, the insecurity because of petty crime and problems related to infrastructure and traffic.

The situation got worse during the last three years. Personally, I don't go out at night. And when I go by car, I always lock it from the inside. (...) I also avoid leaving my daily surroundings, you know, I live in a kind of circle... during the week, I move on maybe ten, twenty square kilometres at the most: work, home, cafés, everything is close and I know that it's safe. (Hasan)

Life in the city is described as "extremely stressful", "nerve-racking" and "exhausting". Many considered their life as dominated by work, with the long office hours and the difficult traffic situation not allowing for pursuing a hobby, sports or just meeting with friends in the evenings.

The traffic situation here is incredible. I come home from work – and I'm completely exhausted. A big part of your energy gets lost only because of the traffic, and then you come home stressed, in a bad mood, you only want to sleep. (Hind)

For those who would have the time, the city's offer in leisure time facilities is poor and unsatisfactory, lacking major cultural institutions such as theatres, opera and concert halls. Women in particular felt unsafe and exposed to harassment:

It's really about very normal things. For example, I could do that of course, just go out and have a walk. But you can only go two- or three hundred meters and immediately several people start chatting you up. I've been in Germany recently, and I felt so comfortably there, because... you know. You don't see the danger (Naima)

In the beginning, I could not just sit in a café, I've been so frightened! I preferred to stay at home. Now, it's ok, but you have to be very careful. (Yalda)

The statements referring to emotions and impressions the returnees shared with me when asked about their personal reintegration after return show that the return is experienced in very different ways. On the one hand, several respondents said to be "happy" to be back in Morocco, where they see their future, where they "don't feel as a foreigner" because it is their country, their culture, their language and their religion. These respondents who said to be overall satisfied with their return emphasized the need to "stop comparing Morocco with Germany" and the importance of "accepting the differences". Many others, on the other hand, actually continued comparing the two countries. Those, who said of themselves to still be struggling with their reintegration, told me to feel "as a foreigner" in Morocco, to be "homesick for Germany", to feel "lonely", "misunderstood" and sometimes "desperate". They felt an immense pressure to adapt and integrate both at the workplace and in their private lives, which created tensions with what one of them called the "German side of my personality". These tensions had different consequences for different returnees, with some telling me to feel like "acting" when leaving their house, others "searching for a balance" and some even worrying to "vulgarise" and "to go gaga" because of a "lack of intellectual stimulation" and the daily confrontation with "uncivilised behaviour".

Whose development? Thinking the Möbius subject

As previously stated, I set out to study the ways the returnees themselves give meaning to their mobilities and to their current situation in terms of their professional career and private life. For practical reasons I refrained from searching for empirical evidence

on the “developmental” impact the returnees, according to the migration-development nexus, are supposed to have on their post-return environment as professional and private models, as transmitters of knowledge and skills or as social and cultural “ambassadors”. However, after having seen the trajectories of these highly skilled migrant workers, the question “what has happened to the returnee” turns back on us with an even stronger force, as many of them seem helpless in making sense of their double role as “German Moroccans” themselves. How can we think on a more abstract level the personal change many of my informants recognised in their own personality and forcibly became aware of when confronted with reintegration difficulties after their return? What is the relation between structure and agency, between environment and personality in the context of this change of personality? Is it the same mechanism that brought about the change within the self of the returnee that is supposed to trigger social change in the post-return environment? Can “personal development” be enlarged and spread in order to achieve “societal development”?

Identity formation and social change are strongly intertwined, not only in terms of agency and structure, but also as identity is understood as being “the conceptual link between the individual and the society” (Brewer & Hewstone, 2004, p. xi). On the one hand, identity formation occurs “always within a context of power relations” (Goddard, 2000, p. 7), a context of which the self’s identity perceives itself as being an integral part: “the self within the group”. Along with this go, for instance, processes of identification (cf. Verkuyten, 2005, pp. 63-67). On the other hand, social identity is “the group within the self” in the sense of an individual self-concept “derived from membership in specific social groups” (Brewer & Hewstone, 2004, p. xi). It is important to add that the importance each of these two meanings may have, differs cross-culturally (cf. Abrams & Hogg, 2004, pp. 151-152), which, in turn, leads to different dynamics in terms of social change. This popular way of thinking identity as a temporal outcome of a continuous interaction between society and individual, structure and agency has however its flaws. Firstly, this model does not provide an answer to the relative share of respectively “society” and “individual” within the linking structure “identity”. Secondly, thinking historical change within this

model is equally problematic, as it is difficult to say where the cause of change is situated: rather in society or rather within the individual. Do “individual” and “society” reside in two strictly separate fields like in the Marxist model of base and superstructure with the cause being completely external to the field of its effect (but how can a cause lead to an effect if there exists no relation whatsoever between the two)? Or are causes rather immanent to the sphere of their effects like in the Foucauldian thinking which closely links power with its outcomes (but by doing so makes causes indistinguishable from effects)? Or must we use an auxiliary construct like Pierre Bourdieu’s *habitus* that bridges the two fields in order to understand social change (but being then confronted with the problem of the synchronism of the *habitus*-model and the loss of individual variation) (cf. Rothenberg, 2010)?

It is clear that, when it comes to theories of social and cultural change, anthropology is still searching for pertinent models. There are abundant ethnographic descriptions of different forms of social and cultural change, using methods such as long term fieldwork¹⁵ or the life history approach¹⁶. Yet, theorizing remains rare or too specific to be cross-culturally valuable. Some scholars turn to theories of change in philosophy, such as Derrida’s cognitive model of *différence* and *différance*. Yet, most of these theories are centred on the individual and do not seem to offer a solution to broader, societal or collective social and cultural change in the sense of “development”. Is there a way to think individuals within their social environment as being both cause and effect, generator and result of social change?

Maybe Anne Molly Rothenberg’s (2010) new theory on social change might provide an alternative way of thinking both identity formation and individual change on the one hand and larger societal developments or practices of alterity on the other hand. In revealing the existence of what she calls an “external immanent causation” or “extimate causation” that keeps cause and effect distinct and links them at the same time, Rothenberg offers a solution to the problems of both external causation (the two-tier Marxian models) and immanent causation (the one-tier Foucauldian models). Crucial to the extimate causality is the “excess” caused by it:

(...) the social dimension of subjectivity is irremediably *excessive*. Extimate causality names the operation that generates subjects in their social dimension – that is, the operation that gives us social identities, properties, and relationships. In producing the social subject, extimate causality also leaves a remainder or indeterminacy, so that every subject is an “excessive” subject. For convenience, I refer to this excessive subject – the subject born of and bearing excess – as the “Möbius subject” because of the typology of the Möbius band (with its apparently impossible configuration of two sides that turn out to be the same) provides a convenient model for understanding how, at every point in the social field, an irreducible excess attends social relations (...). (Rothenberg, 2010, p. 10)

As such, extimate causality “produces the excess that links subject to social field” (ibid., p. 32) in producing both a structured field or system and, at the same time, giving rise to “an element of nondeterminancy, surplus or excess” which, “although it seems paradoxical, (...) is what makes the social field itself possible and makes its structure potentially analysable” (ibid., p. 36). This simultaneity of cause and effect which produces both structure and “excess” is not easy to think. In order to facilitate imagining the extimate causality and its excessive result, this “more than one but not quite two”, Rothenberg uses paralogical images like the Möbius strip with its indifference of inside and outside, but also double negotiations (“I am not unwilling” adds an excessive meaning to “I am willing”) or models like that of Charles Sanders Peirce (1933) in which a plane is simultaneously cutting through a line and is being pierced by it.

Can Rothenberg’s theory help us to understand the change that has taken place in the way the returnees consider their own self and how they are considered by their environments? I argue that, while Rothenberg emphasizes that every subject is a Möbius subject, this is even more clearly the case with return migrants. During the whole of their migration trajectory we see a simultaneity of multiple internal and external causes at stake: the emigration has for many of my informants been initiated and made possible by their surroundings, while there has also been a motivation on their side, be it curiosity, ambition or the wish to follow someone’s example. Residing in Germany presented them with new ways of working, communicating and handling relationships, of which they took over some and

rejected others in a way that anthropology uses to call “negotiation”. However, as should have become clear by the previous discussions, it is not appropriate to call these returnees “half-half”, “German-Moroccan”, “in-betweeners” etc. Especially after returning to Morocco all of my informants have been forced in one or the other way to position themselves in their private and professional contexts, and many have still been struggling with that at the moment that I have met them. What makes things difficult is, that it is not only a “German side” that has been added to their “Moroccan” identity in the form of work values, attitudes or perceptions. It is not about summing up, adding or hyphenating. It is about *excess* in the sense of a personal change into something new, that is neither Moroccan nor German nor “in between”, and which differs from one individual to another. In the style of a popular German saying, the returnees do not “sit in between all chairs” but they sit on a new kind of chair as it were. Although during interviews many returnees spoke about “German” or “Moroccan” ways of doing things, in daily actions these two sides rather act like in the Möbius strip: appearing distinct for the outside spectator, but switching from one side to the other without having to cross any barrier whatsoever, and as such, creating something original and different. It is thus not a tension inherent to the returnee but rather the *excess*, the nondetermined outcome of the interaction of the returnee with his or her surrounding, that brings about new forms of social practices, behaviours and attitudes. It is not because returnees act “German” at their workplace, towards their employees or in their private relations, but because they act as a Möbius subject, creating something unpredictably new out of their experiences, that we speak of identity change, and, eventually maybe, of social development. And this is then the question that remains when examining the feasibility of the idea of the migration-development nexus: how can these individually created distinct “excesses” generate similar impulses or negotiations in the post-return environment in the sense of societal development?

“I’m not even in between, I’m kind of different”: the self-employed returnee as a Möbius subject

The sun is already low over the old city of Fes when we get out of Hicham’s Mercedes in front of the five star luxury hotel situated on a hillside from which you have “the best view over the most beautiful city in the world” as the man in his early forties has told me. Mostafa parks his car next to Hicham’s – also a Mercedes, but this one with a German licence number. The former fellow student and good friend of Hicham spends his last week of vacation in his home country before returning to Germany where he works and lives since having finished his studies. He has agreed to participate in the interview I had arranged with Hicham. While waiting for our drinks at the terrace of the hotel’s restaurant, Hicham, who runs a small engineering company in Fes specialised in construction works, tells about the advantages he sees in his German training:

“Of course, I’ve brought several assets with me from Germany. The punctuality, the honesty, the precision. I always tell my employees: ‘control! You have to control everything!’ And the creativity! Sometimes you need some creativity to find a solution. You have to be creative, that’s something we’ve learned in Germany.”

I ask him if he would then compare his way of working in his enterprise with the way of working in a German company. A whimsical smile unfurls on his face:

“Well, you know, there are not that many controls here as in Germany. Authorities don’t whinge about these peanuts like in Germany. Germans check the flagstones and if there is half a millimetre of space they say ‘ah, pull it down!’ Here they say: ‘it’s no problem. It’s ok.’ Well, and I, I am somewhere in between. No, I’m not even in between, I’m kind of different.”

Mostafa puts his coffee back on the table and leans forward, his elbows on his knees:

“You see these guys, things are easier for them.”

Hicham leans back and laughs while Mostafa continues:

“When I come to visit Hicham he says: ‘Hey, how are you? Come on, let’s go for a coffee in the city!’ I can’t afford that kind of behaviour in Germany. These people, they just live their lives. They

do their job, they earn money, they are more... flexible. They don't feel the pressure."

Hicham thinks for a short moment and responds:

"Morocco is good and bad at the same time. It depends on the way you look at it. I believe that you can earn better than in Germany..."

Mostafa blows a quiet whistle while lifting his eyebrows in a surprised gesture. Hicham continues:

"I say: you *can*. Anyhow, you have the possibility to live a better life here: without stress. This is what I like about Morocco. You can live here and you can control the time as you like it. At the same time you know that you do a good job, that you don't do things by halves. Here, I can work as I like to work: independently but accurately. I don't regret having returned to Morocco. I'm very satisfied."

"You always say that."

"Yeah, I'm doing fine. I've got more and more clients now. There's a lot of work. You can still come, Mostafa!"

"Yeah, yeah..."

IV. What does development have to do with it? Interrelations between empirical reality and policy concepts

Becoming a development agent: the role of development in the way returnees give meaning to their lives

As Jean-Pierre Cassarino (2008, p. 27) emphasizes, “pre- and post-return conditions and the choice to return are (...) of paramount importance: these elements are part and parcel of the return preparation process”. For this reason, the preceding chapters have tried to give an idea of the whole migration trajectory as well as of the circumstances, individual objectives and strategies guiding the migration decisions. Related to the respective migratory stages (before emigration, professional and private life in Germany, formation of the return decision, public and private reintegration in Morocco after return) we can retain several insights. Firstly, emigration to Germany has been largely guided by a logic of chain migration and social mobility, not by an initial desire to study or work in this specific country. Secondly, with regard to the stay in Germany, most respondents had made a pragmatic decision when choosing their field of study in terms of their future career rather than in terms of development. Thirdly, the vast majority of the return decisions have been involuntary, i.e. taken out of the impossibility to stay in Germany on the basis of a work contract or because of prolonged unemployment in the case of respondents married to German partners. Only a small number of returnees said to have had a “vision” or an “intention” as regards their post-return life in Morocco at that stage. Finally, while in the previous stages the individual trajectories had developed in a roughly homogeneous way, in the post-return phase a clear distinction in terms of general satisfaction, professional success and ambitions to contribute to the country’s development can be remarked between self-employed returnees and employees. While the vast majority of the latter struggled hard with their professional and private reintegration process, the self-employed persons, despite all difficulties they had

encountered after return, presented themselves in a much more optimistic and content way. In summary, the important role chance and circumstances have played in most returnees' life trajectories and the absence of a clear desire to emigrate and/or to return in order to contribute to Morocco's development make it difficult see these returnees as "agents of development" in the first place. However, as all of my respondents have been supported by the CIM program for returning experts, it is clear that German development cooperation, who funds them with not unimportant amounts of money, considers them to be crucial agents in the development of their home country.¹⁷ How do the returnees themselves make sense of this?

I have tried to find answers to this question by both evaluating the returnees' activities and ambitions and by asking them directly in which way they see themselves as contributors to Morocco's development. The direct questions provoked some instructive reactions. For instance, several returnees have been quite sceptical with regard to their own role in the social and economic development of Morocco, and stressed the urge to adapt themselves to the circumstances:

Me: Do you consider yourself to be in a position to change something, for instance at your work place?

Hafeza: Well... you can do that, of course, I've also tried to do so, but... that does hardly change a thing (*laughs*). You really have to be the boss of everything to realise something, I don't know... I can't decide, me myself, I can't decide. I have to adapt.

Take for example corruption: it's a bad thing. But, be honest, if you would have had the opportunity to bribe a police agent back in Germany, you would have done so, no?! You always adapt to your environment, that's how you survive. You know, I don't want to say that corruption is good or something, no! I only say, those returnees who complain "oh, they're mean, they want my money, the criminality in Casa" and so on – yeah, ok, things are different here! You come back from Germany, they have metros there and we don't have metros here – ok, so what?! (Kamal)

Here in Morocco, it's crucial that you have a good relationship with your boss. Your boss is your best client (*laughs*). He's always right, you never disagree with him, you know. If he tells me: "we do it like

that” then I do it, even if I know that he isn’t right, no problem. Even if I know that it’s nonsense, I do it. I don’t give a shit if it works out or not. (Aziz)

Interestingly, the most pessimistic voices about one’s personal influence in terms of development have been raised by those returnees who in general felt unsatisfied with their return and experienced great difficulties to reintegrate in Moroccan work and private life. The impact an individual can have has generally been rated very low by these respondents:

Me: What do you think about the idea that returnees can bring about social change and development here in Morocco?

Kamal: I say, concentrate on your own situation, your own job, you can’t change the way things are. That’s one thing. The other thing is, you’re not responsible for the others, but *you* have to be a good example. You work on your situation, on your life, the little world you live in, maybe you can change that, in a micro way, in a small environment, yeah, maybe, but I don’t really believe in that.

Many respondents working as employees argued that the only thing they can contribute to Morocco’s development is “to do a good job” and to “work hard”. Hind, for instance, told me that she would like her work in an industrial company to be appreciated as a contribution to the development of Moroccan society. The logic behind most of these statements was: I do my work in order to make a living and if it benefits the development of Morocco, so much the better.

Me: Do you also see yourself playing a role in development? In the sense that you have been in Germany, you might want to contribute something?

Yousef: Well, I think so, yes. I mean... (*pauses*). I’m only someone, I mean, I do my job, basically. I mean, they need me, they need engineers, and I am an engineer, I can do things, but... I don’t think I can do a lot, I don’t think I will change or want to change the country (*laughs*). The important thing for me is that I feel good, I have a job, I have my salary at the end of the month, I enjoy my time...

However, there have also been respondents who had a more optimistic idea of their own possibilities to bring about social change and who actually said to already do so. It is a decisive insight that the group of those returnees who have been both willing and capable to contribute actively to what they considered development exactly coincides with the group of the self-employed returnees. As already mentioned, all of the self-employed returnees passed on the technical knowledge they had gained in Germany by training their own staff. They also tried to be an example in core values they considered important for the success of their work, such as accurateness, punctuality, openness and discipline. Interestingly, the only two non-self-employed respondents who had been very positive about the capacity of returnees to “change something” have been Rachid, a manager who had returned to Morocco just a week before I met him, and Mostafa, the friend of one of my respondents who had stayed in Germany after having finished his studies and has been on his summer vacation in Morocco at the moment I interviewed his friend:

Me: You told me that you decided to return to Morocco because you wanted to give something back. Do you already have concrete ideas what you wanna do?

Rachid: Yes, I'll try to educate people, that's my plan. And to sensitise them for the value of time, that they get a feeling for time. And the topic of *baksheesh* is also a big issue here in Morocco. That has to stop. You only have to talk to the people, that's a process of education.

In summing up one can say that employed returnees seemed to be less reflexive about a potential developmental impact that they could have in Morocco on the basis of their experiences in Germany, while self-employed respondents frequently addressed the topic even before I had asked them about it. Clearly, employed returnees also had much lower estimations of their capacities as “development agents” than self-employed returnees who presented themselves as being both willing and able to have an impact. Recently returned and not-(yet)-returned respondents also expressed an optimistic attitude with regards to the role returnees can play in Morocco's development, although they themselves had not (yet) gone through the reintegration process.

„You handle things differently”: the employed returnee as a Möbius subject

The living room of Abdelaziz and his wife Naima could just as well be situated in a Western European apartment: IKEA-style furniture, modern art paintings on the walls, thick woollen carpets and on a cupboard framed photographs exclusively picturing the young couple. The two of them returned to Morocco four years ago. While Naima prepares fried potatoes - “the German way, they are the best” - Abdelaziz tries to describe how he experienced his return:

“Well, partially, I am German, and I also have a problem with that. You know, I have edges, I have a defined, geometrical form, I am no amorphous figure. And I... I sometimes have difficulties with... with certain character traits. For instance, I believe in what I hear, and I do what I say. And I think, here, you have to be a sort of actor. You must never say what you think. And I have a problem with that. But obviously, I learn to come to terms with that, I withdraw from it, I nod along, it’s as simple as that.”

I am touched by the pain and the frustration that the athletic man in the middle of his thirties expresses with every word he says and that speak out of the worry lines on his forehead. His helplessness troubles me. I ask him which specific difficulties he encountered after his return.

“There are many things that are quite new – well, not new, but you handle them differently. Sometimes you have surprises. For example, I am used to discuss a problem and then to agree about it and that’s it. Here, it’s possible that several months later, people come back on what you’ve said during this or that discussion. And that is a mentality that I... that I, how should I say... that I have to learn again. I mean, I learn to handle it, but I won’t certainly behave the same way! But, if you work somewhere, you have to adapt. You might bring the competences with you, but not the working culture. So, we can’t even use the experiences we have, you know, as people would react *à la* ‘this is not Germany’.”

Naima, who entered the living room while her husband was talking, adds:

“The real problem is: if you have grown up in Europe or you have studied and worked for such a long time in Germany, you obviously

have developed certain ideas and... and also the circumstances are totally different, so, I mean, you are really bound to encounter difficulties when you try to live here. That is completely normal, I think.”

Her eyes are searching those of her husband while her fingers play nervously with her silver necklace. Abelaziz nods. Naima continues: “Yeah, that is really completely normal. And yeah, maybe you need time. Look at us, we are here for four years already. People always say that you need three years to acclimatise here. These three years are over now - but I still feel like I could go back to Europe.”

Theory with(out) actors: policy concepts versus the returnees’ life conceptions

Let’s take a step back for a moment and reconsider the objectives of policies based on the migration-development nexus and the focus of previous researches in social and economic sciences on this topic. From the side of policy makers, the wish to also trigger social or even cultural change through return migration is clearly formulated: “Migrants’ return, even temporary or virtual, can play a useful role in fostering the transfer of skills to the developing world, together with other forms of brain circulation” (Commission of the European Communities, 2005a, p. 7). The “brain circulation” or the “transfer of skills” are sometimes even considered the main characteristic of return migration, a vision symbolized in the rhetorical substitution of “returnee” with “skills” like in the following fragment: “A challenge regarding the return of skills is how to reach out to and encourage members of diaspora to return, even if only temporarily, and to facilitate the sharing of their skills by the home community” (Laczko, 2005, p. 180). Clearly, policy makers expect that the returnee functions as a kind of “container” that transports technical skills, but also societal and cultural knowledge such as for instance a certain awareness of democratic values or gender equality, a container filled with Western know-how and values so to speak that is consequently being unloaded and disseminated in the respective developing country to the benefit of all inhabitants of the latter. But is this really the case? As already mentioned, previous research on

the interrelations between migration and development have largely focused on measurable effects of return migration such as local financial investment by returnees or the number of jobs created through their economic activities. As Bimal Ghosh states:

The broader societal dimensions of development, in particular the social and cultural capital, as well as the environmental aspects of development reflected in behavioural patterns of a wide variety, have not been seriously considered at all [in policy formation and intervention]. (Ghosh, 1997, p. 2)

Policy makers and development projects simply hope for a certain degree of social change and transfer of values initiated by returnees, although they are not capable to measure these effects. For instance, the head of a pilot project of German development cooperation in the Nador region that aims at the stimulation of investments by the Moroccan diaspora community in Germany told me that an important indicator for the success of the project is the “percental increase of the share of investment credits made by diaspora Moroccans in the sum total of credits”, an indicator he himself considered way too high aggregated to be practicable. Criteria like that are obviously not aimed at measuring the social impact of return. When I asked my contact person at CIM about how the project measured the contribution of the returnees it supports to social and cultural development, he was taken aback. Apparently, he had never even considered that there could be any doubt that returnees would contribute to social development: “I always thought, well, every engineer that returns constitutes a benefit to the country”. Yet, he had to admit that there are no indicators or evaluations that prove the relation between return and social development. Hence, it seems fair to say that, both in political theory as in the practical realisation of projects based on the idea of the migration-development nexus, *ignorance* of the social and cultural implications of return migration is predominating. Clearly, the policy actors’ expectation that returnees play a positive role in societal change in their home country is either based on aspirations or is simply assumed without critical reflection on how this development might go about.

This ignorance can be considered as being a political choice but certainly also refers to an actual lack of knowledge on the return migrant as an “actor of change”. Based on the previous descriptions

of the life trajectories of the returnees I worked with, the objectives and strategies guiding their actions, what can be expected from them in terms of contribution to social change after return? In my opinion, there are two major limitations to the developmental impact these returnees can have on their home country. Firstly, as has frequently been emphasized in the literature and by the experts I met in the field, the structural circumstances in the country of origin play a decisive role in the capacity of a returnee to contribute to development. For Morocco, the most important aspects of this “unfavourable general development context” are, according to Hein de Haas:

inadequate infrastructure and the absence of public services, particularly in rural areas; failing credit and insurance markets; excessive red tape and corruption confronting potential investors; difficulties in obtaining title deeds on property; inefficient judiciary and a lack of legal security; as well as a general lack of trust in government institutions and doubts about future political and economic stability. (de Haas, 2009a, p. 1588)

Secondly, and less acknowledged in scientific literature, many returnees seem to encounter major difficulties in the reintegration process, particularly with regard to the work place but also in private life. This is exactly what happens when “the often dramatic social influences and challenges which result from migration are filtered through existing social systems and managed in a variety of interactions to produce new and complex social forms” (Collyer et al., 2009, pp. 1565-1566). We can see this most obviously in the descriptions made by the returnees with regard to “Moroccan working culture” as compared to “German working culture”. The importance of authority, control and hierarchic structures as well as the existence of indirect communication and a general lack of motivation due to a non-identification with one’s work or company have repeatedly been brought up when talking about work life in Morocco, always in contrast with the situation in Germany. As should have become clear in the statements of the returnees in the previous sections, many of my respondents suffered from these differences between Moroccan and German work values and attitudes and felt a strong urge to “adapt”, to “act”, “not to be oneself” in order to function well in their job. Hence also the

comment of one expert that, for many returnees, self-employment is a kind of “survival strategy”: it allows them to escape unemployment but also to be “their own boss”, i.e. to avoid exactly the above-mentioned problems faced by many employed returnees working in Moroccan enterprises.

Is there not a certain absurdity in policy concepts based on the idea of the highly skilled return migrant as “agent of development” while a vast number of returnees neither considers themselves to be an actor of change nor seems to be in a position to act accordingly, except for the self-employed ones? As one expert told me: “it’s a little bit naive to think that all diaspora Moroccans in Germany who decide to return want to become active in the country’s development. How many business and social entrepreneurs do we have in Germany?!” Perceiving return migrants as “development agents”, “brains” or “skills” is, in my eyes, a major pitfall in the theoretical and policy conception of development through return migration. It ignores the fact that returnees are individuals, empowered and limited by social relations as well as by economical and political contexts and guided by personal motivations, emotions and strategies that might not conform with the developmental goals of, for instance, the German state. A similar argument can be found with Eva Østergaard-Nielsen:

It is, however, important not to take for granted that migrants are by default interested in participating in co-development, although this is often implied in the Spanish and Catalan policy environment. Migration, as stated time and time again in interviews with Moroccan migrants, is an individual project that the migrant undertakes to safeguard the livelihood of his or her family. (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2009, p. 1632)

Not considering the individual anxieties, ambitions and desires of the returnees dehumanises them in order to create an image of a benefactor, someone intrinsically motivated by the wish to contribute to development, someone easily incorporable in policy concepts and development projects.

Is this gap between theory and the reality as perceived by many returnees thus unbridgeable? In my opinion, one of the major problems at the moment is the small number of highly skilled migrants returning to Morocco. Respondents also repeatedly referred

to their lack of contacts with other returnees and their impression to be “all alone” with their reintegration difficulties. Several authors mention the potential of a future chain-remigration in facilitating the realization of the migration-development nexus:

What follows from the expectation of chain-re-migration is that the attraction of returnees through return migration programs is likely to be difficult at the outset, but has the potential to become a self-reinforcing process which becomes easier once a critical mass has been reached within an organisation or a relatively small geographic region such as a high tech park or a city. (Jonkers, 2008, p. 30)

A higher number of highly skilled returnees might allow for a better networking and exchange of experiences among the individual returnees in order to provide each other with mutual support. In the case of my respondents, some had already attended the so-called “Stammtisch” of the German Chamber for Foreign Trade in Casablanca in earlier years, a kind of regular, informal meeting where entrepreneurs associated with Germany came together. This platform has been appreciated as a way to get in touch with other returnees, and therefore it has also been deplored that the meetings are not organised any longer. A better connection of returnees might not only facilitate their personal reintegration process but also be beneficial to development as can be observed in other contexts, such as for example Jamaica:

the existence in Jamaica of sixteen associations of return residents (...) is a clear indication of the shared sense of identity which exists among return migrants, as well as their need of support in adapting to conditions in Jamaica. (...) The associations are also concerned to contribute to the welfare of their community and the development of Jamaica. A number of the associations have "adopted" welfare or educational projects in order to give regular support. (Thomas-Hope, 1999, p. 196)

Concluding remarks

This research has set out to fill with life the migration-development nexus idea on social change through migration by having a look at the way the supposed “actors of development”, the highly skilled return migrants, are making sense of their migration trajectory and

their post-return experiences. As has become clear, “being the development agent” is obviously not the foremost activity of these persons, as “being the returnee” for many is already tough enough. While the short report of my encounter with Ahmed in the beginning of the thesis looks promising at first sight, it is not the whole story: Ahmed, despite being very satisfied to be able to “help”, still doesn’t feel completely at home in Morocco, suffers from homesickness for Germany and travels there regularly “in order not to go insane”. However, re-returning to Germany is no option: “Morocco is my country, this is where I belong”. Things are thus a lot more complicated than an appealing concept could make us believe.

What can the relevance of an anthropological research on return migration within the framework of the migration-development nexus be? It should be clear that the scope of this study is particularly small and specific. Further research is necessary in order to eliminate biases, for instance the focus on the urban sphere, the selective sample as regards the success of the returnees or the lack of cross-cultural comparisons. However, in my view, this study can serve at least two aims. In the first place, the insights in the individual objectives, perceptions and struggles of returnees help us understand the existence of the so-called “gap hypothesis”, the gap between migration policies and their results (cf. Cornelius et al., 1994; Cornelius & Tsuda, 2004; Nyberg-Sørensen et al., 2002). In my opinion, recent policy debates on the potential of return migration in development cooperation make the same mistake as integration policies in treating “the migrant” not as a social being but as a number, “an agent”, a unit. As has become clear in this thesis, the returnee is, just as every human being, a highly irrational and emotional subject, whose decisions are oftentimes guided by chance, or by what Anne Molly Rothenberg calls “excess”, rather than by rational strategies, and who suffers from her “being different” both in professional and private life. It is illusionary to think that migrants might return for the single aim to contribute to the development of their country; migrants are after all no less egoistic beings than non-migrants. Policy plans could profit from this insight.

Furthermore, ethnographic studies of return migration in the light of development help us reconsider theoretical concepts that might have become outdated in the meantime and develop new ones

instead. Take for example social and cultural capital which is a very popular concept in migration studies. However, it has become obvious that this theory seems to have less significance in the context studied here. Returnees cannot deliberately utilise the social and cultural capital they might have gained abroad, as it is just the wrong currency, to stay in the same semantic field. By contrast, they are creatively negotiating the different influences, environments and impulses, creating “excess” or change, while at the same time being tied to the rules of their surroundings. They are the ones who are at the interface of the different puzzle pieces. They are the ones who have to make sense out of it. We need new theories in order to understand this complex dynamic of the individual returnee’s identity change, and, in a second step, the societal development that might be brought about by returnees. The excessive subject is one of the concepts anthropology could use in this endeavour.

Endnotes

¹ All fragments of interviews used in this thesis have been translated by myself from German or French into English.

² All names of respondents used in this text are pseudonyms.

³ Hein de Haas identifies Morocco as “an outstanding example of an emigration country” (de Haas, 2005a, p. 2) with a long migration history. Seasonal, circular and rural to urban migration patterns and a small number of international migration of traders had existed for centuries in pre-colonial Morocco. Yet, it was only with the growing influence of France in neighbouring Algeria from the beginning of the 19th century on and the establishment of the Spanish-French protectorate on Moroccan territory in 1912 that an important rural to urban wage labour migration set in. During the two World Wars, over 150.000 Moroccans served in the French army, most of whom returned after the end of the wars or had been sent back during the Great Depression of the 1930s. Moroccan labour migration to France slowly resumed after the Second World War, especially after France stopped the recruitment of Algerian workers during the Algerian war of independence (1954-62) and because of the closure of the Moroccan-Algerian border in 1962, which meant a certain isolation of the country from the rest of the African continent until today. Morocco became independent from France in 1956. The 1960s and early 1970s would become known as the period of the “great migration boom” with an increase of Moroccan residents in Europe from 30.000 in 1965 to 400.000 in 1975. The so-called guest-worker migration to Western Europe caused a diversification of migration patterns which were no longer directed only towards France but also to Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands. Official recruitment played a minor role in these migrations, with informal recruitment and personal networks being the main migration channels from Morocco to Western Europe in this time. Through broad regularisation campaigns in the 1970s, most of these irregular migrants have been regularized though (cf. de Haas, 2005b, pp. 4-8).

With the European migration stop due to the 1973 oil crisis and a phase of political instability and repression in Morocco that made many emigrants decide to stay in Europe, a period of family reunification set in, that lasted until the end of the 1980s. The numbers of returns to Morocco have been lower than the number of migration for family reunification, which led to a further increase of the Moroccan diaspora in Europe. From the 1990s on, with family reunification of the former guest workers being largely

completed, family formation of second generation Moroccans residing in Europe with partners mostly coming from the parents' region of origin in Morocco became an important migration pattern. Another one has been undocumented migration from Morocco to the countries of northwest Europe but increasingly also to Spain, Portugal and Italy, as the EU had made legal access almost impossible for Moroccan citizens. In 2009, more than three million persons of Moroccan origin lived abroad with the total population being about 31 million (cf. de Haas, 2009b, p. 1) and circa 85% of the emigrants residing in Europe (cf. de Haas, 2009b, p. 4).

Seen these historical and current migration patterns, Hein de Haas sees Morocco as a "typical example" of what Skeldon (1997) has termed a "labour frontier country", i.e. "that category of upper lower and lower middle income countries whose modest social, economic and infrastructural development has encouraged and enabled people to emigrate in large numbers" (de Haas, 2005b, p. 2). For the nearby future, de Haas predicts that Morocco will continue being marked by migration, as the new Moroccan diaspora in Spain and Italy will further increase through family reunification, family formation will continue in the more traditional migration destinations in northwest Europe and irregular immigration will remain high due to high unemployment and lack of opportunities especially for the Moroccan youth (de Haas, 2005b, pp. 23-25). Since the 1990s, Morocco has furthermore become a transit country for migrants from sub-Saharan Africa trying to enter Europe via Spain and increasingly also choosing to stay in the country (cf. de Haas, 2005a, p. 4; de Haas, 2009, p. 5).

⁴ I refrain from using the concept of cosmopolitanism, as it has never been used by the informants themselves. I equally chose not to use concepts on networks and social and cultural capital. Pierre Bourdieu's understanding of social capital as "capital of social relations", which is yet not only accessible to elites but to everyone as has been remarked by James Coleman (cf. Field, 2003), could indeed be useful for returnees who are particularly dependent on meaningful social relations in their reintegration process. However, both social and cultural capital and network theories are often used by policy makers and non-professionals in a metaphorical sense that runs counter to the insights I gained in how return migration is experienced by my respondents (cf. "Concluding remarks", p. 72f).

⁵ Scott Lash explains this ambiguity in an instructive way in the following quote: "Even the verb *erfahren* means to learn as if to accumulate knowledge, to come to know, etc. But not *erleben*. *Erfahren* has *fahren* in it like '*Mit dem Zug zu fahren*'. To travel, to drive, to go a distance. *Erlebnis*

has *life* in it. (...). *Erlebnis* has something of the event (*Ereignis*) to it. ‘Event’ happens with *Erlebnis*. It is like having an aesthetic experience. Or having indeed a religious experience. Normally there is no event with *Erfahrung*: only an act of abstraction, an act of judgement.” (Lash, 2006, p. 338, accent in original text)

⁶ To be more precise, the European Community (EC) used to be one of the three pillars of the European Union (EU) under the Maastricht Treaty and was thus not equivalent to the EU. As by the moment of writing the Treaty of Lisbon has already abolished the pillar system, I chose to use “EU” instead of “EC” in order to facilitate understanding.

⁷ Other important EU policy documents in this regard are the policy plan on legal migration (Commission of the European Communities, 2005b), the communication on migration and mobility partnerships between the EU and third countries (Commission of the European Communities, 2007) and the revised “global approach to migration” from 2008, where recent initiatives in the field of return and circular migration are described as having proved successful (Commission of the European Communities, 2008, p. 7).

⁸ The MIREM project is carried out by the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies at the European University Institute in Florence. The survey discussed here consisted of about one thousand interviews carried out in Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia and provides quantitative data on the return and reintegration process of migrants from those three Maghreb countries.

⁹ For instance the work of the MIREM project on return migration to Maghreb countries (cf. Cassarino, 2008).

¹⁰ When using the term „imagined mobilities“ I refer to what Tim Cresswell calls “geographical imaginations” (Cresswell, 2006). I share his view that “these imaginations (...) are not simply colourful mental maps confined to the world of ideas. Rather they are active participants in the world of action. (...) They escape the bonds of individual dreams and aspirations and become social. They become political.” (Cresswell, 2006, p. 21). When these social constructions of places do not only produce imagined mobilities and migration aspirations (cf. Carling, 2002; Jónsson, 2008), but are turned into action, they become what Erind Pajo calls “socioglobal mobilities”: “Social status in our time’s world seems to be a matter of envisioning society and of envisioning the world as much as it is a matter of territorial presence; hence contemporary international migration might be driven by the social desire to advance from a location envisioned

as low in the international hierarchy towards one envisioned higher.” (Pajo, 2007, p.10).

¹¹ German universities and colleges of higher education (“Fachhochschule”) do not regard the Moroccan *baccalauréat* as being equivalent to the German *Abitur*, which is why Moroccans who want to study in Germany first have to follow a one year preparatory course at a university, the so-called *Studienkolleg*. In order to be admitted to the *Studienkolleg* they have to pass a test of German language which already requires an advanced level of language competency (mostly level B1 of the Common European Framework of References for Languages). In many cases, these admission requirements lead to several years of linguistic and content specific preparation, either in Morocco (e.g. by taking language classes in the *Goethe-Institut* in Rabat or Casablanca) or in Germany before the actual admission to a German university. Foreign students are allowed to work ninety full-time days per year plus a possible student job at their university (cf. Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Leiterinnen und Leiter der Studienkollegs an deutschen Hochschulen, 2009).

¹² After having finished their studies, foreigners are allowed to search for a job matching their qualifications during a period of twelve months. During this period, they still have a work permission for ninety days (§ 16 para. 4 Aufenthaltsgesetz in Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 2004). If they do not succeed in finding a job during this period, their residence permit is withdrawn. A foreign worker applying for a job in Germany is faced with the rule of the so-called subordinate access to work (“Nachrangiger Arbeitszugang”), which implies that whenever employers are able to find a German applicant with the same qualifications for the job, they are obligated to select the German candidate.

¹³ From the late 1990s on, there has been a rising awareness of the challenges of immigration and integration in Germany, which has led to quite some policy and public debate and, in 2005, to a new law on immigration. Because of the long hesitation to openly discuss Germany’s quality as a country of immigration (German: “Zuwanderungsland”), the level of racism and xenophobia especially towards Muslim immigrants and citizens is comparatively high in contemporary Germany (cf. Decker & Brähler, 2008). The number of rightist extremist criminal and violent acts has increased since the mid-1990s, with a preliminary absolute peak in 2008, reaching almost 32.000 cases of discrimination and violence directed against foreigners (cf. Bundesministerium des Innern, 2009).

¹⁴ Looking back on a long history of emigration, Germany became a migration destination country in the 1950s with a peak in the early 1990s.

Facing a scarcity of labour after the Second World War, Western Germany concluded contracts for the recruitment of foreign labour with Italy, Spain, Greece and Turkey in 1955 until 1961 (cf. Özcan, 2007, p. 2). A recruitment agreement with Morocco was concluded in 1963, the same year as France and one year before Belgium (cf. de Haas, 2009b, p. 2). Until the recruitment stop in 1973, the number of the foreign population in Germany increased quickly, reaching 4 million in 1973. Contrary to the “rotation model”, many of the former so-called guest workers stayed and obtained improved legal status during the 1970s and 80s. Since the middle of the 1990s, the number of the foreign population in Germany has been remaining constant at a level of about 7,3 million, about 20% of which have been born in Germany and the biggest group consisting of Turkish immigrants and their children. Since 1993, it has been possible for immigrants to obtain German nationality. The granting of dual citizenship is possible, if, as is the case with Morocco, the former citizenship cannot be abandoned. With about 108.000 inhabitants of Moroccan origin in 2005, Germany hosts a comparatively small Moroccan community. It occupies the sixth rank in the favourite migration destinations of Moroccan immigration, preceded by France (1 million), Spain (500.000), Italy (350.000), Belgium (350.000) and the Netherlands (325.000) Yet, while the size of the Turkish community, which represents the biggest group of foreign population in Germany, is stagnating, the number of the population with Moroccan origin continues to grow, not only in Germany but in the whole of Europe (cf. de Haas, 2009b, p. 4).

¹⁵ For instance the research on the Nuer by Sharon Hutchinson, building on Edward Evans-Pritchard’s work (cf. Hutchinson, 1996).

¹⁶ For instance the controversial work of Oscar Lewis (1961), the more psychoanalytical research of Vincent Crapanzano (1980) or the recent work of João Biehl (2005).

¹⁷ At this point the question of parallels with colonial times returns. Counter-arguments for this linkage of contemporary policy based on the migration-development nexus and the colonial situation include the fact that Morocco is no former colony of Germany, that migrants are not selected in Morocco and brought to Germany in order to receive specific training as it used to be the case in colonialism (cf. Comaroff, 1997; Moore, 1992), and that contemporary returnees are generally free to think, act and speak without being subordinated to an external government’s authority. However, one could take the practice of German development cooperation as being a more indirect way of a colonial-style exertion of influence. The funding of returnees who German authorities consider to be the most

beneficial to Morocco's development, is probably based on the expectation that this investment will provide Germany with an even larger return on investment. For instance, the financial support of returnees who are trained as business specialists and who work as managers in Moroccan enterprises might be motivated by the expectation that German economy will profit from a stronger Moroccan economy in the long run.

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