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**Acquiring a 'voice' through 'exit'**  
**How Moroccan emigrants became a driving force of political and socio-economic change**

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**Introduction**

This paper argues that Moroccan communities abroad underwent an empowerment process through emigration. Predominantly unskilled, coming from rural areas and belonging to indigenous minorities, many of those who emigrated in the 1960s and 1970s had little agency to shape the socio-economic conditions of their existence. Over decades and through their active involvement in diaspora NGOs, emigrants' collective agency brought about social and economic change to historic regions of emigration.

The increasing demand for labour in Europe triggered a postcolonial migration of mostly young men into expanding fordist industries in the context of sustained economic growth. Large numbers of Moroccan men emigrated to France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany in the framework of bilateral agreements. This emigration and the permanence of these departures changed for good the idea of the Moroccan nation. The lowest estimation of the number of Moroccans living abroad is somewhere between 3,5 and 4 million individuals, based on the number of persons registered in Moroccan consulates; this represents around 10% of the Moroccan population. The real figure is probably higher if one were to include individuals who never registered, undocumented migrants and children under 16 (who will only be counted after the full introduction of the biometric passport). Moroccan emigrants are present in over a hundred countries, with the most numerous community settled in France (1 146 652), followed by Spain (671 669), Italy (486 558), Belgium (297 919) and the Netherlands (264 909), according to 2012 figures of the 'Ministry in Charge of Moroccans Living Abroad and Migration Affairs'<sup>1</sup>. Even if the size of Moroccan communities in Southern Europe is nowadays

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<sup>1</sup> Figures quoted by Alaoui (2013)

very significant, this emigration started later, in the mid-1980s. It was stimulated by labour demands in specific sectors such as agriculture and construction. Migration to the Gulf countries is also a growing phenomenon and represents 6% of Moroccans living abroad (Directorate of Consular and Social Services, 2012). The destination countries of Moroccan emigration went indeed through great diversification, and today significant Moroccan communities reside not only in Europe, but also in Canada, especially in Quebec, in the United States, as well as in the Gulf countries. This paper will focus on Moroccan emigration to France, where the largest share of Moroccans abroad reside, and on civil society organisations created by Moroccans living in France. It is worth mentioning that this dispersion led some authors to describe these communities, including first generation migrants and their descendants, as constitutive of a diaspora. The use of this term is arguable; this paper however relies on this concept as theorized by latest developments in the field of diaspora studies. In their diaspora typology Gabriel Sheffer and Moshe Ma'oz (2002) distinguish for instance between 'historical', 'newer' and 'incipient' diasporas. Under the category of incipient diasporas they include the Turkish and Filipino diasporas that stem from labour migration. It seems therefore appropriate to classify Moroccan communities abroad as an incipient diaspora under this typology. The weakness of bounds between the different communities in various countries and on different continents led Rachid Alaoui (2013) to favour the concept of 'transnational communities' over the concept of diaspora. While acknowledging this point, this paper refers to 'diaspora policies' in order to characterize a particular field of state policies, that reach out to expatriates, and which bear its specificities and need therefore to be named.

Since the 1960s, the Moroccan state has been actively engaging with its expatriates, with tremendous efforts regarding methods and means implemented in order to preserve diaspora links. The Moroccan state has been particularly active in engaging with its expatriates, from channelling departures from specific regions to current policies designed to facilitate participation or return migration of particular categories of emigrants, including French born youth of Moroccan descent with skills that match Moroccan employers' demands. In parallel, civil society organisations were created abroad taking various forms and endorsing different discourses. The progressive political liberalization of the Moroccan regime has created opportunities for synergies between the official and the non-governmental sectors that were not foreseeable in the past. The particular history of Moroccan emigration gave rise to an interesting re-definition of power relationships between the state and indigenous ethnic minorities. The question of how emigration empowered indigenous Moroccan minorities from the South (Souss-Massa-Drâa) and the Northeast (Oriental) and for what impacts needs therefore to be addressed in the context of changing forms of belongings to the nation. Equally, it is here

argued that diaspora activism needs to be taken into account in the analysis of democratisation processes in Morocco.

This relatively long history of diaspora policies raises several questions as to the transformations that affected the state's understanding of who belongs to the nation and under which conditions. This paper attempts to answer two of these questions: How are forms of belonging to the Moroccan nation re-invented and redefined through diaspora links? How does the involvement of diasporic organisations in Morocco impact in turn the state? This paper is divided into three sections. The first section attempts to assess how emigration assigned new meanings to the concept of 'nation' and 'citizenship' at discursive levels; in a second section it is argued that the Moroccan diaspora constitute a soft power which explicate the state's interest in courting it; and a third section addresses the issue of multi-level empowerments that took place as a result of emigration and the emergence of a diasporic civil society.

Data collection and analysis for the purpose of this paper followed a qualitative methodology. Fifteen semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted between September 2012 and January 2013; including six community leaders engaged in transnational activities in France and six officials in Morocco (List of interviews, Annex 1). Participant observation served as a complementary method. The observation took place in seminars held by transnational NGOs (internal seminar of a French-Moroccan NGO, public seminar of a French NGO created by Moroccan emigrants), as well as in seminars organized by the Council of the Moroccan Community Abroad (three seminars) and the Ministry in Charge of the Moroccan Community Abroad (one conference and networking event that launched a new network of highly skilled professionals).

### **Emigration re-invents the nation and citizenship rights**

#### ***From labour migration and the status of 'royal subject' to a diaspora consisting of citizens***

The Moroccan state perceived very early the interest it had in engaging with its expatriates. 'Diaspora policies' is used here to characterize public policies addressed at Moroccan expatriates and their descendants. The engagement of the Moroccan state in diaspora policies started already with the channelling of emigration in the 1960s and 1970s. Regions inhabited by indigenous minorities, Amazigh, in the North (Rif) and in the South of the country (Souss-Massa-Drâa), were made into essential sources of emigration (Lacroix, 2005) as these regions were particularly suspected of political unrest. A certain pattern in the migration flows can be distinguished between emigrants from the Souss-Massa-Drâa region who migrated mostly to France and Belgium on the one hand, and emigrants from

the North-East of the country and the Rif mountains who migrated to the Netherlands and Germany on the other hand (Alaoui, 2013). Large-scale emigration offered a safety valve as men emigrated in significant numbers and started to send remittances back home. Mostly unskilled, men emigrated alone and their families started to migrate only years later, when the closure of the gates of labour migration in 1973 contributed to transform this migration into permanent settlement through the consequent need for family reunification. Communities were deeply changed by the arrival of women and children and births that from then on took place on French territory.

Moroccan state policies towards its expatriates went through several major reorientations since the 1960s until today. In the 1960s, the state sought above all to gain control over Moroccans living abroad through the work of associations named "Amicales des Marocains" created in France, Belgium and the Netherlands. It has been exposed that some of the leaders of these associations worked at that time for Moroccan intelligence services by providing names of activists who were detained upon their arrival in Morocco when they were coming back to visit their families (Driss El Yazami, interview by author, January 2013). The participation in industrial strikes was perceived as a form of treason and the repression could take different forms, from redundancies by French employers to seizure of passports upon return to Morocco (Iskander, 2010). The persecution of trade union activists and leaders took place in the context of strong internal repression after two attempted coup d'Etat against the monarchy in the early 1970s and a series of social unrests, a decade subsequently known as 'les années de plomb', the years of lead.

It is thus not only the receiving countries that were mistaken in assuming that these migration waves were to be only temporary. The Moroccan monarchy made similar assumptions. Hassan II considered Moroccan emigrants as his subjects, addressed them as such in his speeches, including on French television, and denied any form of belonging to the country of residency. A striking example of 1993 illustrates that this approach lasted relatively long. In an interview on French television Hassan II answered the journalists' question on integration as follows: "They will never be integrated. (...). I discourage you, in relation to my people, the Moroccans, to try an embezzlement of their nationality because they will never be a 100% French."<sup>2</sup> Hassan II refused to have his subjects 'integrated' into French society, as it would diminish their "marocanité".

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<sup>2</sup> Interview on French television, mai 1993, "Ils ne seront jamais intégrés. (...) Je vous décourage en ce qui concerne les miens, les Marocains, d'essayer un détournement de nationalité, car ils ne seront jamais 100% français". (Translation, Author)

The emergence in the public sphere of the claims of French citizens of North African descent in the 1980s showed however that ethnic minority youth's priorities were related to the country of residence. In a context of recurrent racist assassinations and police blunders that were not fairly considered by the judiciary system, the 1983 peaceful march from Marseille to Paris, the so-called 'Marche des Beurs', is considered by some as the historic starting point of these new generation's visibility in the French public realm. The *de facto* loosened relations with the homeland of their parents required a change in Moroccan diaspora policies. In this context, and for a whole set of socio-economic and political reasons, the permanence of departures started to be progressively recognised by both the country of origin and the country of destination.

These evolutions are illustrated by the terminology used to characterize Moroccans living abroad: they were first referred to as 'Moroccan Workers Abroad' (Travailleurs Marocains de l'Etranger), then from the 1980s as 'Moroccan Nationals Abroad' (Ressortissants Marocains à l'Etranger) and 'Moroccan Residents Abroad' (Marocains Résidents à l'étranger), (Nuno and Souiah, 2013). Lately, the term 'citizens' started to be increasingly mentioned. As if to stress the transnational belongings of Moroccans abroad, 'Moroccans of the World' also became a phrase widely used, as in the web address of the Ministry "marocainsdumonde.gov.ma".

If signs of this discursive turn were already visible in the 1990s, this re-orientation was fully achieved at the level of political discourse in the 2000s. Stepping-stones in this evolution are royal speeches of November 6<sup>th</sup> 2005 and 2007, the commemorative date of the 1975 'Green March' on which the King delivers a speech each year. The 2005 royal speech pointed out to the central role played by Moroccans abroad in the development of the country, especially at the regional and local levels. In this speech, the King also announced the creation of an institution dedicated to Moroccan expatriates and in 2007 he outlined its composition and main responsibilities. It is interesting to note that the vocabulary of citizenry has entered the highest level of official discourse, in royal speeches:

"The democratic, development-oriented process I am spearheading requires the participation of all Moroccans, wherever they may be, in a spirit of strong commitment to our national identity and to responsible citizenship. My regular field visits and my tireless efforts to make sure my citizens at home enjoy a dignified life are equalled only by the special importance I attach to the conditions of our beloved fellow citizens who live abroad."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> King's speech on Green March Day, November 6th 2007

Source :

[http://www.ccme.org.ma/images/stories/LTD/FES/LE\\_CONSEIL/discours\\_royal\\_2007\\_anglais.pdf](http://www.ccme.org.ma/images/stories/LTD/FES/LE_CONSEIL/discours_royal_2007_anglais.pdf)

The acknowledgment of the fact that Moroccans started to put down roots in their countries of residence challenged the traditional concept of the Nation and required an appreciation of this dual belonging. Acquisition of citizenship of the country of residence for primo-migrants and the emergence of 'second' and 'third generations' of Moroccan descent transformed the sociological composition of communities. The reform of the Family Code, the Moudawana, in 2004, gave Moroccan mothers the right to pass on the Moroccan nationality. In the context of the presence of large communities abroad, this right bears important implications for the maintenance of diaspora links. The 2011 Constitution furthermore acknowledges the fact that many Moroccans living abroad have dual citizenship. Article 16 of the Constitution states:

"It [Kingdom of Morocco] sees to the reinforcement of their contribution to the development of their homeland [*patrie*], Morocco, and to strengthening [*resesserrement*] of ties of amity and of cooperation between the governments and the societies of the countries *where they reside and of which they are citizens.*"<sup>4</sup> (Cursive, Author)

Moreover, the 2011 Constitution assigns to public authorities the duty to "assure a participation as extensive as possible to Moroccan residents abroad, in the consultative institutions and [institutions] of good governance created by the Constitution or by the law"<sup>5</sup> (Article 18). The participation of Moroccans abroad is desired, but at the same time presented as a duty, as part of their role as citizens.

It is difficult to distinguish to what degree transnational activities impacted on these re-orientations. The debate around political rights of Moroccan emigrants illustrates however further how the concepts of 'citizenship' and 'nation' are being re-defined and how militant activities contributed to shape this debate.

***At the heart of the definition of who belongs to the Nation: the old debate of voting rights for expatriates and why it remains open***

The debate around the political rights of Moroccans abroad has been vivid since decades and it is central to the reflection about who belongs to the Nation and why. The right to vote for Moroccans residing abroad is enshrined in the Constitution adopted in 2011 (article 17), as it already was in the previous Constitution. The key discussion revolves around the modalities of this participation, which need to be

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<sup>4</sup> Jefri J. Ruchti, trans., Draft text of the Constitution adopted at the Referendum of 1 July 2011, HeinOnline World Constitutions Illustrated library 2011

The part in cursive could have arguably been translated in a slightly different way by adding "and/or of which". The French version stipulates: "les sociétés des pays où ils résident ou dont ils sont aussi citoyens".

<sup>5</sup> Jefri J. Ruchti, trans., Draft text of the Constitution adopted at the Referendum of 1 July 2011, HeinOnline World Constitutions Illustrated library 2011

defined by law. A distinction must be drawn between the possibility to cast a vote from abroad and direct political representation in national legislatures, what Collyer analyses in a recent article on 'special representation' of emigrants (Collyer, 2014). According to a 2007 study conducted by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 115 states and territories out of 210 have legal provisions that allow their electors to cast a vote from abroad but only 13 countries adopted measures to enable political representation in national legislatures for external voters, for instance Algeria, Portugal and Italy (IDEA, 2007; Collyer, 2014).

Direct representation through the election of deputies representing Moroccans abroad in the Parliament constitutes thus a possibility but is not imposed by the current Constitution. Such a reform was already introduced in 1984 but lasted only until 1992. Five deputies were elected through circumscriptions abroad, and this represented a relatively pioneering initiative among sending countries. The former Prime Minister A. Youssoufi characterized the Moroccan experiment as a failure (Belguendouz, 1999), mainly due to the difficulties of designing relevant circumscriptions, a lack of involvement of deputies with their constituencies, electoral frauds, and the political opportunism of deputies elected who migrated from one political party to another (Belguendouz, 2003). The current President of the Council of the Moroccan Community Abroad, M. Driss El Yazami, considers that no serious assessment of this initiative has been conducted to date (El Yazami, January 2013, Interview by author). In the absence of circumscriptions abroad in the last legislative elections, there was no other option than voting by procurement for Moroccans who were not in Morocco on the day of elections. The Association for the Observation of Elections has therefore denounced the absence of a possibility of voting abroad ("Collectif Associatif pour l'Observation des Elections") in 2002 (Belguendouz, 2003). A group of migrant associations went to court in Morocco in 2003 but the Supreme Court deemed their claim inadmissible. In 2011, a demonstration was organised on November 13<sup>th</sup> to protest against the exclusion of this part of the electorate in the legislative elections of November 25<sup>th</sup>. These critics were widely covered by the press<sup>6</sup>. The institutional opposition to the renewal of the experience of 1984-92 is still strong but some politicians, and in particular the Justice and Development Party, tend to appeal to voters abroad by promising their inclusion in the next legislative elections, as announced by Abdelilah Benkirane, the current Prime Minister, in August 2012. In the context of the upcoming 2016 legislative elections, political campaigning abroad has indeed already started and officials from several political parties organise meetings in the main cities where Moroccans abroad reside. The laws drafted by two parties, the UFSP and Istiqlal, illustrate this competition. The former suggested in February 2014 in its proposal 30 additional seats for deputies representing Moroccans living abroad while the latter

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<sup>6</sup> Entre autres : L'Observateur du 30 septembre au 6 octobre, L'Economiste du 25 octobre 2011, Aujourd'hui le Maroc du 18 novembre 2011, L'Opinion du 12 décembre 2011.

mentioned 60 additional seats in March 2014, which would represent 13% of the total number of seats. A proportional representation runs the risk of strongly overweighting the votes of Moroccans residing abroad. Other studies have indeed shown that in spite of the fact that in existing systems deputies elected in external circumscriptions tend to represent more voters than deputies elected internally, in terms of registered voters, external voters tend to have more weight because of the important discrepancies between population and registered voters (Collyer, 2014).

Part of this debate concerns the question of the social base of this demand and the representativeness of social actors who endorse this claim. This issue needs to be raised because the experience of certain countries of emigration that implemented the right to external voting has been to observe low turnouts. For example in the 2002 Portuguese legislative elections, the rate of abstention was as high as 75% (Dumont, 2013). Fieldwork with some of the main civil society organisations engaged in transnational activities between France and Morocco has shown that even though various opinions were expressed, this demand seemed to constitute a marginal concern. A historically significant NGO, the Association of North African Workers (Association des Travailleurs Maghrébins de France, ATMF) that started out as a gathering of Moroccan workers, does not campaign actively on this issue. A member of the national board nevertheless considered that this right should be implemented because a major share of the Moroccan population is now unfairly excluded from elections:

“It is said that only activists claim (that right) or those who have something else in mind. But citizens cannot take part in this debate, they are excluded from the debate (...) except people who are active either in political parties, or in trade unions or in NGOs. (...) Until this right is not granted, a share, and a big share after all, it represents in terms of percentages 10 to 12% of the population that is excluded. It is not insignificant 12% of the population that has no representation.” (National board member, Interview by author, November 2012, author’s translation)

For the leader of another well-established NGO, Immigration Développement Démocratie (IDD), the issue of voting rights needed to be addressed in the broader framework of political rights. Abdallah Zniber pointed out to the need for a democratic tradition of civic rights for the act of voting to be meaningful (Abdallah Zniber, interview by author, December 2012). The President of the transnational NGO “Migration et Développement” expressed a different opinion and considered that it served better the interests of Morocco to have youth from Moroccan descent elected in France than the other way round. He also saw the risk of unnecessarily dividing the community if electoral campaigns were conducted on French territory. Fearing as well the importation of bad electoral practices, he did not consider the right to vote from abroad in Moroccan elections as constituting the most urgent



question to be solved. The founder of the same NGO, himself a migrant of Moroccan origin who came to work in the French car industry in the early 1970s and who became a trade union leader, considered that the most important struggle was to obtain voting rights in the country of residency and not in the homeland. He believed the implementation of this right would not bring about any positive outcomes for Moroccan communities in France:

"I ask the question to everybody: what will this bring us to be in the Parliament? Immigrants will fight each other, one will belong to the UFSP, one to Istiqlal, one to PAM<sup>7</sup> etc...and in the middle of Paris we will argue and make a spectacle of ourselves which is not worth it; at the same time we give arguments to the extremists, 'you see they vote already there and you want to give them the right to vote here...For them to vote for elected representatives in France?' One should not be citizen twice." (Jamal Lahoussain, Interview by author, December 2012, author's translation)

If the right to take part in elections and the implementation of direct representation is among the demands of certain civil society organisations (Belguendouz, 2003), it is far from creating consensus. Actors engaged in development activities in Morocco have placed their priorities elsewhere, either because of political disillusion or on the grounds of the belief that one should fight for citizenship rights in the country of residency and engage differently with the country of origin. The debate around voting rights and its modalities is at the interesting intersection of state sovereignties and transnational activism. It also highlights how nationality and citizenship are inherently linked in nation-states and how international migration might introduce tensions in this equation. Catherine Wihtol de Wenden uses the term 'revisited citizenship' ("citoyenneté revisitée", Wihtol de Wenden, 2010) to characterize the conceptual and empirical changes triggered by international migration. Because the diaspora represents for the sending country a resource that is economic, diplomatic, cultural, political and demographic at the same time (Wihtol de Wenden, 2010), diaspora policies are arguably the symptom of a will to actively "re-territorialize" – as conceptualized by Louie (2000) in relation to Chinese transnational communities – what has been de-territorialized by international migrations. Beyond the territorial framework of analysis, it appears to be more fruitful to perceive in these policies a profound transformation of the nation-state's sources of legitimacy. Collyer, building upon Brand's analysis (Brand, 2006), makes a valuable contribution to this debate by observing and analysing the process through which 'special representation' for emigrants is the symptom of a partial displacement from territorial control to legitimacy stemming from the representation of the nation (Collyer, 2014, p.8). Central to the political analysis, voting rights are nevertheless not the only way the

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<sup>7</sup> UFSP : Socialist Union of Popular Forces, Istiqlal : Independance Party, PAM : Authenticity and Modernity Party.

state reaches out to citizens abroad. The following section looks into more details into the evolution of Moroccan diaspora policies and the meanings that could be assigned to these changes.

### **The diaspora, a soft power for the sending country?**

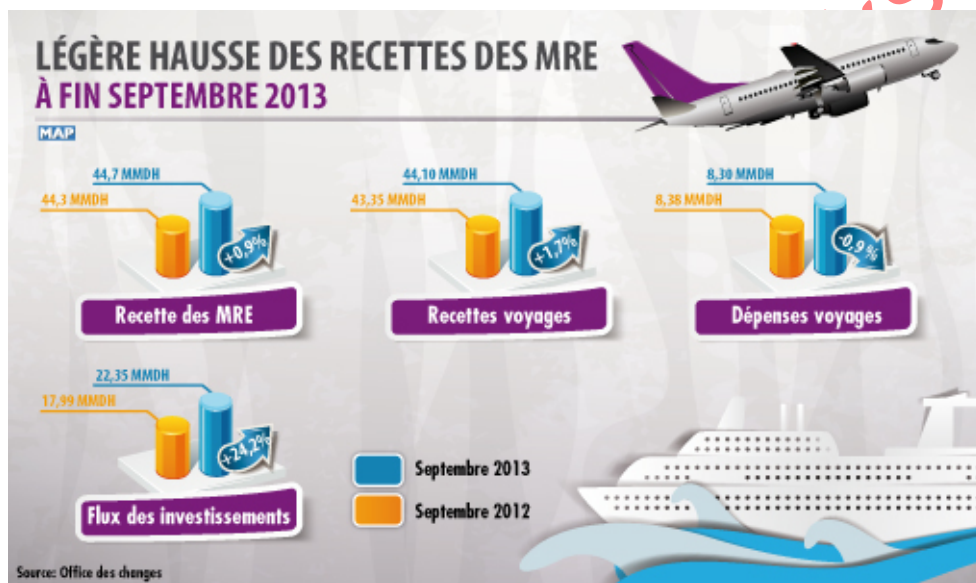
#### ***Pro-active policies of the state, from control and containment to incentives for engagement and participation***

Expectations regarding the benefits of emigration were formulated from the early days, as the potential financial and technical benefits were included in governmental plans already in the 1960s (De Haas, 2003; Belguendouz, 2006). Morocco identified indeed remittances as a strategic source of foreign currency. In this context, the state reached out to its emigrants and engaged in a 'conversation' with them (Iskander 2010) in order to attract financial transfers by bringing the national bank, Banque Centrale Populaire, to Moroccan workers, who previously relied on informal means to transfer remittances back home. Iskander (2010) showed how the state has proven to be innovative and thus very efficient in channelling from early on these remittances. The expected short and medium term benefits in terms of skills and know-how were however not fulfilled along the lines of the governmental plans. Emigration became permanent and returns before retirement were rather rare, thus the expected transfers of knowledge could not happen, and for those who returned, the structures of the Moroccan economy did not offer the opportunity to make use of the skills acquired.

The Moroccan monarchy changed its approach significantly in the 1980s as it sought political normalization and favoured co-optation strategies rather than control and repression. This significant turn took place when remittances started to decrease, for instance a 20% decrease in remittances was observed in 1988 (Aboussi, 2013). In parallel, more and more Moroccans were acquiring the citizenship of the country of residency (Chattou and Belbah, 2002). The following decade witnessed therefore necessary reforms of state policies in engaging the diaspora, in order to maintain strong links with Moroccan communities abroad. If this shift, from 'controlling' to 'courting' (De Haas, 2007a), has been to some extent successful, it is because it took place in the context of "general processes of political and economic change", without which the courting efforts would most probably have had no impact (De Haas, 2007a, p.47).

Moroccans living abroad represent today around 10% of the population and their remittances amounted to 9% of the GDP in 2007, i.e. 7 times the Official Development Assistance, according to data provided by the Moroccan Ministry in charge of Moroccans abroad. These transfers represent for Morocco the second

source of foreign currency, a key asset in maintaining the external trade balance. The need to ensure the continuity of these financial flows in the context of a threat of loosened linkages encouraged the state to develop new institutions. Caring for Moroccans abroad became thus the second national priority after the defence of territorial integrity (Consular Services, Department of Protection and Assistance, Interview by author, January 2013). Figures related to the level of remittances are for instance regularly published and widely covered by the media, as illustrated by the graph below entitled “Slight increase in revenues of Moroccan Residents Abroad (MRE) by the end of September 2013”.



Source: Published by the Moroccan Press Agency

URL: <http://www.mapexpress.ma/actualite/legere-hausse-des-recettes-des-mre-a-fin-septembre-2013-office-des-changes/>

To take up these challenges, new institutions were created in the beginning of the 1990s, as mentioned above, to gather knowledge around the changes that affected Moroccan communities abroad (Belguendouz, 1999) in order to implement policies directed at attracting the financial wealth of emigrants and at maintaining cultural and religious linkages. In this context, Bank Al Amal was created in 1989, in order to attract investments by Moroccans living abroad, along with a dedicated Ministry department. Additionally, the Foundation Hassan II created in 1990, was in charge of cultural and religious affairs and it is until today responsible for sending teachers of Arabic language in the framework of a bilateral agreement with France. A major operation was also launched in 1991, the ‘Opération Transit’, in order to smooth the journey of Moroccans coming back for holidays by welcoming them already in Spanish harbours. In the same period, Morocco took part in the UNPD sponsored programme TOKTEN aiming at mobilizing highly skilled emigrants and organised in this framework the first conference on the participation of Moroccan scholars from abroad in the development of the country.

The coronation of Mohammed VI in 1999 represents another step in the design and implementation of diaspora policies, in correlation with the changes at the discourse level described in the previous section. The mobilisation of expertise and skills became a key aspect of policies along with the attraction of financial remittances and the promotion of investments. In order to illustrate his commitment the King Mohammed VI initiated and supported institutional changes. The Ministry in charge of Moroccan communities living abroad was re-created in 2002 after having been downgraded to a Ministry department in 1997. For a few years the Ministry lacked however autonomy and funds as it was attached to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In 2007, the transversal nature of issues affecting Moroccans abroad seems to have been acknowledged and ushered in the transfer of the Ministry under the umbrella of the Prime Minister as well as in the increase of its budget (Belguendouz, 2009).

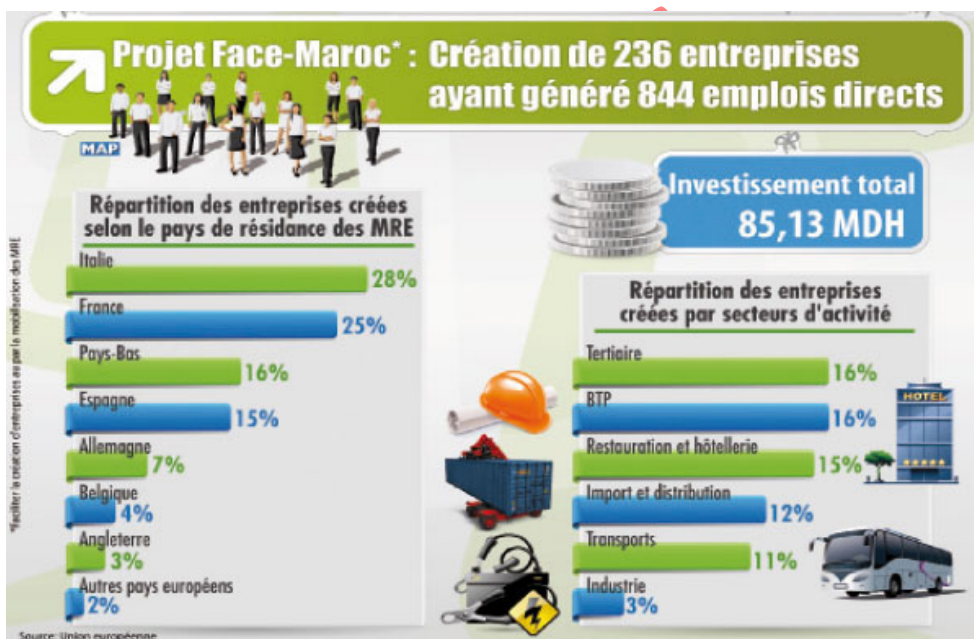
As mentioned in the previous section, a specific council was created in 2007 to reflect upon Morocco's strategy, the Council of the Moroccan Community abroad. This council created with the King's support and based upon a recommendation of the Equity and Reconciliation Commission was made into a constitutional body in the 2011 Constitution (article 163). Its relatively high budget of 49 millions dirhams (Driss El Yazami, interview by author, January 2013) seemed to reflect a certain commitment of public authorities for a better assessment of its policies towards the diaspora. Its mission is indeed to "ensure the follow-up and assessment of public policies of the Kingdom towards its emigrants and its improvement in order to ensure the defence of their rights and increase their contribution in political, economic, cultural and social development of the country".<sup>8</sup> The President of the Council has been nominated by the King; in spite of the fact that Driss El Yazami has not been elected, the profile of the chosen President illustrates the will to open the Council to civil society organizations, including former opponents of the regime. Driss El Yazami was indeed himself an activist in leftist organizations and former Vice-President of the French League of Human Rights. In exile for many years, he only returned to Morocco after the amnesty granted by Hassan II in 1994 to former political opponents. He defined the Council of the Moroccan community abroad as a network of networks. Under his leadership the work of the Council focused extensively on culture and literature, which he justified by the fact that he saw the development of cultural activities as absolutely key in offering Moroccans abroad possibilities in constructing their own identities (Driss El Yazami, Interview by author, January 2013). The work of the Council has however been criticised both internally and externally by certain Moroccan association abroad. The main critics addressed to this institution concern its lack of democratic representation of Moroccan communities abroad, whose implementation could however pose

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<sup>8</sup> Website of the CCME. URL : <http://www.ccme.org.ma/fr/ccme/30313>

significant challenges, and its limited efficiency in terms of legislative and strategic influence.

If the Council focuses on cultural aspects, promotion of investments and mobilisation of skills are the other main axes of Moroccan diaspora policies. Potential investors seem indeed to be the ones who receive greatest attention, and in this perspective several reforms aimed at smoothing the process of investment and lightening the burden of administrative procedures. For instance the programme FACE, launched with the financial support of the European Union and several European development agencies, brought together official institutions, in Morocco and in countries of residency, as well as a network of civil society organizations commissioned to help identifying project holders. The graph below summarizes the main outcomes of the project. The amount invested represents around 7,5 million euros and served to launch 236 enterprises that created 844 jobs according to the Moroccan Press Agency.



Source: [http://www.lematin.ma/journal/Entrepreneuriat\\_Les-MRE-ont-cree-236-entreprises-dans-le-Royaume-grace-au-projet-Face-Maroc/176709.html](http://www.lematin.ma/journal/Entrepreneuriat_Les-MRE-ont-cree-236-entreprises-dans-le-Royaume-grace-au-projet-Face-Maroc/176709.html)

The second central aspect of Moroccan diaspora policies concerns the mobilization of the 'highly skilled'. In this perspective the platform FINCOME (Forum International des Compétences Marocaines à l'Etranger, International Forum of Moroccan Competencies Abroad) was launched in 2004 and was managed by the Ministry in charge of the Moroccan Community Residing Abroad (Belguendouz, 2010). The results of this initiative were however limited with less than a hundred experts benefiting from the scheme each year until 2012 (Interview at the FINCOME department of the CNRST, National Centre for Technical and Scientific Research, January 2013). The scheme was redesigned in 2012 and launched in 2013 with

more ambitious objectives. This type of mobilisation does not necessarily rely on a physical return, or at least not permanent return, but can take the form of networks and online collaborations.

After having tried to reach out to 'Moroccan skills' abroad, sometimes without a well-defined action plan, institutions attempted a more targeted approach to ensure concrete results. For instance, in a report published in 2009 by the IOM and commissioned by the Ministry, the potential contributions that Moroccan emigrants could bring are identified on the basis of the human resources needs observed in relation to the implementation of national development plans such as 'Plan Azur' in the sector of tourism, 'Plan Vert' in the agricultural sector or 'Plan Envol' for the industrial sector.

On the whole, Moroccan engagement policies towards its expatriates are well developed and Morocco became a key actor on these issues in international fora. The celebration of diverse forms of "marocanité" seems to be structured around the figures of the 'Moroccan- investor', the 'Moroccan- agent of development' and the 'Moroccan-Cultural Ambassador'. These very sophisticated and targeted policies may however run the risk of not being inclusive enough to sustain the country's attractiveness and political clout over different generations.

#### ***Maintaining sustainable diaspora links and political clout: remaining challenges***

The multiplication of governmental and paragonmental bodies and agencies created some confusion, as older institutions were not reformed or adapted whilst new institutions were simply added to the existing institutional set up. This created inefficiencies and a need for rationalization seems to have emerged. The board of the Foundation Hassan II for instance do not convene meetings anymore because the composition of the board needs to be reviewed as representatives of the strongly criticized "Amicales" are still officially members of this board (Driss El Yazami, interview by author, January 2013). A strive for coherence exists, and the creation of the Council in 2007 was already meant to strengthen the coordination of different initiatives as indicated by the King Mohammed VI:

« The creation of this institution, which I intend to inaugurate before the end of the year, should be viewed as an integral part of a thorough, rational review of our immigration policy. The aim is to develop a global, harmonious immigration policy which puts an end to overlapping and to the multiplicity of institutions. Each government agency or institution should fulfil its mission and complement the work of the other bodies concerned, regarding the proper management of immigration

issues and, more broadly, the promising, democratic process I am resolutely spearheading. »<sup>9</sup>

The ministry took note of this royal announcement and stressed in its strategy 2008-2012 the need to put an end to the overlapping roles and the multiplicity of actors<sup>10</sup>. In a paper on sending countries' diaspora policies, Gamlen (2008: 12-13) notes that it is a common trait of these policies to be characterized by inefficiencies and he argues that improving diaspora policies might suppose the development of the infrastructures needed to ease transnational flows without focusing *stricto sensu* on diaspora policies. Beyond issues related to institutional structures and the distribution of prerogatives, a key challenge lies indeed in the immaterial nature of the need to promote attachment and human ties. An indicator of these ties could be for instance the number of Moroccans living abroad and coming back for the summer. To this regard, in summer 2013 between June 5<sup>th</sup> and August 15<sup>th</sup>, 55% of Moroccans registered in consulates visited Morocco.

The 2011 Constitution touches upon this issue rhetorically in article 16:

"The Kingdom of Morocco works for the protection of the rights and legitimate interests of the Moroccan citizens [feminine] and citizens [masculine] resident abroad, within respect for international law and for the laws in force in the host countries. It is committed to the maintenance and to the development of their human link, notably cultural, with the Kingdom and the preservation of their national identity."<sup>11</sup>

The implementation of this vast task can be highly problematic. The Council of the Moroccan Community Abroad, which is in charge of working in this direction, reflects upon the content to be given to policies of this nature. Its President, Driss El Yazami, posed the question: "can we elaborate from afar a policy to manage a population?" (Driss El Yazami, interview by author, January 2013). He believed that if the Council would have been created in a European capital, for instance in Brussels, the content of the work of the council would have been much different, while still pursuing similar objectives.

The state seems here to face barriers to its involvement as far as any bottom-up approach, i.e. the transnational rather than the international, suits all social actors

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<sup>9</sup> King's speech on Green March Day, November 6th 2007

Source :

[http://www.ccome.org.ma/images/stories/LTD/FES/LE\\_CONSEIL/discours\\_royal\\_2007\\_anglais.pdf](http://www.ccome.org.ma/images/stories/LTD/FES/LE_CONSEIL/discours_royal_2007_anglais.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Site du Ministère chargé de la Communauté Marocaine Résidant à l'Étranger, consulted on 30/10/2011.

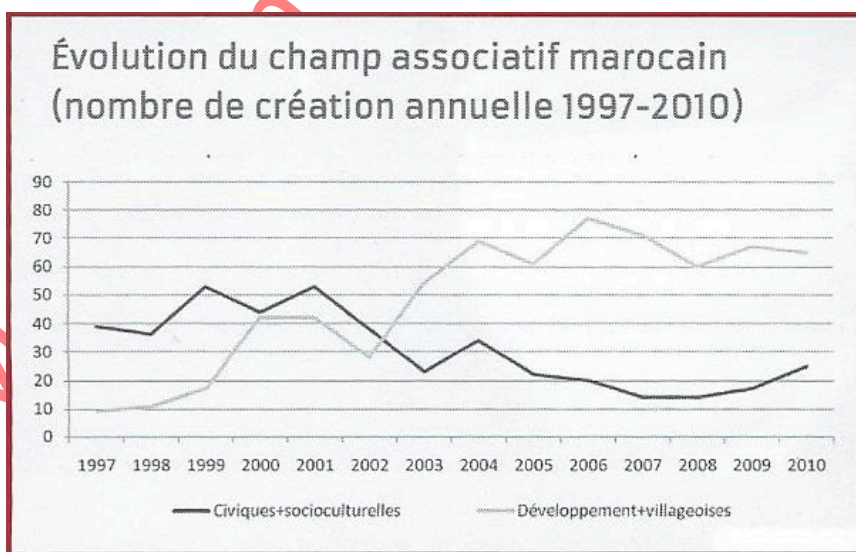
<sup>11</sup> Jefri J. Ruchti, trans., Draft text of the Constitution adopted at the Referendum of 1 July 2011, HeinOnline World Constitutions Illustrated library 2011

but the state that needs to engage at the intergovernmental level if it wants to be active beyond its territory. Enhancing transnational ties created in the first place at an infra level constitute thus inevitably a challenge. The following section looks into how transnational NGOs emerged at this level and what some of their impacts are.

### Empowerment and changing power relationships at multiple levels

#### *A transnational civil society?*

The history of civil society organisations created in France by Moroccan emigrants needs to be analysed in relation to the particular history of Moroccan migration, the general evolution of the political regime of the country of origin and the specific socio-economic regional realities. Further to his thesis on Moroccan development networks, Thomas Lacroix (2013) established a typology of NGOs founded in France by Moroccan migrants. He distinguished between organisations created by former political refugees and trade union activists, organisations sponsored by the Moroccan state, and a vast field of organisations involved in civic, social and development activities that are politically neutral and which have grown strongly since the 1990s. Lacroix created the largest database of Moroccan migrant led civil society NGOs in France including 1599 organisations, mainly based on French official sources, which has enabled him to conduct an interesting quantitative analysis. Lacroix (2013) shows indeed the changing nature of Moroccans NGOs in France: in 2002-2003 the number of NGOs created per year and whose main activities concerned development and hometown associations outnumbered NGOs focusing on civic and sociocultural rights in the country of residency. Moreover this trend became increasingly obvious throughout the decade, as illustrated on the graph below.



Source: Lacroix (2013)



The growing number of NGOs involved in development projects might be the symptom of several changes. The more welcoming approach of Moroccan authorities (Lacroix, 2013) might have triggered this type of engagement, but this needs to be correlated with the fact that a growing number of migrants of the first generation reached retirement age in the 1990s and 2000s. Through emigration, not only financial remittances were sent back but also social remittances. The emergence of an active field of transnational NGOs provided channels for these social remittances to have broader and more sustainable impacts. The work of these NGOs changed profoundly the socioeconomic realities of regions most affected by emigration and put into question the divide inherited from colonisation into 'useful' and 'useless' Morocco. By getting involved in projects that benefited their villages and regions of origin, emigrants implemented local-to-local development projects (Ostergaard-Nielsen, 2009) as illustrated on the map below « Municipalities with at least one association involved in rural development ».

figure 70 : **Communes comportant une association impliquée dans le domaine du développement rural**



Source: Map published by Lacroix in Jaffrelot and Lequesne (2009)

In his quantitative study Lacroix shows indeed that regions which benefit from NGO development projects are mainly regions of origin of migrants, for example from over 300 development NGOs in France for which it has been possible to trace their

region of activity, almost 30% focus their activities in the Souss-Massa-Draa region (Lacroix, 2013).

***The empowerment of marginalized communities through emigration: the example of 'Migration et Développement'***

The oldest NGO in this field is « Migration et Développement » created in 1986. Based in several cities in France and in Morocco, where it operates in the region of origin of some of the migrants involved in the NGO, Migration et Développement illustrates the potential of migrant led development. Starting in the 1980s by bringing electricity to villages, their activities entail today a broader range of projects, from water supply to youth camps, to support in the commercialisation of local products. The local rooting of the NGO's activities is absolutely essential and explains why projects were not extended on a national level in spite of regional successes. The activities of Migration et Développement, the largest organisation active in the region Souss-Massa-Drâa, is complemented by smaller and less professionalized NGOs that accomplish sometimes similar work. The result is that for instance in the region of Taroudant, where only 18% of families had access to electricity in 1996, the process of electrification is now almost fully completed (Lacroix, 2013).

The work accomplished by Migration et Développement goes however always far beyond the project itself. The methodology followed while implementing the installation of electricity, water, or the set up of cooperatives to support local products brings about sustainable change. Jamal Lahoussain, the founder of the NGO, explained:

“When we bring water, we need to make the population reflect upon water management, good management practices, no corruption, no misappropriation. Through the implementation of projects we teach something else to people, so after we should not be surprised that people take care of themselves, claim and have demands for us (...) we have cultivated protest, because with development, when someone evolves and open his/her eyes, stands up, this person will demand and claim. For me, the whole of development revolves around it.” (Jamal Lahoussain, interview by author, December 2012, author's translation).

Managing infrastructures and other projects gives people a voice because each project requires a local NGO to be the managing partner at the local level. In the villages, the traditional Jemâa formed by the eldest did not usually have a legal basis. It has therefore been necessary to create local associations, which sometimes simply provided a legal basis to the Jemâa, but sometimes also gave the opportunity to a broader audience to be involved in the management of the

project. A leader of the Moroccan branch of Migration et Développement, presented this process:

“The tool « association » is a small revolution at the village level because we destabilize, but in a positive manner, the established order where only the eldest and the village notables give orders. Because an association is democratic. It is true that village associations are diverse and do not resemble each other. Each association has its way of working, depending on the context, depending on the heritage, on the number of persons, the degree of openness etc. There are associations in which the Jemâa itself was formalised but the village notables still manage, but they accept the rules of the game; and there are associations where a symbiosis has been created with youth, because in the villages it is very hard to accept youth, for an old man who is 70, even if his son is 50, for him it is still his son, he cannot sit in the same meeting. Now, in the associations the sons can be there, even women take part. In the beginning it was impossible, in the 1980s. (...) The first reaction of local authorities was creating an association is against the Makhzen<sup>12</sup>, ‘why do you create an association? What do you want to do? Against whom are you organising?’ This was the reaction. Organising means against somebody. A lot of water has flowed under the bridge since then but at first it has been difficult.” (Leader of the Morocco branch, interview by author, December 2012, author’s translation).

This methodology makes social change sustainable, after the implementation of the project the NGO can leave it to local partners and institutions for future management. This is what happened for example in the early 2000s when the National Office for Electricity took over villages in which electricity has been first brought by Migration et Développement (Yves Bourron and Jacques Ould Aoudia, 2013). Autonomy needs indeed to be among the objectives of any project for it to be sustainable. Immigration, Développement, Démocratie, a network of NGOs created in 1999, adopted a similar approach in the sense that no NGO from the ‘global North’ can be member of the network on its own, partnerships with NGOs in the South constitute a *sine qua non* condition.

The intensive work for over 25 years of Migration et Développement in the Souss-Massa-Drâa region illustrates how migrants participated in changing the authorities’ perception of these territories. When the NGO started to implement infrastructure projects it worked pragmatically with those who were ready to get involved. The more they did, the more villages asked for similar infrastructures. The NGO on its own could not have covered thousands of villages but by getting the work done in hundreds of villages they implicitly called into question the role of

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<sup>12</sup> Ruling institutions related to the Monarchy and the establishment.

the state. An officer at the department of consular services of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, while displaying a certain level of general distrust in relation to the credibility and levels of representativeness of civil society organisations created in the diaspora, mentioned spontaneously the important role played by Migration et Développement (Consular Services, Department of Protection and Assistance, Interview by author, January 2013). This official recognition of the knowledge accumulated and of the influence of the NGO illustrates how transnational ties give formerly marginalized actors high levels of agency. As the current President of the NGO, Jacques Ould Aoudia explained: "Jamal [the founder of the NGO] is not someone from a well-known Moroccan family, he is someone from the village. He is not someone who has an inherited social capital, he has really created it by himself." (Interview by author, December 2012, author's translation). The transnational dimension played a key role in providing this agency to the actors involved. Here again, the point is illustrated by the interview with Jacques Ould Aoudia: « our supports in Rabat and abroad give us weight, people are suspicious of us, they know that if they mistreat us too much, we know some people...It is the transnational dimension that gives us tremendous weight." (Interview by author, December 2012, author's translation).

Through a pragmatic "local-to-local" approach small and bigger NGOs led by migrants contributed to deeply transforming the socio-economic realities of their regions of origin and to changing the authorities' approach to the development of these territories. This 'grass roots transnationalism' (Ostergaard-Nielsen, 2003) injected democratisation dynamics and promoted civic engagement through the urge to create local associations and the need to manage project autonomously at the local level. More often than not, populations concerned belong to Morocco's indigenous minorities. Yesterday's 'exit' reinforced the 'voice' of these marginalized communities who live in territories that are now opening up to use Hirschman's analytical categories.

## **Conclusion**

Over five decades Morocco showed a sustained interest in its expatriates. Discourses and perceptions have greatly changed, and from a will to control and contain, authorities evolved to a position that celebrates migrants' agency and aims at channelling this dynamism to make it work for the country's development. The engagement of diaspora-led NGOs plays a role in the reconfiguration of power relationships in the political and institutional realms. It matters indeed that among Moroccan emigrants many came from the most economically disadvantaged and politically marginalized regions in Morocco. Their engagement in development projects in Morocco through the progressive expansion of local projects and the continuous multiplication of initiatives called into question the role of the state. There seems to exist a dialectical relation between political internal liberalization

and the influence of a transnational political field embedded in diasporas. The more the internal political system and institutions work democratically, the greater the impacts of diaspora civil society and migrants' initiatives are on the country's development. Today, at the intersection of government initiatives and transnational grassroots movements, a space for exchange and dialogue seems to emerge. Further political reforms and socioeconomic development might encourage migrants' involvement and attract youth of Moroccan descent scattered in European countries in which many face labour markets opportunities that hardly meet their expectations.

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## Annexes

Annex 1: List of interviews

France		Morocco	
Organisation	Interviewee	Organisation	Interviewee
Association des Travailleurs Maghrébins de France (ATMF)	Member of the national board	Ministry in Charge of the Moroccan Community Abroad	Project officer
Migration et Développement (M/D)	President of the NGO Founder of the NGO Director of the Moroccan branch of the NGO	Department of Consular and Social Service, Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Two officers in the department of Protection and Assistance
Immigration, Développement Démocratie, (IDD)	President of the NGO	Council for the Moroccan Community Abroad	President of the Council
Association des Marocains en Grandes Ecoles (AMGE)	Active member of the NGO	National Center for Technical and Scientific Research (CNRST, Fincome)	Team in charge of the FINCOME project
Association des Etudiants Marocains de France (AEMF)	President of the NGO	Migration scholars in Morocco	Mehdi Lahlou, University Mohamed V Rabat
Maroc Entrepreneurs	Active member of the NGO		Mohamed Khachani University Mohamed V Rabat
			Abdelkrim Belguendouz, University Mohamed V Rabat
		International Organisation for Migration, IOM, Rabat	Programme Officer

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