

Rural Romanticism: The Aspirations and Experiences of the Migrants of young farm workers in Eastern Beni Amir

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Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to delve into questions about the migrant aspirations and experiences of young farm workers in the Eastern Beni Amir. Through a case study of the newly arriving migrants from Europe to the eastern Beni Amir, this paper seeks to emphasize more on how these young farm workers are related to the eastern Beni Amir and its farming culture. Additionally, we aim to show how these changes affect their choice to migrate to Europe and later return. The significance of this study lies in the way that research begins with open interviews between young farmhands and experienced migrants regarding the issue of migration. This will undoubtedly help to better understand a few individuals' intentions while reflecting on current economic conditions and farm policy in Morocco.

Introduction

The interest behind this issue is twofold: first, it is directly related to an area specialty. Second, the relationship between place (migration in Eastern Beni Amir) and space (farm workers) is a problem that I have been investigating since my early years of inquiries and PhD research. Since then, I have been very interested in the relationship among different structures leading to migration vis-à-vis the development of the place. This will lead us to think of other structures that drive immigration and emigration.

To fully understand the migration process in the Beni Amir region, one needs to know that Beni Amir, as a rural area, becomes what Mary Louse Pratt terms a "contact zone." Louse-Pratt uses the term "to refer to social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in the contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today [she also uses the term] to reconsider the models of community" .

Therefore, my paper is partially motivated by academic interests and personal endeavors related to my belonging to the region as the son of a farming family. My choice of this research topic is also motivated by my experiences as a researcher, a lecturer, and a professor at the university who takes every single opportunity to tackle this issue and discuss it with the public. My participation is yet another opportunity to, hopefully, contribute to knowledge.

I was born and bred in eastern Beni Amir. During my childhood, I used to see that most of the migrations that took place in the region were affected by the locals watching their relatives return from Europe or through conversations with people and families, especially on the weekly market day, which allowed me to learn about the secrets of international migration. Their knowledge about migration was orally experienced before it was brought into focus. For this reason, my data collection was based on my social experience, mainly relations with hometown dwellers in the Eastern Beni Amir, namely: my family, my relatives, and my old classmates; some of them are still settlers in the region while others have traveled abroad. Also, it is based on a series of informal interviews and interactions that took place during my stay there.

To gain access and collect data, I made enormous efforts to meet a few young workers and learn about their relationships to migration. My intention was not to create a study that discusses all of the experiences of young farm workers in Morocco or even of all people in the village by and large. My purpose, however, was not more than to listen to individual perspectives and see how they were confirmed, contrasted, or even forgotten by literature. What I expected to find was a remarkable difference between the lives of the young farm workers who left the "Douar", or village, towards Europe and the lives of those who chose to stay in their home town. I had expected that the literature I had already read would confirm this difference in terms of identity construction between the experienced lives and those of the migrants in the context of farm workers and their relation to their land. Before starting my analysis of literature in the coming section, it is important to define some concepts I will refer to in this paper.

Pastoral Migration

In the dictionary of sociology (1998), "pastoralists" means "a nomadic or semi-nomadic form of subsistence that is mainly dependent on herds of domesticated animals. Those groups that move according to regular seasonal routes for pasture are called transhumants. Pastoral nomads are found in most areas of the world, including southern Europe. Many have faced pressures of enforced settlement."

Since pastoral life depends on movements in the open space, Bni Amir in this area becomes a cross-border space for different social fractions, including nomads from Zayan tribes. The border space of Bni Amir incorporates different identities longing for belonging. Therefore, the notion of the frontier only remains an imagined one, and, as Russell West-Pavlov indicates, it is already "blurred".

Accordingly, West-Pavlov reveals that when a border is crossed, it is no longer a border because "one would have to speak of the border 'under erasure' (sous rature)". The process of border crossings in Bni Amir tells us more about the cultural and sociological dimensions of migration. The notion of crossing for the Bni Amir People lies as far as the eye can see—that is, there are no frontiers, only the nomads. (ANBI, Abderrahim. 2014. P.146)

As I mentioned above, Beni Amir consists of different social fractions, and even though there is a notion of differentiation characterizing this social space, they are organized around the notion of Jma'a (traditional social group) (ANBI, Abderrahim, 2014. P. 27). The role of Jma'a lies in sustaining the notion of not the spatial but the imaginative frontier. The notion of frontier is sustained in this respect according to tribal customary law. When, for instance, Beni Amir experiences drought and difficulties having water for themselves and their animals, the tribe moves to the customary law in order to define the frontier of their cultural norms and find solutions. (ANBI, Abderrahim. 2022. P.99).

Taking into consideration the absence of the frontier and its existence at an imaginary level, people engage in social and political conflicts in order to maintain control of a certain space that belongs to no single tribe. Here, I would say that the frontier only remains a local phenomenon. In order to ensure freedom of movement within Beni Amir Space (which consists of different social fractions with imaginary frontiers), these social fractions construct relationships with each other either through marriage or by reconstructing some imaginary parental relationships, and these are called Rbga or Ttadda. Consequently, these constructions and reconstructions of relationships only further the crossing of borders and eliminate the frontiers between these social fractions. (ANBI, Abderrahim. 2022. P. 99).

The constructed relationships facilitated many different movements in Beni Amir. Regardless of the frontiers and crossing borders, different identities emerge in this space, where the notion of belonging is problematic. We can hardly talk of Beni Amir as a social entity; rather, it is a *bricolage*, in terms of Derrida, of identities and hybrid ones at the same time. What I would like to emphasize here is that these movements are not characteristic of Beni Amir alone. Different rural areas in Morocco had, more or less, undergone the same migration process but with different social constructions.

Also noteworthy is that the notion of migration will move to another yet deeper level of border crossings in rural areas. If the crossing of frontiers in the pastoral era had been motivated by subsistence dependent mainly on herds of domesticated animals, which had imposed on tribes the need to construct and reconstruct different social relationships, the crossing of frontiers has been enlarged and captured other dimensions during the colonial period, and this will be the focus of my next point.

Migration and Colonialism

Until 1935, Beni Amir was still considered a pastoral society, even though Morocco had been under the dominion of France since 1912 and French colonialism was officially present in the region by 1916. In the pastoral era, Beni Amir, as a contact zone, demarcated different local Aborigines. A new element is involved in this contact zone "where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power," as Louse reminds us. The French army was first installed in the region, bringing with him all that, for the locals, does not belong inside the imagined (ANBI, Abderrahim, 2014. P. 29).

The French army ended the local resistance, and as a consequence, a new spatial policy would begin. The engagement with the new policy suggested that Beni Amir must become an agricultural space for two reasons: first, to end up with resistance groups, people ought to be positioned in a closed space with real borders and not only imagined ones.

This can be noted in most agricultural societies, where frontiers are clearly demarcated. Second, France's aim was to establish areas of influence to supply its army in the First World War.

The natives then were threatened by their economic supply, which was based in principle on pastoralism and open space. The natives' fear would be clearly indicated in the 1940s, especially when irrigation projects had begun. At that moment, famine had spread all over Bni Amir, while the irrigation project was manipulated

by colonial power. Consequently, waves of migration began to take place to mainly urban areas, especially Beni Mellal, Khenifra, and Casablanca. (ANBI, Abderrahim. 2014. P.146)

In addition, George Balandi explains this asymmetrical power as follows: when two unbalanced powers meet and confront each other, they create a social change process that affects the locals' cultures, norms, values, and social behaviors. These aspects were noticeable in Beni Amir in the colonial era. As irrigation processes developed, French engineers and Spanish and Portuguese employers migrated to the region. (Balandier, Georges. 1971. P.78)

Different cultures met in Beni Amir and clashed with each other in an asymmetrical way. The interference of these new cultures would further close the space and enhance borders between different cultures in the same space.

The new generation would prefer to work for the colonizers on the farms. A new cultural phenomenon would emerge as an aspect of meeting cultures, which I prefer to call the ideology of material frontiers (money culture). The ideology of the material frontier imposed on the natives led them to believe only in all that is material. (ANBI, Abderrahim. 2014. P. 244). The culture of agriculture instead of pastoralism and the creation of frontiers instead of open space became important elements in attracting other natives from different rural areas to work in Bni Amir, such as Sraghna, Romania, Chyadma, Souss, and so on. In the shadow of these movements, the region would drastically change when the system of production was transformed from being pastoral to agricultural, from open to closed space.

As Morocco gained its independence in 1956, the region witnessed times of prosperity. Nevertheless, this prosperity was mainly dominated by the notables of the region. These notables had manipulated the best agricultural lands and maintained power over the natives. Economic and social stability had been affected by drought during the 1970s and 1980s. The policy of agricultural structural adjustment, which had been enforced by the government, had imposed on the small farmer the obligation to pay his taxes immediately. Another wave of migration took place, where the destination can be said to take two directions: the first one concerns the less fortunate. These people had primarily moved to the main cities in Morocco. The second one concern the offspring of wealthy people who succeeded in moving overseas, and this will be the topic of my next section.

Contemporary Migration Movements

In their research on Souk Larbi'a Gharb entitled *Ce Que Descent 296 Jeunes Ruraux*, Pascon and Bentahar¹ argue that both money and youth move from rural to urban areas. Whereas the land was divided among the family heirs, the work became much harder than its benefits. In addition, the countryside became more dependent on merchandise exported from the urban areas outside the special borders. At this stage, migration in Bni Amir had two different axes: the first was horizontal, and the second was vertical.

Horizontal Migration: It concerns people considered less fortunate in the region. The first wave of this type of migration began in the late 1970s, when young farmers decided to move to urban areas looking for better jobs. This aspect of the movement takes with it all that is cultural from one space into another. To change space, one assumes that one needs to adapt to the new place with its social norms and cultural values. Accordingly, the movement suggests that identity is revisited, belonging is problematized, borders remain borderless, and other contact zones are created. The main destinations were mainly Fkih Ben Saleh, Had EL Bradia, Bni Mellal, Casablanca, and the southern Moroccan Sahara. (ANBI, Abderrahim. 2014. P.146) some of these migrants prefer to engage in professional workshops and some of them choose to indulge in commercial affairs between the south and north of Morocco.

Vertical migration: there are two categories. The first wave remained exclusive to the region's wealthy offspring. It was as such because gaining access to a passport was prohibited to the layman since you needed a middleman to interfere and have a passport ready. This would not be possible without authority, which is exclusive to wealthy people.

This wave began as early as 1970, when some young students were sent to study abroad while the rest preferred to work in Italy, Spain, and France. The status quo lasted until early 1990, when a new culture of foreignness (Kharij) was constructed inside the rural space. This new culture would coincide with many incidents. These include the years of drought during 1981–1982, the agricultural policy, which worked only to discriminate against the locals, and the new decision in 1989, in which the criteria for having a passport became more flexible and enabled every Moroccan citizen to have one. The result of which would produce waves of migrations whose importance lay in bearing the name of a migrant. Migration now became the norm, and clandestine immigration was enforced, so everyone sought to flee towards Europe.

¹Pascon P. & M. Bentahar (1978 [1969]), *Ce Que Disent 296 Jeunes Ruraux*; and cf. Fanny Colonna, 1987

Beni Amir: A history of agricultural policy and rural farming

Historically speaking, the mid-Atlas region, where Beni Amir is located, was considered a pastoral region. It was first used as a grazing area for nomadic farmers until French colonization, when the area was set up as a more organized, settled agricultural community. This change in export-production farming started with the implementation of the French agricultural plan in the late 1930s. This plan provided subsidies for water and crop seed in order to supply the French army during the Second World War.

This farming for the benefit of colonial powers marked the beginning of a period that continued until the presence of foreign policy influenced agriculture in the Beni Amir region. This has cemented a farming relationship with Europe that is still present today and largely affects the techniques and equipment used in small farming operations.

With this in mind, I believe that both trade and agriculture were important starting points for my comparisons with the timeline that I found in all my fieldwork in Beni Amir. The problem started with the initial French model that pushed wheat production in the region, which was expensive and hard to maintain in a production system sustained mostly by rainfall (von Merten, 2004).

Even after independence in 1956 and up until the 1990s

The Moroccan state kept strict control over these large-scale irrigation schemes. Farmers were obliged to grow the crops chosen by the administration, and the state introduced several plans to launch and organize the production of industrial agricultural products, such as sugar and milk. (Faysse, Errahj, Dumora, Kemmoun, and Kuper, 2012, p. 5).

These cooperatives and large-scale schemes were, like the French model, based on governmental organizations that controlled collectives made up of small family farms (Faysse et al., 2012, p. 5). The early 1980s were a period of drought, and the state adopted an IMF structural adjustment program to deal with the economic shortages induced by agricultural hardships.

To make up for the shortage of capital in certain sectors, the prices of many social services and basic goods increased, including the price of water. This further restricted the farmer's individual choice and continued the role of international policy in Moroccan farm practice.

This IMF deal gave control of irrigation development to foreign institutions, and thus Moroccan farmers were largely left on their own, removed from the decision-making process at a national level that affected how and what they had access to for farm development. Thus, development in farming happened mostly in some recently irrigated areas, while those who still rely on the more traditional flood and drain irrigation and rainfall are left out.

Things have not changed much in farming in these rural areas since the IMF restructuring, even with the availability of many new technologies and production means, because they remain too expensive for small operations. Von Merten (2004) also mentions that because many farming communities have low levels of education, many policies are not well translated or understood.

This is a problem when they have a significant effect on access to resources and collective organization (von Merten, 2004). Low levels of education and engagement combined with outdated practices have created problems for many of the small farms I saw, which suffer from "alarming rates of soil organic matter decline, erosion, and desertification" because of overuse by livestock and heavy tilling (Mrabet, Moussadek, Fadlaoui, and van Ranst, 2012, p. 2).

Many small farmers are stuck with more traditional methods and old practices because they continue to be cheaper than more environmentally friendly alternatives, despite the fact that they ultimately damage soil quality and thus production returns. It was not that the farmers I met were not fully aware of this reality, but because of land divisions and the technology available, these methods continued to be the best way for small farms to sustain families.

The Green Morocco Plan, started in 2008, is one of the most recent state-led agricultural initiatives. The plan tries to facilitate "sustainable production intensification for all types of farms and crops" by aggregating small farm lands to better manage resources and increase efficiency with access to technological improvements and subsidies that benefit farmers (Mrabet et al., 2012, p. 2; ADA website). This plan has not been as successful as expected because of the unpredictability of Mother Nature and the difficulty in translating feedback from small farms to government agencies.

As the agricultural development agency (ADA) website mentions, most farmlands are in small parcels, and "national policies have different local impacts" meaning that "the implementation of water allocation and distribution reforms depends on local conditions" (Theo, Ciszewski. 2013. P. 12).

Thus, many small farms like the ones I saw in Ulad Ghanum don't change their practices, just their means of distribution. Being part of the milk cooperative doesn't change the way my host father feeds his cows or the price of seed or grain, but it does change where he takes his product. (Personal observation, 2018)

As Faysse et al. (2012) note, the price and distribution of collecting farm products are decided outside of the contributing communities, meaning cooperative organizations don't interact much with their suppliers and there is little feedback on policy or practice. Overall, farm policy has done little to change the situation for small family farmers in rural areas. I think this is important in the context of my study because it gave me a background for some of the practices I saw in the village and a better idea about some of the ideas in the literature on cooperative action.

While I largely agree with the aforementioned authors that the current policy does little to change the reality of farm practice on the ground, I do not think the economic importance of the collectives should be ignored. My host family, among many others, was largely dependent on the milk stipend we received for our weekly contribution. This season, the price per kilo of olives was 6 dirhams, which I was also told is a very good price.

Thus, while current agricultural policies may not be relevant for many small farmers, the economic support provided by collectives is very important to a small farmer's income. As I learned, however, there are also many other factors that influence rural income and contribute to economically motivated migration.

Farm practice and literature in the context of research

Mrabet, Moussadek, Fadlaoui, and Rans's (2012) article "Conservation Agriculture in Dry Areas of Morocco" provides more insight into the type of agriculture currently practiced in dry areas like Beni Amir. This was important in conjunction with articles discussing policy because it provides a point of comparison for my experience in the village and the effects of the policies I mention.

Agricultural production in Morocco "provides employment to near 44% of the workforce" and is largely composed of cereal crops and livestock operations (Mrabet et al., 2012, p. 1). From my observations, most people in Beni Amir own a few sheep and cattle and have chickens grazing on their land. The majority of crops are grown to feed these animals. There are also many olive trees and centers for turning olives into olive oil with old equipment sourced from Italy. (ANBI, Abderrahim. 2014. P.148).

As Mrabet et al. mention in the article, "products from irrigated agriculture account for 75% of total primary and processed agricultural exports," meaning that Beni Amir and the surrounding douars are largely not concerned with foreign markets influenced by international policy agreements because they operate at a local level (Roe et al., 2005, p. 913–9).

Not surprisingly, then, it is the "reforms outside of agriculture" that can have stronger effects "on the incomes of rural agricultural households" (Roe et al., 2005, p. 926–22). This article was important in forming my methodology and thinking about how I would use literature on farm policy in my research and analysis of my experiences in Beni Amir. Dealing with contemporary migration in rural areas shows the importance of qualitative research in rural areas with an emphasis on observation.

The observational approach in rural research parallels that of Faysse et al. (2012), who in their joint article on Moroccan farmers' collective action suggest "local dynamics" and not "effectiveness of public policy" as an entry point to their study of farming in Morocco (2012, p. 6).

The authors take this local approach, similar to what I have observed, because "past and present public policies [...] have made only limited efforts to include farmers in decision making" and thus are not very reflective of local situations (Faysse et al., 2012, p. 2). The author's perspectives on policy confirmed much of my previous analysis and further influenced my research approach. This led me to a casual, conversational approach, which allowed interactions to cover a variety of local topics that in many ways influence migration and farming.

It must also be noted that this study, particularly, is insightful from a research standpoint because the team of the authors strove to "support interactions between researchers and actors and interactions among the actors themselves," actors here meaning farm workers and their collectives (Faysse et al., 2012, p. 3). Both the textile and milk cooperatives are observed to be present, as noted earlier, in new markets for the newly acquired skills. This goes without saying that in larger parts of the process, such as funding and marketing, rural collective action is given a simple cause-and-effect analysis instead of a more specific, community-involved approach. (Theo, Ciszewski, 2013. P.12).

In the instance of the textile cooperative, many women learning to use sowing machines attended the association because they were not able to keep attending school. Instead of dealing with this problem, the collective action funded by the Association for Human Development simply provides a market for a skill. It is much the same with farming cooperatives in Beni Amir, like the milk collective. The simple solution for struggling farmers is to pool resources to send to a larger market instead of looking at the more complex historical narrative, which explains the root causes of the current inequalities.

Thus, I would argue that much of the current agricultural policy plays a part in migration because these policies do not have a clear chain of feedback and thus do not support effective collective action in small rural

communities like Beni Amir, leading young farm workers to seek better opportunities overseas. Both the research process and my findings shed light on the complicated relationships between farmers and the land, their means and ways in relation to technology, and how and where history and policy influence these relationships in the district.

Young farmers and return migrants

The overall research experience has only improved with time, as I was able to make more social contacts with young farmers and return migrants in the village, allowing me to gain more data.

I relied on my social network that I made during my return home to Beni Amir to initiate informal interviews and interactions concerning my project. While I think this was an important part of my observational approach, I found the second part of my research in Beni Amir to be much more productive while still maintaining an observational quality characterized by an informal series of extended interactions with my research participants.

At first, my intention was to make contacts in the Souk El-had, or Sunday Market, because it is a gathering place for many farmers looking to sell their produce and an obvious example of a "contact zone." I decided to walk through the back roads of Beni Amir. (Personal Observation.2015) I also tried spending more time in "hanuts" and cafes because I found them social spaces and usually ended up seeing people I knew from farm work in a more social setting. I simply needed to be in the right place at the right time if I sought to meet my special informants. (Personal Observation.2015).

Watching Beni Amir, the visitor can see some construction trucks in the nearby town of Bradia with services advertised in Spanish with them, and I thought perhaps talking to some of these community members in Spanish might connect me to other Spanish-speaking migrants who were involved in farming. While all of these places were not important or successful in their ability to help me establish contacts, this exercise set off a week where, through community participation, I began to meet the people who taught me about my own project.

Between two shores

This section is divided into two parts. The first part concerns the young aspiring migrants, and the other one is about the old farm-working migrants. Then, I will analyze the conversations I had with my research participants as they relate to other conversations I had in the village and my original hypothesis.

Most of the interaction I had with young aspiring migrant farm workers took place in and around the olive trees, where we worked for many days on the second week of my stay. Work started early in the morning and went until about three or four in the afternoon.

After one day of picking, I asked one of my old classmates if he might act as a translator for a conversation I wanted to have after work. Everyone in the working group was between 18 and 21 years old and had been olive picking for about three seasons. Everyone has family in "Douar" (village) and has grown up doing work on their family's land.

When I asked them what they thought about farming and their lifestyle in the village, the general impression was that work was good and decently paid, but that they were mostly doing it because they did not finish high school and had no formal training in any other trade. When I asked about relatives abroad, everyone had something to say about a few brothers or sisters, mostly in Italy.

In conversation with their relatives, which can happen anywhere from once a day to once a week, they mostly hear good things about life in Europe: that it is proper, things are well organized, and there is work. I asked them if they ever heard bad things, and a few mentioned that they did, but that for the most part, their families were doing well.

As for the specifics of farm work, many knew that they would be paid about ten times as much for the same labor we had done that day if they lived in Europe, and that was enough to make them migrate, even if it meant doing something they would not do if they had other choices or technical training.

My last question concerned a hypothetical situation: if they migrated, how often would they hope to come back? All said for a month or two vacations, and hopefully in a car. Said has been going to Spain for several years to work in painting and construction but comes back to Morocco occasionally to take care of his family's land and rent out his tractor.

While he was home, Said would work many days in his fields and with his animals. The rest of his time was mostly spent with family members or in cafes. When in Spain, he would return to Valencia and work for some time until he was needed in Morocco or there was not sufficient work. Said's life seemed quite relaxed in Ulad Ghanum, and he was well received in many social settings.

However, it seemed in many ways that his life was divided between his work in Valencia and his social and familial life in Douar. Compared to the other farms I saw in the douar, Said's farm was larger, and he had better-quality animals. He would often cite the price of farm things for me in euros, which I took to mean he

financed much of what he had with the money he made in Spain. M1 mentioned to me in one of our conversations that he would like to get married in Morocco and said he wanted to keep living here, but it was clear that he needed to spend time in Spain to save any money for his life in Ulad Ghanum and support his family.

Ahmed was a returning migrant from Italy and the Netherlands who had lived abroad for more than a decade and then decided to return because of economic difficulties and other reasons he was not comfortable discussing. Ahmed is the only one of his brothers who is staying in Douar full time to tend to the land his family shares.

Upon coming back to the douar permanently, Ahmed married a woman his family thought would be a good choice for him. Now divorced and with two kids, Ahmed is not happy with his family situation but does not want to leave for Europe because he wants to be around for his children. Ahmed noted several times the importance of having his family in the community upon his return, often sighting the Italian proverb 'blood does not turn to water.

Both Said and Ahmed recognized the importance of their family relations in their migration experience and how it gave them a certain responsibility to return to the village to help take care of the land and their families. Thus, I can use social capital theory and cumulative causation to conclude that both the existence of connections abroad and a culture of migration are important in migrant decisions, but that these two terms do not take into account the resulting transnational existence that I would argue is most relevant to young men involved in farm labor. All of the dairy farmers with whom I spoke had relatives' abroad, thus social capital, and lived in a culture of cumulative causation.

These theories, however, only discuss the migrants' primary motivations for migration. As reflected by Said and Ahmed's experiences, young farm-working migrants will likely be subject to a transnational identity that involves returning to the same patterns of farming that have been perpetuated by policies mentioned in the literature section of my paper.

While the experiences and conversations I had with my research participants were important to my analysis of these two theories in relation to the migration of young farm workers, conversations I had outside of this narrow focus, especially with my informant, gave me great insight into why I believe farm labor migrants are deserving of a transnational identity.

Outside insights

Taking different views about the motivation behind migration is an important task to have a multidimensional perspective on the issue. I was speaking to my old classmate, who pointed out that parents would even send their children, though they heard horrible stories about migration to Europe, just to satisfy the thrust of their children and receive a different social 'status' and recognition in the douar. This statement reminded me that individual migration is much more of a family decision than it may seem to be. One day I asked my old classmate if the land was ever sold from family to family. He had been that week in the process of trying to change some of the partitioning of the land in our backyard, and I was curious if that was common practice. According to an old proverb, selling your land is equivalent to selling your honor. It is thus not something that happens very often, although this does not mean that land stays the same within the family structure.

In relation to agricultural land" (Theo, Ciszewski, 2013. P. 28), this of course creates problems when those living on the land do not have enough space to work efficiently in a way that can be productive. My old classmate estimated that he would only need 5 ha to live comfortably, but that currently, with the way his property was divided, it was split between family members, making it hard to make enough money to save and use the land efficiently. This was relevant to my reflection on conversations with young aspiring migrants because it demonstrated another way in which living comfortably on one's own land is difficult, even outside of the government structure and economic conditions.

Current policy and economic conditions make farming under these divisions all the more stressful, as many plots are largely dependent on unpredictable rainfall and the technology available for cultivation is expensive. My old classmate told me frequently about the elevated price of fertilizers and crop protectors and lamented how it would cost about 100 dirhams to feed one cow properly each day.

With these factors in mind, which constrain the lives of farmers in the village, it is no wonder many decide to go to Europe to do menial field labor instead of investing in their own lands. Nevertheless, people are still tied to the land, and in many cases, this falls to the non-migrant male member of the household.

In many cases I observed, when migrants decide to return permanently, they engage in the same type of farming, but the land is further split, which can lead to tensions as return migrants often have more savings than those who stay in the douar. My old classmate noted that most of the people leaving to do work in Europe since

the douar have low levels of education, meaning that when they return, they have little to return to other than their family land.

A description from my old classmate on the increase of technology in the Beni Amir area gave me some insight into why migration to Europe has perhaps become more accessible for younger people, despite current economic conditions and increases in border security. Although at least one color television is commonplace in every home, in Dowar, it was not until 1984 that the district got its first color TVs, and it was not until the mid-90s that they became widespread. An operator would connect your phone call until 1996, and before that, the only phone was in the neighboring town of Bradia. Migrants would have called their neighboring families and informed the caller's relative, then he would call at a specific date and time if they would love to chat with her or him. Cell phones are still very recent for most families.

Since 2000, I have noticed an incredible increase in technology in the village, and I think it more affects the older generation's lives than it does those of the younger generation. It certainly gives everyone an easier way to keep in touch, send money, and live a transnational life. Although some processes, like phone calls, have been made more personal, perhaps it has made transnational identity construction easier. Yet, I still found ways in which the process was part of the larger culture of the village.

Conclusion

When I formed my proposal and started my study, I expected to find people with fixed identities. I expected young farm workers to be working towards visas and transport in Europe, and I expected experienced migrants to be working only in Europe and returning to see family and friends.

What I was exposed to through my individual case studies was a much more complicated, transnational existence that highlighted the continuing social role farming continues to play in the lives of migrants from Beni Amir, no matter their affluence or travel plans.

In the specific cases of Said and Ahmed, although Said was well off and still living a transnational life, he was active in his land and farm practices when he returned to the village.

Ahmed had no further plans to live in Europe or outside of Morocco, and perhaps because of his original migration and the migration of his family, among many other factors, he was beginning to use his land again as he settled into life in the douar.

Ultimately, farming is sustained by the policy in a social rather than an economically incentivized way for many small farmers, which could be said to be a reason for the migration of young farmhands to Europe.

This move, however, is neither permanent nor a departure from agriculture. In some cases, it actually facilitates relationships that bring technology to rural areas to help collective action.

I saw this specifically with the olive oil cooperatives that get old equipment from Italy. Most young farmers and return migrants, however, still have problems living sufficiently off of their own land, and this continues to put stress on families in a community where migration has become a widespread phenomenon.

In reflecting on my hypothesis in the context of literature, I would say the social capital theory and cumulative causation are each relevant to looking at migration in Beni Amir. Based on my specific case studies and outside interactions, I would argue that to fully understand individual migration choices, there needs to be more focus on the idea of transnational migration, which "suggests that migration is not always a permanent move" but instead a constant back and forth, which in the case of farm workers has maintained close structures to their original community relations and responsibilities (Heering et al., 2004, p. 13). I think these findings are particularly interesting in my specific analysis of farm workers because they show how certain individuals' transnational identities are created due to family relationships to land.

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