Towards the elsewhere : Discourses on migration and mobility practices between Morocco and Italy.

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The objective of this article is to analyze the preparation process of young Moroccan migrants

directed towards Italy. My focus is on the personal and collective formulation of their desire to

leave and on concomitant action taken to realize these aspirations; highlighting the complexity of

the imagination, which migration – and expected return – entails.

A second point of attention is the agency exerted by such youth during preparation for departure;

even when they have not physically left the country yet. In addition, my observation is focussed on

networks emerging as a result of having to deal with state-imposed, migration restrictions, as well

as with the politics of humanitarian agencies and NGOs. My discourse argues that these aspiring

migrants project themselves into the future and act in accordance with what they long to become.

They shape themselves as mobile subjects through a process of self-making to overcome the above-

mentioned constraints.

Keywords: migration, mobility, Morocco, imagination, agency, development.

Introduction

Nowadays, migration from Morocco to Italy is topical. This leads to numerous studies;

researched particularly in the field of sociology, economics and – though to a lesser extent –

anthropology. Italian and Moroccan scholars, who focus on the migrant arrival-state, address

issues pertinent mainly to legal conditions of migrants (Iorio et al. 2000; Pellicani 2000), their

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discrimination, above all in the labor market (Allassino et al. 2004; Dal Lago 2004; Hadraoui 1995), their multiple belongings (Barile 1994; Giacalone 2002; Paterno et al. 1996) and the networks they entail across national borders (Capello 2008; Decimo and Sciortino 2006; Persichetti 2003; Salih 2003). As far as their departure-state is concerned, attention to the *push and pull factors* – its social and economic conditions, which determine migration – is somewhat diffused (M'Chichi Alami 2000; Arab 2005; Berrada 2000; Gaillard and Gaillard 2002; Khachani 2003, 2005, 2005b; Moreno 2006). Other studies also critically address the effects of migration and remittances on those rural areas of Morocco (Bencherifa 1996; Cassarino 2007; De Haas 2005; Kharoufi 1997), highlighting the role of movements related to people and goods within the definition of the very same local and national subjectivity (McMurray 2001) and the incidence of such movements on the conditions, social status and desires of those who do not leave the country (De Haas 2006; Van Dalen et al. 2005).

Within these research efforts a little space is devoted to a very singular part of the migratory process, i.e. its preparation. This includes the formulation of that desire to leave (Capello 2008; Pandolfo 2007; Vacchiano 2007) and the resultant activities towards its realization. This article is meant to analyze this latter migratory step, an integral part of the migratory process, regardless of outcome. It also intends to highlight individual, collective, local and global dynamics that characterize it. As expressed by Martiniello and Rea (2011), an integrated approach is of fundamental importance since considering the macro, meso and micro levels of a "migratory career". They stress the necessity of not having to lose sight of global economic and social relations, of local conditions and the personal, socio-psychological motivations that encourage these individuals involved to leave.

During a six-month anthropological research conducted in Morocco between 2007 and 2008, my attention was dedicated to young people living in Khouribga; aspirant migrants as

recruited into a project of migration to Italy. The "reputation" of this city as a place where almost everyone seems to be yearning to move to Italy made me wonder about both the personal and social nature of such an aspiration and about the means by which it is converted into a real migratory project. The proliferation of political and humanitarian discourses on migration in Morocco, caused me to sense the need to analyze reactions and social projects executed locally to stop or regulate the act of migrating. These by themselves contributed to debates about the nature and legitimacy or illegitimacy of such an act. My thesis is that within this complex network of local and international dynamics, an individual *agency* (Salih 2003) is exerted, in which these young prospective migrants manage to transform themselves into mobile subjects; notwithstanding their (present or definitive) permanence on Moroccan territory.

In the first paragraph, my intention is to briefly recount the methodology deployed; followed by a presentation of the history relevant to the foundation and growth of Khouribga as well as to how this city is currently perceived by its inhabitants. In the paragraph "Imagining migration" an analysis is given as regards the local youths' discourse on migration; from departure to relocation, and action pursued within the migration process. The last part reports my investigation of that which is locally done to stop or regulate the issue known as the "migratory flow".

Methodology

During my field research, the gathering of bibliographic material concerning migration – spread locally – was given priority. Thereafter, I joined an important local NGO to exploit the opportunity as a participant-observer of their activities addressing migration issues.

Approximately thirty young people of Khouribga – the protagonists of this ethnography – were approached by me through a local language school, which organized Italian language

courses. This mediation granted my research some degree of institutional legitimacy; thus allowing me to collect tape-recorded, semi-structured interviews.

I conducted what Aihwa Ong (Ong 2005: 9) calls "commuter fieldwork" – an expression she borrowed off Judith Stacey – as my own accommodation was in Rabat and not in the city where my interviewees were. This compelled me to regularly commute between Rabat and Khouribga to perform interviews. Material for my study was also gathered from several fortuitous conversations in the street, in cafés and in city shops (one case only in a private home) which, albeit fragmented, turned out to be very meaningful.

The context of departure

Khouribga, local crisis and migration

Khouribga, a city with a surface area of 4,250 km² located on the Ouardigha plain (Atlantic Moroccan plateau) 120 km south of Casablanca, is renowned as the world's largest center for phosphate mining. It was founded during the French Protectorate (1912–1956) in an area unsuitable for urban development. Until the '50s, it had only been temporarily inhabited by semi-nomadic communities. In order to control the exploitation of the mines, the government set up the OCP (Office Chérifien des Phosphates[1]). In 1924, the OCP headquarters were moved to the place where Khouribga lies today. Public offices, transportation and infrastructures were set up. European managers, who had started to settle down in the city, fostered the development of "modern" trade. Hence the urban area of Khouribga was experiencing rapid growth.

The economic, social and cultural life of the city was under strict control by the OCP, which was responsible for employment, housing, health care, education services, trade and cultural events. Contemporarily, however, the mechanization of mining production processes and the world phosphate crisis (during 1975) affected the capacity of the mining company to absorb

labour. This process led to the development of widespread urban unemployment. Nowadays, this still exceeds the national average percentage relative to urban areas. Scholars and locals of Khouribga alike speak of a town in the middle of a deep crisis. Adidi describes a "dysfunctional" job market forcing "an exceptionally high number" of people, who were once attracted to work in the mines, to migrate abroad (Adidi 2000: 129). Currently, this region is reputed for its high number of migrants living in Italy and, as a 50-year-old OCP engineer told me, "if you do research, you'll see that every family has somebody in Italy." As a matter of fact, of the 452,424 Moroccan citizens living in Italy (Caritas/Migrantes 2011), the majority comes from the area between Casablanca and Beni Mellal (Melchionda 2010); more specifically 25.3 percent are from the Chaouia-Ouardigha region, 12.6 percent from Khouribga.

Over and above such topics, there is widespread awareness of the area's "richness" in natural and economic resources, as states Malek, the Italian language teacher (about 30 years old).

> The city of Khouribga is the richest phosphates center in the world, but miners are not local people, […] the local youth are unemployed. Each month they make a turnover of 30 billion dirhams[2] that stay here, and you see people migrating.

Problems such as nepotism and a lack of redistribution of wealth and resources seem to be affecting the whole country. The above-reported extract of a conversation between Malek and 'Anbar, Malek's 32-year-old friend is evidence of the diffused opinion, which sees such problems as the result of not only domestic dynamics but also of global geopolitical factors.

> 'Anbar: Yes, it's true. Morocco is rich. Some are doing well and some others not so well. […] Has Morocco enough resources to stop migration? Sure, look at Khouribga, for instance. There's phosphate, farming, fishing, in the south there's oil. If we had control over oil, if fishing were regulated […]. There's the World Bank, they set the rules for Morocco, and the Moroccan government pays the World Bank with citizens' money, the country's money. This prevents the

Moroccan government from implementing its economic projects. […] it's a foreign policy that introduces cuts, that kills the local economy, that helps but under conditions that cripple the country.

Ilyas[3]: I would like to know how the rich got the money here in Morocco.

'Anbar: If you go to Fès, there was the first king of the Alouitan age, there were the *fassa*[4], […]. They worked for the king and the king gave them money, houses, goods. Nowadays, who's rich? The very same people!

Malek: They are the thieves of the times of the Protectorate. The sons of the resistance are in jail […].

'Anbar: The sons of the *fassa* […] they used to send their kids to France to have an education and it's them, who are in power. The link between politics and business is obvious.

According to the people interviewed, these problems negatively affect the standard of living of the population in a country, which, as 'Umar says, is run by a "private capital mentality" (*ras maalia*[5]): a person is important only if he is wealthy; only his assets earn him the title of "sidi" ("sir") and give him the possibility to get married. In such a context, migration becomes the only way to escape from the crisis; to improve his circumstances and the life of his family and be able to change his social status. A "culture of migration" (Cohen 2004, Kandel and Massey 2002, Ali 2007) takes form. Quoting Ali and his study among Muslims in Hyderabad, it consists in "those ideas, practices and cultural artefacts that reinforce the celebration of migration and migrants. This includes beliefs, desire, symbols, myths, education, celebration of migration in various media, and material goods" (Ali 2007: 39). Such a culture, by "shaping the effects of migrant remittances, transforms traditional ideas of marriage and status and links them instead to migratory movements" (Ali 2007: 38). Young people living in such a cultural and social environment learn to yearn for migration by starting to imagine a move and the consequences it could have.

Imagining migration

Departure

A youngster initiating a migratory process actively lives within three concurrent space-time circumstances: "here", "there" and "in between", as described by Tarrius in relation to migrant multiple belongings (Arab 2005: 6). If "here" is the *blad*[6] and "there" is Italy, the "in between" is that place where these youngsters live; in their own country but dreaming of another one. For them, the boundary between "here" and "elsewhere" is nebulous, on account of both the family-network's transnationalism and, in particular, the very same mobility of the aspirant migrant. He moves in a liminal land, where these two dimensions overlap – like a "bricoleur culturel" – as Bennani-Chraibi would define him (1993: 65). The aspiring migrant envisions that: "If you go, you think hard, you work, you save money, then you come back and you set up your project. You'll then feel that you have the skills to make things happen.", as 'Umar stated.

However, leaving Khouribga does not just mean deserting a city in crisis. For Rashid, for instance, the town represents: "Your memories, your childhood, your childhood friends, the house where you grew up, your parents, your culture". Imagining the "elsewhere" implies an almost physical perception of the *ghorba*; a word, which describe a state of alienation, of exile, and which is used by young people interviewed to define separation from country and family.

Migration entails a paradox: people plan it to improve their lives; concomitantly, they perceive the sensation of sacrificing a part of themselves. Departing also means putting one's own *sharaf* [honour], *kirama* [goodness] and the chance of exercising religious freedom at risk. As a matter of fact, people are concerned about not being able to comply with some of Islam's pillars, such as daily prayers, fasting during the month of Ramadan, or respecting Islamic holidays. Moreover, difficulties are also perceived and imagined in relation to bringing up

children in accordance with the principles of Islamic religion, when in countries where behavior and images appear to contradict them.

Departing therefore means escaping from that which is known, defying the unexpected, being afraid, challenging one's own limits and testing oneself when confronting risks and fate (Lagnaoui 1999: 24).

The Return

The complex representations of the 'elsewhere' incorporate the envisaged relocation to Morocco as well. "The migrant can't stop thinking about coming back" (Engineer OCP), since "Morocco will always be your country, a Moroccan will always be thinking about coming back" (Yamin, 21 years old).

Through the imagination, voluntary returning is forged by elaborating the experience of other migrants acquainted and the capital investments they make once back in Morocco. Most migrants invest their savings by building a house in their country of origin, since "A house is your life's grave" (Sulaiman, 22 years old). People also invest in small enterprises such as opening a bar, an internet café, a call centre, a small trade business etc. Repositioned back from Europe also means carrying know-how and new technologies, or even just a nice object or a style; all these perceived as key factors for business success, as "people, ideas and things flow[ing] in both directions […] are often value enhanced" (Ali 2007: 41).

Movement by Moroccan inhabitants triggers economic flow which involves both money and products. A migrant cannot resist purchasing a car for himself and offering gifts to family members during his summer stay. These gestures are symbolic of social improvement and a way of incrementing the conspicuousness of the entire household (Chattou 2005: 90). On the one hand, such a flow of goods improves economic conditions in places of origin; thus reducing the

need for individuals to migrate. On the other hand, by witnessing migrant success stories, this also generates a longing to migrate. During their holidays in their home country, however, Moroccan migrants who ostentatiously exhibit their newly acquired wealth, risk being perceived as defying "good" values. Rashid interprets them as being: "silly people, who don't care anymore about the law". Nevertheless, judging people by their appearance can be misleading: "People say that the guy makes his money selling hashish, but only those who really know you, know the truth about you", Yassar, 23 years old, told me. Moreover, the hardship migrants confront in Italy can manifest. Hassan, 30 years old, asserts that:

> Regardless of what you see, it's when you talk to him, sit with him, you see he's in pain. In spite of the surface, of his car, he's just miserable. He does his little show of the month but when you sit with him, he tells you it's just a facade.

The narratives of my informants, assert that migration generally emerges as a means of improving one's social conditions and status in the community of one's departure. According to the local saying: *qt'a al-bhar bach toulli rajl* [cross the sea to become a man], it even appears as if leaving Morocco were the sole manner to "become a man" and to be viewed as such in the country left behind; the 'elsewhere' is seen as the space offering "the" alternative[7] (Chattou 2005: 88).

Reactions

The ambition of these youngsters to realize their migration dreams transforms into action aimed at making it happen; it thus triggers preparatory practices for the journey. These practices are equal to a displacement, as they tend to get those involved to project themselves elsewhere and, as such, they imply a real change of personal traits. Martiniello and Rea (2011) mention the "professionalization" of migration: particular skills as prerequisite-criteria for migrants to gain

eligibility to undertake the migratory path. Among such skills – either acquired through ad hoc training, self-taught, or imparted through the help of relatives and friends – local, linguistic knowledge of their destination seems to be fundamental for these youngsters I interviewed. As a matter of fact, attending an Italian course is one of those migratory requisites they resort to. Students are all focused on obtaining a certificate proving their knowledge of Italian. Subsequent to a nine-month course, they take an exam at the Italian Consulate's headquarters in Casablanca. The acquisition of language skills is the first indispensable step towards starting the migratory journey. Sonya[8] had expressed her wish to go to Italy and she stated: "When I leave, I don't know how to behave with people there, will I behave as I do with people here? That's the problem. Language is a powerful thing."

Learning the language is an investment in the migratory project but also a journey in itself. It brings the students closer to a series of sounds, topics and images belonging to the 'elsewhere'; previously only imagined but at that point physically experienced. Moreover, aspirant migrants I met – thanks to their acquisition of language skills – managed to gather knowledge regarding legal procedures required to enter Italy. Some of them told me they had either tried to fill out the online application form for a work permit or that they knew how to do it:

> You have to submit your application on the internet and you get the confirmation message, the
> *ricevuta*, the answer that your file has been accepted. You have to fill out the forms by the fifteenth
> of the month, they've scheduled just one day […], you have to wait for the answer that your file has
> been opened, to finally get your *nulla osta*, the authorization to leave. (Nur).

The need to be in possession of a job contract to complete such an application is due to a desire to leave for Italy complying with its laws that regulate migration: "I've already tried. I had "burned" and everything. But not like someone leaving under the law [*qanuni*]. " – (Mahmoud,

40 years old). In Morocco clandestine migrants exiting the country are called *harraga*; from the Arabic root *ha-ra-qa,* meaning 'to burn' and which in such a context seems to express the burning desire (to leave) (Capello 2008); but also to 'burn bridges' (Empez Vidal 2007: 17), or the finitude of human conditions, as Stefania Pandolfo puts it in her study (2007). To secure a job contract, would-be migrants contact a middleman. The document he is supposed to provide almost never entails a real recruitment. Nonetheless, procurement is paid for at an exorbitant price – Yassar for example paid the sum of about 7,000 Euros. Buying a job contract can be considered as a counterstrategy (Broeders and Engbersen 2007) adopted to face the restrictive state policies addressing migration.

These young protagonists discuss activities they carry out as part of a journey already begun. A journey of this sort is meant as being both "legitimate" and "legal", thus it redefines the very same meaning of these two words. The said activities entail a displacement towards a different universe; a translocation which very frequently also engages the migrants' family members at different levels and in different ways. First of all, they assist with the preparation of the journey, with economic support needed to settle the cost of the contract. Much more than half of the amount Yassar paid, was a loan from his brother. Family contributions are indeed fundamental to settle fees for study courses, the journey and for basic needs after having landed in Italy. Sayyida, 25 years old, says: "I've got family there to help me out; my aunt with her kids. Somebody will take care of me." Relatives also provide moral support, psychological help and encouragement towards the accomplishment of the project. They suggest that you undertake it, as is the case of 24-year-old Adnan, who confessed: "It had never crossed my mind [to leave]. My family members gave me the idea."

The fulfillment of the migratory process is therefore the product of a collective reaction embodied by the migrant. It also involves reciprocal sharing of resources with those not leaving.

The migrant and his family delineate a sense of belonging (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004), which cross national borders. The young owner of the city shop "Porta Portese"[9], for example, started his own business when his family migrated to Rome. He had decided to remain behind and manage a shop selling Italian clothes. With this he acquired new social status, both as local citizen and as a crossroad of cultures that meet through the international flow of goods. These very same dynamics, involving family networks of migrants, are often intercepted by non-governmental projects – or state provisions –, which address migration and the development of the country in complex ways.

Disciplines

The humanitarian blame of migration

In Khouribga there are numerous local and international development agencies working on information and awareness programs concerning migration. They often describe the migratory movements as causes of a "murderous plague", which starts with sea-crossing. In 2001, a local association, AFVIC (Friends and Families of Victims of Illegal Immigration), was founded. It works to raise people's awareness about human rights and the dangers related to the "crossing of borders". The association is also equipped with a radio program, a counselling centre, three reception centres for Sub-Saharan migrants (Morocco also being a destination for migrants from other African countries, settling down or moving on towards other destinations), providing legal and psychological support. Discourse on illegal migration and its dangers sound redundant in that 85 percent of migrants moving to Spain enter the country via seaports and airports. Only 15 percent therefore cross the strait (Khachani 2003). Yet, it is this latter route that gets extensive coverage from the media.

Migration is imputed to be the cause of depopulation of entire villages and of a consequent lack of local manpower. Moreover, even in their "host country" migrants are forced to confront miserable conditions and integration problems (particularly the second generations, feeling socially and culturally disadvantaged). These migrants, being coerced to escape from suffering and poverty, are recognised as victims in their fatherland, portrayed as such also during the crossing as well as in the country they enter. Humanitarian organizations find legitimacy of intervention resorting to this kind of representation of migratory movements. Despite their assistance to the oppressed, such initiatives are all part of: "a dilemma. On the one hand, they have NGO's wish to become an antagonist to power", trying to compensate for the lack of governmental intervention, denouncing poverty in the world. "On the other hand, they have a normalizing function […]." (Mesnard 2004: 9).

My fieldwork led me to take part in one of these humanitarian programs dedicated to unaccompanied minors. The project was executed by Tanmia**.ma, a Moroccan association located in Rabat and was referred to as "Support to initiatives to prevent illegal migration of unaccompanied minors". This initiative was part of the "Program in Support of Civil Society – The National Human Development Initiative" (PASC-INDH), promoted by the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) in partnership with the Italian Development Cooperation (Ministry of Foreign Affair) and in collaboration with the Italian NGO CISS (South-South International Cooperation). The project had a budget of 99,475 US$ to reach its goals; the priority of which was the protection of rights of unaccompanied migrating minors. A strategy to achieve this was the dissemination of "awareness on the dangers and consequences of illegal migration" (Tanmia.ma 2007a). The instrument implemented to accomplish such a target was a "pedagogic kit" consisting of two cartoon stories[10] translated into four languages: Moroccan Arabic, Berber, Italian and French; used in programs aiming at discouraging young people from migrating. These

pedagogic kits were devised after a series of consultation workshops was held. Each was run in one of the sixteen regions of the Moroccan state. Associations and stakeholders, dealing with migration issues, were involved. Such workshops were principally aimed at gathering information on the most diffused reasons pushing youngsters to leave. This then led to legibility, which "increase[s] the state's ability to govern and control its population" (Broeders and Engbersen 2007: 1595).

My attendance was confined to a workshop held in Tétouan, where "prevention" to stop minors from migrating was regarded as being the best solution. In the President of the association's words, "prevention" means addressing the root causes of the problem in Morocco: the lack of protection of human rights and of respect of human dignity, in addition to an impoverishment of the country and a scarce access to resources. The two cartoons created make reference to such causes by depicting two life stories. One is that of a boy, who "loses his way" (the title of the storyboard), leaving his parents' home to follow migratory dreams he may never accomplish. The other one is of a young man who, in spite of poor circumstances initially, manages to secure his future in virtue of his commitment, perseverance and, above all, without abandoning Morocco. Presenting these stories to young people, they are expected identify themselves with the main characters; recognizing common experiences, dreams and fears; hoping that these similarities would possibly guide them towards the "correct" choice: that of pursuing a life-path without migrating.

Monitoring and directing movements

'The Strasburg Declaration on the Right to Leave and Return' adopted on November 26, 1986 stipulates

the right of everyone to leave any country, *inclusive* of his or her own. Yet this right is not

complied with when it comes to the right to enter other countries, *unless* it is the country of origin,

since such a right is regulated by individual states in a discretionary manner. (Elmadmad 2000: 68)

Following the closure of the European borders and the discussions this has entailed, the same

Southern borders were externalized, in order to start the regulation of migration in the very same

departure states. The Moroccan legislation on immigration is strongly affected by similar

dynamics along with the Euro-Mediterranean agreements between EU countries and Morocco.

Thus, in 2005, within the framework of these agreements, the EU provided 40 million Euros with

which to finance a project to make border controls more efficient (M'Chichi Alami 2000: 44).

Earlier, during the summer of 1998, the EU had established an Inter-ministerial Commission

responsible for analyzing issues related to clandestine migration and the situation of Moroccan

migrants residing abroad, based on the notion that everyone must be identifiable and localizable

(M'Chichi Alami 2000: 47).

Similar initiatives had already been taken during the early twentieth century. The *dahir*

(decree) of September 27, 1921, for example, was meant to regulate foreign recruitment of

Moroccan workforce (Khachani 2003: 2) and some time later the French Protectorate created the

Service d'Emigration (*dahir* of July 13, 1938), an agency responsible for the recruitment of local

labour based on fixed quotas (Kreienbrink 2005: 195). The present Moroccan law addressing

migration is law n° 02–03, which, at its article n° 50, lays down that "anyone who leaves

Morocco in an unlawful way […] is liable to a fine between 3.000 and 10.000 dirhams and/or a

prison term from one to six months, […]". As for the Italian side, attempts at normalizing

accesses into Italy were numerous. With law n° 943/1986 strict rules were established in order to

control immigration and permanent residence of citizens from outside the EU. In 1990 law n° 39

laid down the procedure for the regularization of migrants already living in the country. Yet, not

all the Moroccan residents in Italy could actually legalize their status (Kharoufi 1997: 417)[11]: the government had "pursued the strategy of selective inclusion through regularization programs" (Broeders and Engbersen 2007: 1596). The current Italian legislation on migration, law n. 189 of July 30, 2002, and amendments thereof in 2008, 2010 and 2011, states that the only way to obtain a residence permit in order to work in Italy, is to be "called" by an employer, who hires the migrant under a contract because of skills not being available locally.

On the one hand, curbing migration means monitoring and regulating it. On the other hand, it means transforming it into "useful" forms. Hence a paradox is entailed as migrants, who have managed to succeed abroad – and this does happen – are addressed by humanitarian campaigns whose goal is to promote the reinvestment of capital within the country of origin. "Today, migrant remittances constitute 9.6 percent of Morocco's PIB. The fourth largest receiver of remittances in the world in absolute value" (Moreno 2006: 19) is Morocco. Remittances are increasingly perceived as a way to fight poverty. People are allowed to access public services, including those of education and health care, and to substantially improve the economy of the poorest households (Tanmia.ma 2007b). From this viewpoint, not only investments and remittances by migrants, but also their stay as "tourists" during the holiday season, become a way of fostering the country's "development"; contributing towards an attenuation of local unemployment and thus precluding new emigration flows (and fostering an internal reverse migration – De Haas 2009). Following this line of thinking, several projects have focused on decentralized cooperation between Italian and Moroccan municipalities. Concurrently, others have been working on the migrants' productive return.

Local and international NGOs share their opinion with institutions working inside the country; in that the only journey people are allowed to undertake is the one occurring in their very country – Morocco. A process of exclusion, usually detected in the new country, starts with

the departure-state. The would-be migrant gets close to Italy, thanks to the images, products, language, humanitarian programs etc. which reach him in Morocco. But, he is factually forbidden to access the country he wishes to move to (with the exception of a limited number of regulated cases). 'Italy' is a *subject*; something that gets imparted and learnt. Hassan declares that in a program he is attending: "They have started teaching 'Italy' […], they teach things about Italy to give us the chance to integrate once there, and then come back in a constructive way".

The program in question is "Migrations and remittances for development", created by the International Organization for Migrations together with the Hassan II Foundation, the Centre For Study And Demographic Research in Rabat and the Italian NGO CERFE (Research and Documentation Centre February '74), which ended in 2009. The final outcome of this program might be the departure for Italy for a six-month work experience.

Programs like this concurrently constitute opportunities and constraints to the construction of the migratory career (Martiniello and Rea 2011). Talking about "intelligent migration", they attempt to normalize the migratory process; promising a structured form of movement, which might be never realised. Such programs try to link these youths to local activities, so as to deter them from departing on their own terms. Political exclusion of autonomous migrants – more difficult to be identified and controlled – is performed by means of the legitimate 'means of movement', a state-created monopolization (Broeders and Engbersen 2007: 1594).

Conclusion

The focus of this article was not about the actual activity of border-crossing by aspirant migrants drawn into my study. In fact I have not even, since then, wondered whether the young people I interviewed had finally left for Italy. I instead tried to analyze the discourses originating both from the context in question and from my interlocutors, and to report the activities the latter had

been subjected to. By each of these reactions, the said central characters witness of a personal *agency,* which lets them move on towards a desired state of being; notwithstanding the restrictions imposed upon their movements.

The young people considered move actively within a thick network of disciplinary actions historically and culturally woven by powerful local and international players (Moreno 2006: 6) of the world of politics, humanitarian and social services. They become mobile subjects through a dual process of being-made and of *self-making* (Ong 2005). On the one hand they are forced to perform within a highly regulated scope, facing the state laws and the humanitarian rules. On the other hand they manage to deal with this very same constraints in profitable ways, deviating from expectations and thus fulfilling a dynamic construction of themselves.

The complex image of life abroad, stemming from both an individual and a collective desire, leads to the construction of these young people as real migrants. Despite the definition of migration being linked to the physical activity of border-crossing, individuals planning to move to Italy embark on a journey, what we might call "a tangible imaginary venture" structured in accordance with very precise practices. They project themselves into the future and they accomplish all essential tasks to reach the desired situation of being a migrant. They learn Italian, they gain competence in dealing with state laws on migration, they activate family-network support, etc. Individuals trigger a migratory circulation (De Tapia 1996) involving imagery, information, investments in an authentically transnational space, which "engage[s] cross-border, multi-local processes and practices" (Vertovec 2007: 968). The migrant youths' activities analyzed in this article entail a displacement; one which is perceived and which comes into being in spite of any attempt at guiding migration and its representation within certain given paths. Therefore, authentic mobility is performed, leading to the need of having to reformulate the very definition of current migratory practices.

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[1] At present O.C.P. SA, with headquarters in Casablanca.

[2] One dirham is equivalent to 0.09 euros.

[3] My research assistant.

[4] Inhabitants of the city of Fès.

[5] The transliteration of Arabic terms and expressions used in the article follows the simplified code produced by the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (2002) instead of the one, scientifically more appropriate but harder to decode, applied by the Word Organisation for the Normalisation (ISO 233: 1984). This choice is also due to the fact that Moroccan Arabic has a lower degree of standardization than Classical Arabic and is therefore open to a wider range of transcriptions.

[6] The noun *blad* means countryside as well as country; in this context it is used by Moroccans to mean Morocco.

[7] It is however not unusual for migration patterns to fail to improve one's life conditions, or even to result in being expelled. 'Umar says: "Here he is now begging. He has wasted five years of his life, and came here and beg".

[8] 20-year-old woman, nearly at the end of her work-oriented high school, has a sister in Bologna, that she would like to join to go to college.

[9] The name is that of a district in Rome.

[10] Please refer to http://podcast.tanmia.ma/article464,464.

[11] For an interesting study on the creation of illegality from regulation defining "legal" mobility, please refer to De Genova.

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