

CONNECTING THE DISCONNECTED

The Migratory Transnationalism of Moroccans in the Canary Islands

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Abstract

The Canary Islands, a region of Spain and the European Union, are just over 100 kilometres away from the coast of western Africa off Morocco's southern border. Moroccan immigration to the Canaries grew during the last boom in Spain's economy (1994-2007), which saw an influx of people from the regions surrounding Morocco who responded to the needs of the local labour market that caters to the tourism industry. This paper presents evidence of an emerging transnational social field that unites the Canaries to these regions through the transnational activities of migrant families. It also considers the unique features that insularity introduces into the analysis of migratory transnationality. The case of the Canaries shows that the territorial dimension and the proximity of borders exert selective effects on migratory flows and on the stratification of the transnational social field.

Keywords

Transnationalism, international migration, islandness, Canary Islands

I. Migratory transnationalism in island contexts

In the social sciences and in migratory studies, delimiting the concept of transnationalism is subject to controversy. To defenders of the concept, it comprises a novel phenomenon that requires a paradigm shift and a new methodological approach (Levitt & Glick, 2004). To its detractors, the transnational practices of migrants are a historical constant, albeit one that has not been the subject of specific study (Waldinger & Fitzgerald, 2004). For some authors, transnationalism is limited to bottom-up practices (Smith & Guarnizo, 1998), part of the so-called 'globalisation from below'. According to Sinatti (2008: 98), "migratory transnationalism is a form of bottom-up transnationalism since it is borne of the institutionalisation of practices rooted in the everyday life of individuals in transnational communities".

Migratory transnationalism aims to make sense of the simultaneous involvement and belonging of migrants in different places and institutional frameworks in the so-called transnational social fields. This is done by creating new conceptual tools that allow us

- 1. Sociodemographic dimension**
 - 1.1. Relatives and friends at point of origin
 - 1.1.1. Places of residence of parents, siblings, children
 - 1.1.2. Places of residence of other close acquaintances
 - 1.2. Trips
 - 1.2.1. Frequency
 - 1.2.2. Purpose
 - 1.2.3. Cost
 - 1.2.4. Average duration
 - 1.2.5. Destination
 - 1.2.6. Activities during stay
 - 1.3. Communication
 - 1.3.1. Telephone calls
 - 1.3.2. Internet, e-mail
 - 1.3.3. Other means
 - 1.3.4. Recipients and contents
- 2. Economic dimension**
 - 2.1. Remittances
 - 2.1.1. Frequency
 - 2.1.2. Amount of average monthly remittance
 - 2.1.3. Change over the course of the stay at the destination
 - 2.1.4. Recipients
 - 2.1.5. Uses at point of origin
 - 2.2. Corporate investment and activities
 - 2.2.1. Farming activities
 - 2.2.2. Industrial activities
 - 2.2.3. Service activities
 - 2.2.4. Residential activities (upkeep or purchase)
- 3. Political dimension**
 - 3.1. Political participation
 - 3.1.1. Political party affiliation
 - 3.1.2. Financial contributions to parties
 - 3.1.3. Participation in electoral activities
 - 3.2. Non-electoral civic activities
 - 3.2.1. Memberships in NGOs or associations
 - 3.2.2. Participation in local development activities
- 4. Sociocultural dimension**
 - 4.1. Religion
 - 4.2. Customs
 - 4.3. Values

Figure 1: Indicators of the transnational activities of international migrants

to understand the relationships between social phenomena and the various spaces in which they occur. In this sense, the focus shifts away from the territorial concept that

associated a space to the State-nation, with its administrative divisions providing the areas to be analysed or explored, and toward “the new modalities of social, territorial and cultural reproduction of identity in conditions of geographic mobility” (Sinatti, 2008: 103). It is the study of the social reproduction of a specific group that redefines the concept of an enclosed territorial space into one that is created and recreated by migratory and non-migratory social agents and their interaction. The make-up of transnational social fields is shaped by the cross-border activities of migrants (Figure 1), which connect people and communities on both sides of the border. Space becomes a relational concept and stops being considered solely as a geographical or physical entity, a phenomenon that some authors have called transnational social spaces or fields (Levitt & Glick, 2004). Along these lines, Pries (2005) proposes a definition and analysis of the social space that does not ignore the geographic context¹. As a result, the principles used to identify and delimit social fields based on geography are the internal homogeneity (presence of common attributes, what is shared, *us*) and inter-heterogeneity (the weakness of what separates, of what divides while still remaining *us*).

Internal homogeneity and differentiation with the outside are what comprise the identification and delineation of social fields. The spatial dimension likely affects the intra-homogeneity and inter-heterogeneity of territorial units. Also well-known is the fact that this homogeneity is reinforced by the bordering process (Anderson and O’Dowd, 1999: 596), to the extent that the establishment of borders selectively modulates exchanges with the outside (Godenau, 2012) and that national policies have, among other purposes, that of homogenising internal conditions and creating a nation through shared rules and symbols.

An operational approach to the social field that considers elements at the origin and destination of the migration is shown in Figure 2. There are many factors that influence (positively and negatively) transnational activities. The figure proposes groupings that take into account the aggregation criterion (actors-contexts) and a criterion for the location in time and space (origin-border-destination).

	Origin	Border	Destination
Actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family structure, role of the migrant • Socioeconomic status, available income 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel permits • Equivalence of diplomas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socioeconomic status, available income • Family regrouping
Contexts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment possibilities • Social structure • Technical resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Migratory policies • Commercial policies • Conditions of connectivity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possibilities for social integration • Technical resources

Figure 2. Dimensions of the transnational social field

When considering the aggregation criterion (rows), we should differentiate between the actors, be they individuals (micro) or families (meso), and the contextual factors (macro) that condition and stimulate the translational strategies of the actors. In the location criterion (columns), we differentiate between the two sides of the border (origin-destination) and intermediate obstacles and facilitators that (dis)connect the two

spheres from changes over time. These latter elements are called the 'border', understood as a social institution whose function is the bilateral and multidimensional regulation of the permeability of cross-border flows.

In our opinion, the concept of a border is one that has not been sufficiently analysed in the transnational approach while at the same time overemphasised unidimensionally (only as border control policies) in other migration analysis perspectives. Borders stem from the sovereignty of States and regulate the permeability of the flow of people, goods, services, capital, etc. in time. As a result, they affect transnational activities. Borders separate and connect and their influence on international migration is not limited to the border crossing (López and Esteban 2010: 84). Thus, a border, in addition to being a physical-geographical place that defines a political boundary, is also a (mutable) barrier in terms of education, language, religion, and so on, that generates internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity.

What is the effect of insularity on transnational activities? Considerations abound that illustrate the relationship between the two. First, the migratory influx to the islands can be high if the islands are part of international migration routes, as is the case of the Canaries. Some islands are located in the interstitial spaces (López & Esteban, 2010:78) between continental States and can act as stepping stones between the two. Second, islands can be independent States or be part of a mainland State (or not, in the case of archipelagic States). When islands are an insular region of a State, they can be viewed as an outpost through which migrants can eventually reach the mainland². In the case of an insular State, its sovereignty implies the power to design and implement its own migratory policies, with all of the difficulties that may entail if the island State lacks its own resources (e.g. Malta as a European Union State). Third, a constituent element of insularity, analysed as a social phenomenon, is that of connectivity. Transnationality is connectivity because it comprises social fields that connect distant lands. As a result, 'nodal islands' (King, 2009:63) and the 'sea of islands' (Hau'ofa, 1993) are manifestations of the broad connectivity of which migratory transnationality forms part. Fourth, the openness and connection of insular spaces has given rise to cultural mixtures and fusions, creating island cultures that draw on multiple influences. Cultural transnationality, then, is not at all foreign to these cultures where nodal islands are concerned. Lastly, a comparison of the 'island' and 'social field' concepts combines two different dimensions: spatial and social. Although the term 'social field' has metaphorical spatial connotations, its ties to the territory are often not explicit (as in Bourdieu's demarcation of the social field as a system of social relationships characterised by the possession and production of a specific type of capital). Social islands, in turn, are social fields that are relatively isolated from one another and can be located on geographical islands or in other mainland territories (e.g. an isolated desert village). Geographical islands are typically not social islands and form part of broader social fields. This inclusion depends on, among other factors, the economic, demographic and cultural integration of insular areas in broader societies, these frequently being national States.

As a result of the above, islands tend to be good 'laboratories' for the study of migrations and transnationality. The case of the Canaries is no exception to this rule.

II. Socio-political context

A description of the context of departure and reception of Moroccan migration and a characterisation of the border between Morocco and the Canaries is essential to

analysing the transnational activities of migrants. Morocco is on the north-western tip of Africa. It borders on the European Union via the Mediterranean and is a transit space for international migrations toward Europe from Africa's western coast. Any indicator of human development will reveal a gaping chasm between the living conditions in those countries and the European Union. For example, the Multidimensional Poverty Index in 2010 was 0.139 for Morocco, 0.352 for Mauritania, 0.384 for Senegal and 0.564 for Mali (Figure 3).

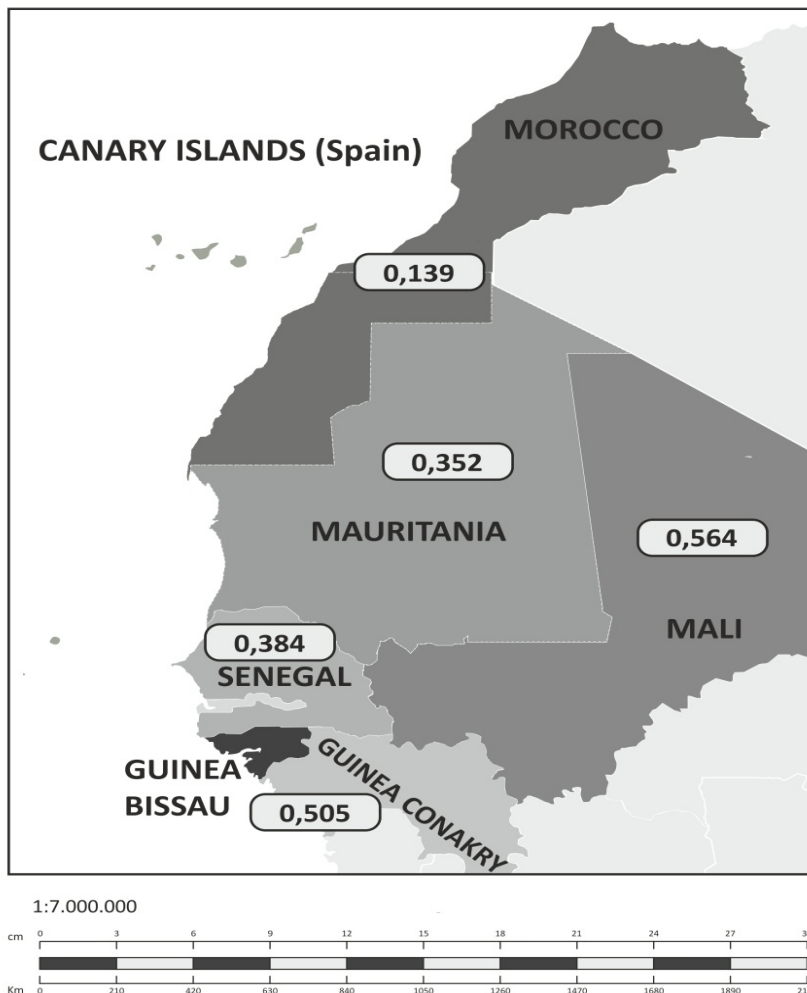


Figure 3. Multidimensional poverty indices for countries in western Africa (Source: Compiled from data from the 2010 Human Development Report. UNDP)

The Canaries/Suss-Massa-Draa border region (region 14 in Figure 5) is separated by a strip of ocean less than 100 kilometres across at its narrowest point on Africa's Atlantic coast. Clandestine migration from Africa to Europe in recent decades has given rise to strict controls and surveillance measures on both sides of the border through FRONTEX, the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the

The regions of Suss-Massa-Draa and Guelmin-Esmara in Morocco and the Canaries in Spain (European Union) exhibit a similar economic specialisation, one based on the export of crops like tomatoes and bananas, tourism and international maritime transport. As economic regions they are more competitive than complementary, though Moroccan migration does not imply a transfer of manpower between the origin and destination in the aforementioned areas of activity. Moreover, the scarce business investment by the Canaries in this area of Morocco is aimed at these activities.

The scarce connectivity between these regions in the south of Morocco and the Canaries is explained, bearing in mind the locality theory of migratory studies, by the interstate position of Suss-Massa-Draa and Guelmin-Esmara, defined as a “bottleneck area” in the power politics of central Morocco, which give priority to territorial union by including Western Sahara, over regional development. Agadir and its metropolitan area can thus be regarded as a global city within scalar theory, while the rest of the Suss-Massa-Draa and Guelmin-Esmara region faces many difficulties in terms of accessibility and connectivity, both territorially, politically and economically. In general, the power of the State severely limits the global ties of these large territories, though international migration tends to offset this effect and contributes to improving the condition of cities like Guelmin and Sidi Ifni, medium-sized localities in the local context of origin.

The bilateral relations between these regions, which share their peripheral nature as regions at the south of their respective States, are partly due to their respective State’s interests and to Spain’s membership in the European Union. Flows in this cross-border regional space are very limited by state and supranational conditions and interests. Local and regional interests lack the resources to defend the expansion and improvement of cross-border relations between the Canaries and Suss-Massa-Draa.

The connectivity between these regions, enhanced through the regulations of supranational organisms, primarily the European Union, has not translated into significant changes or into the normalisation of cross-border relations. Although a programme of activities (2007-2013) is in place to promote the interactions of outermost islands in their geographical regions, its results have been negligible (COM/2004/0343; European Commission, 2004). The goal of supranational organisms is *regional integration*, but this ‘Wider Neighbourhood’ is merely rhetorical and fails to question the status quo of the asymmetrical international border between Spain and Morocco, all of which limits the development of transnational activities. The Canaries, due to their geostrategic-political position, have more ties with Latin America and Europe than with Africa. What we analyse in our research, then, is above all this *transnationality from below* that is practised by Moroccan migrants in the Canaries.

Since Morocco’s independence in the 1950s, Moroccan families have viewed emigration as a basic resource for their survival. Emigration is a structural feature within a Moroccan society that has over three million emigrants, most in European Union countries. Morocco underwent its second demographic transition between 1960 and 2004, with a significant increase in the average marrying age, a notable decrease in the completed fertility rate (from 7.2 children per woman in 1962 to 2.5 in 2004), a substantial increase in celibacy and a substantial rural exodus toward the Atlantic and Mediterranean coastal areas.

Rounding out this demographic behaviour are regional changes that gave rise to three highly dynamic areas or regions in the country with growing economies and urban

areas, two in the north – the Tingitane Peninsula (Tétouan) and Western Rif (Nador) – and one in the south – Suss-Massa-Draa. The rest of the territory is either a frontier land due to its geographical characteristics (dry and mountainous) or an outermost region (the east and south of the country, bordering with the Canaries). This territorial demarcation is useful to understanding development and mobility in Morocco and its connectivity with border regions (Troin, 2010; Figure 5). Morocco is fragmented, with the population and economic and social activities concentrated on the Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts and a wide outlying swath to the east and south. The dynamic aspect of Suss-Massa-Draa attracts internal mobility while halting cross-border interregional mobility.

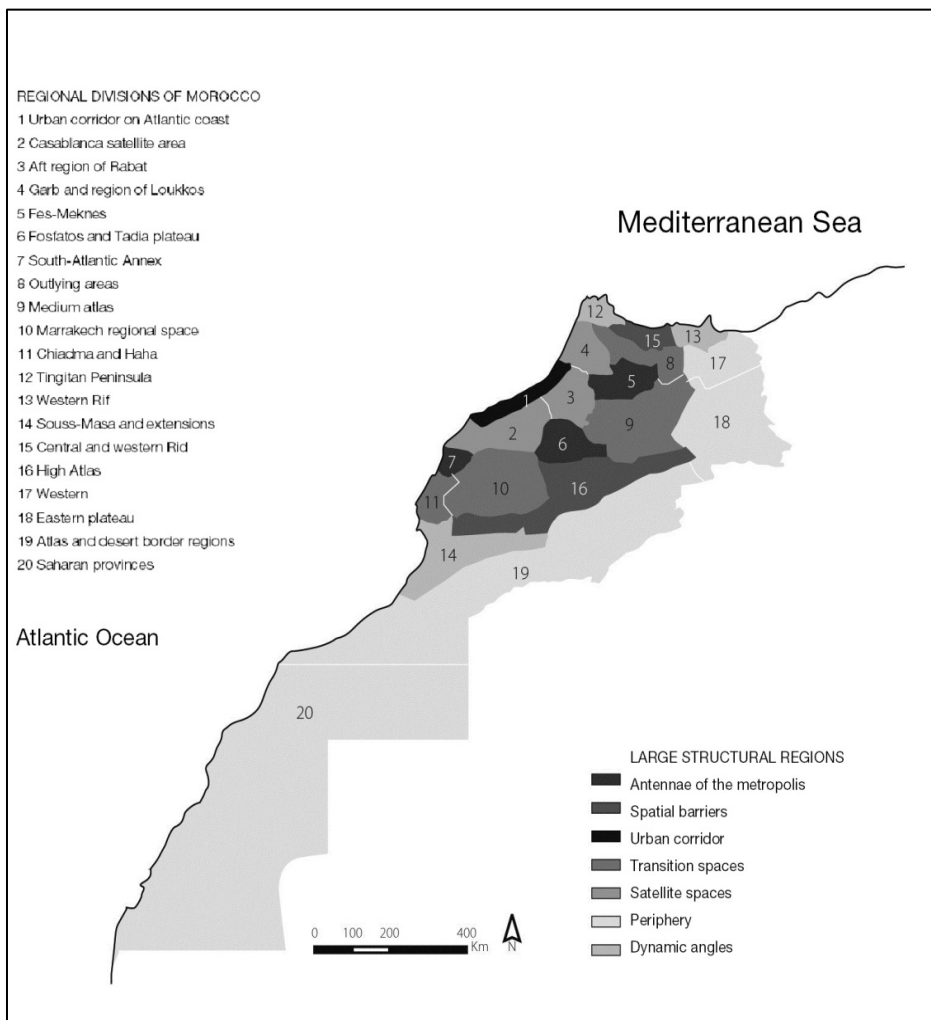


Figure 5. Large regional structures in Morocco. (Source: Troun, 2010: 94)

The Moroccan community has been present in the Canaries since the 1960s, initially due to migration from the north of the country and devoted primarily to trade, and then, in a second phase starting in the 1990s, due to migration from the south of Morocco. This is a labour migration force that settles in growing tourist and residential areas on the islands of Gran Canaria, Tenerife, Lanzarote and Fuerteventura. The economic boom on the islands between 1994 and 2007 increased the geographical dispersion of these settlements, which had previously been confined mainly to the island of Gran Canaria.



Figure 6. Distribution by municipality of the Moroccan population in the Canaries. (Source: Spain's National Statistics Institute: Municipal Registry of Inhabitants on 1.1.2008.)

Figure 7 shows the growth in the number of migrants originating in the south of Morocco, with six of the 10 main sites of origin being in the south, and in the preference for Fuerteventura and Lanzarote as settlement sites for people originating in Guelmin, Sidi Ifni and El Aaiun. These local settings are small cities or municipalities where migratory networks and chains are easily created. A large percentage of Moroccan migrants residing in the Canaries are from communities, cities and towns whose current prospects for economic development are bleak.

Place of birth	Municipality of residence									
	Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (GC)	Arona (TF)	Arrecife (LZ)	Pájara (FV)	La Oliva (FV)	Tías (LZ)	Yaiza (LZ)	Puerto del Rosario (FV)	Antigua (FV)	Santa Lucía de Tirajana (GC)
Guelmin	5.5	21.2	19.7	20.0	33.3	64.7	46.7	42.9	42.9	15.4
El Aaiun	10.1	24.2	44.3	20.0	16.7		13.3	14.3	14.3	23.1
Sidi Ifni	14.7	1.5	6.6	40.0	12.5	17.6	20.0	7.1	14.3	7.7
Casa-blanca	11.0	9.1	11.5	8.0	8.3	5.9				7.7
Nador	3.7	12.1	1.6							23.1
Agadir	3.7	6.1			20.8		6.7	7.1		
Dakhla	8.3	4.5	6.6							
Tan-Tan	3.7	9.1	1.6			5.9	6.7		14.3	7.7
Tangier	5.5	4.5		8.0						7.7
Rest	33.9	7.6	8.2	4.0	8.3	5.9	6.7	28.6	14.3	7.7

Figure 7. Distribution of Moroccan immigrants by place of birth and current residency. FV: Fuerteventura, GC: Gran Canaria, LZ: Lanzarote and TF: Tenerife (the 10 municipalities with the largest Moroccan populations)

III. Results

III.1 Field work in the Canary Islands and Morocco

Field research on migratory transnationality requires coordination among many disciplines in order to accommodate the cultural, political, economic and social dimensions exhibited by the phenomenon. The theoretical references used in our research were the transnational and the livelihood approaches, since both coincide in their efforts to reconcile agency (the individual) with structure (society), placing the emphasis on studying the home and the family (meso level). Families implement individual and collective strategies in which mobility is regarded as one more resource from among the set of options. If mobility is part of multi-local and multi-sector family strategies, then social networks and family structures, whose study requires a combination of quantitative and qualitative research techniques in order to describe, explain and understand migratory projects and their consequences, are of great relevance to analysing mobility.

According to Glick (2008), the location should be viewed as a relational mode that places points of origin in contact with points of settlement. The aim is to regard people and places as interlinked elements in the overall processes (Glick, 2008:40). The transnational space, then, takes into account the historical timeline of the relationship between territories (by identifying the macro and cultural aspects) and the concept of local aspects in which the migrant plays a key role. Moreover, Glick and Caglar (2008) propose a scalar study of the localities that hierarchise the territory from the standpoint of globalisation and migrations. The roles of the State and of collective and individual agents (corporations, migrations, etc.) thus give rise to uneven geographical development in an open process of restructuring the space arising from the competition between cities and regions, promoting unequal spatial development. Our analysis of the

cross-border transnational space limits the geographic scope of the transnational social field to the regions of Suss-Massa-Draa/Guelmin-Esmara in Morocco and the Canaries in Spain.

After an initial phase reviewing the literature and interviewing experts and officials on Moroccan migration in the Canaries, we drafted a questionnaire (sample of 400 cases) to ascertain the current migratory pattern, the voyages, networks and driving forces involved and, above all, to quantify the regularity and continuity of transnational activities: remittances, trips to areas of origin, investments in areas of origin, involvement in associations, online contact with relatives, and so on. The survey can be used to detect the presence of transmigrants in the Moroccan community living in the Canaries and to obtain their socio-demographic profiles. This is done by defining a synthetic indicator that includes five criteria: the regularity and continuity of telephone contact, monthly remittances and annual visits, investments, and participation in support associations, all involving the point of origin. Maximum transnationality is regarded as fulfilling three or more criteria, average is two criteria and low or none is one criterion. Maximum transnationality was attained by 21.8% of those surveyed, and average transnationality by 39.3%. Taking into account the type of migration and the characteristics of the border, the percentage of respondents with the maximum transnationality is considered high.

A semi-structured interview technique was used to study 28 transnational families. One interview was conducted with a respondent in the Canaries and another in Morocco with a direct relative. The goals of these interviews were to determine the current structure and configuration of family units, emphasising internal and external migration paths, to examine the personal and family work history, to detail the structure and organisation of transnational ties and to determine the consequences of migration on the communities of origin. The cases sampled were arranged based on a combination of three variables: the social class of origin in its local context (high, medium or low), the intensity of international migration of the family of origin (high, medium or low) and the contribution of the respondent in the Canaries to the support of the family at the point of origin (primary, high, medium, none). In this study the survey and the interviews complement each other. The former are used to analyse the migratory pattern and to contextualise and quantify the transnational activities, while the qualitative technique is used to analyse the processes, the multi-location strategies of individuals and groups, the migrants and their families in their transnational community setting.

This study does not consider in detail all of the dimensions of the transnational activities shown in Figure 1. The fieldwork focuses mainly on the indicators of the socio-demographic and economic dimensions, and to a lesser extent on the political and sociocultural dimensions. This research approach was chosen so as to allow for comparisons with studies from other places and is in keeping with the pioneering and exploratory character of the field of transnational borders.

III.2 Socioeconomic stratification of migratory transnationalism

The transnational profiles and the intensity of the transnational activities of Moroccans are determined by their migratory pattern. We should note that the type of immigration (labour, commercial, asylum, circular, etc.), the group of immigrants or population selected (ethnic group, national or regional group, border communities) and the type of transnational practices to be analysed (economic, political, cultural, religious) are key factors in the transnational profiles. In other studies (Kyle 1995; Portes 2003; Zhou

2004), the population selected to analyse the transnational activities and intensity is more in keeping with a commercial or corporate migratory pattern, meaning that the type of community selected yields a greater intensity of transnational economic practices. In our case, the weight of salaried individuals in the current Moroccan community and also of those unemployed since 2008 influences the transnational profiles, intensity and practices. As a result, the migratory typology, the population selected and the type of transnational activity determine the degree and intensity of the transnational profiles. Moreover, the quantitative importance of migration in the country of origin (Morocco, Colombia, Mexico, etc.) also influences the transnational social fields and the family profiles of the transmigrants (Lamela et al., 2012).

The results of the survey show, especially for the variables associated with the receiving context, that the propensity of a primarily economic transnationality correlates: to the arrival period, the length of the stay, the income, the level of studies of the transmigrants, their place of birth and the family residency pattern. Thus, the profile of a Moroccan transnational in the Canaries offers the following characteristics: he is a male residing more than seven years at the destination, a small business owner, self-employed or qualified service worker with a university degree, with a spouse at the point of origin and who emigrated from a border region.

The variables with the greatest effect on the transnational socio-demographic profile are associated with the destination context (Figure 8), which points to a directionality from the outside – settlement spaces – toward the inside – departure spaces – of the forces that enable the phenomenon: the length of the stay and the professional or occupational status (along with the labour contract). Of less importance in explaining transnational activities are the variables associated with the departure context (Figure 9), such as the family settlement pattern or place of origin, also influence the transnational profile but to a lesser extent. The Moroccan transnational community in the Canaries is defined preferentially by the socioeconomic integration conditions and by the length of the stay, which correlates to their residential status as migrants, given the typically observed transition from migratory irregularity toward residency permits during the first few years of the stay.

A visa requirement was imposed at the Spanish-Moroccan border starting in 1990. This control on mobility conditions clandestine immigration (37% of respondents were undocumented) such that a longer stay is required to achieve a threshold of integration that provides stability and regularity to transnational practices. Once past the seven-year point at the destination, the intensity of transnational activities remains steady among those who stay past 15 years; in other words, a transnational community develops that is stable over time. What is more, our sample excluded Moroccans with Spanish or EU citizenship, who probably play an active role in the transnational community.

Leon Santana and Godenau: Connecting the Disconnected

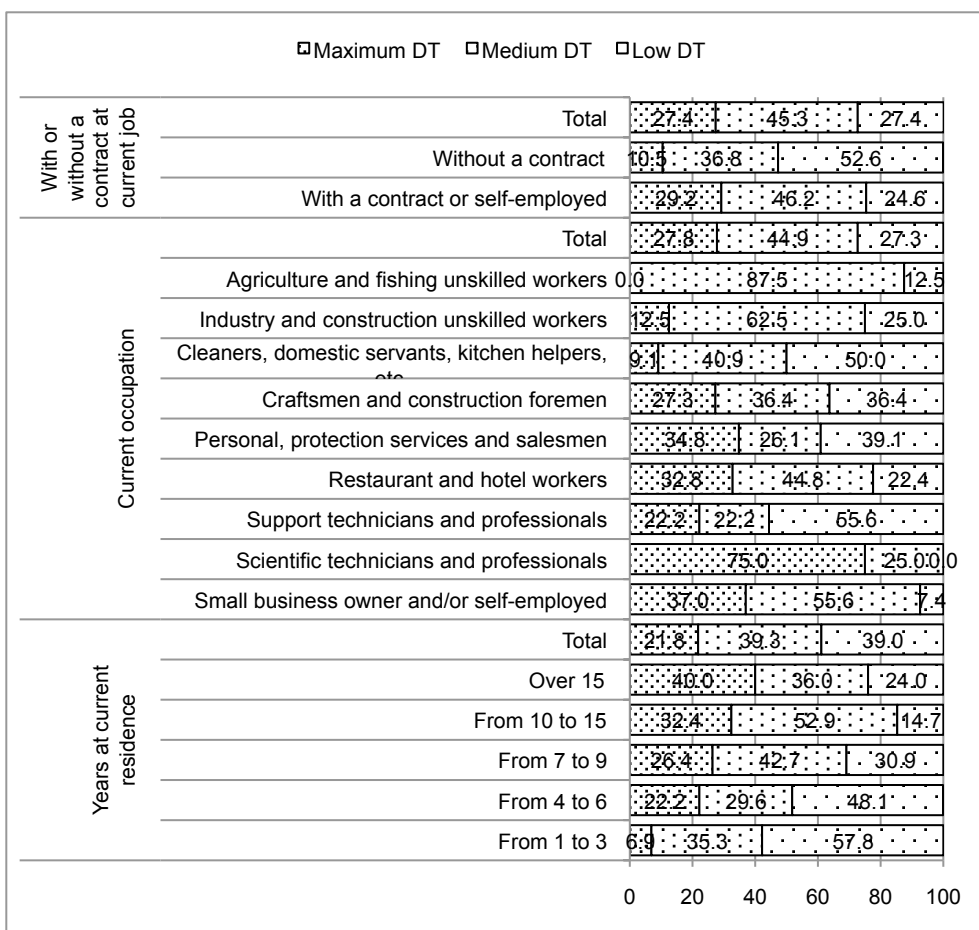


Figure 8. Extent of transnationality based on socio-demographic determinants associated with the destination context (horizontal %).

Transnational activities considered: 1. Telematic contacts (telephone, internet, etc.); 2. Average no. of trips/year; 3. Frequency of remittances; 4. Investments at point of origin; 5. Involvement in associations that support the place of origin. Maximum DT (degree of transnational activities): satisfies 3 or more criteria; Medium DT: satisfies 2 criteria; Low DT: satisfies 1 or no criteria.

The employment status of migrants in the Canaries conditions their transnational profile. Those employed as business owners, technicians, or professionals, or in the personal or hotel services have a greater propensity for high levels of transnationality, while unskilled labourers and cleaners are barely present in the group with the highest transnationality. These unskilled labourers, however, feature more prominently in the average transnational intensity level than the average occupation. The employment contract variable reinforces the tendency that a legal salaried status will increase the economic transnationality profile.

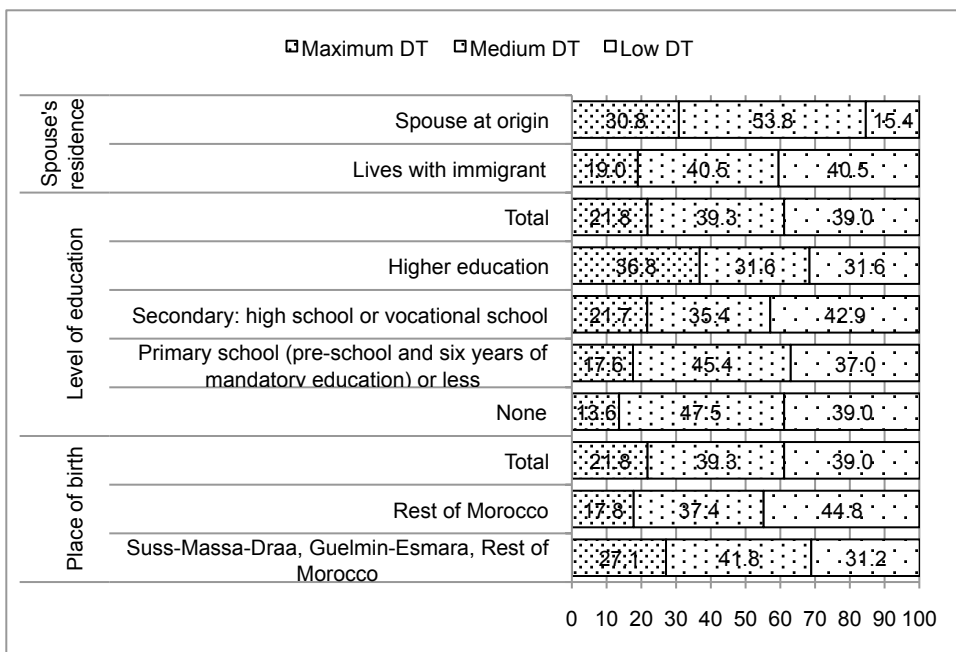


Figure 9. Extent of transnationality based on socio-demographic determinants associated with the departure context (horizontal %).

Transnational activities considered: 1. Telematic contacts (telephone, internet, etc.); 2. Average no. of trips/year; 3. Frequency of remittances; 4. Investments at point of origin; 5. Involvement in associations that support the place of origin. Maximum DT (degree of transnational activities): satisfies 3 or more criteria; Medium DT: satisfies 2 criteria; Low DT: satisfies 1 or no criteria.

A significant result of our research is the correlation between the place of origin and a high propensity to transnationality. People from border regions are more transnational even if the border is highly impermeable and their arrival is more recent. This fact can be explained by a combination of other variables. The percentage of migrants from Suss-Massa-Draa and Guelmin-Esmara is higher than the national average in the most transnational occupations (business owners, self-employed, and qualified hotel personnel), they have higher average incomes and a higher level of education (and this despite the fact that the populations in these regions are not known for these attributes, indicative of a selective migration effect). In this case it is possible that the migratory chains provided them with this job placement, since their points of origin and destination are small cities and towns and as such may have knowledge of each other.

The immigrant's marital status and conjugal residency pattern are key to the transnationality we analysed. We would expect that reuniting with one's spouse at the destination will reduce the propensity for transnational activities, such as communications, remittances, visits, investment, etc. The following cohabitation patterns were found among respondents: 51.3% live with their spouse in the Canaries (12.8% of them are married to a Spanish national) and 10% have a spouse in Morocco (30% of these have a high transnationality). Of those migrants living with their spouse, 53.7% were married when they left Morocco and the rest married afterwards. The cohabitation pattern correlated to the Moroccan migratory pattern. Families who

typically reside at both the point of origin and destination have a particularly high contribution to the development of the former, but such families are low in number.

III.3 Transnational activities and local development

Having presented the elements that define the transnational social field at the border, we now consider the effects of remittances, visits to the area of origin, investments and involvement in associations in the local socioeconomic development from a social stratification standpoint. It is important to note, however, that the development of economic activities in the area of origin is subject to its own market limitations and to the conditions established by local and central institutions, as well as by the international stage in which transmigrant families evolve. This group contends with a world of possibilities for developing life projects, integrating the conditions at the destination (which are usually many) and origin as a whole entity in which the subject and families set up their strategies and their practices. Sometimes the slightest chance at prosperity at the point of origin is denied in order to justify a desire to leave: "There is nothing in Morocco". In other words, the realisation of the opportunities (real or imagined) present in transnational life conditions the perception and interaction with both the local and national point of origin.

According to the survey, the economic dependence between Moroccan emigrants in the Canaries and their families back home are as follows: 70.8% of respondents stated that between one and three people regularly depend on them; for 20.6%, that figure rose to between four and six; and finally, 7.1% must look after seven or more. The number of dependents correlates with the marital status, with parents and siblings depending more often on unmarried individuals, and wives and children depending on husbands who have not regrouped their families at the destination. Considering the large average family size in south Morocco, the average number of dependents for each migrant does not seem high, meaning it is fairly likely that other family members have emigrated or that other resources exist to support the family.

The findings from our survey indicate that 62.5% of respondents send remittances. In the group that does not send them (37.5%), 9.8% stated that they "no longer send them". This percentage might be affected by the economic crisis. We differentiated between the financial and educational profiles of those who send remittances and those who do not. The former have been in Spain longer, have higher incomes and greater job stability. One's current occupational status exerts a clear influence on the propensity to send money. The unemployed show a lower propensity to send money, while those employed in the construction and hotel industries stand out for their high propensity to send money. The average amount sent each month is 171 euros.

Remittances are used mainly to support direct relatives at the point of origin (88.1%), and less often to support non-relatives or relatives living outside Morocco. Once the basic needs are met, the money is then used to improve home furnishings and to purchase, expand or improve dwellings. The effects of the use of remittances can be very beneficial to development. Spending on food and dwellings can expand the populations' abilities and freedoms, and as a consequence must not be regarded as non-developmental or non-productive.

The in-depth interviews revealed how the socioeconomic stratification of transnational families is linked to the unmet needs at the point of origin and, by extension, to the preferential use of the additional resources provided by emigrants. In the poorest

families these resources are used to cover basic needs, while more well-to-do families expand their wealth through the acquisition or expansion of dwellings. In families with more resources, remittances are used to cover educational costs for siblings, purchase land and build a house for the family. Several respondents indicated that their parents did not need any money. A little over two-thirds (68.7%) of Moroccan immigrants living in the Canaries visit Morocco about once a year. Of these, 19.9% do so twice and 11.3% more than twice. In 95% of all cases, the primary reason given for travelling to Morocco is to visit family.

The frequency of these visits has a positive effect on the propensity to send remittances. Those who travel to Morocco more than once a year account for 47.4% of those who send over 3,000 euros yearly in remittances, while those who travel less account for 78.5% of those who send less than a thousand euros a year. Thus there is a relationship between the frequency of visits and the financial standing and legal status of the migrant, aspects that in turn change with the length of the stay in the Canaries/Spain. It is important to note that there are no maritime connections across this border and that scheduled, non-stop flights are subject to the impermeability of the militarised border. The end result is that a short distance of a little over 100 kilometres often ends up requiring a flight via Madrid, Casablanca and Agadir that spans several thousand kilometres and lasts five hours.

There seems to be a link between the visits home, the use of remittances and investments in the strategies of transnational families in Guelmin and Sidi Ifni. Temporary stays in the area of origin are used to establish contact, make decisions, sign documents, purchase goods and carry out an onsite verification of the long-distance arrangements. All of the families interviewed mentioned an annual visit that is made, if possible, during Ramadan or in August.

The information obtained from the survey indicates that the frequency of investments is relatively low (16.5%). The investor profile shows a direct relationship between the number of years residing at the destination (80.3% of investors have lived in the Canaries over seven years), annual remittances in excess of 2,000 euros, self-employment (those who invest are primarily self-employed and small business owners), monthly income above 1,500 euros, a higher level of education, gender (only 13.6% are female) with a non-working spouse and having an average level of transnationality. Most investments are used to purchase or improve a home (80%) typically destined for family use. Investments not destined for housing or land (10.7%) go to commercial activities (8.9%). Income is rarely obtained from the acquisitions (15.9%) and when it is, it almost always (90.9%) stays in the area of origin.

A large portion of the investments is associated with the migrant's province of origin. Some interviewees noted that the choice of the location in which to invest was made based on expected returns and not for reasons of supporting their families. The main destinations of these resources are the principal bordering cities located on the coast, El Aaiun (20.4%), Sidi Ifni (8.2%) and Casablanca (8.2%) - and inland -Guelmin (30.6%). This pattern correlates as expected with the main places of origin of the migrants: Guelmin (20.5%), El Aaiun (19.9%), Sidi Ifni (11.5%) and Casablanca (8.7%). The percentage of Guelmin in the investments exceeds its demographic representation in the sample, while Sidi Ifni does not seem to attract investments in correlation with the number of emigrants the city has abroad.

Conclusion

The fieldwork conducted both in the Canaries and in Morocco as part of our research detected the presence of an incipient cross-border transnational social field conditioned by the political and economic impermeability of the Spanish-Moroccan border in this unstable geographic region. Even so, migrants are promoting a 'transnationality from below' whose transnational activities profile is characterised by a focus on supporting the family, maintaining social and cultural contacts through visits to the area of origin and online communications, as well as by a conversion of the economic and social stratification of family units into a stratification of transnationality. Our findings confirm that the family strategies used by migrants contribute to connecting two geographical areas that are separated not so much by the sea, but by the political and geostrategic factors imposed by the national States involved.

The uniqueness of migratory transnationality in insular spaces is evident in the Canaries in several aspects. First, irregular maritime arrivals that cross a closely monitored border account for a high percentage of Moroccan immigration to the Canaries. Second, the archipelago's 'interstitial' position as part of the southern border of both Spain and the European Union conditions this border's low permeability and the 'Europeanisation' of the control and surveillance duties. Third, the notable openness and financial, migratory and sociocultural connectivity of the Canaries confers on them the character of 'nodal islands', though with respect to the African continent this connectivity is less pronounced ('living with its back to Africa'). In this sense, the migratory transnationality of African, including Moroccan, migrants opens doors that were once closed (both Morocco and Senegal have high emigration rates). Fourth, the insular distribution of the Moroccan population in the Canaries is uneven and conditioned by the housing and tourism boom; as a consequence, the construction of the transnational social field in the territory is also uneven. Its impact on the local scale depends on the characteristics of the local (insular) job markets. The notion that the territorial dimension of the social space or field must seek its own specific analysis is confirmed. The archipelagic fragmentation of the Canaries shows that some of its islands are closer to Morocco than other not only in geographic terms, but in social ones as well.

End Notes

¹ The social space is a "given societal space must be regarded as a dense and durable configuration of social practices, systems of symbols and artefacts. It can either extend over one contiguous geographic space or span plurilocally different geographic spaces ... According to the classical reasoning of John Stuart Mill, two conditions should be fulfilled in order to construct or identify societal spaces: (1) the commonality of features (of the aspects and variables considered as important) within the societal space should be significantly greater than the commonality of features shared by it and other societal units; and (2) the differences (among aspects and variables considered as important) within the societal space should be significantly less than those between it and other societal units" (Pries, 2005:186).

² Unless the mainland state redefines the insular territory as excluded from free internal mobility, as is the case of Australia: "it did so by designating portions of its sovereign territory as 'non-Australia' for the strict purposes of claiming asylum. These portions include Christmas Island, Ashmore Reef, Cartier Islands, and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands" (Baldacchino, 2010: 130).

³ The fieldwork was carried out by the Tenerife Immigration Observatory and funded by the Government of the Canary Islands Office for African Relations. Its detailed results are published in Godenau & León (2012). The survey questionnaire is available upon request.

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