

Migrant Associations as Actors in Local Development? A National Event-History Analysis in Burkina Faso

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Social and environmental consequences of migration are often studied through the lens of destination areas both because (1) this is the place where population pressure constraints local resources and (2) this is the place where social and economical integration problems arise. However, migration also affects sending areas. Depopulation is often cited as a major issue especially since emigrants are usually young working people. And there is still a debate on the impact of remittances: some authors have argued that remittances have no impact on sending areas, others contend that they have a detrimental effect (Reichert, 1981), while others agree that remittances do help origin communities (Taylor, 2004). Migration can also have an impact through collective organizations. But the role of migrant associations has received very little interest in the literature on the consequences of migration on sending areas. In this context, our paper aims at assessing if migrant associations can be actors in the social and economic development and the environmental change of origin communities. We will provide both qualitative analyses and quantitative results using a national community survey carried out in Burkina Faso (West Africa) in 2002.

Migrant associations and Sending Communities

Migrant associations are quite common institutions among migrants within and from developing countries. They are formed by migrants sharing places of origin. They have been described for long by anthropologists and historians as “migrant village associations” made up of domestic migrants moving from rural areas to towns and cities in developed as well as in developing nations (Fitzgerald, 2004). More recently, they have been labelled as “home-town associations” (HTAs) in the literature on international migration, especially to describe Mexican migrants organisations in the United States (López, Escala-Rabadan et al., 2001). In West Africa, migrant associations are today both domestic and international migrants’ initiatives. Depending on the regional context, they group either domestic or international migrants, or sometimes both of them. In Burkina Faso, as in other West African countries, the first associations were created under colonial rule by migrants settling in towns and cities and were aimed at helping the urban adaptation of new arrivals (Mande, 1996). The scope of their activities progressively broadened (informal insurance, rotating credit, sportive and cultural events organization, etc.). Migrant associations’ objectives were thus primarily social. Their activities were mainly turned towards destination areas, though they were also aimed at maintaining the migrant’s attachment to the community of origin. Following the same model, international (mainly Senegalese and Malian) migrant associations appeared in Europe (mainly in France) in the 1970s when West African

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trans-border flows became significant (Daum, 1995 ; Lavigne-Delville, 2000). At first, these organizations were vehicles of integration in the host country.

In the 1970s and 1980s, in West Africa, sending areas began to receive more attention from migrant associations of both the international and domestic variety: the promotion of the development of origin communities became an explicit objective (Bierschenk, Chauveau et al., 2000). Existing organisations added it to their previous aims and new associations were also created in order to contribute to the development of sending areas. In Burkina Faso, for instance, the number of (domestic) migrant associations devoted to the community development dramatically increased from 58 in the 1970s to 119 in the 1980s (Diawara, 1996). Basically, they intend to take care of the needs of their village or town of origin, i.e. to promote the construction of public infrastructure, to create social projects, to participate in productive investments. One way to do it is to organize a collective remittances system. This characterizes most Malian and Senegalese migrant associations in France (Quiminal, 1991). Another way to fulfil this development objective is to act as brokers between the origin community and potential sponsors, i.e. governmental or non-governmental organisations (Bierschenk, Chauveau et al., 2000). This is a strategy adopted by domestic migrant associations, whose urban based leaders are usually well instructed and have often jobs that allow them to be in contact with public or private support organizations. International migrant associations also play a broker role since they have a good access to developed countries institutions (NGOs, municipalities).

The question whether migrant associations are actors in development in origin communities is more and more crucial in developing countries, and especially in Africa. Indeed, since the 1980s, they seem to be privileged partners of NGOs: they are preferred to individuals because they appear as structured organizations (Jacob, Lavigne Delville, 1994), and they are preferred to governments because these latter are alleged to use funds in an ineffective manner (Mande, 1996). The state withdrawal, implemented in most West African countries in line with structural adjustment programmes (SAPs), have reinforced the needs of alternative actors in local development since public authorities are less and less able to provide basic infrastructure and equipments. West African governments now appeal for international migrants investments in the development of their region of origin (West African Regional Ministerial Meeting on the Participation of Migrants in the Development of their Country of Origin, 2001).

Migrant associations are thus nowadays expected to play an important role in the development of their region of origin. In several countries they have already accomplished various projects. Qualitative and often monographic studies have been done on their impact. It has been shown that (1) they contribute to social change (Quiminal, 1991 ; Kossi, 2000 ; López, Escala-Rabadan et al., 2001), (2) they partly compensate for lack of public investments in infrastructure and equipments (Daum, 1998), (3) they rarely carry out productive projects (Lavigne-Delville, 2000 ; López, Escala-Rabadan et al., 2001). All in all, migrant associations are expected to have a significant impact because when they fund the construction of public infrastructure, such as roads and bridges, they improve local economies by facilitating economic transactions. Similarly, their financing of education and health projects is a direct investment in human capital. And finally, their efforts to introduce modern agricultural techniques (e.g. irrigation, soil enrichment) contribute to environmental change. But these effects are still uncertain. Qualitative studies have put to the forth a large range of obstacles that limit the success of migrants collective efforts to develop their place of origin (Quiminal, 1991 ; Diawara, 1996 ; Mande, 1996 ; Kossi, 2000). As a

result, most local analyses have mixed conclusions. And, beyond local case studies, there is no global evaluation of the impacts of migrant associations.

The Burkinabe Case: Objective and Hypotheses

The goal of our paper is to provide a global and quantitative assessment, at the national level, of impact of migrant associations on origin communities in Burkina Faso. Compared to other countries, Burkina Faso seems to be particularly well endowed with migrant associations (Bierschenk, Chauveau et al., 2000). Organizations of the domestic type have emerged after the severe droughts of the 1970s, both because of a higher local demand (community needs were crucial) and because of a new offer (international NGOs who rushed in the country were seeking local institutionalized partners). Besides, since the 1960s, migrant associations of the international type have also been created by Burkinabe people settled in Côte d'Ivoire (Deniel, 1967)³. Contrary to other West African countries, such as Senegal or Mali, migration from Burkina Faso to European countries has been very limited.

Our main hypothesis is that migrant associations are actors in development in sending communities, in that they provide investments or seek public or private support to carry out social projects (health, education), to supply new infrastructure (paved roads, electricity, telephone, hydraulic system) or services, and to introduce new activities or to modernize agriculture. By all these means, migrants are expected to induce environmental changes in their community (in a broad sense, including social, economic and water and land use changes). In theoretical terms, our hypothesis is in line with the new economics of labour migration, according to which migration is not simply the result of individual decisions aimed at maximizing personal earnings, but much more the result of collective decisions aimed at overcoming market failures that threaten the material well-being of households in origin communities.

A secondary hypothesis is that international migrant associations have a weaker impact than their domestic counterparts in Burkina Faso. This expectation is in contradiction with most observations in Mali or Senegal (Lavigne-Delville, 2000). It is grounded on several arguments. First, Burkinabe migrants living in Côte d'Ivoire have much lower incomes than the Malian or Senegalese migrants in Europe. Furthermore, they have a much more restricted access to support organizations (international NGOs, national institutions from developed countries). Second, almost 50% of Burkinabe people living in Côte d'Ivoire were born in this latter country, so that their links to their origin community may be weak. Third, field observations have concluded that Burkinabe migrant associations are poorly organized in matter of collective remittances (Blion & Bredeloup, 1997). However, Mande (1996) suggests a competing hypothesis: he suggests that international and domestic migrants are grouped in the same associations. If he is right, then there should be no distinct associations in Burkinabe villages and, of course, no differential in the impact of migrant associations.

³ Until civil war broke out in Côte d'Ivoire, this country was the main destination of Burkinabe international migrants. And Burkinabe people still constitute the main foreign community in Côte d'Ivoire.

Data

The analyses performed in this paper will rely on two data sources : (1) a unique quantitative data collected on a large sample of localities in Burkina Faso in 2002 ; and (2) quantitative and qualitative data collected from a sample of migrant associations in Burkina Faso's two cities (Ouagadougou and Bobo Dioulasso), where most of the associations are located.

The data on villages and small towns come from a *retrospective community* survey conducted of 600 localities in Burkina Faso in 2002 (out of approximately 8,000 settlements in the whole country)⁴. The survey was part of a larger project on migration and urban integration in Burkina Faso, in which individual life histories (migration, fertility...) were also collected. The community level survey was designed to be linked with individual histories for the analysis of demographic behaviour (see Beauchemin and Schoumaker, 2005). Retrospective data was collected from groups of community informants, consisting of "délégués de village" (administrative representatives), village chiefs and other knowledgeable informants. The survey covered a broad range of topics including transportation, health centres, schools, employment opportunities, development projects, agricultural mechanization, and, of specific interest for this paper, migrant associations. Efforts were made to obtain retrospective information since 1960 for most village characteristics. Respondents were asked to recall, for instance, the years when the schools opened or the year in which a migrant association was created. Information on migrant association include the year of creation, the place where the association is located (name of city or town, country), whether it is a local or regional association, the type of activities it carries out (economic help, integration of migrants, cultural activities,...). The data from the community survey thus include a large amount of relevant information to test the relationships between the existence and type of migrant associations and the level of development of the community.

Quantitative and qualitative data will also be collected in Fall 2005 from a sample of about 25 migrant associations in Ouagadougou and Bobo Dioulasso, out of about 250 associations identified in these towns in the community survey (table 1). A structured questionnaire will be used to collect data on the activities of the associations, on their investments in their villages/towns since their creation (building of schools, investments in mechanization of agriculture), on their links with governmental and non governmental organizations to promote development in their villages/towns. In-depth interviews will also be collected from some leaders of these associations, notably to obtain information on more sensitive topics such as lobbying from these associations to governmental and non governmental associations.

⁴ The sample of localities is not a random sample of the 8000 localities. A set of weights was derived using post-stratification (three stratification variables were used : province, administrative status, and population size) to approach a representative sample of the localities.

Table 1: Some characteristics of the migrant associations identified in the 2002 survey in Burkina Faso

Characteristics of migrant associations	Number of associations	% of total
Place of the association		
Ouagadougou	202	60
Bobo Dioulasso	50	15
Other place in Burkina Faso	44	13
Abroad	40	12
Date of creation		
Before 1970	17	5
1970-1979	34	10
1980-1989	83	25
1990-2002	202	60
Provides economic help to locality		
Yes	291	87
No	45	13
Total	336	100

Methods

The first part will be devoted to descriptive analyses of the migrant association (number, types, dates of creation, localization...), and to bivariate (cross-sectionnal) relationships between the existence and type of migrant associations and the level of development of the villages. Several dimensions of local development will be examined separately:

- (1) Public facilities: primary schools, secondary schools and health centres;
- (2) Infrastructure: roads, electricity, telephone, mills, boreholes;
- (3) Agriculture: mechanization, irrigation, market-gardening;
- (4) Other (non agricultural) economic activities: commercial services, other private enterprises;

Because of the limitation of cross sectional analyses to infer causation, the second part using multivariate models, will take advantage of the longitudinal nature of the community data. The community data will be analysed with discrete-time event history models, using “village-years” datasets (i.e. each village appears 42 times in the datasets with a line per year from 1960 to 2002. Each line, i.e. each year, characteristics of the village may change).

The discrete-time event history model, estimated through binary logistic regression (Allison 1995), is specified as follows:

$$\log\left(\frac{p_{it}}{1-p_{it}}\right) = \alpha_t + \beta' \cdot \mathbf{X}_{it}$$

where p_{it} is the conditional probability that village/town i experiences the event under study (new school, new health centre,...) at duration t (starting from 1960), given that the event has not already occurred. α_t represents the baseline hazard function. \mathbf{X}_{it} is a vector of time-constant and time-varying community level covariates.

Several models will be implemented in order to test the net effect of migrant associations on various dependent variables (see the above-mentioned variables related to public facilities, infrastructure, agriculture and other activities). Independent variables will be divided in two types. (1) Time-varying variables on the characteristics of migrant associations (international vs. domestic migrants, local vs. regional associations...) will be analysed as *explanatory variables* in order to assess if their existence and their characteristics at time $t-1$ have an impact on the probability that specific amenities or activities will be implanted in the community at time t . (2) A set of *control variables* will also be included (e.g. the population size of the locality, the existence of facilities in neighbouring villages, etc.) in order to take account the fact that the impact of migrant associations depends on the local context.

Additional data collected from migrant associations in fall 2005 will be used to complement results of the event history analyses. Quantitative and qualitative data from migrant associations will provide us with rich information on the mechanisms through which these migrant associations impact on local development (investment through remittances, lobbying...) and on the factors that influence their successes or failures.

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