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Thomas Lacroix

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# Working Papers

Paper 27, December 2010

## **Bonding Collective?**

### The moral infrastructures of transnational hometown networks

Thomas Lacroix

*Paper 1 of 2 on 'The migrant organisations of development:  
Unveiling the meta-structures of transnationalism'*

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- analyse migration as part of broader global change
- contribute to new theoretical approaches
- advance understanding of the multi-level forces driving migration

### Abstract (Research Background)

This working paper is part of a comparative research project looking at three immigrant groups (two North African Berber groups: the Moroccan Chleuhs and the Algerian Kabyles; and the Sikh Punjabis from India) residing in two receiving countries (France and the UK). This work seeks to explain the emergence since the early 1990s of hometown associations committed to the development of their place of origin. This research draws on a previous doctoral study on Moroccan Berber immigrants in France. Since then, I have extended this research to the other two groups. This choice has been underpinned by the prospect of comparing this first group with one which displays strong similarities (the Berber Kabyles from Algeria) and another which presents distinct features (the Sikh Punjabis). The three migrations have been spurred by British and French colonisation. They are three ethnic minority groups in their origin countries which have become the forerunner of the Indian and North African migration systems. However, the conditions of their settlement in the arrival countries are obviously different. The Berber groups have predominantly remained working-class groups while the Punjabis have enjoyed a better economic integration into multicultural Britain. However, despite their common cultural, religious and historical features, Algerian Kabyles turn out to be far less committed to transnational practices than their Moroccan counterpart. Conversely, Moroccans and Indians both display a high level of engagement in cross-border development projects. Relying on Mill's laws of comparison, my intention is to uncover the common factors which have led these two distinct groups to engage in similar practices. The Kabyle/Chleuh comparison is likely to help us highlight why some groups form developmental hometown groups while others do not.

The analysis initially rests on the structure agency approach. However, the research has been heavily influenced by the theory of communicative action of Jürgen Habermas, which offers a better framework to address the coordination of collective actions. This has led me to unravel the symbolic framework which underpins the implementation of a development project, a symbolic framework which allows migrants to use remittances as a means of expression of who they are and how they position themselves within and toward the spaces of departure and arrival.

This paper is the first of three working papers addressing the different layers of structural constraints which were conducive to the implementation of collective remittances of development: the moral-practical infrastructures, the agential structures and the institutional superstructures.

### Keywords

transnationalism, development, remittances, hometown organisations, migrant associations

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## Introduction

Hometown organisations (HTOs) are one of the most widespread features of immigrant associational life (Moya 2005: 847–50). Authors have usually assumed that the creation of place-based groupings results from the need to create a space where emigrants can gather and re-create a hometown-like atmosphere. But studies have also highlighted a second major function of such collectives: the maintaining of relationships with the origin community. HTOs disseminate information about the latest events: weddings, births, elections, economic downturns, etc. Collective remittances meant to improve public infrastructure are another common aspect of the role played by HTOs. However, theories seeking to explain cross-border bonds maintained between emigrants and those who are left behind are focused on families and individuals. My intention is to fill a gap in migration theories and to bring some new insight into immigrant hometown networks by addressing them as a way for emigrants to mediate their transnational relationships with the sending area. This paper explores the initial conditions which have led three immigrant groups (Indian Sikhs in the UK, Algerian and Moroccan Berbers in France) to maintain collective relationships with their home place, and to send collective remittances.

Cross-border linkages are usually explained through the lens of economic theories of remittances. They are perceived as an outcome of economic strategies of individuals and households. Alternative perspectives have been developed by non-economists. To explain transnationalism, Basch *et al.* argue that transnational bonds enable migrants to challenge their minority position in the arrival country (Basch *et al.* 1994). Luin Goldring puts forward that migrants make use of their cross-border ties to valorise their status in the place of origin (Goldring 1998). A third explanation found in the literature rests on the sense of guilt that imbues the act of migration and structures migrant–non-migrant relationships. From that perspective, transnational relationships are underlain by a moral and economic indebtedness incurred by the departure (Carling 2008; Hage 2002; Sayad 1999). But the role of social institutions in general and of hometown organisations in particular, is neglected by migration theorists.

The theoretical stance which serves a starting point for the argument in this paper is the one developed by Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss (Durkheim and Mauss 1963 [1903]: 81–8). According to this stance, the course of action taken by individuals is propped up by a socially constructed understanding of the world. An internal relation exists between concepts and the life of people who use them. In other words, the categories used by people to give a meaning to their actions have a social origin. This paper aims to uncover the categories and meanings which frame migration and subsequent transnational relations of the three groups investigated. In the first place, I will focus on the meaning of migration itself for three types of actors concerned with the departure of emigrants: the emigrants themselves, the household they belong to, and the village community at large. I will attempt to complement existing theories which strictly focus on the individual and/or family levels. In the second place, I will devote specific attention to the spatial representations of the place of arrival. It will be shown that this perception is linked to the representation of the village itself as a social and spatial unit. The co-substantiality of space and identity informs the moral obligations of expatriates towards the origin community.

In the first section I present the current state of the debate on the nature of cross-border bonds. The second section interrelates the three levels of decision making (individual, family and community) by examining the meanings of migration at each level. The third section analyses in more detail the co-production of space and identity which has characterised North Indian and Berber villages since pre-modern times. It is argued that the maintaining of a village ethos is a spatially embedded process. Finally, I explain how this process of co-production is transposed in the context of destination countries, and fosters the maintaining of collective bonds.

## **1 Fostering bonds: a literature review**

There is a large literature on how people maintain cross-border linkages. The transnationalism, diaspora and remittances literatures give a detailed account of the variety of networks which span borders and the goods and ideas which are circulated by those networks. Only a handful of authors have directly tackled the question of why people maintain social bonds over time and space. A larger body of literature, mostly economic, has indirectly addressed this issue through the motives explaining remittances. In any case, migration is usually perceived either as an individual or as a family fact. And remittances have, so far, been scrutinised in accordance with this perspective.

### ***1.1 Bonding remittances: the economics of transnational social linkages***

Liberal economic theory is based on a definition of economy which puts the *homo economicus* at the core of economic dynamics. Accordingly, research focusing on the drivers of remittances primarily seeks to highlight the common individual inclinations that lead actors to send money to their origin country. So far, three hypotheses have been empirically tested. The first one is altruism, i.e. that remittances are meant to cater for the needs and well-being of migrants' relatives back home (Agarwal and Horowitz 2002). Another version of the altruistic stance asserts that the money is transferred for insurance purposes and helps households to face all forms of hardships that households might undergo (Lucas and Stark 1985). A second, opposite, stance states that money transfers are driven by personal interests – remittances are expected to prepare for the return of the migrants, to ensure their inheritance, or to enhance the migrants' prestige or wealth (Brown 1997). The third set of studies argues that remittances are driven by an implicit mutual arrangement. According to this model, migrants send money to pay back the costs of departure, including the education expenses that prepared migration. A variant suggests that migration is part of a household income diversification strategy insofar as remittances provide an alternate source of revenue (Lucas and Stark 1985). The New Economics of Labour Migration approach (NELM) is the sole attempt to nuance the individual-based approach. In that framework, remittances are regarded as the result of a co-insurance agreement between migrants and those who stayed behind. The livelihood strategy approach complements this view by conceiving of migration as a way for households to diversify their income (de Haas 2009).

Beyond the diversity of approaches, the debate raging on among economists boils down to the question of whether remittances are driven by individual or collective interests or by mutual arrangements accommodating both. The discussion now turns on what should be

put under the label 'collective': the family, or more abstract groupings as suggested by the vagueness of the term 'altruism'. The various empirical studies have not led to clear-cut evidence in favour of one of the three hypotheses (Vargas-Silva and Ruiz 2009). There has been no attempt to analyse these different motives in further detail, in particular from a comprehensive sociological perspective. Social scientists who have borrowed the theoretical path opened by economists have striven to broaden the understanding of the drivers of remittances by embedding them into their non-economic structural context. A sizeable body of works has taken on the issue of gender and how it intersects with remittances (Osaki 1999). These works tackle two questions: what are the specificities of female remitting migrants compared to male remitting migrants and to what extent do remittances affect gender relationships within households? The Cuban case has spurred a series of studies on the impact of the political context on remittances. For instance, Diaz-Briquets and Perez-Lopez argue that right-wing refugees are less likely to remit for fear it would indirectly support the communist regime (DiazBriquets and PerezLopez 1997). Conversely, Sarah Blue shows that political considerations are of secondary importance and that family and interpersonal ties ultimately prevail in the decision to remit (Blue 2004). Inspired by the NELM approach, a body of work has explored the nature of migrant–household relationships and the broader role of social capital. By and large, the literature points to the role of communication in maintaining social obligations (Blue 2004; Loomis 1990; Mazzucato 2008).

Finally, few authors focus on the cultural-historical context of receiving communities that affect the use, and therefore the sending, of money. Prema Kurien (2008) documents the diversity of behaviours towards immigration monies among three Indian villages, respectively in the Muslim, Hindu and Christian parts of Kerala. Muslims tend to have a more collective-oriented use of transfers, whereas Christians send remittances exclusively for family purposes. In between, Hindus invest in conspicuous religious rituals and education. Beyond the religious factors themselves, these differences are rooted in the colonial past and the socio-economic characteristics of these different groups. A similar study focusing on the host country has been carried out by Celia Falikov (2001). The author relates the varying uses and meanings of money between Latinos and Anglo-Americans to their respective cultural backgrounds. In particular, the group-oriented use of money (through gifts, rituals, free loans etc.) is linked to the collectivist structuring patterns of Latino groups in the US.

To sum up this overview, economic approaches have tried to reduce factors explaining remittances to the most fundamental causalities (individual and collective interests) in order to support economic models. Conversely, social scientists from other backgrounds have striven to render the whole complexity of this social phenomenon by unravelling the socio-structural conditionalities of the remitting act. In addition, even if there has been no attempt, to our knowledge, to revise the terms of the debate defined by economists, one can notice a shift in the vocabulary used by social scientists who prefer to talk about social obligations rather than altruism.

This body of works highlights the complexity of factors that interfere in migrant–non-migrant relationships. The state of the art of such research gives a sense that remittances are not spurred by one single factor, but by a complex combination of subjective (altruism/egoism), inter-subjective (mutual agreement, sustained communication, social

capital) and meta-subjective (economic, political, geopolitical contexts) factors. There is a thrust in the current literature toward more holistic approaches to remittances.

## **1.2 Why maintain bonds? A transnationalist perspective**

In their pioneering work, Linda Basch, Nina Glick Schiller and Cristina Szanton Blanc (1994) argue that transnationalism is primarily an exit door from exclusion and racism in the arrival countries. It is a form of resistance to the hegemonic processes (in the sense given by Gramsci) of market, class and nation building. The transnational spaces provide immigrants with the financial, cultural and psychological resources to challenge their proletarian status. Likewise, Luin Goldring asserts that transnationalism is primarily a status enhancement strategy. But she suggests that migrants make use of their cross-border ties to valorise their status in the place of origin rather than in the arrival country (Goldring 1998).

Another explanation for transnational behaviour found in the literature rests on the sense of guilt that imbues the act of migration and structures migrant–non-migrant relationships. Several authors have defended the idea that transnational relationships are underlain by a moral and economic indebtedness incurred by the departure (Hage 2002; Sayad 1999). Jørgen Carling elaborated on this interpretation by stating that long-distance ties are motivated by a ‘moral economy of social belonging’ (Carling 2008). According to Carling, the migration act fosters among migrants a feeling of moral obligation towards the origin community. The ‘moral economy’ of migration thus compensates for and glosses over power imbalances between migrants and non-migrants. It draws a line between what migration should be and what it should not be, between the good and the bad emigrant. Thus, the moral framework is a solution brought to a tension inherent to migration agency, a contradiction between the objective spread of resources among actors and the subjective norms (or habitus) that bind together these actors. The merit of this approach is to question the so-called natural bonds that link migrants and non-migrants in the place of origin and to point out the internal contradictions between the individual interests of the migrant and the political order of the origin community.

To better understand what distinguishes these different theories, an interesting parallel can be drawn with the theories explaining the sending of remittances. While Luin Goldring and, in a more indirect way, Basch *et al.* put the emphasis on the interest-driven rationales for maintaining linkages with the origin country, Carling depicts migrant–non-migrant relations as framed by social obligations in the context of asymmetric relationships. The theory of a ‘moral economy’ convincingly explains remittances as a form of gift without counter-gift, a perpetual repayment of communality (Hage 2002). Carling sees in the set of clichés usually associated with migration in origin countries the mechanics of reproduction of the ‘moral economy’. For example, mockery and stigmatisation of migrants is a worldwide observed phenomenon in origin areas. Emigrants are commonly portrayed by their communities of origin as wealthy, oblivious, individualistic, selfish or eager to boast about their wealth. In short, they are accused of placing their own interests before those of the community. This imaginary of the selfish migrant is to be found in the Mexican cinema of the 1930s, in the Berber poetry of Southern Morocco (Lefébure 1990), and in contemporary African cinema (Carling 2008: 1460). Moral condemnations draw a line between the good and the bad emigrants. Through them, we can implicitly read the duties of emigrants while reasserting the moral superiority of the place of origin over the place of arrival.

The different theories put emphasis either on the personal interests of the migrants or on the pressure exerted by the community back home. The moral economy approach is the only one which envisages this link between migrants and non-migrants as worked from within by an inherent tension between collective and individual interests and resources. However, by strictly focusing their attentions on emigrants, these theories regard 'non-migrants' as an indistinct category. Are they other individuals, the household, the extended family, wider communities such as the village community? There is a need for a more accurate definition of the category 'non-migrants' in order to unravel the various patterns of relationships. In order to understand these differences, the following section elaborates some theoretical considerations about the meanings and challenges of migration for individuals, households and village communities.

## **2 Elementary meanings of migration**

The reason why people migrate informs the nature and content of the relationships they maintain with the homeland. Migration is a total social act enmeshed in a whole range of social, environmental, political and of course economic factors, each of them explored by an extensive literature. But I focus here not on the determinants themselves but rather on the meanings of migration for the various actors concerned.

As mentioned above, I will successively examine what migrating means for individuals, families and village communities. Each of these levels reveals one dimension of the migration act: socio-psychological, economic and political.

### ***2.1 Migration as a search for self-fulfilment***

For individuals, migration is associated with a desire for personal achievement. The pursuit of economic success is only one facet of this drive to achieve. The desire to leave, to enrich oneself with new experiences is commonly felt and socially encouraged. Voluntary migration is always part of a life project. In West Africa, migration has been associated with rites of passage to adulthood (Adams 1977; Jonsson 2008; Kandell and Massey 2002). In Western states, public schemes support the mobility of young people, such as the Peace Corps in the USA or the ERASMUS programme in the EU. Youngsters use migration to become a man or a woman. In that sense, migration is a gendered act which is approached differently by men and women.

By and large, the departure sets actors free from ascriptive roles in their place of origin and potentially enables them to invent and explore alternative identities. Under that lens, migration can be read as an act of transgression of community borders (Ahmad 2009) which leads, in a dialectical thrust, from a community death to a rebirth into a full-fledged social being. Of course, it would be misleading to present emigration as an emancipating act freeing actors from hetero-defined identity and enabling them to express a supposed 'true self'. Once abroad, emigrants become immigrants and are confronted with a new ascriptive status. Migration is often a deceptive quest when discrimination and racism imbue actors within an underdog status.

## **2.2 Households, householding, and migration**

The New Economics of Labour Migration approach has popularised the idea that migration is a household strategy to diversify income sources (Stark and Bloom 1985). Remittances provide a stable source of revenue when other sources of income (such as agriculture or casual jobs) are submitted to climate or market ebbs and flows.

But the use of remittances does not solely draw on an economic rationality but also on what can be called a 'social rationality'. Conspicuous consumption of domestic equipment, clothes, cars, investment in education and even health practices imported from the emigration country are widespread ways of marking one's social ascension. Likewise, examples of remittances participating in the gift-giving economy between migrants and non-migrants are manifold. A sizeable body of works has analysed immigrant remittances through this lens. Gifts and remittances are used by migrant households to manage their circle of relationships and assert their social position (Werbner 1990). In that respect, remittances respond simultaneously to the need for economic resources and for wider social strategies.

Migration is therefore a way for actors to manage economic balances and an avenue for advancement in their life. It goes without saying that migration is not the only way to achieve these family and individual objectives. Economic, political, social and psychological factors leading people NOT to move are of an incomparable greater importance (only 3 per cent of the world's population has chosen to live in another country). But there is no country, area, or even village in the world that has not faced, in one way or another, short- or long-distance migration. Human mobility is crucial for the life of societies, their change and their reproduction. Mobility and migration are not simply adjustment variables of temporary economic imbalances, but are structural conditions of social reproduction. Migration is the breath of human societies.

## **2.3 The politics of community binding and migration**

When migration affects a sizeable share of a given population, then it poses a challenge of a more political nature to the group. There is a large literature on political exile and forced displacement. There is ample evidence that politics is a major driver for migration, whether caused by an oppressive regime or by the collapse of a social order (in case of war, of famine, etc.). But, it can be argued that any form of migration is fraught with political dynamics. Because they leave their origin territory, migrants implicitly question their membership to their initial political community. Therefore, migration can also be a political stake in peaceful villages. Following Georges Balandier, I define politics as the strategies implemented by social groups to resist or to adapt to entropy (Balandier 1967: 43). Migration, from that perspective, constitutes by itself a form of social entropy. Human mobility blurs the external borders of sending groups. It not only blurs the limits between here and there, but also between 'us' and 'them', i.e. between members and non-members: where does a village start and end when a large part of its population is abroad? In addition, migration puts internal order at stake. Migrants are likely to concentrate material and mobility resources (Carling 2008: 1467): economic power, power to convey new sets of values (cultural power) and power to mediate and carry out gate-keeping between inside and outside (positional power). By affecting both resources and norms, migration is likely to

impact on community social structures. This accumulation of powers constitutes a threat to the authority of the group elite, especially when the geographical mobility of this elite is limited.

Multiple strategies are implemented by social groups in order to either block or incorporate this entropy. For example, the origin community can strive to filter out the undesired symbols, practices, norms and values coming from abroad. Traditional temporary forms of migration respond to this expectation. Emigrants leaving the village are to reintegrate their status of villager once returned. But village communities can also implement strategies which allow them to integrate the social change induced by migration. The creation of village development associations to channel collective remittances illustrates this type of strategy. Whatever the reaction of origin communities, migration is therefore instrumental to the reproduction of social life when the sending community is both able to maintain its boundaries and hierarchy. In other words, village communities must make sure that the allegiance of those who leave is preserved despite the distance and despite the 'transgression' that is represented in the act of departing.

#### ***2.4 The raison d'être of hometown organisations: combining individual, household and community interests***

Migration engages the social being in its totality. Migration is a political, economic, cultural and gendered act. It is an act with multiple levels of significations which change according to the level at which it is addressed. For individuals, migration is above all a strategy of self-accomplishment. Their journey is part of a life trajectory with regards to an existing or a future household. For households, migration is a livelihood strategy to diversify their income. At the household level, migration is a strategy to maintain the household economy between various economic logics (gift and market economy and house-holding). At the community level, migration is a tool for social reproduction. Likewise, remitting is a total social act which conveys an allegiance to and an inscription in a social ensemble with its hierarchies of values, its cultural imaginings and symbolic meanings. Remitting is a multidimensional act, driven and worked from within by different levels of expectations and aims. For example, the building of a house, the most popular immigrant investment, is a choice which can be understood in its overall complexity under the lens of multilevel processes. For the immigrant himself or herself, building a house is a personal achievement which has strong symbolic implications: it heralds a successful migration project. For the family, the house means increased livelihood security. For the community, it is a proof of allegiance. In other terms, the house is simultaneously the act of a man/woman, of a household member and of a villager.

In this context, the primary function of hometown groups in the receiving societies is to provide an organisational framework in which the different (and often contradictory) levels of interests are combined. Hometown networks recomposed in the place of arrival give migrants the resources to achieve their migration project, to find a job and a place to stay. They ease the circulation of information and of remittances between the emigrants and their family back home. They maintain a moral framework which ensures that expatriates will fulfil their duty of 'long-distance' villagers.

As shown above, the existence of hometown networks stems from the contradicting meanings of migration produced by individual and collective actors in the villages of origin. What remains to be explained is the efficiency of the social control exerted by village communities over the members of hometown networks despite the distance. In other words, how is a moral framework maintaining the condition of villager transposed in the context of the arrival country?

### **3 The moral space of migration**

In order to understand this process, we have to come back to the starting point of this paper, namely the idea that mental categories have a social origin. I contend that the moral framework is informed by the representation of the place of arrival, a representation which is tightly related to the perception of the place of origin and therefore to 'villageness'. As pointed to by Claire Mercer et al. (2008), village communities co-produce identity and place. The following section starts with an 'archaeology' of the concept of village space. First, it will be shown how villageness is not only a social identification but also a spatial compass which informs the meaning of space. Second, it will be shown that this villageness has not disappeared with the process of modernisation and the re-composition of the traditional spatiality under the effect of international migration. Villageness remains a pole of identification which buttresses a moral superiority of the space of departure over the one of arrival and therefore inscribes the emigrants into a moral economy of social belonging.

#### ***3.1 Villageness: the traditional imaginings of village belonging and space***

Addressing the issue of village belonging in the former colonial areas of North Africa and Northern India can rapidly become a road to hell paved with good intentions. One must be cautious not to walk in the footsteps of colonial anthropologists who worked in these areas until the Second World War, and to keep away from essentialist temptations. This said, addressing village belonging remains indispensable in order to understand why villageness (I borrow this concept from the work of Judith Scheele [2009] on a Berber village in Algeria) still constitutes a fundamental pole of identification and mobilisation among the groups investigated. This will be done through an effort to unravel the formation of village belonging in the three areas of departure. Contemporary villageness is rooted in a pre-modern sense of village belonging. It is first necessary to explore the constitution of traditional villages in order to highlight the process of co-production of space and identity. Village belonging is intertwined with the spatial categories of 'here' (the village) and 'there' (outside the village).

In pre-modern villages, the village space is the material facet of its social architecture. The building of village space is therefore an intrinsic part of the sense of belonging of actors. The spatial division of North African and North Indian traditional villages reproduces their social morphology. The basis of this morphology rests on households, the fundamental kinship, political and economic unit (Bourdieu 2000; Leaf 1972: 61). Above the household, Berber villages are divided into different neighbourhoods, each of them hosting a clan (*takherult* and *iderma*). The village itself is formed by an aggregate of *iderma* (Bourdieu 2000 [1972]). Likewise, caste groups and sub-groups (*gots* and *pattis*) form the main neighbourhoods which compose North Indian villages (Smith 1960: 166). This social-spatial division was

overarched by a political organisation. In Berber areas and in Punjab, a patriarchal council in which the main components of the village community were represented used to rule the village community. In North Africa, this assembly is called the *tajmaat*. It is constituted of the house masters and clan leaders (*tamen*) co-opted among house masters to represent their *takherult*. The *amin* chairs the *tajmaat*. The Indian counterpart of the *tajmaat* is called the *panchayat* (literally the council of the fives). It is composed of the representatives of the dominant caste. The main prerogative of the village councils was to administer the customary rules which used to regulate village life. In each area, the labour division and group relations were regulated by a customary code. It is best known as the *jajmanji* in North India (Lewis 1958) and the *tiwizi* in North Africa (Bourdieu 2000).

The works of nineteenth-century colonial anthropologists, geographers, army officers, etc., although often invaluable due to the wealth of information they provide, tend to depict Maghreb and Indian villages as spatial and social units closed on themselves, sheltered from the passage of time (Lalmin 2004). Village structures were magnified as democratic structures inherited from the past, with their local assembly ruling village matters according to immutable customary laws. Since then, it has been shown that villages have always been extensively connected to the outside world and therefore that the sense of belonging to the village has always been articulated with the perception of the village within a wider context. Villages and village identities, in a pre-modern context, are not only embedded into the village space itself, but also inform the wider context of inter-village relations.

In Northern India, village reticularity, i.e. the system of inter-village networks in which villages are embedded, stems from marriage norms. The spouse must be chosen outside of the village limits, i.e. outside *gots* and *pattis* in the village and neighbouring offshoot villages. Because of the dual rule of caste endogamy and clan exogamy, *biraderis* (the caste portion in which marriages are contracted), connect villages into a regional canvas of marriage alliances. Marian Smith found that this marital exchange among *jats* has delimited three areas in Punjab: The Malwa in the South, the Doab in the centre and the Mahja around Amritsar, the holy city of Sikhism (Smith 1960: 174). The size and scope of the *biraderi* are related to the status of the caste group. The higher on the social scale, the wider will be the outreach of the group (Dumont 1966). Similarly, North African traditional villages are connected to the outside world at two entangled levels: political and marital. There is no Berber equivalent of the *biraderi*. However, North African villages are affiliated to wider political entities: the *arch* (tribe) and the *taqbilt* (confederation of *arouch*). *Taqbilt* are exclusively convened in times of emergency and war. I will leave them aside. Marital alliances tie villages together within the limits of the *arch* level. Marriages outside the *arch* are exceptional and have strong political connotations: 'le mariage avec un étranger habitant loin du village est prestigieux parce qu'il témoigne de l'ampleur du rayonnement de la lignée' (Bourdieu 2000: 150). The work of Romain Simenel on the Ait Baamrane, a Berber tribe of South-West Morocco, confirms that village reticularity is buttressed by the exchange of spouses (Simenel 2007). He shows that the religious elite of the area, the *Chorfa* (who are said to be descendants of the prophet Muhamad) do not have the possibility of giving their land to non-*Chorfa* families. They favour endogamy and, therefore, remain a cohesive force of the village identity. Conversely, non-*Chorfa* families can give away their property rights through marital contracts to non-village families. They therefore ensure inter-village solidarities at the *arch* level.

As shown above, villageness in pre-modern times did not only structure a pattern of identification and status within the village community. It also used to regulate the relationships with the outside and outsiders. In that sense, villageness can be regarded as a point of connection between inside and outside, 'us' and 'them'. It served to define a whole gradation of roles and status from close kin to absolute 'Other'. It was the metric according to which the social distance within and outside the village was measured. This mental mapping framed the mobility of spouses and established political delimitations.

### ***3.2 Villageness and international migration***

Nowadays, the sense of village belonging has been re-composed by the transformation of rural economy, the building of modern states and international migration. Some features of traditional villages have persisted in remote areas, while others have disappeared. After the Second World War, these areas entered the age of mass emigration. Long-distance mobility, until then restricted to a limited number of traders, artists, clergymen or temporary workers, started to embrace every strata of the population. The diffusion of the phenomenon was conducive to a definitive transgression of the limits of traditional mental spaces before redefining them on a global scale. What characterises North Indian and North African villages today does not fall under the scope of this paper. This process has been documented elsewhere (Scheele 2009). However, as shown by the very existence of transnational hometown networks, villageness has not lost its efficiency as a pole of identification and mobilisation. I want to show that the spatial categories of migration (i.e. the meanings of the spaces of origin and arrival) are still embedded in the social logic of villageness. The village remains the place from which is forged a mental representation of the world. In the previous section, we saw that spatial and identity categories of village belonging are tightly related. It is here contended that a similar process is at play in the arrival setting. The status of village expatriate and the rights and duties that go with it, is linked to the imagining of the space of arrival.

First, the space of departure, once put in perspective with the place of origin, becomes of moral category. The values and representations associated with the place of arrival are informed by the meanings of migration. The space of destination is at the same time perceived as a space of moral corruption, foreign to the values of the village community and a space where self-fulfilment is possible. It spurs both fascination and repulsion. Through this operation, space becomes a vector of a normative framework of moral norms. This ambivalence is nothing new and has long been demonstrated by various researchers. In their analyses of the determinants of migration, academics have mostly paid attention to the perception of the space of destination as an Eldorado. Abdelmalek Sayad shows how the discourse of Algerian emigrants about their trajectory is dotted with positive assessments of the place of arrival versus the negativity associated to the place they come from (Sayad 1999: 50). But, the moral superiority of the place of origin is equally constantly re-asserted by actors. The most telling evidence for this is the desire to be buried in the place of origin. In North Africa, as in the rest of the continent, home is the place where one wants to be buried (Page 2007). In that sense, migration is embedded in a spatial eschatology in which the village is both the place of origin and the ultimate destination of a life trajectory. Designating the village as the place of burial therefore asserts the moral superiority of the place of origin over the place of arrival. For village communities, moralising space is a way to keep control over the migration process. The process of moralisation is a way to imagine the

space of destination, to humanise it, to delimit it and to sort it into the order of the world, an order in which the village is a centre and the place of destination a periphery. Moralising space makes migration acceptable and therefore possible. For emigrants this articulation gives a meaning to their act. This process is not purely symbolic but also has practical implications for the orientation of migratory flows. The moralisation of migration space favours the clustering of villagers in the same settings. For some groups, settlement far from the rest of the community is condemned. Soninke Senegalese have a word to designate spaces where no expatriate community is settled, a word, *alla ba*, which approximately means 'bush', i.e. a non-humanised, wild space outside the village. Emigrants settling in a region or a country out of the reach of the community are pressured into coming back, even if their economic prospects are far better where they are (Sall 2008).

Second, the spatial imagining of the place of destination informs the status of village expatriate. Inscribed in a collective framework, emigration goes along with the attribution of a status. Emigrants join the community of expatriates by contracting two debts. The first is the one which renders possible the departure and binds the émigré to the community of origin (the money provided for the trip, the consent of the family and the wider community, etc.). The second one renders the arrival possible. It is contracted while newcomers are welcomed by those who are already present in the place of destination. They provide accommodation, food, and money, and support the process of settlement. In turn, the beneficiaries become indebted to the group and therefore a member of it. These first initial gifts turn villagers into émigrés. As a consequence, the relationships between those who left and their fellows remain bonded within what Carling calls the moral economy of migration (Carling 2008). Those who left remain under the scrutiny of those who stayed behind, and any misleading behaviour is promptly mocked as a result of their contacts with foreign lands. The second gift embeds actors into the expatriate community. The community provides the social meanings which inform the migration act and a status in the arrival country. As put forward by Crespi and Gabriele Tomei, community embeds people in primordial loyalties through cultural identity formation processes. But, simultaneously, members join their community on the basis of personal claims for identification and recognition (Crespi 2004; Tomei 2010). There is no contradiction between the inscription within hometown networks and the yearning for personal achievement in the arrival context. This process provides actors with the possibility of elaborating this new identity without cutting off from previous ones. Hometown networks facilitate the passage from the émigré to the immigré. Reciprocally, they permit village communities not to lose control of this process, and therefore of the people themselves.

Finally, with the status of emigrant come its rights and duties. Gaining their new status of expatriate, actors can benefit from the services of the community and they are expected to fulfil their duties of expatriate villagers. Members can access the space of intimacy provided by the community and any form of support other fellows can provide. In exchange, people are expected to give time and resources to both the expatriate and origin communities. This includes, of course, remittances. In this context, remittances can be regarded as a repayment of communality, a gift without counter-gift. Even more so, remittances, be they financial, material or immaterial, are filtered out by social control. In certain groups, in addition to the gift-giving of remittances, hometowners have to fulfil customary duties imported from the village. For example, *tiwizi* norms are still present among North African Berbers. For villagers, these groups act as a relay through which they can exert some form

of control over expatriates. Ascertaining the distribution of rights and the respect of duties does not go without a minimal formalisation of leadership and the concretion of internal hierarchy. Hometown networks tend to reproduce the pre-existing village hierarchies. The variety of organisational patterns of hometown associations will be presented in IMI Working Paper 28 (Lacroix 2010).

## Conclusion

In this paper, I have tried to highlight the moral-practical infrastructures which account for the reproduction of village communities in the place of arrival. The meanings given to migration, and to the associated spatial categories of migration, support the moral framework of collective transnational bonds. It has been argued that migration is fundamentally a multi-level act in which individuals are only one stakeholder next to families and communities. Migration changes meanings and aims at each of these levels. The migration agency and the subsequent forging of transnational bonds are therefore to be understood as a dialectical process worked from within by different levels of interests. Expatriate hometown communities are the social institution which permits the combination of these interests. Communities in the receiving areas provide emigrants with the resources to settle and carry out their migration project. But they also make sure that actors will carry on sending money to their fellows back home and comply with their status of expatriate villager. Morality is therefore at the core of the normative framework which shapes the structural conditions of collective binding. It draws a line between the good and the bad migrant. Finally, we have shown that, as for the villages themselves, space becomes the norm-conveying resource. This process locates villages and villagers at the centre and emigrants and the place of emigration at the periphery of a moral geography of belonging. The agents' migration act becomes meaningful when the space of migration becomes delimited with and ordered by the invisible borders of morality.

At this point of my reflection, I have depicted a first (infra-) structural system in which meanings (individual, family and community) and materiality (space), overlap to lay the foundation for collective bonding and remittances. The focus at the level of infrastructures leaves an impression of a stable, *longue durée*; almost 'timeless' arrangements. In practice, constant negotiations, tensions and re-compositions are at play, both in the places of settlement and origin. In this framework, remittances are to be understood as a communicative act, i.e. a mode of expression of emigrants through which they formulate what they think they have to do in accordance with who they think they are. But, as any message, remittances must be understood by and meet the expectations of the receivers. As a consequence, the message changes when either the sender or the receiver change themselves. In other words, remittances change in line with the processes of integration in the country of settlement and social change in the country of origin. Of course, my claim here remains confined to the level of broad theoretical reflection. The flesh of fieldwork will be brought to the bones of abstract considerations in IMI Working Paper 28 (Lacroix 2010).

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