

Chapter 5

Rural Origin Areas: Impacts and Practices



This chapter looks at the implications, impacts and consequences of rural migration on the areas of origin, where oftentimes portions of the family, and of the family assets, remain.

The chapter provides some basic indications concerning the triggers and impacts of migratory processes in areas of rural emigration in Northern Africa and Eastern Europe. It looks at the implications at the individual, household and community levels, as well as on the patterns of local development.

By the end of the chapter some elements and references for further and deeper analyses are proposed.

5.1 Introduction

In Chap. 3 we assessed the pull factors attracting migrants to EU agricultural settings, and in Chap. 4 we have addressed the implications of such immigration from the perspective of the areas of destination. This chapter looks at the reasons, the impacts and the consequences of rural migration in the immigrants' communities of origin, where oftentimes portions of the family, and of the family assets, remain.

Why do people leave their rural communities? What are the drivers and the triggers that induce such emigration? What are the implications for those remaining behind? What are the impacts on local communities and development patterns?

In the following sections we will partially answer these questions by looking at the main push factors, as well as at the local implications of rural emigration. Together with remittances, financial transfers sent by migrants back to their households, rural migratory flows carry implications for members who remain behind. As networks and relationships at the community and household levels are redefined, local socio-economic dynamics are also impacted, influencing patterns of local agriculture and rural development.

The impact of emigration on origin communities is a huge domain with dedicated literature and debates. Here we present just a brief outlook of main relevant elements; reference bibliography for the EUMed context is also proposed for further and deeper analyses. Most data and information from the field are sourced from works in Tunisia with the RUMIT project (Zuccotti et al. 2018) and in Romania within the TRAMed project (Nori 2017; Nori et al. 2019).

5.2 Drivers of Emigration

Migration out of rural areas is triggered by various elements, usually defined as ‘push factors’, which include specific socio-cultural conditions, historical and geographical factors, economic development paths, political events, environmental and climatic factors. Somewhere rural emigration might also be conceived as an adaptive measure to ease the human pressure on a dwindling resource base and to alleviate rural unemployment, or as a response to the collapse of traditional organizational and/or governance mechanisms, including insecurity and conflict (de Haas 2009; Azzopardi 2012; UNDP 2015; Deotti and Estruch 2016; Desjardins et al. 2016; Zuccotti et al. 2018). Different drivers affect the intensity, trajectory and duration of rural migratory patterns (Nori et al. 2019).

Determinants of migration decisions can be analysed at three levels. The first level of analysis, called micro-level, focuses on individual migration decisions that are influenced by a migrant’s individual features. The meso-level analysis looks at the socio-economic characteristics of the migrant’s household of origin. Finally, the macro-level analysis focuses on the contextual features of the migrant’s area of origin. These three levels of determinants do not exclude each other but can be considered complementary in explaining emigration. The Sustainable Livelihood approach (SLA) provides a consistent perspective to analyse these levels and the intertwined interactions (Frankenberger 2000; Ellis 2003; Scoones 2015).

One of the main reasons to emigrate is economic, and the youth leave rural areas and agriculture principally to look for better income, employment opportunities and for improving living conditions. This phenomenon could be indicative of failures of the institutional and/or market domains, whereby rural areas suffer from unemployment syndrome and agricultural income does not provide for a decent and sustainable livelihood (also refer to de Haas 2009; ILO 2015; Milan 2016; Gertel and Hexel 2018; Zuccotti et al. 2018).

More generally, agriculture and rural development provide little incentives for decent livelihoods, as these have in many countries been overlooked for decades in policy frameworks. Policies have been conceived to favour urban consumers rather than rural producers (ie. through food security strategies, subsidy schemes, pricing mechanisms, import schemes, etc.). This adds to a situation where risks are higher, and incomes lower compared to other economic sectors, with relevant implications for the economic and social viability of agriculture and rural livelihoods. The socio-cultural aspects of such marginalisation should not be underestimated; as the associated negative image agriculture has inherited vis-à-vis younger generations represents an important factor for their disengagement (Nori et al. 2019).

Box: Structural Challenges for Rural Maghreb and Mashreq

Poverty and unemployment in the Maghreb and Mashreq are concentrated in rural areas. Moreover most agricultural systems in the region are confronted with structural challenges: climate trends are putting under strain the limited water resources in arid regions; population growth, urbanization, erosion of soil fertility are reducing arable land; governmental policies favouring a liberalization process have facilitated a dual agricultural system dominated by highly competitive farms beside small, low-income family ones (World Bank 2011; CIRAD 2017).

Additionally, the Southern region of the Mediterranean basin is characterized by a wide economic and social divide between inner, rural communities and urban areas, usually situated on the coast. These latter have access to the advantages of global economic exchange while the former are more isolated and face higher levels of poverty and unemployment, which are reflected in a higher vulnerability to food insecurity (CIHEAM 2009, 2014; Zuccotti et al. 2018).

The wider geo-political framework is also relevant to set the scene. Political turmoil, the recent financial crisis and related social and political events, including the Arab spring, international conflicts, terrorism threats and shifting EU border policy regimes have also had an influence on migratory patterns in the Mediterranean, and beyond.

Box: Emigration and Revolution in Rural Tunisia

In rural Tunisia outstanding differentiations have been reported between migratory projects that took place before 2011 and those that materialised afterwards in terms of opportunities, costs and impacts (Bardak 2014; Zuccotti et al. 2018).

Figure 5.1 reports the reasons for migration before and after the 2011 political turmoil, from the viewpoint of the members of migrants' origin household (N = 633 men and 323 women. The results and the analysis come from the work undertaken in rural Tunisia in 2018 by the EUI Migration Policy Center (MPC) with the objective to enhance the understanding of rural out-migration by young people in Tunisia to facilitate positive impacts on food security, agriculture and development in rural areas (Zuccotti et al. 2018:42).

There are important differences depending on whether the migrant is a man or a woman, as well as depending on whether migration happened before or in/after 2011. For men, work and improving life conditions are the two most important reasons for migration, and this applies to both periods of migration. Furthermore, sustaining the family, change in lifestyle and, to a lesser extent, study and reduction in income from agricultural activities, appear as more relevant reasons for migration among recent

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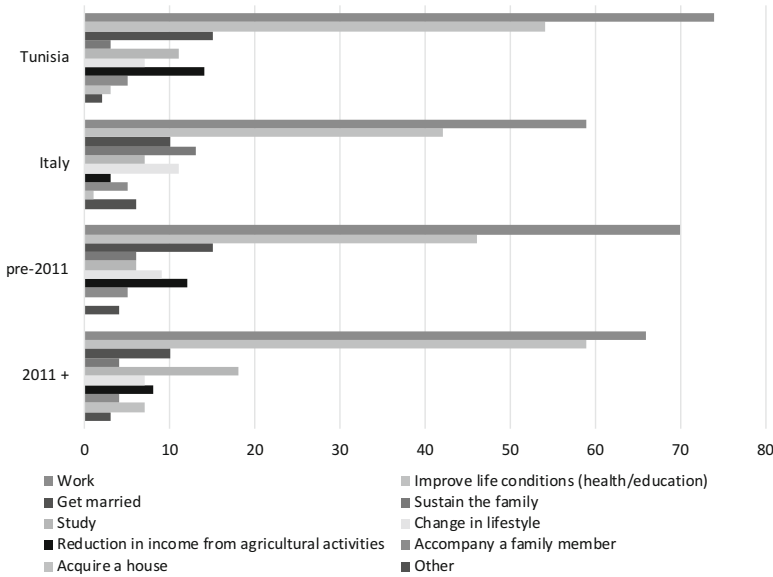


Fig. 5.1 Reasons for emigrating out of rural Tunisia. (Source: our-relaboration on data from Zuccotti et al. 2018. Map legend: N = 633 men and 323 women (multiple responses allowed))

migrants (i.e. with their first migration in 2011+). Among women the picture is quite different. Next to improving life conditions and work, getting married is an important reason for migration. (...) Migration for work and study is much more relevant for recent migrants than for migrants who left before 2011; conversely, migration to get married and to improve life conditions becomes less relevant among 2011+ migrants.

In Eastern Europe the fading of the Soviet regime has carried relevant consequences on the local socio-economic restructuring, with a specific impact on rural areas and societies. The process of integration into the European Union has provided a further trigger for the mobility of local populations out of rural areas.

Box: Moving off the Carpathian Mountains

After the collapse of the Soviet system, most Eastern European countries underwent quite complex socio-economic and political changes, with relevant impact on local rural livelihoods. The restructuring of rural livelihoods in areas such as the Carpathian mountainous were heavily impacted by several factors, including the shutting down of state-run factories, farms and mines at the end of the regime, the opening of frontiers and becoming EU citizens, money lost in wrong investments, recent curtails in public salaries and overall socio-economic disillusionment. The impacts of these factors differ according

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to diverse people and groups, as varieties existed amongst: those who worked for the State, those whose firm or enterprise collapsed, unemployed miners and workers, those that remained landless, those with family members abroad. Due to the current economic conditions of the country, many Romanians have tried coming back during the last decade, though several have and then decided to re-emigrate.

Recent literature on push factors in rural areas of origin reflects the growing concern in the scientific as well as policy circles about the structural drivers of emigration resulting from climate change, rural poverty and socio-political instability (refer amongst others to: Sivakumar et al. 2003; Vargas-Lundius and Lanly 2007; Lacroix 2009; Nori et al. 2009; de Haas 2010; Adams 2011; Scheffran et al. 2011; Hsiang and Burke 2014; Wodon et al. 2014; CIHEAM 2015).

The presence and evolution of existing migratory networks, set up by friends, relatives, or conationals who have undertaken emigration are also important factors that might contribute to influencing and facilitating decision-making on why, how and where to migrate, regardless of the initial drivers of migration (Bakewell et al. 2011; Mainwaring 2016). Especially in the case of seasonal workers, the recruitment of peers in the village community might be facilitated by their return home during non-peak labour periods at the winter season. Recruitment is often carried out directly by word of mouth between workers and between companies. Cases are reported where these networks present problems of intermediation, with sometimes exploitative mechanisms (De Haas 2007; Nori 2017).

5.3 Impacts of Rural Emigrations

The impacts of migration on the areas of origin are highly context-dependent, and often heterogeneous, and depend on the nature of the migratory project (ie. extent, duration, trajectory, which individuals, etc. . .) and on local variables, including the local economy, the characteristic of the households, etc. . . (De Haas 2007, 2008; Kriaa 2013; Deotti and Estruch 2016; Zuccotti et al. 2018).

A comprehensive analysis requires an approach that considers **migrants** as actors and factors of development also in their own countries of origin. When some members emigrate away from an area, a community or a household, the implications for those remaining and for local society can be assessed through three main domains (FAO 2018):

1. the *flow of migrants*, which affects the structure and composition of households and communities of origin, including labour supply, and could affect pressures on local resources and development patterns;
2. the *financial transfers, or remittances*, sent back by migrants to their households, which are often reinvested or spent locally;

3. the non-monetary transfers, often referred to as “*social remittances*”: ideas, skills, technologies and social patterns brought or transmitted back by migrants and that expose origin communities to change, including potential impacts in furthering emigration.

These factors have controversial implications for the management of territories, the reproduction of community and household structures and for the reconfiguration of local class, gender and generational dynamics. Rural emigration may reduce pressures on local resources and increase community exposure to technical innovations and financial investments through the transfer of know-how and remittances, which could be reinvested locally. However, migration can also be problematic in terms of labour shortage or increased social disparities at community level.

As it is normally the active workforce that emigrates, this can be problematic for agriculture in terms of resource allocation and rural labour markets. For example emigration has direct consequences on local productivity, farm management and territorial maintenance, which might ultimately affect the resilience and the sustainability of local agrarian systems.

Existing territorial disparities and social inequalities that characterize rural contexts could be strengthened, as emigration might foster individualisation of resources, polarize production systems, abandonment of marginal territories and traditional know-how, economic differentiation and decreases in social protection measures (Bleahu 2004; King and Vullnetari 2006; Gertel and Breuer 2010; Amara and Jemmali 2016).

The impacts on community dynamics and the remaining members of households are important to understand. Some studies point to the psychological and emotional distress for those left behind due to the departure of a relative, usually the father or husband (Kriaa 2013; Zuccotti et al. 2018:38). As an example, the absence of parents from home might cause problems to educational and disciplinary experiences.

Furthermore, remaining members might have to take on the role of those who have emigrated, and thus take on new economic and social responsibilities, with important consequences of local gender relations. In some Eastern European countries where it is mostly rural women who emigrate to work as care-takers in the EU, remaining men have to reconsider their role within the household. While in the MENA, where it is often rural men emigrating, this leads to the feminization of agricultural labour, as women supply the labour missing from the departure of men.

Cases are reported whereby emigration could perpetuate gender imbalances, such as the reproduction of a patriarchal order, while other cases show that emigration challenges existing structures and dynamics, contributing to important social transformations. A brief review of the literature suggests that the impact of emigration and remittances on the participation of women to the labour market can be very heterogeneous, as these mechanisms do not operate in a socio-cultural vacuum and they need to be interpreted in light of the context specificities (David and Lenoël 2016).

Examples exist where with the departure of family men the social and economic empowerment of women have improved, increasing their level of autonomy and self-employment. Other cases occur where remittances have decreased the exposure of rural women to the formal labour market, thus somehow dis-empowering them

(Massey et al. 1993; Vargas-Lundius et al. 2008; Mahdi 2014; Lenoël 2014; Sampedro et Camarero 2015; Zuccotti et al. 2018).

Remittances are an important component of the migration project. Typically, the opportunity to send money back to the family is a main reason some members decide to emigrate. According to the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD 2017) around 40% of international remittances globally are sent to rural areas.

In rural areas access to these revenues can make a great difference in local livelihood strategies. Evidence suggests that remittances from emigrated members have overtaken agriculture as the main source of income and investment, in a large number of rural communities (IFAD 2017; FAO 2018). Such financial sources have allowed rural households to expand, diversify or protect their livelihoods, with mostly positive outcomes associated with poverty reduction, food security as well as nutritional levels. Remittance money is largely utilised to satisfy the basic needs of the household, with a view to enhance basic living standards. Improved housing conditions, food consumption and access to basic services are often mentioned as main sources of remittance expenditure. For those who are abroad and send remittance, children education is often a priority, together with health care for elderly family members.

Figure 5.2 reports on the responses provided by migrants and by their origin households on the use they make of remittance. Remittances use patterns are more related to consumption and to improving the livelihoods in origin, rather than to new

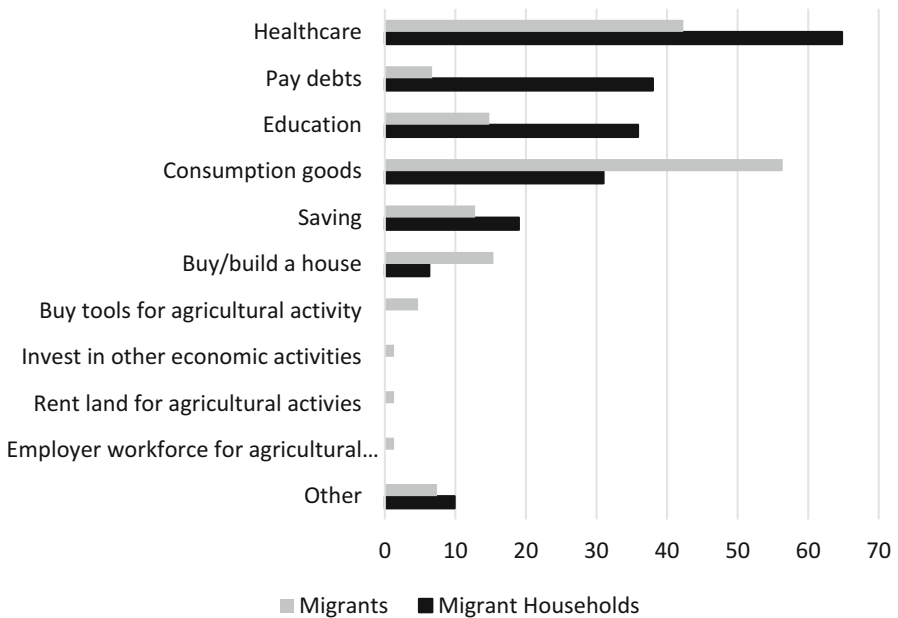


Fig. 5.2 Use of remittances. (Source: own elaboration of Zuccotti et al. 2018: 67. Map Legend: N = 413 origin migrant households; 195 migrants)

investments. Healthcare expenses, consumption of goods, education, paying debts and, to a lesser extent saving and buying a house, are the most common uses of remittances.

Box: Housing Development Through Remittance (Nori 2017)

In the Carpathian region of Romania remittances are typically used to purchase or build larger houses, or for aspects associated to prestige and ‘social competition’ such as expenses related to cars and clothes. Rural villages tend to be over-housed compared to the effective population, as most houses are built with money earned abroad. The large number of local houses on sale, ‘*de vanzere*’, probably indicates the choice of the family not to come back, not even at a later stage.

Box: Remittances in Stateless Somalia (FSNAU 2013)

Somalia has seen its central state collapse in 1991. Since then, forms of local governance in the different Somali regions, and livelihood patterns, have evolved and adapted. The relevance of remittances sent by the international diaspora has been very important in shaping rural livelihoods in the Somali drylands.

Remittances to the country were estimated at around US\$1.2 billion per year in 2010. The relative significance of this amount can be appreciated when comparing it with international aid flows which averaged \$834 million/year between 2007 and 2011, Foreign Direct Investment estimated at \$102 million in 2011, and revenue from exports of \$516 million in 2010.

Evidence from the study attests to a significant secondary distribution of remittances, particularly by rural recipients; two rural households in three redistributed the remittance they received to support other rural relatives. Furthermore, households that receive remittances are more likely to support poorer relatives (75%) than those who do not receive remittances (54%).

The relevance of remittance in supporting the livelihood of rural communities is thus dramatic, and it is likely that most needy households would not be able to cope with growing climatic and financial uncertainties if not supported by these remittance flows.

While money generated through agriculture is often reported as a main source of household funding for migratory projects, investing remittance in local agricultural assets and productive investments is less automatic than it might sound. Experience indicates that if any money is invested in agriculture, it is often in sub-sectors or activities that secure economic or social returns, through the purchase of land, livestock and agricultural equipment (ie. irrigation pumps, horticulture seeds), and the hiring of non-family labour force.

Investment strategies are tailored to the local agro-ecological or socio-cultural contexts, and might support agricultural intensification or enhance off-farm

diversification of the rural economy, including service provision, agricultural diversification, value adding processing, agro-tourism, and environmental management. These investments might in turn attract workforce from neighboring regions and countries, thus contributing to perpetuating rural migratory flows.

Box: Land and Remittance in the Maghreb (Zuccotti et al. 2018)

Access to and control over land remains a main constraining factor to agriculture production and rural development in most Maghreb countries. As a result of emigration, many plots are abandoned or remain vacant, thus to affect agricultural productivity and the effective management of the natural resource base. Land reforms are debated in policy fora, while on the ground evolutions in contracts, transactions, rental and sale schemes of farming lands have evolved in recent times. Tree and livestock productions seem increasingly preferred for investment over annual crops, as they reportedly fit better within the socio-economic (ie. labour feminization, market demands) as well as agro-ecological (ie. dry spells, land fragmentation) dynamics.

Apart from business-oriented approaches that try exploiting existing lucrative opportunities, remittance reinvested in local rural development could address the need to maintain a social link with communities of origin (often with a view/dream to return at an elderly stage), to provide employment and income-generating opportunities to household members (ie. petty trading and local services provision), or to more broadly support the economic activities of local family members.

Problems around reinvesting in local agriculture development are often associated with high costs and limited returns, lack of local workforce, and limited market opportunities to sell products. For countries in the MENA, constraints related to accessing land, water, credit and commercial opportunities are indicated as main factors constraining local reinvestment of migrants' remittance. In eastern European countries the main reported constraints are associated with bureaucracy, limited market outlets and high production costs (for further references: Zuccotti et al. 2018; Nori et al. 2019).

Together with remittances, emigration can also contribute to transferring knowledge, skills and technologies that can play important roles in local development patterns. The implications and impacts of these 'social remittance' might provide further challenges to existing socio-cultural as well as economic patterns, including in social, gender and generational terms.

Here is a non-exhaustive list of the existing literature for some Mediterranean countries from which emigratory processes to southern Europe has been taking place in recent decades:

- For Romania: Bleahu and Janowski 2002; Bleahu 2004; Sandu 2005; Serbescu 2009; Cingolani 2009.
- For Albania: Eniel 2003; King and Vullnetari 2006; Miluka et al. 2010; Mendola and Carletto 2012.

- For Morocco: De Haas 2001; Mejjati Alami 2004; Azzarri et al. 2006; Khachani 2007; Gertel and Breuer 2010; Lenoël 2014; David and Lenoël 2016.
- For Tunisia: Boubakri 2013; Amara and Jemmali 2016; David and Marouani 2017.

Development interventions from international agencies could represent an important leverage to redress the institutional and structural aspects of local rural development so to become more attractive for remittance investments. Inclusive policy should consider the participation of government officials, local authorities, banks and microfinance institutions, trade unions and producers' associations, agricultural centres and diaspora networks (Nori et al. 2019).

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