

MIGRATIONS – a big Challenge for European Youth in rural Development

A position paper addressing politicians, men, women, children and all the populations to renew our considerations and behaviours about Migrations, especially in rural Europe.

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I. Culture and Migration

1. Context: what we analysed

The advantages and disadvantages which result from migration are, as mentioned, very complex. Especially in rural areas, migrations are seen as a threat for some and as a chance for others but few people consider the complexity of it. The impact of migratory movements is much more analysed from the perspective of the so called 'destination' zones than from the perspective of departure zones.

For those leaving their homes, the question of culture is tricky to tackle and to analyse. The primary objective of migrants is generally to seek a better life or living situation, be it for economical, political or social reasons. This means that cultural aspects are often not considered. However, often, their destination choice can be influenced by some cultural concerns (i.e. the possibility to practice their religion, the presence of a community of the same origin there to be able to keep a link with their home land, etc.). Unfortunately, few studies explore this aspect so it is difficult to make clear statements on this topic.

Concerning the destination countries, the cultural impact of migration has been significantly analysed and detailed by western researchers. When a population faces the arrival of migrants, they frequently develop several kinds of fears: fear of losing their jobs, fear of getting reduced standards of living, fear of losing political power, fear of facing new political and religious beliefs, and also fear of losing their cultural identity or even their genetic and cultural patrimony¹.

These fears are a fertile soil for several xenophobic, nationalist and populist groups, who use and perpetuate these fears to promote their own political agenda. Migrants are blamed for all the problems of one society leading to the so called "Threat theories". The "Threat Theories" study the impact of xenophobic attitudes on several types of perceived threats (economical, physical insecurity or about values)².

¹ Brion Fabienne, Tulkens F., « *Conflits de culture et délinquance, interroger l'évidence* » In : *Déviance et société*. 1998- Vol.22- N°3, p.237

² Roux Guillaume, « *Xénophobie, « cultures politiques » et théories de la menace* » *Une comparaison européenne*, Revue Française de science politique, 2008/1 Vol.58, p.69)

2. Concerns for Youth and Rural areas

Why are rural areas and youth particularly concerned by the multicultural aspect of migrations? Firstly, because rural areas frequently tend to be more conservative and thus more susceptible to xenophobic mentalities than urban areas, secondly because migrants' cultural practices are generally rejected in rural areas, and finally because young migrants from rural areas are directly affected by "culture shocks" when they leave home to study or find a job.

2a. Rural areas and xenophobia

The Eurobarometer report on racism and xenophobia³ states that there is no difference in the proportion of racism and xenophobia in rural and urban areas (33% percent). Nevertheless, one could argue that the different cultures and socio-economic backgrounds of rural areas around Europe suggest that the roots of xenophobia and racism are not the same in rural and urban settings.

In his article "*Xenophobia, 'Political Cultures' and threat theories*"⁴, Guillaume Roux explains that there are several elements that explain the proportion of xenophobia in a country. Firstly, socio-economical elements like the presence of ethnic minorities, the number of migrants and the economical context. Given that rural areas are characteristically poorer than the urban areas, where employment and wealth are concentrated, this inegalitarian distribution of wealth may fuel feelings of xenophobia. The number of migrants tends to be lower in rural areas, but the presence of ethnic minorities is bigger. So on the whole, there is a greater chance of xenophobic mentalities in rural areas than in cities.

However, Guillaume Roux highlights the fact that these socio-economic roots are not enough to explain the rates of xenophobia. According to him, these factors should be supplemented by a measure called "the degree of feeling of threat" (true or not), which is dependent on the social and political capital of the country. Religion, national history and the importance of social networks, make societies more or less open to the differences and contribute to this "feeling of threat". Rural areas normally have stronger community links than urban ones as well as a more prevalent religious presence. So these are two factors which should decrease the instances of xenophobia.

Finally, Guillaume Roux notes that in areas where immigration is not common or very recent, societies don't have the "normative frameworks" for tolerance and openness. This means that the migratory phenomenon is too recent for societies to develop attitudes toward a foreign presence and to welcome the newcomers. In this case, since rural areas have less contact with migrants than in urban areas, one could argue that due to their lack of preparation they are less equipped and less willing to open their doors to the newcomers. This applies to cases where rural people migrate to the city; they are equally less prepared to live in a multi-cultural environment making them potentially more susceptible to developing xenophobic attitudes.

³ Eurobarometer 47.1, special report 113, European Commission, 1997)

⁴ (Roux Guillaume, " *Xénophobie, " cultures politiques " et théories de la menace " Une comparaison européenne*, Revue Française de science politique, 2008/1 Vol.58, p.69-95

2b. Rural youth: migrating with their culture

When rural youth leave home seeking for academic or professional opportunities, they may meet for the first time people from different backgrounds, traditions, codes, religions.

Being confronted with someone different can represent potentially painful conflicts for both parties, especially if the society is ill-prepared for "multiculturalism". Very often, people are afraid that migrants will destroy their native culture by bringing new habits. A good example is the case of Muslims in western countries. We often hear accusations of "communitarianism", wherein the newcomers are criticized for 'not trying enough' to integrate into the customs of the place they have migrated to. In an article about migration and changes in value-systems⁵, Jocelyne Streiff-Fénart underlines the fact that many migrants come from rural areas and often, the rural aspects of a "foreign" culture are rejected and despised by the urban "welcoming zones". The culture brought by the migrant is seen as old fashioned, uninteresting and unworthy, not as a source of mutual enrichment. So if migrants are expected to abandon their values, customs, traditions, because the country they arrive in is not ready to accept these aspects of his/her identity, then rural cultures mostly disappear in the "integration" process.

Furthermore, over-simplifications of certain trends have led several "urban" societies to link migration to criminality, stigmatising the migrants and accusing them of bringing violence and crime to their host country. When a migrant acts violently, his/her origins are more often blamed than the social conditions in which (s)he lives. Consequently, all the people who share the same origins may be stigmatised as a result of the actions of one person. This perpetuates the idea that some cultures are more violent than others. In an article about criminality and cultural conflicts⁶, Brion Fabienne and Tulkens F. explain that this link between violence and foreigners is a new concept. In the past, violence was interpreted as a symptom of poverty. In actual fact, it has been statistically proven that violence is primarily a result of poor social conditions and not a problem of origin or nationality. Nowadays, poor people are less stigmatised than migrants. Being a migrant in itself is seen as a fault. According to the two authors, this shift in mentalities within the western societies is due to the State, which fails to ensure a true and fair democracy where everyone has equal access to rights and commons, and therefore blames the foreigners. In a nutshell, people blame the foreigners while they should rather charge their political leaders for not ensuring an egalitarian society.

Now, let us consider the migrants' point of view. Migrants are generally more prepared to change their habits than host societies, since they are the ones who moved. Nevertheless, they face a conflicting situation because they feel like foreigners not only in the countries of origin but also in their countries of arrival. In the country they migrated to, it can be challenging to adapt to new traditions, food and habits. This change often creates an "inferiority complex" on migrants vis-à-vis the native inhabitants of their host country. In the country of origins too, people who have left their areas are seen as "foreigners" (when they come back for holidays or are in contact with them) because they adapted to new modes of interaction and habits learnt in their host country. Subsequently, migrants have to find a

⁵ Streiff-Fénart Jocelyne, "A propos des valeurs en situation d'immigration : questions de recherche et bilan des travaux ", Revue française de sociologie, 2006/4 Vol.47, p.851-875

⁶ Brion Fabienne, Tulkens F., " Conflits de culture et délinquance, interroger l'évidence " In: Déviance et société. 1998- Vol.22-N3, p.235-262

balance between these two cultural identities, requiring support in this process to experience it dispassionately. Integrating a new set of customs does not necessarily mean to forget about your former cultural heritage. There are plenty of creative ways to combine different backgrounds in the same neighbourhood to achieve a mutually beneficial relationship. Migrants, with their knowledge about different social codes and the values of different societies could be seen as a bridge between societies being key actors for a better intercultural understanding amongst people of different creeds⁷.

No identity is fixed; we are all an amalgamation of different backgrounds. No-one can be reduced to one sole origin or religion. All cultures are inter-connected, even if on the surface they may seem contradictory. An African proverb says: "*In the forest, when the branches of the trees are quarrelling, their roots are embracing*".

3. Demands and Commitments

We ask politicians to condemn racist or xenophobic attitudes? Or should everyone have his own opinion? Should we pay attention to it or should it be ignored to avoid making publicity to them? Should there be a rejection of extremist parties or allow a democratic dialogue? Which kind of change for paper procedure??? Do we want to promote?

3a. Demands

We demand:

- A special visa for youth exchanges;
- Politicians not to act in a racist and xenophobic way and to condemn such attitudes;
- Police and border authorities to treat migrants and other citizens equally;
- Official documents translated for migrants and language assistance offered;
- The creation of an online selection platform that would enable employers to select candidates based on education, experience, competences and not nationality or appearance;
- To fasten up the process and improve the quality (more individual approach) of the administrative research to give documents to a migrant;
- An increase of the visibility and ease the access of migrants to the bodies that protect their rights, and support the victims of discrimination;

3b. Commitments

We commit to:

- Organize an exchange of best practices on migration among MIJARC members;
- Welcome people to celebrate together different holidays, and participate in intercultural and inter-religious dialogues and exchanges;
- Analyze how open to diversity we are as organizations: identify the barriers and find ways to decrease them;
- Organize activities bringing together people with different backgrounds;

⁷ Cimade, "*Petit guide pour comprendre les migrations internationales*", campagne DES PONTS PAS DES MURS, oct. 2008

- Avoid stereotypes in the language/ words we use;
- Organize intercultural trainings including how to be critical to media messages (select the info spread by the media that can lead to stereotypes);
- Ask politicians not to use xenophobic or racist arguments, not using fear as a political tool;

II. Migration and Rural Development

1. Context: what we analysed

When discussing the complex issue of migration and rural development, one must first understand how migration and rural development are linked (it could seem contradictory to link development and migrations). For a better understanding of the situation, it is necessary to define these two concepts.

By definition, rural development is a positive and sustainable transformation of the rural environment in favour of the human factor and the various activities that take place there. This process is reinforced by different infrastructures such as economic activities, public services and agricultural activities.

The word 'migration' encompasses internal and international migration, both of which affect rural development. As previously mentioned, migration can be rural-rural, rural-urban, urban-urban, urban-rural migration as well as migration across borders (i.e. international migration). For every thousand people worldwide three of them are migrants⁸. Migration is a key factor in the rapid phenomenon of globalization today. Initially, migratory flows only affected welcoming countries and some departing zone in regions linked to a colonial past. Since the 1980's, new migratory patterns developed as a consequence of increased mobility resulting in migrants from new geographical areas particularly, Asia, Eastern Europe and Central Africa⁹.

From an economic point of view, the big economic emigration areas in the world comprise South-East Asia, India, Central Asia, Maghreb, West Africa and the Latino and the Caribbean. Let us see how this relates to our topic: migration and rural development.

1a. There are many ways to migrate...

Migration from the rural sector to the industrial sector was viewed as the key to modernization as it stimulated growth in the urban sector. Thus, from an economic point of view, rural-urban migration can directly impact rural incomes.

Many long-term immigrants ultimately return to their native country. However, barriers to irregular migration may discourage the return of migrants. This difficulty of re-entering their country or region of origin may prolong their initial stay in the host territory once they have

⁸ Atlas mondial. *Les grandes questions d'actualité*, Tout un monde en Cartes, Editions Autrement / Courrier International 2012

⁹ *Migrations in an interconnected world: new directions for action. Report of the Global Commission on International Migration*, October 2005 (chapter 2)

crossed the border. Nonetheless, there is a tendency of the returning migrants to settle in urban areas of their home country, even if they originate from the rural sector; a tendency which ultimately diminishes the impact of these returns.

In addition, one must not forget the important contribution of migrant workers for the economic productivity and advancement of a country or region, also in rural areas.

From a global point of view, South-South international migration tends to be more important for rural development in the low income countries when compared to the migration of low-skill workers to high income countries. So as a second point, we are going to observe how economic migration works.

1b. Brain drain and brain gain...

Thirty years ago, Europe believed in the end of migrations, but the lack of workers (qualified or not) created migration. There are various forms of migration. On one hand, we have the migration of low-skilled workers and on the other hand, we have the migration of highly-skilled workers. Low-skilled workers migration has a big impact on agricultural jobs. If a highly skilled labourer moves from low-income countries to high-income countries (a common occurrence) this is referred to as the 'brain drain'.

The 'brain drain' is defined as the departure of skilled or highly-qualified people from their original country to other countries with more attractive professional, economic, cultural opportunities. The move may also be motivated for personal incentives.

Conversely, there is the inverse phenomenon called the 'brain gain' whereby a country demonstrates the capacity to attract highly skilled labourers to their regions. One particular case of brain gain is called the 'care drain' where qualified medical professionals migrate to rich and ageing countries. Thus, we see that a hierarchy of mobility's right is built according to the skills of the migrants. This inequality gives less right for the ones who move than for the ones who stay.

1c. All migrations have consequences...

All in all, the main concern is how migration impacts development and how to deal with the consequences of migration. In analysing migration in terms of supply and demand of employment, we can link the phenomenon to development. Historically, all labour migrations are the migrations of people.

For the departure zones, migration may offer an escape from poverty for the migrants themselves but for the territory they have left, the question is whether the migrants' departure may, directly or indirectly, enhance or worsen the consumption, incomes and well-being of those who remain in these rural areas. Migrants play an important role in the promotion of development and the fight against poverty in their departure countries as well as boosting prosperity in the welcoming countries. For instance, an estimated 80% of the incomes in the rural areas of the Kingdom of *Lesotho* are from migrants working abroad and transferring to their families, while in *Somalia* they contribute to doubling the incomes of the

household. For the welcoming zones, one must consider three aspects: the quality of integration of the migrants into their host territories, their social impact and how quickly the integration process is going. There are two key dangers: firstly, migration disconnected with employment which is a real economic and social problem and secondly, the rejection of these migrants, even when migration is economically rational¹⁰.

Last but not least, the concept of migration and development (rural or not) should be seen as opportunities for us, the rural youth. They are opportunities to show our understanding of the world and a way to share the benefits of globalization amongst the different territories of the globe.

2. Youth and Rural Areas

When dealing with migration and rural development, it is important to understand how these changes affect the youth in a rural context. To us, the main issue is 'what is the youth response to migration' and 'how do they deal with it.'

As previously mentioned, one of the reasons for migration out of the rural sector is the lack of employment opportunities. High unemployment acutely affects the agricultural sector and the most vulnerable people in (rural) communities: women and youth. When facing such problems, it is important to consider why the economy is concentrated in the cities and how rural areas could be more attractive for its inhabitants and potential migrants. As rural youth and especially as youth organisations, our duty is to suggest solutions and new ways to promote rural areas.

If people or youth emigrate from the rural sector, they often do so for job perspectives or further academic training such as University degrees. Once they have emigrated, most of them do not come back to their rural homes preferring to settle in the cities. Thus far, these factors (i.e. jobs and academics) are considered to be the main reasons for migration out of rural areas.

At the same time, and mostly in Europe, rural settlements are becoming places to sleep and rest, while economic and social activities remain concentrated in urban areas. This situation is due to the fact that cities are becoming bigger and bigger absorbing all the rural labour force, rural land and also farmlands.

In conclusion, we should discuss the urban to rural migration of the 1960's (new countries dwellers of European countries). How does this phenomenon contribute to rural development? How can this new rural youth participate in making rural areas attractive by developing economic activities?

¹⁰ Debrat J-M. Les migrations, leur impact sur le développement et l'impact du développement sur les migrations, Revue d'économie du développement, 2007/2 Vol.21, p. 211-214

3. Demands and Commitments

3a. Demands

We demand:

- The creation of a space for exchange between immigrants and locals;
- Language lessons for all immigrants;
- Mutual teaching and learning processes between locals and immigrants (language and culture);
- A study on how community land ownership can improve the employment on rural areas for the migrants;
- Support to the development of rural areas by increasing the mobility facilities;
- The facilitation of the relocation/opening of new businesses in rural areas;

3b. Commitments

We commit to:

- Make voices of farmers, youth and young women from rural areas heard;
- Support formal and non formal education for rural areas;
- Make people aware of the tendency of perceiving villages as sleep and rest places;
- Involving the local authorities in support of the development;
- Bringing ideas and support alternative economy for rural areas;
- Use the experience that immigrants bring from their countries of origin;

III. Social Aspects of Migration

1. Context : what we analysed

Cultural diversity, differences, similarities, customs and habits are all concepts we are now beginning to understand, celebrate and value. As a main contributor to an already culturally diverse Europe, migration is a phenomenon which is increasing day by day, generating a constant need for research and knowledge sharing on the social impact of this process. In order to understand the social aspects of migration, we need to turn our attention towards education, human rights, gender, health, protection of migrants and how migration impacts the communities and families in their country of origin as well as in their destination country. The social view regarding migration is dominated by the constant pressure on migrants “to fit in”, forgetting that integration is always a two-way process which requires efforts from both sides: migrants and host countries.

Education, whether it is formal, non-formal or informal, plays a major role in the integration of migrants. Migrant students are disadvantaged in terms of enrolment in the type of school, duration of attending school, indicators of achievement, drop-out rates and types of school

diploma attained¹¹. Moreover, the absence of educational approach focusing on tolerance, openness, along with the concepts of minority and majority and the creation of a distorted image of migrants in textbooks lead to violent or ignoring attitudes from host countries but also to prejudices, fear and unrealistic expectations of migrants when they arrive in a foreign country. Education can also be a major incentive for migration as more and more people, especially young people, move to other countries in order to receive higher quality education and to learn about things they would not be able to learn in their own countries. Very few of them return to their own countries or regions.

“All human beings are born free and equal in rights and dignity. (...)” (Article 1, Universal Declaration of Human Rights) but from being born free and equal in rights to being treated equally is a long way to go. Migrant groups often experience violations of their basic human rights, starting from the migration policies of the country up to the behaviour of communities and individuals towards them. Racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and intolerance are common problems in the areas with high concentrations of migrants. Migrants are often employed on the black market, are prohibited from practicing their religion, speaking their language or following their customs. They do not have access to quality social services and are forced to accept what is given to them without having the power to negotiate, challenge it or even protect themselves.

When discussing migration and human rights, a special attention must be given to gender. Migration can simultaneously exacerbate the impact of existing gender roles and bring about significant changes in gender norms¹². Until recently, family reunification had been the major reason for entry of women migrants¹³. Nevertheless, trends show that women are starting to migrate independently, for economic reasons, as students or as refugees. Migrant women are mostly employed as domestic help or care-takers and they are more affected than men by cultural and religious beliefs. Women are more vulnerable to human trafficking, prostitution and forced labour.

Still, migration can also be an opportunity for women to escape from abusive relationships, unfavourable national laws or religious practices that violate their human rights. Migration can also be a common escape from poverty for many poor people, but a path that requires sacrifices. Policies on access to formal social protection for migrants are fragmented and focus more on protecting the host country from them and not on offering migrants the much needed protection. Even programmes carried out at community level by the civil society are often discontinued and incapable of offering sustainable support for migrants. The agreements between countries that allow people to transfer social benefits from one state to the other are unclear, imprecise and often fail to achieve the purpose of integration.

Another social aspect of migration that requires a special attention is the issue of family fragmentation. Occurring mostly in Eastern European countries, family fragmentation may take place when parents leave their home countries to go and work abroad to earn higher salaries in order to provide for their children, whom they let at home with the grandparents or relatives, sometimes even alone. Even though the psychological effects of such separations

¹¹ “Education and migration – strategies for integrating migrant children in European schools and societies”, European Commission, 2008

¹² “*Making migration work for development*”, Development Research Centre on Migration, Globalisation and Poverty, University of Sussex, 2010

¹³ “*Women, Gender and Migration in Europe*”, Nadjie Al-Ali

have not been thoroughly studied, it is becoming clear that children are affected in their development as illustrated by increasing juvenile criminal rates.

Nowadays, European societies need to become aware of the fact that they are becoming immigration countries and that more and more of “their” people are actually people from other countries.

2. Youth and Rural Areas

The migration of young children and young people is a subject often neglected. There is a lack of statistics and data pertaining to young people who migrate and even less relating to those who migrate from rural areas to urban areas. Migration from rural areas to urban areas often results in the decline of small communities and a prevailing tendency towards urbanisation. People move from their villages in search of better economic, social and educational opportunities which they find in cities, rarely returning to actively contribute to the communities from which they had left.

This tendency is even more visible in the case of young people. Youth migration is becoming a world-wide pandemic. Young people leave their villages and even their countries because of the limited potential for development inside their community in the long run. This is linked to the improper environment for higher education and a drastic reduction of interest in traditional occupations of communities such as: agriculture, arts and crafts or farming. The effects of this exodus of young people can be seen in ageing population process of villages and other small regions, the process of forgetting their identity and the impossibility to grasp the future or find adequate solutions.

A fundamental characteristic of youth is that until a certain age, across different countries, they are a dependent group. In one hand, this translates into young people being forced to migrate with their parents and start a new life in a different area or a different country. Education, social integration and social protection are the most difficult social aspects of this kind of migration. On the other hand, when parents migrate, as we explained before, the impact of such a separation increases the vulnerability of young people, caused by the lack of parental care, by the break-up of the family unit and sometimes psychological insecurity.

Many young people also migrate on their own. They often move without their parents, to urban areas or to other countries, in search for better education and for the social and economic opportunities that these offer. They live on their own and set up families in the new location. There is a phenomenon of educational migration in Europe, especially from Eastern Europe to other parts of the continent, which means that young people leave a region or a country in order to study elsewhere. This phenomenon is followed by the effect of non-return since very few of them come back to the region or country of origin once they finish their studies.

Having discussed the effect of migration on emigrating young people, it is only fair that we turn our attention to youth who come from the host regions. One positive aspect for this category of young people is that they get the chance to live in multicultural environments, which have been proven to help develop communication and social skills. However, in such environments, segregation and violence are common phenomena. In addition, migration also

impacts the age distribution of an area's labour force composition as well as perpetuating the "brain drain".

It cannot be denied that migration can simultaneously constitute a burden as well as an opportunity for development. The question is how exactly do we maximize the social benefits of migration and minimize the social costs?

3. Demands and Commitments

3a. Demands

We demand:

- Politicians to respect international treaties and conventions related to migration;
- NGO's educating people from host countries to accommodate the migrants and to inform about the good results and success of migrants;
- The church to encourage migrants and support them to face their problems;
- More communication and interest from politicians towards migrants;
- Inhabitants of a territory to receive equal treatment;
- Politicians to be responsible and not to act depending on populist expectations;
- Ensuring working permission for migrants without regular papers;
- An improved situation in origin countries so that people have a decent living perspective;
- Fight climate change as one of the biggest reasons for migration;

3b. Commitments:

We commit to:

- Minimize migrants stereotypes and fight discrimination;
- Understand instead of judging;
- Inform the migrants about their rights;
- Reduce misperception towards migrants (e.g. visit mosques, churches or cultural places);
- Open up to differences (e.g. organize international evenings, meetings with migrants in schools).
- Provide information to young people who want to go abroad;