

Onward, return, repeated and circular migration among immigrants of Moroccan origin. Merging datasets as a strategy for testing migration theories.

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Abstract

Studies suggest that the phenomenon of international migration is becoming more widespread, but also that it is changing in nature with individuals' migration patterns becoming more complex. Onward, repeated and circular migration are concepts intended to capture such increasing complexity. However, we still lack of internationally accepted definitions for these types of movements, which renders particularly difficult to make an empirical assessment of their incidence and changing trends in recent years. In this paper we developed a first attempt to define these concepts in a mutually exclusive and meaningful way, which would allow us to measure the incidence of each among immigrants of Moroccan origin around the world (with special attention to those who ever migrated to France, Italy and Spain). By combining information from datasets on returned migrants in Morocco (ETF2013) and current migrants in Europe (Intregrometro2009, TeO2008, and NIS2007), we first describe the incidence of each type of migration pattern in each of the four selected sources. Next, we describe the main characteristics of migrants who engage in each of them and estimate multivariate regression models to identify: 1) the main factors explaining selection into (single) return to the country of origin from different destinations in Europe and, 2) the main factors explaining the selection into each of the four identified migration patterns. Preliminary results suggest a positive return into (single) return in terms of educational level and labour performance at destination, as well as some sort of educational positive gradient for increasing migration complexity. Finally, limitations of data and potentialities of data merging to better understand more complex migration trajectories are discussed at length.

1. Introduction

The interest in measuring return and circular migration mainly derives from the increasing policy attention to circulation as a potential new way of managing migration, which might serve the best interest of the migrants, their countries of origin and their countries of destination. However, in the European context, EU policy documents have never provided a clear definition of circular migration that permits to measuring in a precise manner its incidence and characteristics. The UN recommendations (1998) lack also of a definition for it, as well as for repeated or onward migration. These omissions render particularly difficult policy design and evaluation of the effectiveness of new strategies aimed at promoting some of these forms of (temporary) migration, as well as conventional wisdom that migratory patterns have recently become more complex than in the past.

2. Methodological difficulties in measuring and explaining complex migration patterns

2.1. Return Migrants

The UN recommendations provide the following definition of “return migrants” (1998):

- *“Returning migrants are persons returning to their country of citizenship after having been international migrants (whether short-term or long-term) in another country and who are intending to stay in their own country for at least a year”*

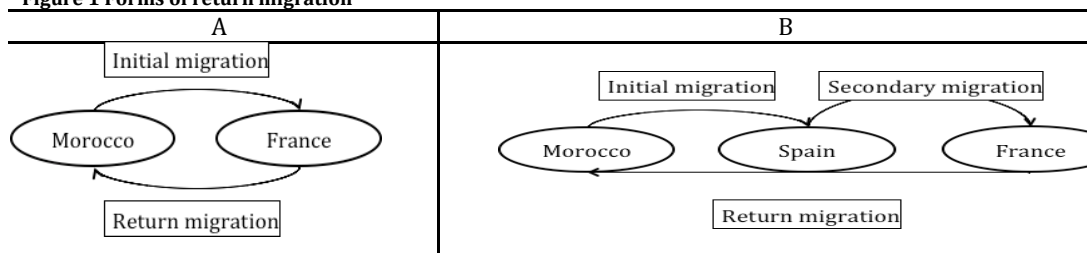
One of the main limitations (and which can be relatively easily put right) is criteria of citizenship (migrants may have acquired the citizenship of their host country and no longer be identified) and which should thus be replaced with country of birth (OECD 2008).

However since the definition has other “parameters” – such as having been an international migrant – the persons that will be identified as return migrants can vary.

- If we take an individual’s point of view – retrospective survey – if the person has spent 3/12/XX months abroad -> will declare this spell and we’ll consider him a return migrant (in the ETF survey)
- If we adopt an administrative definition (definition used in destination country immigration statistics) only migrants having been admitted in special categories or who are in a regular situation will be considered as such -> so if someone who was never considered an “immigrant” in the first place returns, s/he may not appear in the statistics
 - o Imagine someone who is a rejected asylum seeker or undocumented migrant during most of stay, lives for several years in destination country and then returns -> we will “observe” the trajectory in surveys carried in countries of origin among returnees, but unlikely that this situation will appear in destination country data sources
 - o This is why it’s important to include into consideration the migrants’ legal status and type of admission (temporary / permanent) in the analyses

It is important to take into account that return migration can come in different forms. For example, it may be relatively simple with a single destination country (case A) or include secondary migrations in the trajectory (case B).

Figure 1 Forms of return migration



Source: Authors’ adaption from OECD 2008

2.2. Onward, Repeated and Circular Migrants

First, circulation automatically refers to the idea of repetition. However, if circular migration is something different from repeated migration, it is important to specify how they differ from each other. Repeated migration refers, according to the International Organisation for Migration, to “the movement of a person who, after having returned to his or her country of origin, again emigrates”, regardless of whether the country of destination is the same one as in previous migration or not. Thus, one way of distinguishing repeated migration from circular migration would be to add the condition of the same destination as in previous emigration.

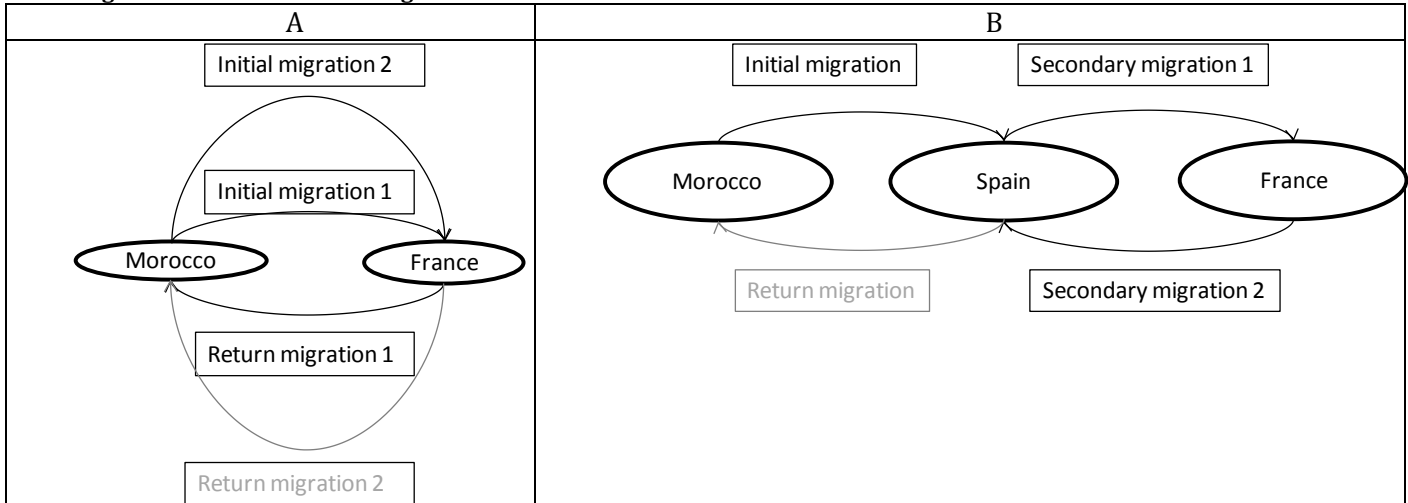
Second, a feasible measurement of circular migration is also conditioned by current statistical systems. The main statistical sources at hand to measure circular migration are population registers, where information on migrations is based to a greater or lesser extent on voluntary registrations and de-registrations made initially by migrants themselves, and sometimes further corrected or completed by the statistical offices. However, the country of destination is often not declared/required in these sources.

Third, the concept of repeated migration does not make reference to the frequency of successive moves, and there is no specification either on the length of stay abroad (or at origin) for each migration spell. But the frequency of movements and the length of stay abroad are the two crucial dimensions for the statistical definition of circular migration. It would be necessary to define a minimum period of time elapse between each migration, and the total period of time over which repeated migration needs to occur to be considered as part of circular migration (within one year, three, five, ten or thirty?). However, information on durations of successive stays is not always available. If short stays following repeated migrations cannot be identified, the reported incidence of circular migration will be underestimated.

As in the case of return migration, circular migration may take more or less simple or complex forms. In case A, the migrant goes to the destination country (France) from the same country of origin (Morocco). The migrant can be considered a “circular” migrant starting from his second stay in DC (France) or after his second return to OC (Morocco).

In case B, the migrant returning to Spain is identified as a circular migrant from this DC perspective. However s/he has never returned to his/her country of birth which raises the question whether the different groups / trajectories of circular migrants are comparable or not.

Figure 2 Forms of circular migration



Source: Authors' adaption from OECD 2008

3. Research Questions

- What is the incidence of different forms of complex migration trajectories among a migrant community established in Europe for long, such as the Moroccan one?
- How do the characteristics between migrants selected into different (complex) trajectories differ and why?

4. Methods

(International) Moroccan migrants are the target population of this paper. These migrants may be residing in their country of origin (return migrants) or in a destination country (current migrants). The combination of data sources collected in both origin (European Training Foundation – ETF survey, 2012) and main destination countries – France (Trajectories and Origins – TeO survey, 2008) and Spain (New Immigrants survey – ENI, 2007) – allows to cover and analyze this transnational population. However, this research objective runs into different limitations in part due to the structure and contents of the data sources chosen for the study.

Firstly, we describe the target populations of each survey and identify the sample of Moroccan migrants comparable across the three surveys. Secondly, we describe and discuss the variables relative to migration patterns (primary variables of interest) and to migrants' socio-demographic and socio-economic characteristics (explanatory variables).

Table 1 Definition of target populations in Moroccan migrant surveys

Condition	Return migrants	Current migrants	
	Morocco (ETF, 2012)	France (TeO, 2008)	Spain (ENI, 2007)
Country of origin (birth / nationality)	???	Persons born in Morocco with foreign (non-French) nationality at birth	Persons born in Morocco. with foreign (non-Spanish) nationality at birth
Country of last destination	none	France	Spain
Duration of residence in destination country	Having lived in destination country for at least 3 months	Living in France for at least one year at the time of the survey	Living in Spain for at least one year at the time of the survey or have the intention to live in Spain for at least one year
Period of migration	Return to Morocco in the last 10 years (2002 or after)		
Age at migration	18 years or older at the time of their last migration	none	Excludes persons born abroad and who are younger than 2 years at time of their arrival in Spain
Age at survey	none	Aged 18 to 59 years	Aged 16 years or older
Employment status in destination country	Worked at least 3 months continuously abroad	none	none
Total sample size	1400	890	1063

Source: Own elaboration from survey documentation

5. Results

5.1. Descriptive results: Returnees in Morocco

We first focus on return migrants residing in Morocco, then on current migrants residing in European destinations: France and Spain.

We distinguish two types of trajectories in the ETF survey in terms of the destination countries:

- Bilateral: only one destination country (region)
- Multilateral: two or more destination countries (regions)

The majority of returnees in the survey have participated in a bilateral mobility, going back and forth between Morocco and a destination country (Table 2). In most cases these movements took place between Morocco and France (27%), but were also frequent for Spain (18%) and Italy (12%).

Table 2 Migration trajectories of returnees

Bilateral	France	27,0
	Spain	17,6
	Italy	12,8
	other EU	11,5
	Middle East	6,6
	OECD	4,1
	North Africa	3,9
	Other	2,6
Multilateral		13,9
Total		100,0

Source: ETF (2012)

When multilateral movements did occur (14%), they often included France and another country (9%) – Spain, Italy, other EU or OECD countries – showing that despite the relative decrease of migrants residing here, it remains an important step in the migrants trajectory either as a country of entry (for example for migrants that will move on to other destinations such as OECD) or as a final destination (for migrants arriving in South Europe and going “north” afterwards).

When we look at the intensity of circulation in terms of temporal frequency, we see that it is relatively low, especially for our destination countries: the proportion of migrants who have two or more migration spells in France or Spain is only 4-5%

Table 3 Frequency of migration by destination

	Migration experience in the country / region	2 or more stays in the country / region (among those with at least one)
France	36%	5%
Spain	24%	4%
Italy	17%	5%
Other EU27	17%	11%
OECD	6%	15%
North Africa	5%	8%
Middle East	8%	10%
Other	5%	13%

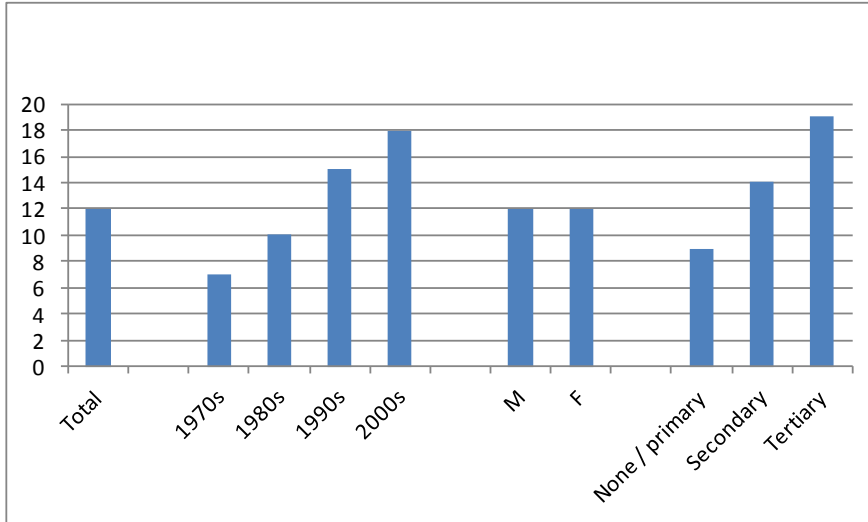
Source: ETF (2012)

5.1.2. Descriptive results: Current Moroccan Immigrants in France

The TeO survey includes information on visits, long-term stays out of France and migration intentions allowing us to analyse past and future migratory patterns among Moroccan immigrants residing in France.

Figure 1 shows that prior to settling in France around one out of eight Moroccan immigrants had already visited the country. Although we do not have other information on this visit (when it took place relative to settlement, how long it lasted, the reason of the visit), the positive relation with the migrants' level of education suggests that it may be linked to their studies. Thus the transformation of the Moroccan migration flow - with a decreasing part of migrant workers and a growing one of student migrants - may induce an increase in the circulation between the two countries, for example in the case of organized (or not) study programmes.

Figure 1 Proportion of immigrants having visited France before their long-term settlement

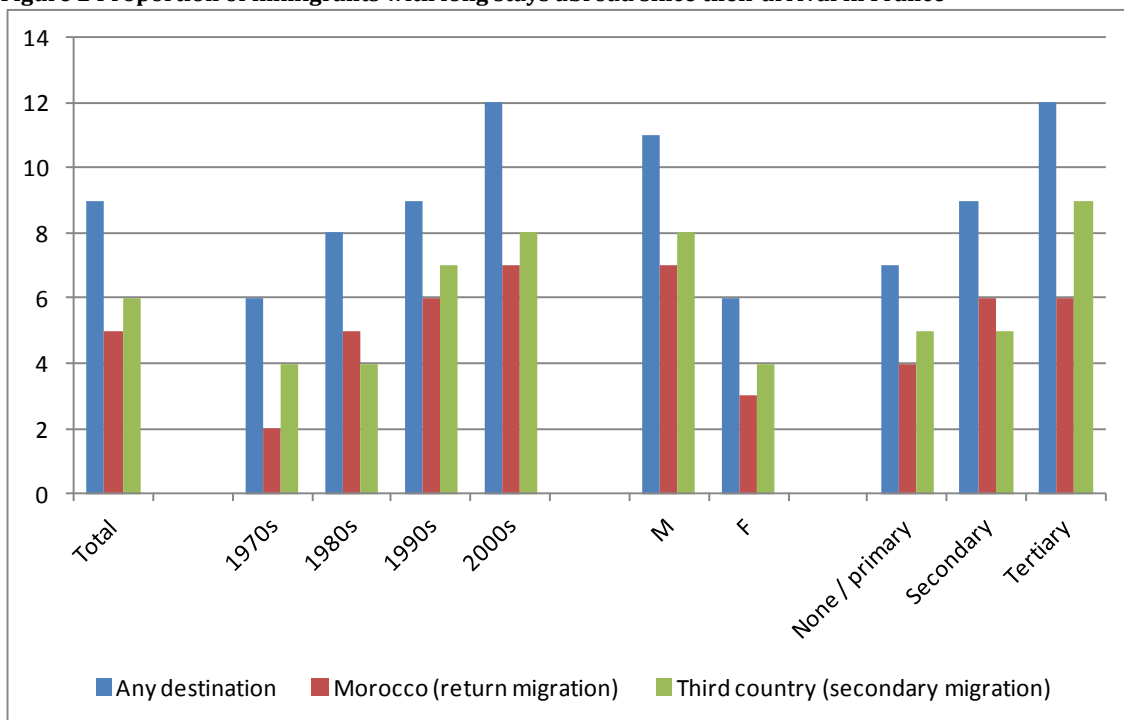


Source: TeO (2008).

The information on migrants' long-stays abroad since their arrival in France allows to estimate the proportion of migrants in France having experienced circular migration (with regards to the destination country). In this section we distinguish whether the migrants went to Morocco (return migration) or a third country (secondary migration) (secondary migration) (

Figure 2):

Figure 2 Proportion of immigrants with long stays abroad since their arrival in France

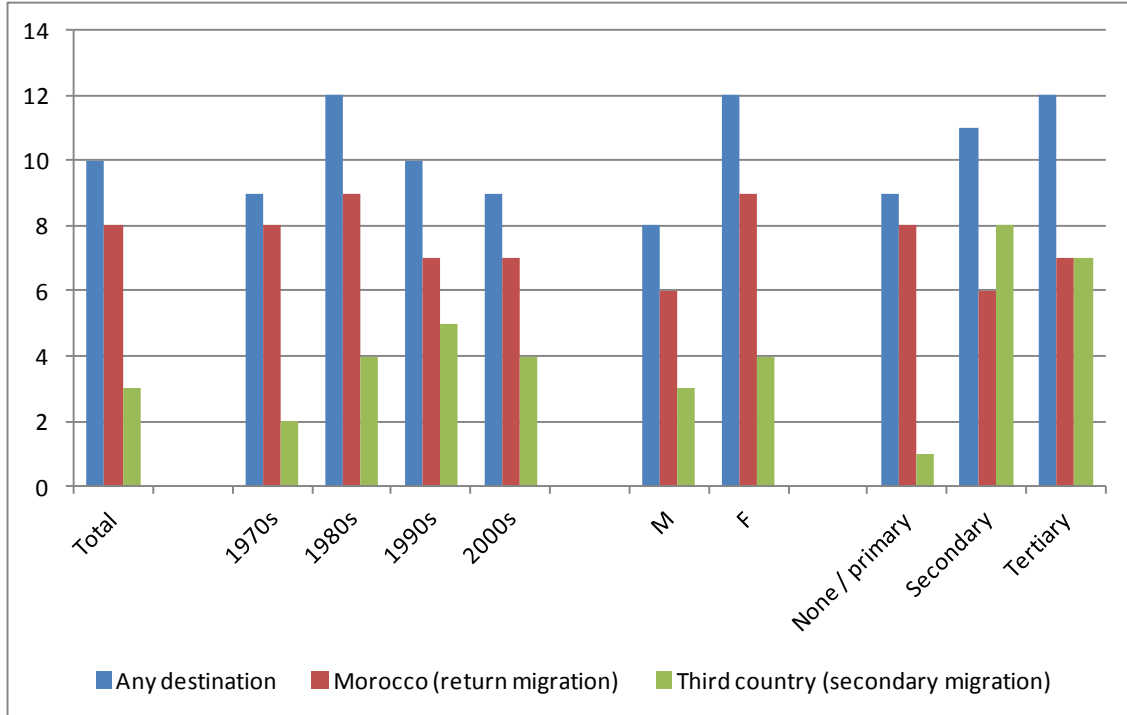


Source: TeO (2008).

Around one out of ten Moroccan immigrants in France took part in a circular migration, with similar proportion of migrants returning to Morocco or going to a third country and then re-migrating to France (some migrants may have done both). As with short visits, circulation was more frequent among more recent and higher educated migrants, especially when considering secondary migration.

Around one out of ten Moroccan immigrants in France has the intention of migrating in the future, in most cases returning to their country of origin (8%) rather than a third country (3%). Thus intentions appear to be very different from the actual behaviour of these migrants, a result which needs to be further explored.

Figure 3 immigrants with intention to migrate, arrivals 1990 or after



Source: TeO (2008).

5.1.3. Descriptive results: Current Moroccan Immigrants in Spain

To be completed in next draft.

5.2. Multivariate results

We first analyse selection into (single) return and, next, we analyse selection into different complex migration patterns versus single return

Tabla 4. Logit estimates of selection into (first) return to Morocco

	FRANCE	SPAIN
Female	-1.338***	-.637
Age	-0.000344	.453***
Age Sq.	0.00167	-.004***
Years since migration	-0.347***	-.440***
Years since migration Square	0.00202	.001
Ref. Less than complete secondary		.463
Secondary	1.240***	.821
Tertiary	-0.994**	3.540***
Some studies in destination	1.131**	-4.423***
Some experience of unemployment in destination	0.971**	.093
Ever remitted to the origin country	1.670***	-.912*
Married	-0.213	.330
Have children	-0.499	-4.031***
Arrival cohort 1990 +	-2.168***	-4.221

pseudo R-sq	0.475	
N	619	1063

Tabla 5. Multinomial Logit estimates of selection into complex migration patterns (onward, repeated, circular) versus (first) return to Morocco.

To be completed in next draft.

6. Discussion and conclusions