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Transnational Diaspora Entrepreneurship: The case of Moroccans in Catalonia

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Executive Summary

This paper is based on empirical research performed in Catalonia in the framework of the international research project DiasporaLink, which analysed the links between transnational diaspora entrepreneurship (TDE), migration and development. In this paper, we focus on the case of Moroccans immigrants in Spain and especially in Catalonia, in order to understand the role that different actors play in fostering or not transnational entrepreneurship of Moroccan diaspora. In order to structure the field research, as well as the further analysis, we have defined three levels of action: a macro-level, a meso-level, and a micro-level. The methodology is based on a field research conducted through in-depth interviews with macro- and meso-level actors in Catalonia, complemented by a bibliographic research on existing political frameworks and initiatives facilitating TDE activities. Our findings suggest that little TDE takes place between Morocco and Spain despite the countries' geographical proximity. The paper reflects on socioeconomic and political factors, among others, to explain why this is so.

Keywords

Transnational diaspora entrepreneurship, migrant entrepreneurs, return migration, migration and development

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Introduction

This paper is based on the empirical research performed in Spain within the framework of the international research project DiasporaLink¹, which aims to analyse and promote the transnational diaspora entrepreneurship (hereafter TDE) among migrants. In DiasporaLink, TDE is generally considered as “a creator of development and wealth in sending and receiving countries”.

According to Drori et al. (2009: 1001), the concept of transnational entrepreneurship “involves entrepreneurial activities that are carried out in a cross-national context, and initiated by actors who are embedded in at least two different social and economic arenas”². In our case, the focus is on diasporic actors.

At a research level, the project explores to what extent and in what forms the economic activities of migrants are becoming transnational. The focus is placed on the creation of different types of businesses that link the origin and the destination country of the migrants. From a geographical point of view, the project looks at specific migration corridors.

In this context, the present paper aims at setting the foundations for a deeper understanding of TDE activities developed by Moroccan immigrants residing, or having resided, in Catalonia. By doing so, we seek to understand the reasons that may encourage or limit TDE, as well as the role that different actors can play in fostering, or not, the transnational entrepreneurship of Moroccan diaspora. For this purpose, we define three levels of analysis:

- a macro-level, where we analyse institutional and para-institutional actors, both of destination and origin countries, at different governmental levels (State, sub-State, and local level) in order to understand how the institutional (structural) framework plays a role, if any, in facilitating these activities
- a meso-level of social networks, where we focus on civil society organisation, associations and private actors – both Moroccans and autochthonous- that can be informed about, or foster TDE activities.
- a micro-level, where we look at cases of Moroccans having developed TDE activities

These three levels of analysis are necessary to understand the TDE dynamics in our case. As Kloosterman and Rath (2001) suggest in their ‘mixed embeddedness thesis’, the opportunity structure provided by the context – the macro-level – interacts with the side of the entrepreneur – the micro-level. Concerning the meso-level, due to the very exploratory nature of this research, we define this category in slightly different terms from those used in the literature. Chen and Than (2009), for instance, define the meso-level as the ‘glocalized networks’, namely social networks with global and local connections linking the macro and the micro-levels. In the present research, as previously explained, we focus specifically CSO organisations that can provide more information about an embryonic phenomenon as TDE activities of Moroccan diaspora in Catalonia.

The Moroccan – Spanish corridor is a relevant one in terms of quantity and quality. Next to France, Spain is the main European destination for Moroccan migrants (de Haas, 2014), which are, in fact, the second largest immigrant group in Spain, after Romanians (INE, 2017). The

¹ The DiasporaLink project is funded through Horizon 2020, see: <http://www.diasporalink.com/> .

² See also Portes et. al. (2002) and Solano (2016a/b).

focus on Catalonia is justified due to the fact that it receives almost 30% of the total Moroccans in the country, and it is this autonomous community that usually takes the lead on immigrant Integration policy (Zapata-Barrero 2013).

The methodology of the research presented in this paper is based on a field research conducted through 9 in-depth interviews with macro-, meso- and micro-level actors in Catalonia (Spain), complemented by a desk research on existing policy frameworks and initiatives for promoting TDE activities of Moroccan migrants both at origin and at destination.

At a first glance, this paper can be considered as the story of a failure, due to several difficulties and limitations that have curtailed our research from the very beginning. Such limitations, however, should qualify as results in themselves.

A first element of difficulty that emerged from the start of our field research is related to the absolute lack of data and information about existing TDE activities in general, and about the Moroccan diaspora numbers and activities in particular. As De Haas and Vezzoli (2010: 24) stated in general terms, “[i]t has been claimed that since the 1990s there has been a certain increase in entrepreneurial activities among Moroccan migrants, although there is still a lack of pertinent data to substantiate this claim”. Several years after, this problem is still central, at least in the Spanish case.

The second obstacle was the low response rate from actors contacted for the research. This is can be due to the effects of the economic crisis on civil society organisations (CSO) in Spain, in general and also more specifically those linked with immigrant communities. This “disruption” of Moroccan associational space is linked to the cuts to public funding to associations, CSOs and NGOs, also working on integration, after 2008 (Aparicio Gómez and Tornos, 2014). For instance, the suspension of the Spanish Integration Fund since 2012 also affected importantly migrants’ organisations and CSOs.

A further problem is related to the difficulties experienced by the interviewees in order to acknowledge the specific figure of TDE that is at the core of our research. Indeed, the limited importance of this category within our case of study is illustrated by the fact that the majority of the interviewees were talking to us about another category so-defined in literature as “ethnic business” or “ethnic entrepreneurship”³.

In few words, the figure on which we have centred the analysis, the TDE, is still not relevant in the case of Moroccan diaspora in Catalonia. Actually, as we will show below, the remarkably small evidence of entrepreneurship practices of Moroccans we have found along the Catalonia-Morocco corridor suggests that a transnational return, rather than diaspora, entrepreneurship is taking place.

However, next to the aforementioned reasons justifying the relevance of the Spanish-Moroccan corridor, it is important to consider also the proximity of both countries, and also the fact that

³ The concept of “ethnic entrepreneurship” is defined as “a set of connections and regular patterns of interaction among people sharing common national background or migration experiences” (Waldinger *et al.*, 1990: 3). This is the figure of a business opened by an immigrant at his new destination – such as convenience stores, public internet and phone places, bars and restaurants – characterised by some loose linkage with the origin countries or communities. See Solé and Parella-Rubio (2005) for an analysis of this figure in the Spanish case.

historically Morocco has tried to keep a strong implication of emigrants towards their country of origin through remittances and investments. This apparent research catastrophe may hide noteworthy elements that justify its analysis. Thus, instead of working on a presence – the TDE and their characteristics - we decided to analyse its absence and to understand the possible reasons behind.

In the remainder of this article, after a short section detailing its elaboration, we briefly describe how Moroccan TDE activities are still marginal in Catalonia. Next, we review the results of our field research concerning respectively micro-, macro-, and meso-level actors on TDE initiatives of Moroccan migrants in Catalonia. Then, we focus on the barriers that can potentially explain the limited development of these activities. Finally, after summing up the main conclusions of the research, we propose some policy recommendations for the main stakeholders in this field.

1 Methodological note

This policy paper relies on the qualitative document analysis (QDA) of three different sources of primary and secondary data. Academic literature compounds the corpus of secondary data that was used to retrieve points of entry to the research, which is of a very explorative nature. For this same reason, a back and forth process of primary data collection and analysis was carried out. We started examining institutional documents regarding legislation in both Catalonia and Morocco, institutional web pages of the several governmental institutions and policy plans. This was combined with desk research of other institutions (meso-level) likely to be involved with the Moroccan community in Catalonia. These documents were analysed with a triple objective: first, attesting for the apparent absence of TDE; second, drawing a map of stakeholders that were likely to provide knowledge about TDE, thus becoming potential interviewees; finally, preparing the structure of the interviews.

In a second step we carried out semi-structured interviews with stakeholders. These were contacted due to their direct or indirect role in relation to TDE, in any of the three levels of analysis we propose. At the macro level, we intended to interview representatives of both the Catalan and the Moroccan government involved in entrepreneurship and migration. At the meso-level, we held a pilot interview with a person that has been actively involved with the Moroccan community in Catalonia since the early 90s, and helped us confirming and/or modifying the list of meso- and micro-level actors. Also at the meso-level, we interviewed the representatives of three associations devoted to the Moroccan community in Catalonia, the responsible for immigration at a Spanish trade union, and a representative of Moroccan Bank also established in Spain. Finally at the micro level we could only interview one Moroccan entrepreneur.⁴ All interviews were conducted between February and September 2016, lasted around 60 minutes and were recorded and transcribed.

These interviews were very helpful to confirm the findings of the first step and provided further information about policy plans and other activities promoted by the macro level to examine in a third step of the analysis. The following table summarises the process of elaboration of the policy brief.

⁴ Due to data protection, more information about the interviewees will only be discussed upon individual request to the authors.

Objective	Type of data	Source
Mapping actors involved on TDE Morocco - Catalonia	Primary	Legislation and policy documents Pilot interview
	Secondary	Academic literature
Elaborating interview structures	Primary	Legislation and policy documents
Mapping institutions and policy plans aimed at fostering TDE	Primary	Legislation and policy documents Institutional web pages (as cited along this paper) Semi-structured interviews
	Secondary	Academic literature
Explaining the scope of TDE Catalonia-Morocco	Primary	Legislation and policy documents
		Institutional web pages (as cited along this paper) Semi-structured interviews

Source: authors' own elaboration

2 Moroccan transnational entrepreneurs in Catalonia: A still marginal figure

First of all, it is necessary to recall, as we announced in the introduction, that no data of any kind exists that would provide a clear image of TDE activities among Moroccans in Spain and in Catalonia. Public institutions, private actors, associations and other civil society organisations both in Spain and in Catalonia have not collected systematic information about how many Moroccans migrants decide to establish a transnational business including their country of origin. Moroccan institutions also have no, not even incomplete, data on this matter. This fact is symptomatic of at least two things: firstly these types of activities are still not very well developed in the case of Moroccan migrants in Catalonia and Spain; and secondly, that public institutions do not seem particularly interested in these activities, at least for the moment.

The majority of the Moroccans who undertake entrepreneurial activities with Morocco are migrants who return and start a business there. Moreover, according to our interviewees, the large majority of Moroccans that return back to the country of origin are not businessman, but mainly employees that act as intermediaries, or 'relational brokers':

“All that I mention came back with this formula: to become the intermediaries for a company they had been working for here [Spain] and that is opening a new market in Morocco, because the company here saw that there is no market here and had a need for expansion. They use the Moroccan employee that has some contact there and that can open there and continue to work. But

none of the cases I know were enrolled in the voluntary return program⁵. I know who has returned voluntarily, but not with an economic project. In fact, of the five [people who returned through the program], three had mental health problems, were psychologically treated, were shattered and needed more to be with the family than to arrive with a project” (interviewee 1).

Once more, the voluntary return programmes, often related at a narrative level with productive activities in origin countries, bear witness of his very limited impact (Plewa, 2012), as we describe further below.

In some cases, the Moroccans that act as intermediaries or directly work for larger local companies (Spanish or Catalan ones) that want to open their markets and start their activities in the Moroccan market, have a higher academic level of education and are still established in Catalonia, as they can benefit of an easy regime of mobility. An example of this was one of our interviewees, (interviewee 2), who actually gave other examples of younger generations of Moroccans living in Catalonia and working for companies with interests in the Moroccan market.

Scepticism about this figure is shared by the majority of the stakeholders that we interviewed. One of the interviewees claims that those who engage in transnational business activities belong to an already transnational elite and, he adds, “the rest cannot do this” (interviewee 8). The same source adds: “it is very difficult to be competitive with small companies that have a budget of around 150,000-200,000 euros.”

This picture is in accordance with the kind of dualism brilliantly detailed by Castles (2011: 311), between a cosmopolitan and mobile elite that can move easily across the planet, and the rest that has to face a world of borders, barriers, security control and exploitation. There is also a Moroccan cosmopolitan elite who is active in the business world, but it seems that they are not immigrants, and neither are they based in Spain or Catalonia. These actors have a higher socio-economic profile, extensive access to social networks with key actors in Morocco, and with more structured and formal activities operating in France, Belgium, Canada, etc. For the moment, the typology of a Moroccan entrepreneur of high socioeconomic status, high mobility and good contacts in the country of origin, is not participating in TDE activities in Catalonia or Spain: “the kind of people you say exist, but these are big capitalists who usually work for multinational companies, who do the operation and do not need to have an office nor a referent” (interviewee 1).

The weight of socio-economic class in establishing transnational activities is also indirectly confirmed in an interview, when the stakeholder points out future evolution in the form, structuration level and size of TDE practices:

“This [the intermediate typology of enterprise between the SMEs (small and medium enterprise) and the big multinationals], I think, will start about 2020. Because we have a quarry of future entrepreneurs in business schools, in Barcelona for example, that is amazing. Especially, children of diplomats. Because today's diplomats have realized that the great value, the great heritage they can leave their children are higher education degrees.” (interviewee 9).

⁵ The voluntary return programme was implemented by the Spanish government in order to foster and assist the return of immigrants. See: http://extranjeros.empleo.gob.es/es/Retorno_voluntario/programa/index.html

Socio-economic class, academic training and personal status facilitating mobility in different spaces links very clearly the evolution of this figure – the Moroccan transnational entrepreneur – to the previously mentioned figure of cosmopolitan elites.

In any case, it is also clear that the time of residence of a community in the destination country is playing a key role, and that the offspring of Moroccan immigrants in Catalonia will probably raise the possibilities of developing TDE activities, if there is a supportive institutional framework.

Looking at the typology of the few TDE activities developed by Moroccans, a previous research carried on in the framework of the Diasporalink project and based on field research in the country of origin (Hellgren, 2017) shows that TDE activities are not largely developed and that the most of these transnational activities are carried on by return migrants in Morocco. However, the report suggests that these activities bear no relation to having taken part to the voluntary and productive return programmes carried on by the Spanish state with the support of the IOM, NGOs or CSOs. These projects were plagued by different limitations that practically made the “productive” part of the return mainly a rhetoric statement at political level. Indeed, data from 2010-2012 suggests that the vast majority of beneficiaries come from Latin American countries, amounting to nearly 300 beneficiaries in three years (Parella, Petroff and Serradell, 2014). Other return programs offer slightly higher numbers (10 000 from 2009-2012), but again the presence of Moroccan migrants is very low. In their study of Bolivian returnees, Parella et al. (*ibidem*) suggest that factors such as the lack of sufficient resources, as well as the rigidity of regulations and the lack of cooperation with countries of origin might explain such low numbers. These findings add to the statements made by our interviewee on the mostly limited entrepreneurial culture and knowledge of returning migrants (interviewee 9) and arguably constitute the main elements of the failure of such programmes.

Hellgren’s research (2017) underlines that the existing TDE activities are carried out mainly by two typologies of Moroccan migrants: 1) those having had a relatively positive labour experience in Spain decided to go back to the country of origin with the savings earned during their emigration period in order to start a new activity in the same field in which they were working in Spain or Catalonia (restaurants or construction, for instance); 2) migrants that have earned an important amount of money through informal business and start an activity in Morocco (Hellgren, 2017)

As we expose below, these findings coincide mainly with those produced through the field research carried out on the Catalan case with several stakeholders linked in different ways with the Moroccan diaspora. As we have already suggested, the few TDE in Catalonia seem to have a very low economic profile, and their activities are mainly informal with limited degrees of planning and structure. This is illustrated by several interviewees in similar terms as the following:

“Even mentally, I think, the Moroccan, well not the Moroccan, but the type of Moroccan immigrant we have here, is not the typical one that has an initiative, which may have an idea of entrepreneurship ... No. They are those who act ‘informally’: ‘you have something, I have contacts, I put you in contact and I take the commission’, and that’s it” (interviewee 1).

The actors involved in these activities in the Catalan and Spanish cases are mainly unskilled or low-skilled workers that apply their knowledge in the same economic sector back in the country

of origin. Moreover, a specific business culture emerged as a factor to consider in relation to the outcomes of Moroccan TDE. As put by a respondent:

“These people do not have the culture to sit in an office and say, ‘I run my business.’ Yes, I run my business, yes, but I run it from the mud, not from an office. [...]The existing TDE of Moroccans migrants in Catalonia and Spain are very archaic; it is nothing scientific or industrialized” (interviewee 9).

Concerning the size of the currently existing businesses that link Catalonia/Spain and Morocco, there are no large and well-structured businesses. The most part of entrepreneurial initiatives are carried out mainly on an individual basis or, in the best case, by very small enterprises.

These small companies focus on a limited number of sectors which coincide with the activities most Moroccans develop in Spain: construction, transport and hospitality.

An interviewee suggest that, in his view, the sectors where there are more investments, (more of the 90%) are livestock farming, construction, and to a lesser extent, agriculture and transport of fruits and vegetables” (interviewee 9).

Concerning the construction sector, it was a very important sector of employment of Moroccans in Spain and Catalonia before the crisis. As a respondent explains:

“they were many people who were here working in the field of construction. Because there were many companies of Moroccans who had begun to work in construction, as intermediaries. The big companies take the big works, and then they outsource, they subcontract small companies. Then, when the sector falls, many of these people have come down to Morocco, because in Morocco there is still the boom of construction. So many, I speak of at least 15 or 20 that I know ... but there are more. Then all these companies have gone down through one of these people with whom they subcontracted. Then we find in Morocco many medium-mixed companies” (interviewee 1).

Looking more deeply at entrepreneurial activities in the construction sector, the enterprises have a very small in size and are ‘managed’ by a former employee in the same sector in Spain:

“What is being created lately in Morocco, are construction companies [...] but the outsourcing of construction companies. Because many of these enterprises have closed in Spain and some of those who were here employed, with their unemployment settlement buy the material that liquidates that company and they go to Morocco and constitute them there a company. They carry the excavators and then they rent it out” (interviewee 9).

The agriculture is another growing field of investments, even if the role of Moroccans seems to be so far limited to intermediaries or to transport companies:

“And now the Moroccan watermelon has become fashionable. In Mercabarna they are sold like candy in the door of the schools, and what they do: they go to Zagora, in the northern part of the Sahara, which is a sandy land, and watermelons have a grittier texture and are much larger, can weigh 20, 30kg!” (interviewee 9)

The investors in this field are mainly Catalan, or Spanish, that rent some land for longer periods and organise the production there, in order to sell it back in Catalonia or Spain. Moroccans, largely already employees in the sector by these investors, serve mainly as intermediaries, because they generally don’t have the capitals to carry out these operations. An interviewee explains that “there is just one that I know. One who used to be a warehouse assistant, he set up

the business with his boss, they fought, and now he has set it up on his own side. Other people are looking for their place in this chain: they create transport companies” (interviewee 9).

Concerning the transport sector, it has started several years after the beginning of the crisis in Spain, and particularly after then the public guarantee fund (Fogasa) started paying the compensations to Moroccan workers whose employer had gone bankrupt.

“They [Fogasa] started paying three years ago or so, so people have received the money 2 or 3 years ago. That's when they started investing. The compensation, plus the capitalisation of the unemployment, and with 30,000 euros they set up a business. There are some who have invested more ... for example I know one who was a driver of a trailer and operated in Europe, and now he has set up a company and is working with Europe and especially with Morocco, because they have clients, and of course, the investment was not only his, but the family has also invested. And he, of course, has no employees, because his company is a truck, which generates an income of 20-30,000 euros per month, but he drives. Then he gets paid as a shareholder in society, but at the same time as a driver. And that will help you to continue saving and eventually buy another truck, which then he might add it to the company's assets by means of increasing his own share of it” (interviewee 9).

Thus, the payment of unemployment indemnities, both by previous employers or by Fogasa, jointly with the capitalization of unemployment – that is the possibility to receive all the unemployment benefits in a single payment – is recently playing a key role in the development of entrepreneurial initiatives of Moroccan migrants in Catalonia and Spain in the construction and transport sectors. In the opinion of one of the interviewees the absence of data about TDE activities is related to the novelty of these practices in the case of Moroccans in Spain: “there is no data because this is a recent phenomenon. It is an activity generated by the crisis. It is a post-crisis business phenomenon” (interviewee 9).

In the restaurant sector, the frame seems different, concerning the typology of migrant entrepreneurs. But also in this sector it is mainly Moroccans who return and set up their restaurants, that is to say that it is a return migration and not mobile individuals:

"In the area of Nador, the investments are mainly in the tourism sector, and particularly in restaurants, because the people there, the Tangerines, Tetuaníes, almost all work here [in Spain] in restaurants; they are chefs, cooks or waiters. Many chefs in very important restaurants are from this area. So, since they work in the seafood sector what they open there in Morocco are seafood restaurants as they have raw material, because there is never a shortage and it is much cheaper. In Assilah, Tangier, Tetuan, there are many restaurants whose owners are ex-chefs in Spain, heads of the hall, waiters, who have mounted them there. [...] They do not ask for much funding either, because they already have the capital. When they think of setting up a business, they have two ways, either associating with a relative with money, or having already saved enough to set it up. But either way, they definitely leave Spain” (interviewee 9).

The specific geographical localisation of different entrepreneurial activities seems to be very important. Agriculture and related transport business are mainly localised in the south, while restaurants are in the northern costal zones, and construction-related business are mainly located in the larger cities.

It is also important to underline that most part of existing TDE activities of Moroccan former migrants in Catalonia or Spain are mainly based on family support, both in terms of investment and human capital (interviews 5, 6 and 9). Access to credits to start an enterprise is clearly a

main barrier to the development of TDE activities towards Moroccans diaspora in Spain and Catalonia.

3 Micro-level factors: specific characteristics of the migration corridor from Morocco to Catalonia and Spain.

The lack of TDE relevant activity in Catalonia with regards to the Moroccan diaspora is intimately connected with factors that have to do with their characteristics as a migration group in Catalonia. As we will see, despite being one of the most important groups in Spain and Catalonia, the socioeconomic characteristics of immigrants of Moroccan origin notably contrast with those of their co-nationals in other traditional destination countries. The length of arrival and their social and educational levels are factors that we deem relevant to take into account. Moreover, other political and institutional conditions both in origin and destination help to shape the overview of TDE activities we have depicted.

However, this very specific attractiveness of Spain, if compared to previous ‘traditional’ destinations of Moroccan migration has some consequences on the profile of Moroccan migrants arriving to the country. Indeed, the typology of Moroccans in Spain is different from those residing in other destination countries in Europe, concerning their educational level and socio-economic profile. In this sense, Spain attracted lower-skilled and less educated individuals (de Bel-Air, 2016). Moroccan international students with a higher socio-economic level prefer destinations other than Spain, both for the language of education and for the reputation of the universities.

“In France, for instance, there are Moroccans that study in very important business schools, and then they go back in Morocco and they lead banks, public enterprises, etc. If we talk about entrepreneurship here, the level is more superficial. We have no influential people here” (interviewee 5).

At the same time, cosmopolitan Moroccan elites that decide to live outside the country also choose other destinations. For example, while 70% of Moroccans in Canada are highly educated, and 55% perform highly skilled professions, for the case of Spain the number of highly educated Moroccans drops to 8% and the majority work in elementary (33%) and craft and trade related professions (17% and 21%) (de Bel-air, 2016). As suggested by other interviewees, the differences between Moroccan migrants’ socioeconomic profiles in Spain and previous traditional European destinations could be an important explanatory element of the very reduced presence of TDE activities.

“Here immigration is very recent. So, there is this first-generation immigrant, who is a bricklayer and works in construction, and has not reached a level of maturity so to think of setting up a company, has not an experience that allows him to run a company. [...] France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany... these are countries of a more ingrained migratory habit. [...] What happens: all their children [of Moroccan migrants] have studied there, they already have a training and always see their home countries as a way of escape. Because they do not see their immigrant status as a handicap. Because they do not have this complex, they speak fluently the host language, they speak German in the same or similar way as Klaus or Magnus, they have a culture similar to that of the native German, and with the plus of speaking another language, and they have the culture and roots of another country. They are like cassette tapes, which have double sides. They have that double face. Here in Barcelona there are some entrepreneurs who are ... well more than entrepreneurs we are in the employees phase. For large multinationals looking at the Arab market.

Especially the infrastructure construction market: roads, ports, airports, naval industry, aeronautics ... There are European companies, where all the staff is European, and then to access the Arab market they need that union bond that can allow them to access with confidence” (interviewee 9).

The employment patterns of Moroccans in Spain confirm that this immigrant group is mainly employed in low skilled occupations (Gabrielli, 2017). Moroccan migrants’ educational trajectories and achievements are also still sensibly lower than those of Spaniards (*ibidem*). These elements can play a key role in terms of TDE activities, considered that the likelihood of entrepreneurship is directly related to the level of education in Spain (Mestres, 2010), but also indirectly in terms of, for example, the capacity to access to necessary investments to start a business (*ibidem*). These considerations about the specific profile of the Moroccan diaspora in Spain and Catalonia will take a specific relevance regarding the size and the characteristics of the transnational entrepreneurship of the Moroccan diaspora in Spain and Catalonia.

A last element that we have to consider in relation with TDE activities is the impact of the economic crisis on flows and stocks of Moroccan immigrants in Spain. Since its outburst in 2007-8, the flows of Moroccans have not only decreased, but become lower than return flows (de Bel-Air, 2016).

At this regards De Haas and Vezzoli (2010: 16) explain:

“In Spain, for instance, in spite of a severe economic downturn and very high unemployment rates, most regular and irregular migrants have opted to stay. Some Moroccans with legal residence have returned, but in small numbers. Also the ‘pay-to-go’ scheme which offered regular migrants a lump-sum payment in exchange for renouncing their resident permit did not encourage many Moroccan workers to return. Some Moroccan families have adopted a ‘partial return migration’ strategy in which some family members (i.e., wives and children) returned while others remained in order to retain residency rights. Some migrants have moved to other EU countries where they might be able to rely on the support of family networks”.

With regards to Moroccans that were already in Spain, the crisis had consequences on their following life-trajectories. In fact the crisis largely affected economic sectors where Moroccans were particularly employed, such as the construction sector, and thus, going back to the country of origin was a possibility for those in the worst conditions. As an interviewee clearly states:

“when they go back to have some economic activity there, it is mostly to work, not start a business because usually people who go are people who, when they went back some years ago it was because of the crisis so they didn’t have any money saved and they would just go back and drive a taxi or work for a company or something like that” (interviewee 4).

Another interviewee also underlines that most of the returning migrants decide to go back to their country of origin because their migration projects have failed, and thus they are generally in a weak economic position that does no help to establish a new business (interviewee 8).

Moreover, according to the same interviewee, return to the country of origin can also act as a significant disadvantage. This is so in terms of returning immigrants’ access to social networks and resources, especially compared to those who stayed in Morocco (*ibidem*). Access to networks is a key element for opening and maintaining a business, and in this sense returned migrants would have a comparative weakness. In sum, part of the Moroccans that return to their

origin countries have no material possibility to start a business, due to the “failure”, at least in economic terms, of their migratory experience in Catalonia or Spain.

The children of Moroccan migrants in Catalonia and Spain are a particular type of “returnees” with a stronger potential of or relationship with TDE activities. This is so because of their educational level, which is higher than that of their parents. As commented in an interview “there are young people who study here and they are going back to Morocco and being employed for companies that are working in both countries” (interviewee 4). However, both first generation of migrants and their children returning to Morocco try to keep the link with Spain, at least concerning their residence permits. This can create problems, in the case of returned migrants for the accomplishment of the mandatory period of stay in Spain, and in the case of students for impositions and social rights. As the same source explains, in the case of students going back to work in Morocco:

“they stay maybe six months or seven or whatever and then when they come back they have problems regarding the money they were getting from the welfare system or whatever [...] usually when they go, they don’t tell that they are leaving but when they come back they find the problems” (interviewee 4).

These considerations remind us of a concept recently emerging in the literature that can be quite relevant for understanding possible patterns or evolutions of TDE activities: the typology of the “double diaspora” (Guo, 2016). In his research on of the Chinese Canadians in Beijing, the transnational migration experience became an hybrid experience transcending ethnicity and nationalism, in which people are at the same time diasporas and returnees, playing the role of economic brokers between the two spaces, and understanding these spaces as part of a circulation between multiple poles. Surely, this perception of the mobility and of national and ethnic belongings by members of the diaspora can play a very stimulating role for TDE activities. Nevertheless, it does not seem to be the case, so far, for the Moroccan community in Spain.

Even if “relational brokers” are considered as a central issue for developing TDE activities (African Diaspora Policy Centre, 2014), it is clear that in the case of Moroccan diaspora in Catalonia this step has not yet been reached.

This contextualisation focused on the corridor and on the micro-level has helped us to set the grounds on which we will try in the next section to discuss the macro- and meso-level factors that explain the relative lack of importance of Moroccan TDE activities in Catalonia.

4 The role of macro level-actors in origin and destination.

Macro-level actors in Morocco

Since the beginning of Moroccan emigration to Europe, the Moroccan State links the emigration of its citizens to the development of the country of origin⁶ (De Haas 2007a; Gabrielli 2017). However, Moroccan emigration projects extended and this idea was rapidly abandoned. Thereafter, in the 1970s the Moroccan government developed some projects to foster emigrants’

⁶ In the 1965-68 three-year plan, emigrants were considered as innovative agents of Morocco’s development, due to the fact that the emigration process was seen, by that time, as a temporary and formative experience.

involvement in national development through investment-stimulating programmes. However, both this program and another one, called REMPLOD (the Reintegration of Emigrant Manpower and the Promotion of Local Opportunities for Development) founded by the Dutch Ministry of Development and Cooperation in 1974, showed poor results, if not a clear failure (De Haas 2007a).

In recent times, Morocco is courting the diasporas in order to keep or eventually increase the flows of remittances and investments in private enterprises, thus contributing, in the view of Moroccan authorities, to the development of their country of origin (De Haas 2007a; De Haas and Plug 2006). It must be also pointed out that Morocco has never developed a proactive policy of return toward his diaspora. For the country's institutions it seems to be more profitable to have a part of the Moroccan labour force abroad, but linked economically to the country of origin (through remittances, and more recently, investments) (Gabrielli 2017).

Lately, the state started paying some attention to the transfer of knowledge as a development tool. For this goal, Morocco has started since 2006 an initiative to mobilize skilled Moroccans residing abroad: the FINCOME (the International Forum of Moroccan Skills Abroad). Previously, a similar programme also related to the mobilization of skills was launched in 1990, under the initiative of the UNDP (United Nations Development Program) in support with the Moroccan government: the TOKTEN programme. Effective results of these projects are difficult to be analysed, in particular the more recent one (FINCOME). The little information available points to a sharp increase of mobilised skills from 2007 (when the programme was set) to 2010, and a steady decrease since then (Boukharouaa et al. 2014).

The importance that Moroccan institutions place on the contributions of Moroccans abroad to the development of the country, in particular through fostering investments, contrasts with very few initiatives of debatable effectiveness from the side of institutional actors to promote migrant transnational entrepreneurship within Morocco and Spain.

Besides the different institutional mechanisms and ministerial reconfigurations in order to take more in consideration the Moroccan diaspora abroad⁷, the main instrument developed by the Moroccan government to foster TDE activities is a specific fund addressed to increase the investments of the diaspora in the country of origin. The Ministry of Moroccans residing abroad (*MRE – Marocains résidents à l'extérieur*) established in 2009 an instrument called “MDM (*Marocains du Monde*) Invest” Fund in order to support and foster the entrepreneurial activities of Moroccan emigrants in the country of origin⁸.

However, the fund has not proven to be a very useful tool, at least considering that it was suspended in December 2011 due to its limited results and for re-framing purposes. The fund went under review in 2013 and was reestablished only at the beginning of 2015, with a budget of 100 million dirhams⁹. At the reestablishment of the fund, the general director of the CCG (*Caisse Centrale de Garantie*), Hicham Serghini Zanati, explained the objective of the fund:

⁷ See Gabrielli (2017) for an overview.

⁸ See: <http://www.mre.gov.ma/fr/investissement/investir-au-maroc/le-fonds-mdm-invest>

⁹ See Yabiladi, “MDM Invest: Opération séduction du Maroc auprès des entrepreneurs MRE”, 24/07/2016 <https://www.yabiladi.com/articles/details/45968/invest-operation-seduction-maroc-aupres.html/> ; and Le Matin, “Marocains du Monde. Project de révision du Fonds MDM Invest”,

“The objective is to encourage MREs to invest in Morocco and to integrate them into a real economic dynamic, within the framework of the priority sectors, away from traditional investments. The State is concerned that the subsidies granted create added value.”¹⁰

The mechanism of the fund is actually the following: a Moroccan migrant that has an entrepreneurial project to start in Morocco has to dispose at least of the 25% of the total investment sum; the fund MDM Invest will provide 10% of the total quota of the Moroccan resident abroad in the project, in the form of a non-reimbursable contribution; the rest of the total investment has to be financed by a bank credit or in cash.

The eligibility of this fund is limited to some specific categories: a Moroccan resident abroad with proof of residence permits, foreign identity document or valid consular card; a Moroccan who has resided abroad and returns to Morocco for a maximum period of one year before the date of the investment project; a Moroccan resident abroad associated with Moroccan or foreign investors in proportion to the share of the Moroccan in the capital. In other words, the Moroccan has to be a regular resident abroad, or a very recent and “legal” returnee, which arguably restricts the access to the funds for Moroccans residing abroad in irregular situations.

At the same time, the investment has to be at least of one million up to five millions dirhams (around 450.000€), and addressed to specific sectors: industries and services related to industry, education, hotels and health sector.

It is clear that the Moroccan migrant has to raise 25% of the entire sum by their own means (personal savings, family or friends contributions, etc.), and then access a bank loan for the main share of the total investment and, as we will see, this is still not easy for Moroccans residing in Catalonia or Spain.

It is difficult to evaluate the impact of the fund since its re-establishment; however press releases suggest that its scope is still very limited. Indeed, a high responsible of the BMCE (*Banque marocaine du commerce extérieur*) stated in July 2016 that “only about 20 Moroccans in the world have so far benefited from this funding”¹¹.

An interviewee clearly explains the difficulties to access the necessary bank loans:

“I think it was stopped because no one used it, because it was very difficult to use. People who asked for a loan, had no solvency, and those who have solvency and have a solid project, already have the capital. The people who applied for it did not meet the profile and those who met it, already had the money. So, who do you give it [the credit] to?” (interviewee 9).

Skepticism about the effectiveness of MDM invest program is shared by another informant:

“I know that there has been a lot of money spent, but I’m not shure if the money has finally been invested wherever it needed to be invested ... there is nothing, no initiative that you can see that is working, at least in Spain. Then there is that agency, Al-jalia.ma, a news agency, located in

23/07/2014 http://lematin.ma/journal/2014/marocains-du-monde_projet-de-revision-du-fonds-mdm-invest/206356.html/.

¹⁰ Yabiladi, “MDM Invest: Opération séduction du Maroc auprès des entrepreneurs MRE”, 24/07/2016 <https://www.yabiladi.com/articles/details/45968/invest-operation-seduction-maroc-aupres.html/> .

¹¹ Yabiladi, “MDM Inveest: Par où commencer?”, 31/07/2016 <https://www.yabiladi.com/investir/details/46102/invest-commencer.html/> .

France, started by Moroccans and partially financed by the ministry. But of course it is in France” (interviewee 1).

Moreover, data about projects supported in the first phase, during 2011, show that Moroccans investing in the country of origin were mainly installed in France, Belgium and Canada¹², confirming in some way that TDE activities of Moroccans in Spain are still in an embryonic phase compared to the traditional destination countries of Moroccan migration.

As the excerpt below illustrate, there is a divergence between the interest that Moroccan institutions have on TDE in narratives and what they do in practice, somewhat disconnected from the specificities and possibilities of its diaspora linked to Spain¹³. The few initiatives that they have put in place have shown little effectiveness for the development of TDE activities of Moroccan immigrants in Catalonia or Spain.

“Morocco has opened an Immigration ministry, has set up consultancy offices for Moroccans abroad. They depend on the Ministry of Commerce, for the investment of Moroccans abroad in Morocco. They advise you, but the offices are in Morocco. Sometimes, they come here to give us talks. There are offices in several regions of Morocco, and they come here. You make contact in the conference and then they advise you. [MDM Invest program (Marocains du Monde Invest) within the Industrial Acceleration Plan of the Moroccan government]. You prepare a project, you present it to the consul and he has to give the approval [...]. Lately [in 2014] they have opened a call, but it depends on the region, for example Morocco strongly encourages projects in the South of the country [Western Sahara]” (interviewee 5).

To Moroccan institutional actors, Spanish or Catalan investments in Morocco seems to be largely more interesting. As an interviewee explains, “the consulate gives advice to Catalan or Spanish enterprises that want to start business in Morocco. [...] There is a specific office for Spaniards that want to invest in Morocco” (interviewee 5). In case of Moroccan emigrants that want to invest, the consulate “mainly refers to public agencies in the home country” (ibidem).

Macro-level actors in Catalonia/Spain

During the last decade, besides the classic focus on forced return of migrants in irregular situation in Spain, the Spanish government has also centred its political action, at least at a rhetorical level, on “voluntary return” and on “productive return”. This narrative was firstly developed at the European political level, linking return of migrants with entrepreneurship and development of the country of origin.

The Spanish policy provides three different programmes depending on the characteristics of the potential returnee. The first one - *Programa de retorno voluntario de atencion social* (Voluntary return program of social care)- is aimed at non-EU migrants in situations of special vulnerability and mainly assists on the return. The second - *Programa de retorno voluntario productivo* (Program for voluntary productive return)- assists non-EU immigrants that want to start an entrepreneurial project linked to their return. These two programs are funded by the European

¹² Bladi.net, “MDM Inveest: 127 millions de dirhams investits par les MRE en 2011”, 22/08/2011 <https://www.bladi.net/mre-investissements-maroc-2011.html> .

¹³ An example that illustrate the lack of actual interest on effectively fostering TDE is the difficulties we faced on interviewing macro-level stakeholders. Despite several telephone calls, e-mails and even a visit to the Moroccan consulate in Barcelona, we never managed to obtain a positive response.

Return Fund. The third program provides and complements the payment of migrant's cumulated unemployment benefits.¹⁴ These programs are implemented by international organisations, as IOM, and NGOs.

As we already suggested, these programs have had, in general terms, limited results, due to several reasons: the limited amount of monetary capital provided to the returnee, the short and very light training offered, and also the prohibition of going back to Spain for a period of time (5 years).

In the case of the Moroccan community in Spain, results of the voluntary return support programs seems even worse, as confirmed by several interviewees that points out the scarce effect of these plans:

“There are very few cases, this call has not been successful in the Moroccan collective. In the case of Latin America, it has worked, but in Morocco, it does not reach 500 people. [...] But there is a factor here that has an influence: the closeness. The Moroccan, when he is living a moment of crisis the answer is easy: from here they are 1000 km, there are a thousand ways of going to Morocco, if you want you can even go for free ... Lately, there are people that go back to Morocco to spend there 3, 4 months and come back for the renewal [of residence permits] issue” (interviewee 1).

It has to be noted that Spanish public institutions that fund these productive return programs have not developed follow up mechanisms after return, nor carried out any serious evaluation of the programs. This suggests that the main priority was fostering the return of immigrants to their origin countries, rather than the actual possibility of promoting or helping the productive reintegration of these returnees, neither the development of the migrants' communities and countries of origin.

Looking more specifically at the regional (Catalonia) and the local level (Barcelona) we have not found relevant initiatives targeting migrants in general, or specifically Moroccans, being developed or implemented in in this field.

At the Catalan level, *Acció* (an institution depending from the *Generalitat de Catalunya*¹⁵ and granting different types of support and advice to entrepreneurs) has some projects targeted to foster entrepreneurial activities towards foreign countries, but surprisingly Morocco is not on the list (apart from a project in the field of internationalisation of Catalan enterprises), notwithstanding the closeness of the country. Moreover, no specific plan focusing migrant entrepreneurs has been developed by *Acció* (Interviewee 3).

5 The role of meso-level actors

A first important meso-level actor that emerges when analysing TDE activities in general, and these of the Moroccan diaspora in particular, are the banks.

In particular, we have analysed the role of the *Banque Populaire – Chaabi* bank, the biggest Moroccan bank, which is based in Casablanca and has offices in all Moroccan regions, Chaabi bank being their European brand.

¹⁴ See the Ministry of Employment and Social Security web page for more information: http://extranjeros.empleo.gob.es/es/Retorno_voluntario/programa/index.html

¹⁵ Catalonia's regional government

As the representative of this bank in Barcelona explains:

“the Banque Populaire / Chaabi Bank, which is the main group in Morocco, 50% of the capital is public, and the other 50% are people very closely linked to the government, we have always followed this trend. The Popular Bank does not have a tendency to follow its own approach [on investments], it always accompanies the State in this regard” (interviewee 9).

The role of banks is central in allowing potential Moroccan transnational entrepreneurs access to credit. This issue is not very easy, as the same source remarks:

“The issue of credits in Morocco, is similar as here in Spain, because the religion of money is the same everywhere, no matter what culture we have! You cannot take risks with a non-resident foreign person, because you have no guarantees. Then, there are committees in the Bank that are in charge of studying the projects. And we assume our own risk, if we see that it is a prosperous project, with a high percentage of probability of pulling forward, and that several factors have to work together to make the project fail” (interviewee 9).

In any case, the potential investor has to move to Morocco in order to receive a loan from a bank, because as a representative of Banque Populaire-Chaabi Bank explained in the interview:

“We have no power, because we are a European bank, Chaabi Bank, which is a European bank that belongs to a Moroccan headquarters. We cannot intervene on accounts and projects and operations that are done in Morocco. It would be to breach the European rules of the ECB. [...] What we do here is to filter, so that we do not overwhelm the Foundation with projects that are unfeasible. It is a first filter” (interviewee 9).

It is interesting to understand the procedure to which is exposed the potential entrepreneur:

“When this type of investors comes to us, or Moroccans from abroad who want to do something in the country of origin, we turn them to the Foundation, the *Foundation Populaire de création d'entreprises*. Then they give them a consultant who even takes care of managing everything that is the subject of managers, lawyers, taxes ... as a manager. This help them to shape that dream they have” (interviewee 9).

With regards to NGOs and CSOs, surprisingly, the Moroccan community is quite unstructured in terms of meso-level actors, apart from a very small number of long-standing organisations, two of whom were interviewed in this research. Concerning other organisations and associations, several of them have disappeared in the last years or are no longer active, due to the impact of the economic crisis on the availability of public funding for these organisation – as previously mentioned - but also due to mismanagement, over-personalisation or, at least in one case, misappropriation of the organisation’s funds.

In addition, collaboration between different meso-level actors is not always simple. Several interviewees have hinted at some tension between these actors, and also between some of the organisations and the Moroccan authorities and institutions.

Some Moroccan immigrants -be it for personal, political, or other reasons- seek to have nothing to do both with meso and macro level organisations due to a lack of trust. This mistrust, and scepticism, both in origin and destination countries, is linked to the perception of clientelism governing the dynamics within and between some of these organisations, concerning the diffusion of information, the attribution of funding, the access to key networks, etc. One of our interviewees, when speaking about access to funding, stated that such funding ‘is more effective

if you have a connection. That is, normally they only give it to friends and family... same as in Spain!’ (interviewee 1)

Some interviewees mentioned for instance a course for Moroccan entrepreneurs organised in Barcelona by the *Fundació Emprèn*, jointly with several other partners both locals and Moroccans, in order to foster entrepreneurial projects of Moroccan diaspora. Following the opinion of one of the interviewees, the project was well organised, concerning the scientific part organised by the local partners, but the implementation of the selected project never materialised. In the opinion of this person, who actually won the prize:

“the Moroccan side, these people just come for the protocol, the first and the last day. [...] The Foundation is very serious, they monitor your business plan, they give you advice... they have done their job well. But ours do not comply. They have awarded the prize because it looks good, but then no one cares. [...] They [Moroccan partners] organise this activity because it is fashionable, and then there is nothing serious [...]” (interviewee 5).

6 Explaining the (lack of) TDE activities of Moroccans in Catalonia and Spain.

In this paper we have shown that the Moroccan diaspora in Spain and Catalonia - unlike the diaspora living in other traditional destinations of Moroccans, such as France or Canada - is hardly involved in TDE activities. In this section we review and discuss potential explanatory elements that emerged from our analysis. These relate to institutional and socioeconomic factors at the three levels of analysis.

Access to funding

The difficulty to access funding for potential entrepreneurs is a key factor explaining the lack of TDE activity among Moroccans in Spain. The reviewed mechanisms set by macro and meso-level actors fail to reflect the target population in Spain. The return programmes and their scarce results show that the conditions set for its access do not fit the characteristics of Moroccan migrants in Spain, be it because they do not meet the formal requisites for access (e.g. having legal residence permits) or because of the conditions related to not being able to return to Spain for the following years. The Moroccan government initiatives on their side appear to be hardly realistic. The minimum investment threshold together with the fact that the migrant has to secure an important amount of the necessary funding are, as our interviewee suggested, the main hindering factors. It should be noted that under-funding and lack of access to capitals has been a factor pointed out by several authors and policy briefs (see for example, Newland and Tanaka, 2010 or ADPC, 2014).

Human capital and entrepreneurial culture

Moreover, the limited existing opportunities reviewed interplays with the characteristics of the Moroccan diaspora in Spain to explain the scant TDE activity. An informant explains that it is not only the capital, but also the background of the potential Moroccan transnational entrepreneurs:

“The problem of accessing capital I think it has always existed. I think it is more about the mentality, because the majority of people who carry these initiatives are people who are very limited at the educational level. And this limitation does not allow you to see the world either, to

have a wider vision, and besides all those things, they are at the level of survival: I do this to earn my day, you do not see that they have a plan” (interviewee 1).

Thus, the lack of training and business experience add on the difficulties for Moroccan immigrants’ to making use of the means set by the Moroccan and Spanish actors to start-up businesses.

(Mis)trust towards country of origin macro- and meso-level actors

The existing TDE actor seems to have little or no contact with the meso-level actors (be they institutional actors, banks, associations, etc.). As pointed out, the issue seems to be the trust in governmental actors (consulates but also the Ministry for Moroccans abroad) and in meso-level actors which are de facto linked to governmental actors.

This lack of trust in governmental agencies has several reasons. The first one is the role that Moroccan institutions abroad have played in terms of eyes and hands of the Kingdom abroad, particularly controlling those that have diverging political opinions (De Haas, 2007a; Gabrielli, 2017). Indeed, one of the key axes of the Moroccan Diaspora policy (through embassies and consulates, the Ministry of Moroccans abroad, the Hassan foundation, the *Fédération des Amicales des Marocains*, and various association linked more or less directly to the Moroccan government) has been historically to control expatriates and their political activities (De Haas 2007s). Another explanation of this type of attitudes is linked to patronage and clientelism.

Moreover, in terms of funding access of TDE project Consular services operate as gatekeeper of entrepreneurial projects of the diaspora in front of potential funders, be they public institutions of semi-private banks.

In this sense, favouritism, personal relations, or patronage can play a key role in filtering the projects. This can happen both at macro and meso-level. The words of a respondent are very clear:

“The consulate is a figurine. For me it has no effective role in this regard, neither cultural nor economic. The only role he has here is to control. But not even to control political activities. The objective is to reproduce the network of interest that they have down in Morocco” (interviewee 1).

Several respondents mention the central role of the president of a Moroccan migrant organisation, that is in some of the interviewees view, linked with Moroccan institutions and the consulate.

“For instance, he has good relations with the consul and the ministry. I am representing an association and I have a project. What does he ask me? I give him my project and he presents it, then this project has a chance to work, and to be subsidized. If I do not want to go through this person, I have to take the project directly to the consul, but if I send it directly, they throw it in the garbage bin. This does not have to be this way. We have denounced it several times. If you check the associations that have been funded, you will see that all are in his zone of influence” (interviewee 5).

The type of personal relations existing between the Moroccan potential entrepreneur and key actors in meso-level actors seems to play a key role concerning the development of the business plan. Favouritism, both based on personal relations and on ideological affinity concerning

Moroccan institution, seems to play an important role in this field. Concerning a course for Moroccan potential entrepreneurs, this ‘clientelism’ is reflected by the fact that “there is a very good course, but when you arrive there, there are only 2 or 3 persons, because they don’t provide proper information. They only inform “their” people, or some specific association” (interviewee 5).

The personal contact seems to be more important than the quality of the entrepreneurial project at the time to being supported from meso-level actors and from banks.

“The financing issue is very complicated. These associations that help you do so mainly by affinity. They look at the profile of the person, their trajectory. And if they know you, they give it to you even if the project is bad [...] If they do not know you, if you do not come recommended by someone, even if you present a good project, they do not accept it “(interviewee 5)

The transnational entrepreneurs vs. the legal limitations of mobility

This limitation is clearly not affecting Moroccans that have acquired the Spanish citizenship. However, it is necessary to note that the access to the citizenship is not so easy for Moroccans, and regard only a part of these migrants (Gabielli, 2017).

TDE activities are strongly related with the possibility to circulate between the different spaces of the business activity, before opening the enterprise and during the transnational migrants’ life. This consideration involves State actors, both at origin and destination level. Several respondents note that the existing and ever growing barriers to a fluid circulation of Moroccan migration between host and home community figure among the main factors to discourage TDE activities.

Migrants do not always have great possibilities for mobility. In the case of the Moroccans, the cost of the displacement is limited, if compared with other immigrant communities in Spain, such as Latin Americans. The main limitation affecting Moroccans’ mobility is related to the residence permit and its renewal. As an interviewee clearly remarks: “you must not lose the link with Europe; even better if you have the nationality” (interviewee 5). However, not all Moroccans residing in Spain have Spanish citizenship. If we look at data on access to Spanish nationality by Moroccans, between 2006 and 2015 a total of 156.326 persons coming from this country acquire the new nationality, between them 91.811 men and 64.405 women¹⁶.

Another obstacle in this sense is the regulation of mobility in Spanish legislation, as well as new practices established by Spanish institutions in order to control the permanence in Spain of Moroccan migrants.

*“If you now stay in Morocco for more than three months, they take your [residence] permit out. Now in the commissioner they ask for the passport, for everything, to renew the residence. They ask the passport, and if they see that you have gone to Morocco, 2 or 3 times in 3 months, they put obstacles for residence and nationality [...]. There are many Moroccans who are afraid of traveling even if you do not have any help. [...]. If you have a hole in the register, forget it. They ask for a certificate of migratory movements, to see your exits and entrances. You are asked to renew your residence or nationality. Many people now, ask for new passport, with no stamps, to avoid this. So now you are asked for the historical certificate of the *padrón*, and for the*

¹⁶ Ministerio de empleo y seguridad social, Secretaría general de Inmigración y emigración, Data on Access to nationality of foreigners (2015-2006), <http://extranjeros.empleo.gob.es/es/Estadisticas/operaciones/concesiones/index.html>

certificate of migratory movements. This is requested in Morocco, in the general direction of the police. You have to travel, you go to the general police station in Rabat. They ask for information from customs. While you are asking, you have to stay inside Morocco. One month, two months. We have seen this problem a lot. So Morocco has been able to ask for it by letter. Someone in Morocco asks for you. But many people do not know it, so they get stuck there. This greatly limits mobility, especially that with no nationality” (interviewee 5).

7 Conclusions

In this paper we have analysed how the TDE of Moroccan immigrants in Spain looks like, showing that such activities are still in its infancy. Moreover, most activities have more to do with Moroccan migrants who have returned to the home country than with the diaspora itself. We have also suggested potential factors that help to explain this situation.

We have seen that there are barriers linked to both human and economic capital. While the issue of human capital (formation, entrepreneurial capabilities, entrepreneurial culture and access to networks) can be progressively resolved or partially circumvented, the issue of access to economic capital to start an entrepreneurial activity at transnational level is a central factor. Existing mechanisms developed by state institutions in Morocco have proved to be of little or no effectiveness, while the role of private actors as banks is still very limited in this sense, also considering the risks they would need to assume in granting loans. In the destination context, existing opportunities in Catalonia are addressed to establish economic activities *in situ* (i.e. training and advice activities of *Barcelona Activa*), independently of an immigrant origin of the potential entrepreneur. Specific mechanisms related to migrant entrepreneurship in origin countries or at transnational level are also of little use for Moroccans, as is the case of migrant-targeted programs of the Catalan institution *Acció* where, as we have shown, Morocco is not one of the available countries. At the Spanish state level, the return programs have proven to be ineffective, in terms of the number of Moroccans using it, and also in terms of venues for improvement, regarding funding, follow up and training services and assistance.

Looking at macro-level, in general terms Moroccan institutional actors seem more interested in fostering foreign investment and the establishment of Catalan and Spanish enterprises in Morocco than in effectively promoting the development of entrepreneurial activities of the diaspora, eventually linking both spaces.

Moreover, another important element emerging from the research is that there is a large distance between the discourses of Moroccan macro-level actors and reality emerging from the field research with meso- and micro-level actors in Catalonia. The abstract narratives produced by Moroccan institutional actors about TDE are drawing the image of a cosmopolitan, highly mobile and high skilled Moroccan migrant, with access to capitals, knowledge of market opportunities, trust in the society of origin’s institutions and economic conjuncture, and not fearing bureaucratic barriers (Faustini and El Hairan, 2007). Field research shows that this profile of Moroccans actually does not exist in the Catalan or Spanish case.

Thus there is a general ambiguity of the policy towards the diaspora of Morocco, which apparently seeks investments from emigrants, but in practice conforms to remittances, with the fact that they are outside and retain a more cultural / imaginary relationship with the country and origin.

Mistrust or reduced trust in country of origin's institutions seems to be still a key feature of large part of Moroccan diaspora.

Policy recommendations

Based on the results of our research, we propose the following recommendations for policy actors, but also for other type of stakeholders in order to foster TDE activities of the Moroccan diaspora in Catalonia and Spain.

Improving policy support

- Considering migrants as effective actors of development of both origin and destination countries (through TDE)
- Develop realistic plans in order to foster TDE. Proximity between the two countries can also play as an amplifier effect, if effective measures will reach practical results. We stress that the plans must be realistic in actually putting means commensurate to the socioeconomic profile of Moroccan migrants in Spain.
- For origin countries: establishing different and effective funding mechanisms. Co-funding of the 20% of the project's costs has appeared as ineffective for potential TDE activities carried on by Moroccans in Spain. In this sense, agreements between both countries on co-funding and collaboration schemes can be a way to help develop plans that actually help TDE.
- Monitoring policies and programmes: despite the very nature of TDE which inevitably complicates the task, the effort of monitoring implemented programmes offers a very valuable information for those policy makers that seek to contribute to fostering TDE activities either by simple funding, or by offering more comprehensive services to potential entrepreneurs. Only by gathering information on, e.g., number of users, applicants, activities and types of, outputs, best cases and not so good cases, policy makers can plan in advance and decide on programme implementation, continuation and cancellation.
- Focusing more on the circulation needs of TDE than on 'productive return' schemes that have proved their limitations in the past.

Overcoming mobility barriers

- For both destination and origin countries: developing legal schemes (visas facilitations, etc.) promoting a smoother circulation of Moroccans between the two spaces will foster TDE activities.

Overcoming lack of training and experience

- One of the main findings of this research reveals the lack of either experience and/or of training opportunities for the Moroccan diaspora in Spain that would enable them to develop economic initiatives. More investment on effective training, coupled with financial measures can pave the way for an increase of TDE.
- Facilitating training agreements between educational institutions and mutual recognition of certifications and diplomas to encourage those who could potentially be interested in getting involved in TDE.

Building trust in countries of origins' economic and political environment

- Better functioning of Moroccan institutional actors addressed to the diaspora, in order to facilitate information sharing, reducing mistrust, and facilitating cooperation between macro-, meso- and micro-level actors.

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In-depth interviews

Interviewee 1, representative of a Moroccan-Catalan association, (meso-level actor) interviewed in Barcelona, 14/9 2016.

- Interviewee 2, relationship broker (micro-level actor) and representative of a Moroccan association (meso-level actor), interviewed in Barcelona, 28/9/16.
- Interviewee 3, representative of a Catalan institution in Catalonia (macro-level actor), interviewed in Barcelona, **/**/2016.
- Interviewee 4, representative of a Moroccan association (meso-level actor), interviewed in Barcelona, 4/2/16.
- Interviewee 5, representative of a Catalan CSO (meso-level actor), interviewed in Barcelona, **/**/16
- Interviewee 6, Moroccan/Spanish entrepreneur in the Tourism sector (micro-level actor), interviewed in Barcelona, 25/7/2016
- Interviewee 7, SAIER, responsible for the Barcelona city council's voluntary return program, interviewed in Barcelona, 26/2/2016.
- Interviewee 8, immigration responsible at *Comisiones Obreras* (Spanish trade union), interviewed in Barcelona, 8/2/2016.
- Interviewee 9, representative of Banque Chaabi Barcelona, interviewed in Barcelona, 21/9/2016.