Women entrepreneur-returnees in their country of origin

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This is the draft version of a paper based on a study completed by the author between April & July 2008 for the CAWTAR, in partnership with the UPI-UNIDO. The final version of this paper will be submitted by January 15th, 2009, to be presented at the Workshop n° 16 of the Tenth Mediterranean Research Meeting, organized by the Mediterranean Programme of the RSCAS-EUI.

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Migration Working Group
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WOMEN ENTREPRENEUR-RETURNEEs
IN THEIR COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

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Paper proposal accepted

This draft is born out of a survey carried out by the author, for the CAWTAR in partnership with the UPI-UNIDO, on the female migrants' entrepreneurship at their return to Tunisia. It is linked to the thematic framework of gender, migration and development, priority of research-action organisations and centres. The survey concerned the region of Grand-Tunis that covers the "gouvernorats" of Tunis, Ariana, Manouba and Ben Arous. We have conceived a questionnaire and identified through resource institutions & persons a sample of eight Tunisian women entrepreneurs "returnees" that represent diversified profiles. We have interviewed them at their enterprises or at CAWTAR between May and July 2008.

As a main hypothesis, we consider female mobility as an undeniable resource that allows the strengthening of entrepreneurial aptitudes in the home country. We consider that women that have migrated for studies, work or family reunion, are better prepared and more well-disposed to entrepreneurship than those who have never left. To carry out this survey, we have conceived a questionnaire dealing with identity’s variables, migratory experience, return-related data, entrepreneurship process, entrepreneurship promotion mechanisms, evaluation of the entrepreneurship experience in the home country and finally impacts related to the entrepreneurship of women returnees. For the identification of women concerned by this study, we advised with resource institutions and persons in the field of migration and entrepreneurship.

The data analysis demonstrated that beyond the economic dimension of the migratory resource concerning the establishment of sufficient saving, the migrant women develop important social and psychological resources. The social resource includes human capital (training, studies and professional experience) and the social capital (the networks built in the country of destination). Moreover, life experience far from home is an important psychological dimension that should be considered in the analysis of the aptitude for entrepreneurship. In fact, the migratory experience implies an adaptation process made by "making risks" and learning that strengthen the personality and empower the capacity to decide and to master own life. Further more, to be confronted to the difference, supposes self questioning, a distance and engaging empathic aptitudes necessary to understand, deal with and negotiate in the difference. This exercise of facing differences and of adaptation to survive with all its fitting costs, allows to be opened to new functioning models, practices and ideas. In fact, the migratory situation allows to mobilize "coping strategies" and to manage situations in an uncertain environment which obliges to risks consideration and decisions making. This condition is at the base of the process for individuation and "autonomisation" building. Moreover, the distance in all its dimensions allows a replacing (repositionnement) towards home country and better conscience of local potentialities.
All these components related to migratory experience represent intrinsic resources for women and reinforce their disposal to entrepreneurship. Beyond its individual and economic dimensions, the entrepreneurship of female migrant returnees, represents a citizenship expression and a form of recognition and maintain of strong links with home country. In fact, by setting the economic initiative, women that in some cases continue living abroad, implement economic and symbolic return and exercise in this way a certain form of citizenship. The entrepreneurship, economic action and -at the same time- expression of the citizenship by the migrant, is worth being analysed more deeply (Proposal accepted for the Tenth MRM, March 2009, RSCAS-EUI).
Fig. 1: Women entrepreneur-returnees in Tunisia

Framework
- Migration field / Gender & migration
- Geopolitical situation
- The two rives of the Mediterranean
- The Tunisian case

Analysis of the entrepreneurial process
- Motivations (idea of the project; determinants…)
- Logic of action
- Women profile (trajectories, life experience, factors of return…)
- The "distance" (migratory experience): innovation factor? Adaptation to the context; comparison with women geographically "stable"…)
- Gender relationships (decision power; role of men)

Resources
- Continuity or rupture?

Origin country « Return migration »

Destination country (before returning)

Localisation choice
- Nature of the entrepreneurship
- Mechanisms of support: training « capacity building »; access to finance; existence of experts in special needs (juridical support, coaching…)?
- Temporal dimension: durability of the project?
- The return? Does the economic initiative in the space of origin mean always a definitive return?
  How the entrepreneurship is coherent with a choice of life in the country of origin? Do women stay or leave again for the previous country of migration or for another destination.

Multidimensional impacts
- Social dimension
- Economic dimension
- Spatial dimension
I. The methodology adopted

For this paper, we have proceeded by conceiving a questionnaire after bibliographical research based on papers of the MIREM project coordinated by Jean-Pierre Cassarino (RSCAS-EUI). For the survey, we have proceeded by identifying and mapping of the most important research and development organisations working on migration and entrepreneurship what has allowed us to have a more precise idea about the entrepreneurial process in Tunisia. Contacts taken with some representatives of those resource institutions were crucial to a better understanding of the question and allowed us to reconsider the return which is often entrepreneurial or economical without being systematically residential.

The choice of the Grand-Tunis region is due to the economic dynamism of the capital. We have considered that this region is more attractive, relatively easier for the re-adaptation, more favourable than other areas for entrepreneurship; it is closest to migration cities in terms of infrastructures and living conditions and style. Through certain resource institutions, we have tried to identify the maximum cases of women entrepreneurs that have lived abroad for studies or work. We have been helped by the NGO Enda-Interarabe as a resource structure with a perfect understanding of the social problematic in the Grand Tunis region.

II. Female migration and entrepreneurship in the country of origin: which articulations?

1. The diversity of motivations, trajectories & logics

2. The entrepreneurship based on the migratory resource
We consider the migratory experience (living in the country of destination with adaptation costs, learning, competences and relationships acquired…) as a composite resource undeniable for the analysis of the disposition of entrepreneurship of migrant returnees. We consider that this correlation is more obvious for women given their specificity regarding to their socialization and their relationship to the space in the country of origin.
2.1. The economic dimension of the migratory resource

The material expectations— economical and tangibles— have always represented the main motivation of the decision to migrate. The majority of migratory choices are motivated by the hope of better remuneration or to find a job, the hope to reach a certain level of commodity, the need of self accomplishment and to have a sufficient savings for a minimum of security towards life uncertainties (illness, age). In Tunisia, the material conditions for men as well as for women are becoming more and more determinants for reproductive strategies (to get married, have children and educate them…)

However, a person cannot be reduced to his/her economic dimension and must be considered in his/her complexity and multidimensionality. Making abstraction of motivations and conditions of migration, migrants are at different levels towards situations where they have to mobilize their adaptive capacities. In fact, due to the cultural difference, the system of reference changes and migrants are constraint to integrate new codes allowing a re-interaction with their new environment. Facing and dealing with the difference involve the adoption of new behaviours, practices… and the renouncement of others that are initials. The effort made for survival, existence and self affirmation in the new system of reference has a cost: the « adaptation costs ».

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Fig. 2: CONSTITUTION OF THE MIGRATORY RESOURCE

Legend:
R: resources
K: capital
H: human
S: social

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2. 2. The social resource (human and social capital)

The migratory situation is above all an experience with a previous life experience with intensive accumulation of information -especially at the beginning- to situate oneself and to better deal with an uncertain environment. The migrant has to do more efforts of learning or capitalization of productive resources than the autochthonous to exist, survive and affirm oneself. The human capital \((H_k)\) consists of resources linked to education (level of learning), vocational training and professional experience… Even if the initial human capital is important, the migratory experience can strengthen this capital especially when the learning or professional experience are practiced in better conditions. The migratory experience leads the migrant to make linguistic efforts, often before departure.

Moreover, the geographic mobility implies obviously formation of new relationships that enlarge the sphere of interaction and exchange, create opportunities, reinforce the « capacities of negotiation » and increase possibilities of action. The new private relationships - neighbourhood and friendship - and the professional ones formed in the country of destination are vectors of information and allow to better seize opportunities and reduce the « negotiation » or « transaction costs » (Coase, 1937). In fact, relationships formed during studies or work abroad… can be extraordinary means to overcome certain stereotypes and cliches, which facilitates exchange and dialogue between cultures… The geographic mobility is undoubtfully in those cases a key for cooperation.

2. 3. The psychological dimension of the migratory resource

We consider mobility as a resource that strengthens personality\(^1\) and allows autonomisation\(^2\) and self affirmation towards the group. The education of Tunisian girls should be analyzed to understand processes of socialization and construction of identities in their social and professional dimensions according to a gender perspective. In the current Tunisian context, the situation of working women is "normal" and tends to become a necessary condition, more or less explicitly expressed, for getting married. Women are more present in the academic education as well as in some sectors that were exclusive to men. Beyond this dimension, the access of women to the job market is still segmented as they are more present in its wage-configuration than in its independent and entrepreneurial ones.

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\(^1\) "Personality can be defined as a dynamic and organized set of characteristics possessed by a person that uniquely influences his or her cognitions, motivations, and behaviors in various situations" (Ryckman, 2004). http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Personality_psychology

Concerning the access of women to job market, the wage-configuration is still more "normal" than other forms perceived as precarious and "few stables". The female employee configuration is socially more tolerated as it allows women to affirm their professional status without reversing them from their "natural" reproductive identity as socially and culturally recognised. Socially, the female work in its wage-configuration is more assuring for the family... because of its characteristics of security and few risks. In fact, the entrepreneurship poses challenges concerning taking risks and personal investment which can take over the priority and the reproductive security. Female entrepreneurs have the challenge to impose an economic configuration at the margin of the evidence and fluency of the salarial one. For the entrepreneurship, willingness and determination are not always sufficient; particular dispositions are required; the disposition for entrepreneurship can be linked to the acquirement of psychological aptitudes often facilitated by the migratory experience. In fact, if a woman raised in a protective local and familial environment with a few possibilities of action tends to be destabilized facing uncertainty and risk expressing herself through affective reactions\(^3\), the migrant, thanks to the experience, learns to react differently mobilizing a register based essentially on capacity of action. The migratory experience influences « coping strategies »\(^4\) mobilized by women towards stress. The migratory experience is though at the origin of undeniable mutations and operates deep changes on perceptions, aptitudes and behaviour of the women migrant. Those deep changes are the result of life experience abroad and are intrinsic.

Moreover, the migratory experience for studies or job, imply a decisional independence and autonomy to manage daily problems... Those situations are at the heart of the autonomisation process unquestionable for the entrepreneurship. All women interviewed put in evidence the importance of the psychological resource, especially concerning the adaptation capacities, distance..., undeniable for the entrepreneurial disposition and strategy at the return to the country of origin.

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\(^3\) Based on an interview with Dr. Abdelwahab Mahjoub, Department of social psychology at The High Institute of Human Sciences of Tunis.

\(^4\) « Coping strategies refer to the specific efforts, both behavioural and psychological, that people employ to master, tolerate, reduce, or minimize stressful events. Two general coping strategies have been distinguished: problem-solving strategies are efforts to do something active to alleviate stressful circumstances, whereas emotion-focused coping strategies involve efforts to regulate the emotional consequences of stressful or potentially stressful events. Research indicates that people use both types of strategies to combat most stressful events (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980). The predominance of one type of strategy over another is determined, in part, by personal style (e.g., some people cope more actively than others) and also by the type of stressful event » (Summary prepared by Shelley Taylor in collaboration with the Psychosocial Working Group. Last revised July, 1998).
2. 4. "The effect of distance" in the valorisation of the patrimony and the local potential

Marc Dedeire proposes an important idea concerning the «effect of distance» in the valorisation of the territorial resources that we adopt to explain the correlation between the migratory experience and the female entrepreneurship in the country of origin. The geographic and cognitive distance, being aware of the value attributed by certain populations to certain practices and products, allows re-considering the local potential and leads some innovators to exploit "créneaux" that the autochthonous do not consider systematically. The physical and intellectual distance to the country of origin can be favourable to the economical proximity with of innovation, creativity and willingness of patrimonialization of local potentialities. The distance allows reconsidering "repositionnement" regarding to the local dimension. The economic return with the project, which could be patrimonial, is in this way an affirmation of the belonging with the migratory choice. We can affirm that the returnee entrepreneur has a certain comparative advantage that the autochthonous does not have. Particularly sensitive to cultural and identical dimensions due to her socialization, the migrant with a better understanding of expectations of the population of the country where she has lived or still live, can develop an entrepreneurial activity with a strong patrimonial component guaranteeing the material and symbolic continuity between both spaces: origin and destination. The distance is opportune to the development of activities that could enlarge possibilities of action especially when the project guarantees fluidity between both spaces.
2. 5. A practice of citizenship

"... I had a feeling of culpability. I was contributing to the development of the country of others. I wanted to develop something at home. I would have been frustrated concerning the feeling of belonging and success. I adore France but it doesn’t make sense. Every year, I must renew my residence card; it is a huge waste of energy. I must have a minimum of pride. We should develop our competences in the home country".

"It was the need to do something for the country. When we see a foreign company established, we think why we do not the same".

This excerpt from interviews reveals the need of « social remittances » to benefit the country of origin (Tunisia) of competences and experiences acquired abroad. The example of the economic return that is not superposed on the residential logic reflects well this need to confirm one’s belonging and one’s links with the country of origin. Beyond its economic dimension, the entrepreneurial return includes a symbolic and civic dimension: the willingness to reaffirm the citizenship towards the country of origin. This dimension needs to be deepened especially concerning temporalities, legal and personal status of the woman returnee. In fact, it would be revealing to consider the economic return with the number of years spent abroad and specially with the legal status of those women in the country of destination. Does the return be provoked by a situation of rupture (unemployment, divorce, absence of permanent legal status abroad...), or correspond to a deeper need independently of any situation of fragility or vulnerability?

3. The difficulties faced: common or specific to female returnees?
Sexo-specific; access to information; functioning; reintegration (cultural gap)…

Conclusions and perspectives
Support female returnees (special needs)
Reinforce the "culture of entrepreneurship"
Improve the access to information
Reinforce the networking

This work needs to be completed by a comparative approach especially with the autochthonous entrepreneurs that have never migrated. Moreover, a gender approach requires a comparison with male trajectories especially to highlight the relationship with institutions and perceptions regarding to the return and particularly to the entrepreneurial return.
Fig. 4: OVERVIEW OF THE ENTREPRENEURSHIP OF WOMEN RETURNNEES

Legend
* This figure should be read from bottom to the right
* R: resource
* k: capital
* H k: human capital
* S k: social capital

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