

Praise for the book ...

'This is a terrific book. It brings together the rich diversity of thirteen case studies across the world to illustrate how communities organize and mobilize around their own assets – rather than simply relying on external support. Its critical contribution to all concerned with the realities of development practice makes it essential reading for academics, policymakers and practitioners alike.'

Caroline Moser Professor of Urban Development,
University of Manchester

'*From Clients to Citizens* is a unique guide to discovering the power of mobilized local community assets. Its special significance is in the case studies that demonstrate how effective community building depends upon first developing local resources before outside assistance can be useful.'

John McKnight CoDirector, Asset Based Community
Development Institute, Northwestern University

'In a world where there is often a great deal of scepticism about the impact of development practice, the 13 examples of citizen action described in this book bring hope.'

Betty Plewes Former President and CEO,
Canadian Council for International Cooperation

'This is a thoroughly enjoyable, original and readable book.'

Jethro Pettit Institute of Development Studies,
University of Sussex

'In *From Clients to Citizens*, Mathie and Cunningham have masterfully threaded together a group of inspiring community development stories with the vexed issues of empowerment and citizens' rights. This integrated set of cases persuasively argues for a non-romanticized appreciation of both the potentialities of communities to determine their futures, the importance of suitable leadership, and governments' clear responsibilities.'

Davydd J. Greenwood Goldwin Smith Professor of Anthropology,
Cornell University, USA

'A wonderfully insightful exploration of the new frontiers of community development, this book is a must-read for students, teachers, activists and policy-makers alike.'

Michael Edwards Director, Governance and Civil Society,
Ford Foundation

'This volume is an essential antidote to expert-dominated views about how communities are "developed" through external initiatives. A rich combination of analysis, geographic variety and diversity of cases show where, why and how people's own capabilities, resources and efforts make an enduring difference to their lives and to society.'

Alan Fowler Former President, International Society for
Third Sector Research (ISTR)

From Clients to Citizens Communities Changing the Course of their Own Development

Edited by
Alison Mathie and Gordon Cunningham

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Authors' note

I first heard about the community of St Andrews on an early morning regional radio broadcast in which a regular contributor from our area spoke of this amazing local community that had built their community centre and curling rink without any government help. Several months later my wife and I had a chance to try curling at a 'learn to curl' evening organized by her employer. At that event I met Leroy MacEachern who filled me in on the history of the curling rink. A few months, and several visits to St Andrews later, Alison Mathie, Kate Fiander and I were convinced that we had found a story of community-driven development not more than 10 km from the Coady International Institute.

In June 2007 Kate Fiander sent copies of the draft case to twenty five citizens of St Andrews who had been interviewed the previous month as part of the research for the case. Most of the feedback we received was very positive but one comment stood out for us. Several people commented that the case played up the role of only a couple of key leaders, in spite of the fact that in St Andrews there were many leaders working behind the scenes. However, when we tried to interview a person who several people put forward as a behind-the-scenes leader, she told us she didn't want to be interviewed (in keeping, obviously, with her *modus operandi*).

Kate and I would like to thank the people of St Andrews, former residents and others who have supported or worked with the community on its various projects, including officials with the provincial government, for giving so generously of their time. This included finding and providing archive material, being interviewed and agreeing to read the draft case to check for accuracy. In particular we would like to thank (in alphabetical order): Kevin Bekkers, Fr Vern Boutlier, Archie Boyd, Mary (Tommy) Chisholm, Benny Ten Brinke, Fraser Dunn, Martha Dunnett, Marie Feltmate, Marianne Forbes, John Juurlink, Joe MacDonald, Loyola MacDonald, Patricia MacDonald, Alistair MacDonald, Leroy MacEachern, June MacIsaac, Ron MacIsaac, Paul MacLean, Mary McCarron, Owen McCarron, Tom Moore, Cathy Sears, Steve Smith, Mary van den Heuvel, and Joe van de Wiel. We hope that this case does justice to the efforts of more than eight generations of St Andrews residents who have built their community from the ground up.

Gordon Cunningham

CHAPTER 7

The hardware and software of community development: migrant infrastructure projects in rural Morocco

Natasha Iskander and Nadia Bentaleb-Maes

Abstract

This case study highlights villages in the Moroccan Souss, long neglected by government, and how people there collaborated with émigrés returning from France to help improve livelihoods in their villages of origin. The need for basic infrastructure to power irrigation prompted innovation in both the technical aspects of electricity generation and distribution (the hardware) as well as in the way communities could organize to maintain and distribute services (the software), adapting traditional forms of organizing. The case extends the idea of community beyond the boundaries of residence to include émigrés still identifying with their place of origin.

Introduction

The Moroccan Souss, a narrow valley pinched between two chains of Morocco's Atlas Mountains, had suffered neglect in a policy framework dating back to France's control over Morocco before World War II that favoured urban Morocco over the subsistence agriculture in the kingdom's heartlands. While the state had encouraged large-scale horticulture enterprise in the valley for the export of vegetables to Europe, investment in these operations stood in stark contrast to the lack of attention to the surrounding mountainous areas of the Souss. Compounded by geographical isolation and the slow strangulation of a drought that was becoming endemic from the mid-1970s, the Souss' predicament produced some of the worst human development indicators in the Arab world. In response to the dismal economic prospects of the area, out-migration became the structural feature of the local economy. Soussis, as the locals are called, emigrated to Morocco's burgeoning cities as well as to Europe's industrial areas in large numbers, turning villages throughout the valley into crumbling adobe shells.

In recent years, the same emigration that was once viewed as proof of the region's economic distress began to reverse the Souss' decline. Migrants

from the region, and international migrants in particular, began to quietly but profoundly transform the region's political and economic landscape. In concert with their communities of origin, they elaborated a vision of economic development in the Souss that began with the provision of basic infrastructure, and experimented with organizational and technological models to make that vision a reality. More significantly, they brought the state in as a full partner, not just into the process of equipping villages in the region with infrastructure, but also into the process of imagining the possibilities for economic change that new services allow. Soussi migrants and their communities did more than compel the state to abandon its habit of chronic neglect and commit long overdue resources to the valley. They drew the state into community-generated processes of innovation.

The results of the ongoing exchange that Soussi communities established with the state have been dramatic, for the Souss region and beyond. The Moroccan government has connected villages to basic infrastructure and services at rates that would have been inconceivable even as recently as the mid-1990s. Tens of thousands of households that until a few years ago depended on candles and firewood now enjoy reliable access to electricity, and the hum of electric-powered irrigation pumps can be heard in the early mornings as orchards and fields – some of them on land newly reclaimed from drought – are irrigated. Schools for boys and girls have been established at unprecedented rates, and weekly markets have sprung up at the intersections of roads that were just dirt pathways until 1998, when hundreds of kilometres of fresh pavement were rolled out to link isolated villages to regional centres.

The catalyst behind the transformation of the mountainous areas of the Souss was a non-governmental organization called Migrations et Développement. Established in the mid-1980s by Soussis who had emigrated to France, the organization began by providing independent rural electricity networks to hamlets dotted throughout the upland valley slopes. This case study follows their lead and shows how their community-generated solutions to electricity provision ultimately led to major reforms in the Moroccan government's strategy for rural electricity supply. The process on which the organization relied to devise new approaches to rural electricity provision, and to inform government infrastructure policy, was repeated over and over again in other areas of infrastructure provision, from roads to schools. This process hinged on two key features. First, Migrations et Développement created an institutional structure for ongoing and participatory discussions that included emigrants, their communities, a handful of European infrastructure experts, and eventually, the Moroccan state. It blended the ideas of all of these actors to create an innovative solution for infrastructure, reshaping the way that communities and the state provided services like water, roads, and schools. Second, Migrations et Développement used the provision of infrastructure 'hardware' – the physical structures and buildings that make up infrastructure – to cultivate the 'software' of economic development, enhancing 'soft' assets such as social deliberation, planning skills, and management capabilities.

On a conceptual level, the participatory process Migrations et Développement fostered in the Soussi villages calls into question definitions of 'community' that rest on representations of communities as self-contained entities with more or less exclusive membership. The ongoing discussions the migrant organization launched between Soussi emigrants, villagers in their communities of origin, French allies, and eventually the state, criss-crossed the boundary that defined what was 'inside' the community and what was 'outside' with such frequency that the boundary was ultimately erased. The deliberations between Soussi emigrants and their communities of origin blurred the distinction between them, and reinforced migrants' sense of belonging in their communities even as they anchored them more firmly in networks far beyond the Souss valley. Similarly, the repeated exchanges that would occur between the state and rural communities were so dense that they bridged the chasm that had been hewn by decades of policy neglect and mutual suspicion. As the conversations between the various actors began to dissolve the distinctions between them, the importance of the deliberative process in generating innovative solutions to development challenges became clear. It revealed that who contributed an idea was less important than how it was contributed. What mattered was the participatory process through which that idea was appropriated, amended, and reinvented as a creative intervention for infrastructure provision and, ultimately, for economic transformation.

Organizing for infrastructure

Migrations et Développement grew out of a struggle over lay-offs and severance packages in a valley much further north, in a small town in the shadow of the French Alps called Argentière-la-Bessée. One of France's largest aluminium processing companies, Péchiney, had a plant in the town, and the Soussi emigrants who founded the association had been labourers there. Like most of French heavy industry, Péchiney had been suffering a slow but inexorable decline since the oil shocks of 1974. To cope with its economic crisis, the company resorted to repeated waves of downsizing in the early 1980s. Péchiney's workforce, immigrants and non-immigrants alike, fought the lay-offs tooth and nail with the help of the CFTD (*Confédération Française Démocratique du Travail*), the labour union that had been representing them. Shedding workers proved an insufficient measure to salvage Péchiney, however, and, in 1984, 16 of the company's plants were slated for closure, with the Argentière plant topping the list. To cushion the massive lay-offs this entailed, and to rescue Argentière from economic disaster, Péchiney extended start-up funds to former employees so that they could establish small firms in the region (Daoud, 1997).

Fifty-four North African immigrants, with several dozen Soussis among them, decided to return to their countries of origin rather than try to rebuild their lives in Argentière. When the immigrants approached Péchiney for the funds to start small businesses in their communities of origin, the company

refused, insisting that the funds were tagged for the development of the Argentière valley. Countering that they had equal rights to the aid since the award was, in fact, a form of severance pay, the immigrants, supported by the CFDT, took the company to court, and after a protracted legal battle, Péchiney was forced to disburse the same funds to the immigrant plaintiffs as it had to the rest of its workforce. The Soussi immigrants began planning for their return (Daoud, 1997).

The plans the migrants had were modest: they wanted to make marginal agricultural improvements to family land holdings, open grocery stores and gas stations, and set up agro-processing firms that produced for local markets. Although small in scale, the migrants' projects were impossible. Most of the migrants would be returning to hamlets without electricity, running water, passable roads, or telephone lines. The infrastructure necessary to support their plans simply did not exist in their villages.

In order to address these infrastructure gaps, in 1986, the returning Soussi migrants, already organized because of their legal battle with Péchiney, formed an association under French law called *Retour et Développement* – Return and Development – which they would later rename, in 1998, *Migrations et Développement*. The migrants decided to pool a portion of the start-up funds they received from Péchiney to fund small-scale infrastructure projects. The members of the group then began to lobby their communities of origin to join them in their efforts. Lahoussain Jamal, the group's founder, remembers his soapbox speeches to his family and neighbours: 'You have to get involved; the state won't do anything for you. Let's take the initiative ourselves. With your participation and ours, we can breathe life back into our village' (Daoud, 1997: 20).

Imgoun, a small village hugging the slope where the Souss Valley rises to meet the Atlas Mountains, and Lahoussain Jamal's birthplace, was chosen as the group's first project site. In early 1985, *Migrations et Développement* conducted an informal assessment of village needs. Members of the organization asked villagers about the problems they faced and found that they were many, each one compounding the last: overgrazing and deforestation leading to desertification, retaining walls for cultivated terraces in such serious disrepair that the steppes were being washed away in the rains, wells briny and dry from overuse and neglect. The migrants' questions also revealed that the villagers' top priority was getting electricity.

Electric power would enable them to run motorized water pumps that could draw up water for their parched agricultural plots from far deeper in the ground than a standard well would allow. Motorized water pumps had also come to represent the divide between the rich and the poor in the village: only the wealthiest residents, with those households receiving remittances from emigrants newly counted among them, could afford the cost of gasoline to run them. The fuel was made expensive by the long haul up to the village on dirt roads only passable during some seasons of the year. Emigrants concurred

with residents on the choice of electricity as the first infrastructure priority. Without it, none of their modest business plans would be feasible.

Imgoun's lack of electricity was typical of the vast majority of villages in Morocco's countryside. In the 1980s, over 60 per cent of Morocco's population was rural, and no more than a fraction of villages had access to electric power. While data for the 1980s are sketchy at best, rural electrification rates were estimated at anywhere between 4 and 18 per cent. The data in the 1990s are slightly more reliable, but they still show that Morocco's rural electrification rates, hovering at between 21 and 25 per cent, lagged far behind those for similar income countries in the region (ONE, 1999; World Bank, 1990). By 1990, Algeria had achieved 70 per cent rural electricity coverage and Tunisia was close behind with 60 per cent (World Bank, 1990). The Moroccan government explained away its poor performance in this area by claiming insufficient revenue and bureaucratic obstacles. In the early 1980s, the Moroccan central government, pressured mainly by the World Bank, embarked on a rural electrification programme, but by all accounts, it was a half-hearted effort with little impact: between 1982 and 1996, the state hooked up a mere 70 villages to electricity per year on average (ONE, 1999). At that rate, it would have taken Morocco over 300 years to provide electricity to its 34,000 villages. As the former director of the National Office of Electricity, Dress Benhima admitted: 'between 1960 and 1990, [rural electrification] was not a priority' (Daoud, 1997: 40). If the residents of Imgoun and the emigrants from the village wanted electricity, they would have to get it on their own.

Connecting electricity and water

For help with their electricity project, the migrants of *Migrations et Développement* contacted the *Agence Française pour la Maîtrise de l'Énergie* (AFME)¹ in 1986 about the possibility of setting up a solar-powered electricity network. The migrants were able to get access to the French government for energy management because the leadership had ties to the CFDT, the union that had supported the migrants in their struggle against Péchiney. The man who had been president of the union during the migrants' legal conflict with the aluminium company, Michel Roland, had since been named president of the AFME.

The migrants' project piqued the interest of the AFME because the agency had already been commissioned by the Moroccan National Office of Electricity to study the provision of decentralized solar power to rural areas. For the AFME, Imgoun represented a potential site for a pilot project, and in the agency *Migrations et Développement* found an experienced partner to help it set up an independent electricity network.

To investigate the feasibility of a solar project in Imgoun, *Migrations et Développement* conducted an extensive needs assessment of energy usage in the village that year, in consultation with local authorities. In the intimate setting of the village of slightly over a thousand inhabitants, the survey,

though thorough, was carried out in a very informal manner. The people conducting the survey were mostly emigrants from the village, and they went house to house, chatting with their friends and kinfolk about how they used energy. The needs assessment evolved into a series of open-ended discussions with people about what they viewed as their priorities for energy usage, about what family resources they devoted to securing the energy they needed, and about how they would imagine themselves using energy if it were readily and cheaply available. Through these conversations, villagers articulated their patterns of energy usage, many of them implicit in practice, and identified the ways that energy consumption was tied to other household and agricultural practices.

The study yielded two unexpected findings. First, motorized water pumps did not represent the village's primary energy consumption by any stretch. Instead, to the migrants' and residents' surprise, the study found that the village's largest energy consumption was at the household level, in the form of butane gas, candles, and batteries for lighting and audiovisual use, and of wood used for cooking. In fact, wood provided an average of 80 per cent of the energy used in households, with about a quarter of the wood used scavenged from the already denuded slopes surrounding the village. Moreover, the poorest 20 per cent of the village population relied much more heavily on found wood, scavenging more than half of the wood they used. The second unanticipated finding was that households were spending an average of 30 per cent of their income on energy, an amount well above the villagers' own estimates (Missaoui, 1996).

These two findings made it clear that energy could shape villagers' access to water, but not through water pumps that dredged it up through rapidly falling underground sources, as the villagers had thought. Rather, a reliable supply of energy could stop the over-harvesting of wood that was leading to desertification in the region. However, in order for this virtuous relationship between electricity and the protection of water supplies to hold firm, all villagers had to have access to electricity, regardless of the ability to pay. If excluded from the network, the poor would continue to scavenge wood, and even as the rich enjoyed a cheaper source of power to feed the pumps, they would still need to reach subterranean water pools, the level of which would continue to fall. The challenge, then, for Migrations et Développement, was two-fold: to create a network that was affordable, reliable, and safe; and to ensure that all villagers could tap into it, irrespective of income.

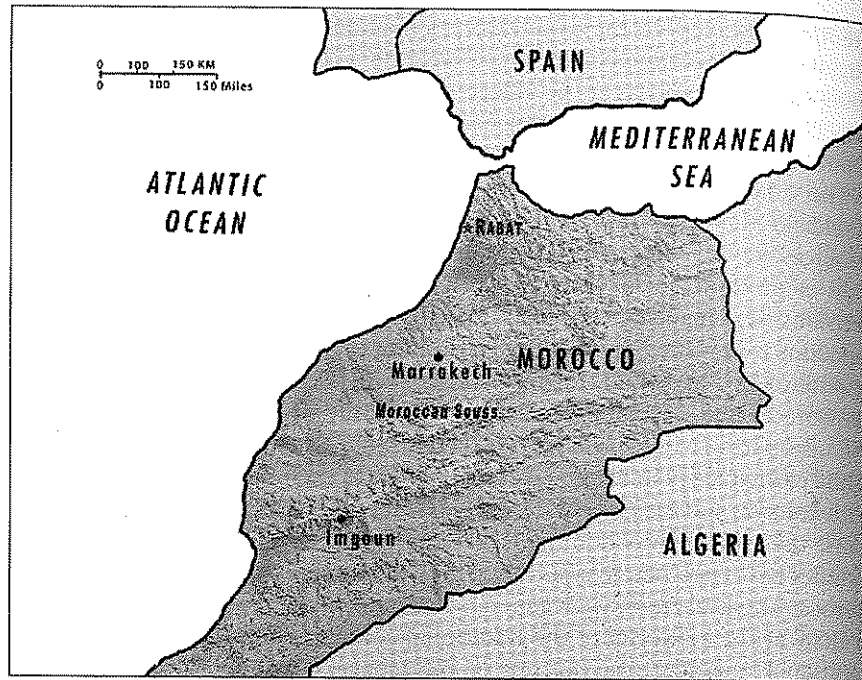
Getting power

In order to construct an electricity network that met these two requirements, the organization would have to link technological expertise about electricity networks together with local knowledge in an on-going way. The rich discussions and participatory processes that emerged during the needs assessment that Migrations et Développement conducted in collaboration with

the AFME, seemed, to the organization's members, essential to achieve that. Migrations et Développement began creating a structure to support the on-going exchange of ideas at the village level and, in 1988, established a village association called the Anour Association to house community deliberation about the proposed electricity network.

The village association was modelled on the *jema'a*² (a traditional council of elders) that had for centuries governed the management of natural resources in the villages of the Souss. Often celebrated as an indigenous form of proto-democracy, the *jema'a* elected its leader each year and most decisions were made by consensus (Mernissi, 1997; Haas, 2003). The *jema'a*'s functions were varied, including determining each household's contribution, in resources or in labour, to the maintenance of community infrastructure, like terraces and irrigation canals, settling family disputes between families, and negotiating with central government authorities on behalf of the village. While participatory in its process, the *jema'a* was exclusive in its membership. With seats on the *jema'a* restricted to male members of land or water-owning clans, the council was dominated by the wealthier families in the village. Families that were newly wealthy, thanks to emigrant members abroad or in Morocco's coastal cities, were generally excluded from the *jema'a*. They began to chafe at the authority of the traditional council, claiming that it favoured traditional notables over the rest of the village. These tensions, combined with changes in agricultural and husbandry practices, including the spread of water pumps had, by the 1980s, undercut the authority of the *jema'a* in the region so significantly that, in many villages, the once vibrant deliberative institutions had become cultural relics.

The migrants of Migrations et Développement revived Imgoun's *jema'a* by reinventing it. Their village association reproduced the *jema'a*'s participatory decision-making processes and its practice of reaching decisions by consensus. But in a radical departure from tradition, membership in the village association was extended to all villagers, regardless of wealth, land ownership, social status, age, or (to a lesser extent) gender. Migrants and locals were invited to participate in meetings, and in decision-making, and the association set its meeting schedule around migrants' yearly return so that their participation would be more than symbolic. As Migrations et Développement would later explain in one of its programme documents: 'the association enables everyone to get involved in the development of the village, and reduces their hierarchical inequalities between rich and poor, between young and old' (Migrations et Développement, 1996). Precisely because the village association was inclusive and open to all villagers and migrants, the village elders who had sat on the traditional council vehemently resisted the new community organization at first. They felt that it undercut their authority in the village, and was less a reinvention of the *jema'a* than a political manoeuvre on the part of migrant upstarts to marginalize the village notables and the wealthy families that they represented. Over time, the elders were swayed by the migrants' persistent and solicitous invitations to join the association, and more importantly, by



the migrants' ability to secure technical assistance from French electrical engineers.

In the case of women, although they were explicitly encouraged to take part in the village association meetings, gender norms in the village made them reluctant to participate until the village association was established as a vital and inclusive institution in the village. While women were rarely seen at the association's early meetings, their presence became progressively more important over time.

With the organizational groundwork in place in the form of the village association, Imgoun and Migrations et Développement still had to overcome the technological hurdles involved in setting up a durable, self-standing network. Migrations et Développement turned once again to French electricity providers. Through the AFME, Migrations et Développement forged a relationship with *Electricité de France* (EDF) with a non-profit spin-off set up by the French power company's employees, called Codev (later renamed *Electriciens Sans Frontières*). Intrigued by challenging topography and the technological puzzle it created, Codev sent 37 volunteers, armed with blueprints and a clear set of principles for electricity provision, to help Imgoun set up its electricity network (Daoud, 1997).

Once the Codev electricians committed to the project, they joined the conversations about electricity use that had been initiated with the needs

assessment and sustained in the village association meetings. Consultation between the Codev, Migrations et Développement and the Anour Association convinced the village to abandon its plans for a solar-powered network, and opt instead for a generator-supplied network that could provide an electrical current better suited to the household uses that represented – and would continue to represent – the lion's share of electricity consumption in Imgoun. The deliberation over the best technological solution for the village continued even as the network was being constructed. Villagers and migrants worked side by side with the volunteer EDF electricians to build the electricity system, and when they ran into obstacles erecting the network, they problem-solved together. Finding it impossible, for example, to haul the ten-metre high concrete columns, mandated by French and Moroccan safety standards, up to the isolated village on rough dirt roads, the villagers and electricians decided instead to make the poles for their network out of stripped eucalyptus trunks, which were available locally and were easier to transport. This sort of ongoing and collaborative improvisation ultimately produced a network that differed significantly both from the blueprints that the electricians had brought with them and from the standards set by Moroccan government, but that was, as a result, well-suited to the local needs and local environment. Local materials, including recycled hardware, were used; the network capacity was scaled down to local usage requirements; and maintenance needs were simplified so that the villagers could manage the network on their own.

In addition to the exchange between the French electricians and the Imgouni villagers and migrants, the construction of the network rested on the huge organizational effort that the village association undertook to fund and manage the new electricity system. The village association collected financial contributions for the project on an income-based sliding scale firmly rooted in the principle that all should contribute what they could, but that no one would be excluded if he or she did not have the wherewithal to contribute. Wealthy villagers and emigrants living in France were asked to contribute 10,000 Moroccan Dirhams (MAD), or about US\$1,330 (approximate equivalent at 3 March 2008), undocumented emigrants were asked to give 5,000 MAD (approximately 665 USD), and villagers only 1,000 MAD, with the poorest households exempt from contribution. The association also organized a rotation system for the accommodation of the French electricians in the village, with some households lodging the guests, and other households taking turns feeding them. Once the network was up and running, the association took charge of maintaining the network and collecting fees based on the income-sensitive payment schedule it had designed. The association charged a slight premium over and above the cost of electricity production and distribution: the additional 'tax' was earmarked for future development projects that the community would decide upon through deliberations in the association. In carrying out these organizational functions, the association enacted the traditional fiscal and managerial functions of the *jema'a* in the community,

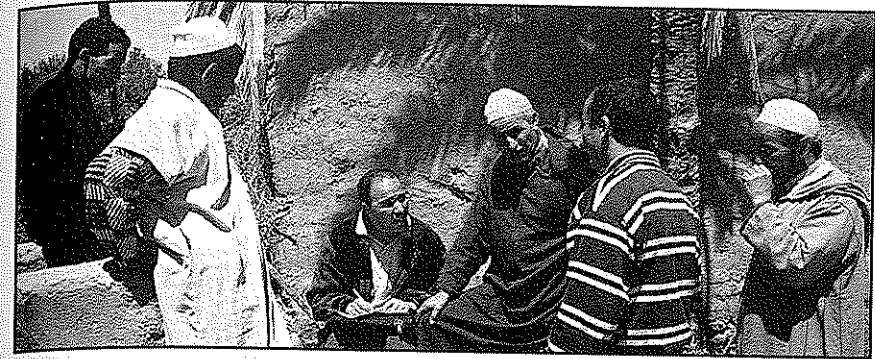
but through an approach that was more inclusive and equitable than the mandates of the elders' council.

The discussions in the village association about what projects to take on next were equally inclusive. The wide-ranging deliberations at meetings and the multiple perspectives that were thrown into the conversations led to new insights about the economic possibilities that electricity could offer the village, and ultimately to a more creative take on the relationship between infrastructure and development. Villagers began to brainstorm about the possibility of using electricity for new water-saving irrigation techniques in 1989, which in turn allowed for the prospect of larger scale cultivation of high-value crops like saffron. The expanded cultivation of high-end crops gave rise to discussions in the early 1990s about the creation of a co-op for the export of saffron and other products to Europe, which in turn began deliberations about the need to provide the women who would be harvesting and packaging the crops with basic literacy, and led to plans in 1996 for an adult education centre for women. As further elaborated in Box 7.1, the electricity network in Imgoun, a piece of infrastructure 'hardware,' had become a catalyst for the social deliberation, the management skills, and the ambitious creativity that constitute the necessary 'software' for development.

The electricity network and the development dynamic that it set in motion quickly spread beyond Imgoun. An elder from a village not far from Imgoun recalled how this happened: 'Imgoun is across the way, just there. We saw that they had electricity. At night, it was all lit up. We went to Migrations et Développement and told them to come and bring us electricity too' (personal communication, 2004). By 1996, seven short years after the first electricity network was functional, Migrations et Développement had worked with over 70 villages to set up electricity networks and had a waiting list twice that number. Cognizant of just how critical the participatory processes of deliberation and innovation had been to the success of their first electricity project, Migrations et Développement stipulated that any village it assisted with electricity – and later helped with other infrastructure projects – create a village association as a structure to support creative discussions, and that it offer access to the service installed to all villagers, regardless of ability to pay. Additionally, Migrations et Développement asked that village associations join a federation that the migrant organization had spearheaded. By the mid-1990s, there were close to 200 federated village associations in the Souss region, many of them self-taxing, and all of them carrying out development projects ranging from electricity provision to the building of potable water networks to the creation of informal schools.

Bringing the state by the hand

The demands on Migrations et Développement from Soussi villages requesting help with infrastructure projects quickly outstripped the organization's capacity. By the early 1990s, Migrations et Développement had shifted its



Returning migrants discuss rural development options with Imgoun village elders.

perspective on community-sponsored infrastructure projects from a stand that advocated village self-help – and self-funded – infrastructure initiatives to one that considered that the state had an irreplaceable role to play in infrastructure provision. Lahoussain Jamal, director of the organization at the time, explained the revised position of Migrations et Développement: 'we want to take the state by the hand and bring it here. We don't have the resources the state does; we can never accomplish what the state can. What we want is for the state to do the work of the state *here*' (personal communication, 2004).

A few short years after Migrations et Développement had begun its work, it was able to achieve that objective by drawing the state into the participatory processes of deliberation and innovation that it had launched in communities throughout the Souss. The rudimentary electricity networks the organization erected would soon transform the Moroccan government's approach to rural electricity provision and enable the state to raise its rural electricity coverage rates dramatically.

Migrations et Développement made the government aware of rural electricity initiatives from the very beginning by formally registering their village associations with the state as non-governmental organizations, but soon Migrations et Développement went further and began to share insights about the best way to set up a network with government agencies. This exchange initially occurred through AFME employees who acted as intermediaries: the same French agency that was first to help Migrations et Développement with Imgoun's electricity network had been retained by the Moroccan government since the early 1980s. Several of its consultants volunteered with Migrations et Développement even as they assisted the Moroccan government in designing a pilot programme in rural electricity provision that it would launch in 1987. The consultants brought the knowledge they had gleaned from Imgoun about electricity usage patterns and network design to the government's pilot programme, but they also brought Moroccan state bureaucrats to the village

Box 7.1: The Anour Association, Imgoun: Mobilizing Assets and Driving Development

The Anour Association has shown the way forward for other villages in the area as a mechanism for mobilizing village-based assets for community-wide benefit; establishing linkages with external institutions to ensure sustainability; and maintaining control over development initiatives. Including migrants in its membership, it recognizes that loyalty to family and place endures the separation in time and space that occurs when people emigrate.

Mobilizing and redistributing assets

The Anour Association has built the capacity to mobilize and redistribute resources within Imgoun. The management of electricity services is a case in point. To pay for the service, households are metered. Rates are calculated on a sliding scale according to income level. An additional charge is added to each bill to cover the costs of providing electricity to public buildings – the mosque, the health centre, and the school. Finally, additional fees are charged to ensure sufficient revenue is raised to fund other projects in Imgoun. An example is the health centre, built in 1992, which was 50 per cent financed by revenues from electricity.

Over the years, its management capacity (building on generations of experience of the *jema'a*) has been put to the test on several occasions. In the 1990s, responding to the drought crisis, the association was the mechanism through which technical expertise (a French national with experience in drought-prone California), youth volunteers from France, migrants, and technical equipment from the local authorities were all organized alongside local villagers to stop ground erosion in the small valleys and build three hillside dams upstream from the village's sources.

Subsequently, a new association, Azourar, was formed to manage a large-scale irrigation project to reclaim large tracts of land left uncultivable by years of chronic drought. Managed on similar lines to the Anour Association, and building on its reputation, the new Azourar Association was able to access grants directly from the Moroccan government for the reclamation work and then sustain the service through user fees.

Establishing linkages

As members of the association, the migrants are both assets in themselves and effective as those who mobilize external assets and resources. Through Migrations et Développement, links to organizations in France providing volunteer support and financial assistance have been significant, especially with regard to the technical expertise required for infrastructure development. But the linkages have been still more extensive. For example, in 1990, youth groups from France (including both children of migrants as well as other French youth) came to help renovate classrooms, originally built by the *jema'a* in 1957. Later, a different group of youth came to assist with the construction of irrigation canals. Over a period of six years in total, the villagers accommodated and worked alongside these young French volunteers to get the work done. Now, with the children of migrants coming of age, another generation of people identifying with the Moroccan Souss is emerging to provide continued support.

As well, as deeper and wider links are strengthened with migrants in France, the association has solidified relationships with government to ensure that service delivery is sustained. It has also embarked on relationships with international organizations that have set an example for continued government investment. For example, an ILO programme in education and skills training for children and youth illustrates a clustering of interests: Imgoun wants to educate and train its youth in anticipation of greater employment opportunities in the future, international organizations want to discourage child labour, and the state has a responsibility to invest in education.

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It is important to note that the Anour Association is linked to a federation of village associations that, individually and collectively, work in collaboration with Migrations et Développement and the government in a relationship that is unique in the region. The road construction project, requiring collaboration between several associations and the government, mediated through Migrations et Développement, is a case in point.

Driving its own development

Investment from outside organizations has had to be carefully handled to prevent it threatening the independence and autonomy of the Anour Association. In fact, Migrations et Développement had played such an important linking role in the early years that donors expected Migrations et Développement to act as the intermediary between the donor and the association. Over time, this stipulation threatened the positive dynamic that had developed between migrants and the association, independently of Migrations et Développement. The migrants wanted to deal directly with the village association. Thus, in 2003, as part of a road construction project stretching 47.5 km, the Anour Association took responsibility for collecting the 10 per cent funding required to leverage government funds for the 2.5 km stretch of road to link the village to the main highway. Migrants donated directly to this fund as well as to the funds necessary for the highway itself.

Reversing emigration: retaining and building local assets

Through these initiatives over the last 20 years, the neglect of the Moroccan Souss and the large-scale emigration from villages like Imgoun has found solutions in the combined resources of migrants and the local population, with Migrations et Développement playing the role of boosting people's confidence in their skills and their country, and aiming at increasing 'the attractiveness of the territory' in the eyes of the people: the youth in particular.

The establishment of basic infrastructure has now permitted attention to be focused on the next priority: economic opportunity. Villagers' experience in 'hard' technical skills, learned through infrastructure development, and in the 'soft' skills, organizing and managing, are now being applied to cooperative enterprises in saffron and olive oil.

itself to observe community management of the electricity network. The connection that the AFME consultants forged led to an on-going exchange between the Moroccan government and Migrations et Développement, one that lasted for the ten-year duration of the pilot programme. Government electricians transplanted practices observed in Migrations et Développement villages to a large number of their 200 pilot sites, and they tried out electricity technologies, new to rural Morocco, on the Migrations et Développement villages, considered by that time to have relatively mature electricity networks. Migrations et Développement appropriated and modified some of the practices introduced, like the use of fluorescent lights and certain generator maintenance techniques, which were then copied once again by government electricians in pilot villages throughout Morocco.

After five years of this exchange between Migrations et Développement and the Moroccan state, government electricians began to articulate the main

lessons the experience offered for rural electrifications. They listed four main findings. First, in order to build a network that addressed village-specific energy usages patterns, a thorough needs assessment needed to be conducted in each community. Second, the electricity networks could be built using materials that were adapted to the topography of rural Morocco, that were locally sourced and less expensive, without compromising service or safety. Third, because communities already spent a significant portion of their income on energy, they were often able and willing to contribute funds for the construction of networks. Fourth, and most importantly, supporting electricity networks with some sort of social organization, akin to village associations, was the key factor for those networks to function properly and cost-effectively. Moreover, the associations would enable the new electricity grids to serve as an 'institutional motor to drive other developmental actions' (Berdai and Butin, 1993: 13). In other words, the impact of infrastructure 'hardware' depended on the 'software' of social processes that surrounded it.

In 1996, a crisis in the Moroccan energy sector created an opening for those lessons to permeate the kingdom's rural electricity strategy. After repeatedly failing to meet national demand, the National Office of Electricity was forced to privatize its energy production facilities and, to avoid closing the sizeable bureaucracy, the Moroccan government began to focus on electricity distribution instead. Overnight, rural electrification became an important government priority, and the National Office of Electricity launched a massive rural electricity programme, with the goal of linking 90 per cent of rural households to the national electricity grid by 2010. After a string of programme failures in the 1980s and 1990s, the National Office of Electricity abandoned its previous rural electrification strategy, which approached villages as if they were tiny, isolated cities that were extremely expensive to electrify. Instead, a programme was built from the ground up, using the lessons learned from the government's pilot programme, and more specifically, through interaction with Migrations et Développement-sponsored electricity initiatives. The new rural electrification programme mandated a needs assessment in each village; it revised national electricity standards to allow for equipment and materials that were less expensive and more readily available in local markets; it required some financial contribution from local villagers, but subsidized set-up costs by means of a tax levied on wealthier urban customers; and finally, the programme allowed for some degree of community management, though mostly in the very limited form of fee collection from households.

The results of the new electrification programme were dramatic. Rural electricity provision shot up from an average of 70 villages a year to 2,000 villages a year. By 2005, less than a decade after the programme was launched, the estimated rural electricity coverage in the kingdom rose from 21 to 81 per cent (ONE, 2005).

Lessons for rural development: the 'hardware' and 'software' of deliberative processes

The success of the rural electrification programme was a watershed in the Moroccan government's approach to rural Morocco: it made clear that community-based initiatives could yield insights pivotal enough to transform large-scale government programmes from embarrassing failures into policy triumphs. The Moroccan government began to look to other Migrations et Développement infrastructure initiatives for ideas about how to revamp other areas of rural infrastructure provision. The government turned to the discussions on water management that emerged in Migrations et Développement villages once electricity networks had been built and found, in the village-based deliberation, a host of innovative solutions for combining traditional water-harvesting methods with modern irrigation and potable water distribution. The resulting national programme for the provision of water in rural areas that the government launched in 1998 raised rural water access from 13 to 50 per cent in a little over five years, by 2005. Similarly, the government's collaboration with Migrations et Développement and its federation of village associations on road construction in the Souss region, beginning in 1997, prompted the government to revise the criteria it used to select the location of roads in 2005, causing it to shift its emphasis from number of kilometres paved to the number of people that a given road would serve. According to the Moroccan Ministry of Infrastructure, the roads planned according to the new measures have been more effective in alleviating poverty and isolation than roads planned under the previous scheme. Further collaborations between the government, Migrations et Développement, and village associations are currently under way in the area of adult schooling and health clinics.

Two important factors enabled a handful of small-scale community-based initiatives to grow into major reforms in national rural infrastructure provision. The first was the creation of an institutional structure to support a participatory process of innovation that included community groups, technical experts, and the state. Had Migrations et Développement not created a village association to protect those exchanges, those processes may not have been visible enough to attract government attention or robust enough to withstand the Moroccan government's sometimes overbearing involvement. The state's active participation in the exchange was most important: this is what enabled it to understand the rudimentary infrastructure set-ups in Soussi villages and to appreciate the conceptual principles that underlay them, which in turn allowed it to translate those principles into programmes that were national in scale.

The second factor that allowed for the spread of infrastructure innovation beyond a cluster of villages in the Souss region was the connection made between infrastructure 'hardware' and the 'software' of social deliberation. In all of the villages that Migrations et Développement worked with, infrastructure 'hardware' provided the focal point around which deliberative processes

could grow, endowing those on-going and sometimes messy exchanges with a concrete purpose and a sense of urgency that kept them from dissipating into the mix of everyday conversations. Meanwhile, the 'software' of those deliberations generated the conceptual connections (between water and electricity, for example) and the creative ideas necessary for innovations in the infrastructure 'hardware.' Development 'hardware' and 'software' existed in symbiosis. Over time, the distinction between 'hardware' and 'software' became blurred as the projects that Migrations et Développement undertook in villages came to depend less on physical infrastructure and more on social organization. For initiatives like the saffron cooperatives and adult education programmes that the association launched in villages throughout the region, the buildings in which the activities took place mattered less than the coordination of community efforts, deliberation about strategy and curriculum, and the collection of funds to launch the programmes. However, the high-functioning community 'software' on which these initiatives depended could have been developed without the initial focus on 'hardware' with which Migrations et Développement began its intervention. The lessons Migrations et Développement drew from this experience are further elaborated in Box 7.2.

With donor agencies increasingly interested in supporting deliberative processes, and with infrastructure provision topping the priority list of a growing number of developing countries, the emergence of infrastructure innovations in the Sous valley offers an important reminder about the connections between participatory practices and the infrastructure services that lay the groundwork for economic development. Participatory practices are delicate and do need to be supported, particularly through the establishment of an institutional space to protect and nurture them, but social deliberation on its own is not sufficient to promote economic development. Likewise, basic infrastructure is an indispensable precondition for economic growth, but unless it draws on community-based processes of deliberation and innovation, the infrastructure provided may fail to meet the actual needs of the community. Furthermore, infrastructure initiatives that bypass community deliberation may forfeit the opportunity to be more than 'hardware' on the ground, and miss the chance to be the kind of catalyst for change that transformed the Sous from a parched, abandoned stretch of countryside into a hotbed of economic development.

Box 7.2: Lessons for providers of external assistance: the perspective of Migrations et Développement

1. The sooner local associations can take control of the projects the better. Taking control and assuming accountability ensures a sense of responsibility, signals victory over submission to poverty, and restores confidence in the options that are available to local people.
2. Solutions to problems can be found through combining 'insider' experience with 'outsider,' in a process that deliberately generates innovative ideas and 'out of the box' thinking, as was the case in building infrastructure and is now the case with finding markets for local produce.
3. Demand-driven, rather than supply-driven, development reverses donor logic. It means that development is shaped by local communities, not outsiders. In other words, development does not proceed by 'invitations to tender,' according to agendas elaborated in the North, but by responding to proposals put forward by local populations and migrants.
4. Building infrastructure first is important for two reasons. Not only is infrastructure essential for subsequent economic activity, but the collaboration on something with a concrete, visible outcome ('a tap in each house,' for example) provides the basis for shared learning and innovation between migrants and local populations. To support economic activities, more sophisticated know-how, fewer tangible assets, and more complex procedures are required. Without the villagers' experience of building infrastructure together with the migrants, this would have been difficult to accomplish.
5. Different donors are interested in different aspects of an initiative. Migrants, local populations, and Moroccan institutions are more likely to finance the 'hard' technology (construction of buildings or equipment). The niche for Northern donors is to finance the 'soft' technology (social mediation, coordination of participants, training for management, marketing of products, or technical studies).
6. Migrants provide an important link between governments in the North and local development activities in the South. Migrants' associations in the North that have credibility in development projects in their region of origin can be an important source of expertise and local knowledge.

Endnotes

1. This agency has now been renamed *Agence de l'Environnement et de la Maitrise de l'Energie* (ADEME).
2. The plural of *jema'a* is *jema'at*.

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Authors' note

Research is the process of creating a narrative, and although the researcher may be the person who ultimately articulates it, multiple hands collaborate in weaving together the story. This case study was no exception: as a researcher, I participated in the processes through which actors in this story made sense of what had happened and of its significance.

As part of the research for my dissertation on migration and development policy, I travelled to Morocco in the summer of 2001 and began to seek out initiatives that link emigration with local economic development. I heard about Migrations et Développement, rented a battered hatchback, and after a perilous drive that involved my car breaking down on one of the dizzying hairpin turns in the road that hugs the Atlas Mountains, made it to Talioune, where the organization had its local headquarters. From that very first encounter, the staff at Migrations et Développement were extremely welcoming and generous with their time and their information. The conversations that began that dusty afternoon would continue for the next five years, and would stretch to include multiple rural and urban sites in at least three countries. Migrations et Développement staff, the villagers served by their programmes, and migrants in Europe and in Morocco not only took the time to speak with me, but also hosted me in their homes, feeding me and often offering me a place to lay my head at night. I also interviewed current and former government officials in Rabat and Casablanca, and spoke at length with electrical engineers that had been involved in the Migrations et Développement electricity projects as well as in the national government's rural electricity programmes. I pored over reams of government documents, some published, some not, but saved in musty closets by people who perceived the significance of the experiment they had been a part of. I also spoke with observers of Migrations et Développement: people who, like me, were trying to make sense of the dramatic changes that Migrations et Développement's initiatives had set in motion in the Souss region.

Nadia Bentaleb was undoubtedly the most central of those observers. Before becoming director of Migrations et Développement she had, like me, gone to the Souss to do research on Migrations et Développement's electricity initiatives for her own dissertation. The conversations I had with her captured most vividly the dynamic that allowed the narrative presented in the case to emerge. Through back and forth exchanges, we built on each other's understanding of what had happened, and of how a small scale electricity experiment ultimately shaped Morocco's national rural electrification programme. (That exploration even broadened to include a consideration of the relationship of migration to development more generally, and in 2003, Nadia came to MIT to give a presentation at a conference on that topic that I had organized). The process of collaborative interpretation that characterized my interaction with Nadia occurred in almost all of my conversations over the course of my research. In a very real sense, it was the same process that

allowed for Migrations et Développement initiatives to have such a profound impact on development, locally and nationally, as illustrated in the case. It was through those exchanges that a story was woven, and although Nadia and I are the authors of the case in this volume, we could not have presented the tapestry of the narrative without the threads many people provided.

In the same way that I was engaged in making sense of Migrations et Développement's initiatives and their impact, the people I spoke with for this research interpreted the significance of my interest. Multiple views emerged as to what my doing research in the Souss meant, but one of those was featured in a book written by Zayka Daoud on Migrations et Développement. In her monograph, published in 2004, she presents my research as evidence that the quality of Migrations et Développement interventions as well as the organization's longstanding commitment to the communities it serves was being recognized internationally, and with those words, it was no longer I who was interpreting what I observed, but I who was being interpreted.

CHAPTER 8

A spreading banyan tree: the Self Employed Women's Association, India

Martha Chen

Abstract

The 30-year history of the Self Employed Women's Association offers insights into how women in India's informal economy have been able to mobilize and build their assets and to work proactively as an organized force for legal and policy changes in the sector. Women identify with the community of SEWA membership as a whole, as well as their particular trade group. They also play a valued role as SEWA members in their respective communities of place.

Introduction

Seeing itself as a spreading banyan tree, the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) of India supports its members through its many and various branches, drawing on the resources and capacities of its members. Thirty-seven years since the first seeds were sown in 1972, and now with a membership 500,000-strong in Gujarat State and 1 million across India, SEWA has grown into a movement of solidarity among self-employed women workers around the world and has steadily transformed the conditions of work and livelihoods of its members who work in an otherwise unprotected, yet substantial, sector of the Indian economy. It has allowed women to slowly and steadily accumulate productive assets, and insure themselves against the risks that constitute the norm, not the exception, in their work and lives. As such the tree nourishes and protects, spreading its influence through development services, collective bargaining, and policy advocacy for regulative and legislative change. As a member-based organization, it consolidates the 'agency' of each individual member as she contributes to household livelihood and community life, such that SEWA's collective power has influence locally, nationally and internationally – a fact aptly described in the title of the recent book by SEWA's founder Ela Bhatt: 'We are Poor But So Many' (Bhatt, 2006). This case study traces its history, how it developed a collective identity as a social movement, inspired by Gandhian principles, and how it interacted at the local, national, and international levels from a position of strength. Finally, recent challenges to that strength