

Learning by doing:
Migrant transnationalism
for local development in MIDA
Italy-Ghana/Senegal programme
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CONTENT

ABSTRACT	4
1. INTRODUCTION	5
2. METHODOLOGY	6
3. ANALYSIS	9
3.1 Migration profiles, incorporation modes and transnational relations	9
3.2 Transnational associations	12
3.3 Transnational leaders	16
3.4 Interaction with local Italian contexts	19
3.5 Interaction for local development in origin contexts	21
3.6 Feedback effects on migrant transnationalism, associations and integration	29
4. WHAT IS CO-DEVELOPMENT?	32
5. MAIN FINDINGS AND FURTHER AREAS FOR RESEARCH	34
BIBLIOGRAFIA	37

ABSTRACT

In 2002, the International Organisation for Migration launched a Migration for Development in Africa (MIDA) programme which sought to mobilise the participation of Ghanaian and Senegalese migrants residing in Italy for the development of their countries of origin. The programme was supported by Italian Cooperation in two phases and concluded in December 2007.

Through the provision of technical assistance and matching funds by Italian national and decentralised cooperation actors, namely sub-national local authorities including Regions, Provinces and Municipalities as well as other local institutions and organisations of an economic and social nature, the programme supported about 18 rural/local development initiatives of migrant associations for the benefit of the villages of origin of their members, and the training of 40 migrants. These initiatives were linked to spontaneous practices of transnational migrants, including the investment of collective remittances in local community development. CeSPI was involved in the implementation of the programme through research and partnership promotion activities. After five years of field and empirical research work, some of the interesting lessons which emerged regarding the interplay between the involvement of migrant diasporas in cooperation projects, transnational linkages and local transformations, can now be presented for debate.

The basic questions underlying the research were: How do different migration profiles and modes of incorporation impact on migrants' capacity to foster local development in their countries of origin? What kinds of migrant associations are more engaged in local development? What are the limitations and strengths of migrant leaders and of local institutions "here and there"? And what are the impacts of their development activities both "here and there"? CeSPI's researchers analysed the integration and transnational characteristics of migrants, entering into direct and long-lasting relationships with the leaders of migrant associations engaged in small rural development activities in their villages of origin. They used sociological and anthropological methods of investigation in order to gain a better understanding of migrant visions of, and their commitment towards, local development. In accordance with structure and agent theories, the research analysed the interaction between migrants, their families and villages as well as non-governmental organisations and local institutions in destination and origin countries. During the course of more than five years of implementation activities and research, over 300 in-depth interviews, focus groups and longitudinal analyses were carried out in specific locations in Italy and Senegal where migrants are concentrated, live and interact with local institutions.

Various findings emerged which both confirmed the outcomes of previous analysis and brought to light new and further knowledge. The different migration profiles of Ghanaian and Senegalese migrants influences their capacity to create social capital and to interact with Italian local institutions to raise funds and secure technical assistance. In addition to these profile differences, the opportunity structures available at local level and the incorporation modes in destination territories are two basic variables which also impact on the structuring of the capacity of migrants' to support their villages of origin.

Different types of migrant associations exist with differing levels of engagement towards local development. Migrant association leaders play a fundamental role in creating the social and financial capital needed to support local development initiatives. Although they face major obstacles in building internal cohesion within their associations as well as strong and weak external ties with local contexts (as per Granovetter's classification) to sustain local development, the initiatives provide them with social mobility, status and visibility which seem to compensate for the human and economic costs they incur.

Migrant leaders have a strong vision for and commitment towards the emancipation of their villages. In some cases, they adopt Western-style development approaches, in other cases they create a hybrid between local traditional ways of life and Western approaches. Their projects create real local opportunities for the alleviation of poverty, although it is difficult to see their impacts in terms of basic transformation for local development purposes. Furthermore, they fuel the culture of emigration. Leaders are conscious of these problems and try to counteract them with awareness-raising activities as well as by entering into political relationships with local and national powers with a view to bringing about change.

1. INTRODUCTION

In 2002, the International Organisation for Migration (the IOM) launched a Migration for Development in Africa (MIDA) programme which sought to mobilise the participation of Ghanaian and Senegalese¹ migrants residing in Italy for the development of their countries of origin. The programme was supported by Italian Cooperation in two phases and concluded in December 2007.

In Italy, this kind of programme is viewed as a co-development initiative, characterised by the “triple-win” concept which holds that well-regulated policies can improve migrant livelihoods and contribute to the development of both countries of origin and destination. According to the former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, “There is an emerging consensus that countries can cooperate to create triple wins, for migrants, for their countries of origin and for the societies that receive them” (UN Report of the Secretary-General, 2006). But it is far from evident that this is the case². There is a need to identify better policies and cooperation programmes that are capable of making migration and the forces which drive it beneficial for development³.

The Italy-Ghana/Senegal phase of the MIDA programme was aimed at identifying and supporting the implementation of new migrant initiatives for local development. Through the creation of bottom-up partnerships, the provision of technical assistance and matching funds by Italian national and decentralised cooperation actors, namely sub-national local authorities including Regions, Provinces and Municipalities as well as other local institutions and organisations of an economic and social nature, the programme supported about 18 rural/local development initiatives of migrant associations for the benefit of the villages of origin of their members, and the training of 40 migrants in the start-up of income-generating activities⁴. These micro-projects, each with average total financing of approximately 100,000 euro, were linked to spontaneous practices of transnational migrants, including the investment of collective remittances in local community development. A precondition to obtaining IOM financing was the investment by migrants of collective remittances

¹ The first phase was dedicated to Ethiopian and Ghanaian migrants due to the interest expressed by the governments of their respective countries of origin. The second phase involved Senegalese and Ghanaian migrants.

² The website “Migration in practice” raises some doubts. “Destination countries can help resolve shortages in their employment markets with the help of migration. Countries of origin are relieved of a labour surplus, profit from a ‘brain gain’ and also receive foreign currency. Finally, the individual migrant can send money home and profit from the experience gained in the destination country. The question, of course, is whether Annan is right. It is also possible that migration is actually a zero-sum game, in which the benefits enjoyed by one party come at the expense of the other party. This is the case if effects such as ‘brain drain’ occur or if migrants in the country of origin or country of destination experience and/or contribute to social or cultural problems. The benefits which some attribute to freer labour migration are also far from self-evident. Remittances do not automatically contribute to development. Improvement in the (economic) conditions prevailing in the countries of origin largely depends on various possible obstacles and roadblocks, such as effective administration, the presence of a favourable investment climate, physical/geographical circumstances, a lack of infrastructure etc.” (<http://www.migrationinpractice.eu/article-113-en.html>).

³ The Report of the House of Commons (2004) on Migration and Development observes that “Migration’s costs and benefits will be distributed unevenly. Economic theory suggests strongly that migration will increase global economic output, giving scope for win-win outcomes, but many of the developmental gains are likely to impose costs for some. (...). There may be some win-wins and cost-free ways of making migration work for development, but these are likely to be few. Policy design should therefore be about finding the most effective and efficient ways to make migration work for development and poverty reduction. To do this, one would need to identify which dimensions of migration matter most in terms of their developmental impact, what the direction of this impact is, and then design policies which can be used to shape the various dimensions of migration to influence its overall developmental impact. It is then the job of governments – which are primarily concerned with protecting and pursuing the interests of their citizens – to determine how far they want to go in making their migration-related policies development-friendly. This should involve factoring in the non-economic costs and benefits of migration, distributional issues, and other policy objectives. Finally, a wise development agency will want to compare the effectiveness and efficiency of migration as a route to poverty reduction, with other sorts of development interventions. Unfortunately the evidence-base for policy on migration and development is very poor.”

⁴ On the strategy of the programme, see Ceschi and Stocchiero (2006).

to a level of about one third of the total cost of the individual micro-project. The other two thirds were covered by IOM-Italian Cooperation and Italian decentralised cooperation partners.

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2. METHODOLOGY

The basic questions underlying the research were: How do the different migration profiles and modes of incorporation impact on migrants' capacity to foster local development in their countries of origin? What kinds of migrant associations are more engaged in local development? What are the limitations and strengths of migrant leaders and of local institutions "here and there"? And what are the impacts of their development activities both "here and there"?

CeSPI's researchers analysed the integration and transnational characteristics of migrants, entering into direct and long-lasting relationships with the leaders of migrant associations engaged in small rural development activities in their villages of origin. They used sociological and anthropological methods of investigation in order to gain a better understanding of migrant visions of, and their commitment towards, local development. The theoretical reference points for their work were social capital and network analysis, as well as the interplay of structure and agency.

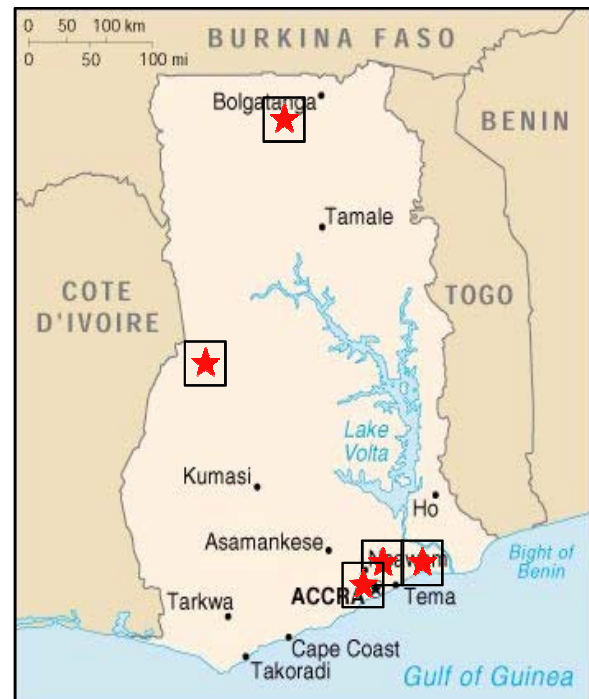
Social capital⁵ can, in this case, be defined as the basic underlying capital through which labour market opportunities are identified and seized, avenues for channelling financial capital (namely, remittances) are facilitated and ways of optimizing human capital are engendered (see Ammassari and Black (2001) regarding these categories of migrant capital). Social capital is in turn a product of the relational and structural components of embeddedness. In this respect, Portes (1995), quoting Granovetter, distinguishes between "relational embeddedness", namely, the relationships between people, and "structural embeddedness", which refers to the wider network of social relations that actors engage in. Special attention is paid to migrant associations, insofar as they constitute a form of social capital situated within a wider set of relationships. It is a form of social capital that increases the density of internal ties and forms part, whether marginal or otherwise and whether by conscious choice or not, of a context or external system, which in the case of migrants links the contexts of origin and destination. Here, the analysis draws on theoretical approaches to transnationalism, with particular reference to the social process in which migrants establish social fields⁶ "that cross geographic, cultural and political borders" (Glick Schiller *et al.*, 1992). A recent article by Portes, Escobar and Radford (2007) analysed the immigrant transnational organisations of three selected nationalities (Colombians, Dominicans and Mexicans), investigating how the contexts of exit and reception jointly determine the form and content of their activities.

In this regard, Ralph and Mazzucato (2008) observe that "further detailed empirical work on development initiatives emanating from African (village or other) associations based in Europe is

⁵ The definition of social capital in Bourdieu (1992) is utilised here: "the sum of resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to the individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition."

⁶ Social fields are defined as "a set of multiple interlocking networks of social relationships through which ideas, practices and resources are unequally exchanged, organised and transformed ... [T]ransnational social fields connect actors, through direct and indirect relations, across borders" (Levitt and Sorenson, 2004).

also desirable: Do they really work, [and] if so for whom?” Our research analysed the interaction between weak and strong ties (Granovetter, 1973 and 1983), and between migrants, their associations and villages of origin as well as non-governmental organisations and local institutions in destination and origin countries. Tracing migration networks shaped by the opportunity structure of the Italian labour market, the analysis focused on the main areas in Italy in which migrant life is concentrated. Migrants and their associations are drawn to the industrial districts and metropolitan areas of northern Italy, namely, the Milan and Turin metropolitan areas and various provinces in the regions of Lombardy, Piedmont, Emilia-Romagna, Tuscany, Veneto and Friuli-Venezia Giulia. In Ghana and Senegal, the origin villages are mainly rural and scattered across several territories, with a relative concentration in central and northern areas of Senegal and in the Ashanti region of Ghana. The maps below show the geographic distribution of the projects supported by the programme, which roughly coincides with the main areas of origin of migrants.



In over five years of implementation and research activities, more than 300 in-depth interviews, focus groups and longitudinal analyses were carried out in specific locations in Italy and Senegal where migrants are concentrated, live and interact with local institutions. About 50 Senegalese and 20 Ghanaian migrant associations were identified and their leaders interviewed.

The main results are set out below, with particular reference to 9 case studies of local development cooperation projects that were submitted for funding under the MIDA programme and implemented by Senegalese and Ghanaian migrant associations. The approach adopted in each case study varies according to the qualitative nature of the research, making it possible to identify similarities and differences in migration profiles and incorporation modes, types of association, local contexts, interaction with institutions and the various actors involved in each of these initiatives.

- The **community development project for Kolda** in Senegal was submitted by the Union of Immigrant Communities and Associations (UCAI) of Friuli-Venezia Giulia (the north-eastern region of Italy). The project conducts training activities and makes small infrastructure and technology investments for market gardening, trade and handcrafts with the aim of increasing the income-generating capacity of families in the region that have grouped together as an Economic Interest Group (EIG).

- The Afro-Italian Humanitarian Organisation (AIHO), based in Udine, submitted a proposal for an **agricultural development project for Doryumu** in Ghana, aimed at consolidating the position of the Canaan Farms company and bolstering the agricultural activities of producers in this village. Initiatives in progress include the upgrading of infrastructure and the establishment of a small processing plant and a training centre. Several Italian citizens and local and national authorities in Ghana participate in the project.
- **The Ghanacoop project** involves the creation of a cooperative enterprise of the same name aimed at importing exotic fruit grown by small farmers in Ghana into Italy. A consortium of agricultural producers in the central and eastern regions of Ghana is currently being established which will be certified according to Fair Trade criteria, in order to create a new MIDCO brand (Migrant Initiatives for Development in the Country of Origin). Ghanacoop is supported by the Ghana Nationals Association of Modena together with the Municipality of Modena, social cooperatives operating in the area and AEmil Banca.
- The migrants and community of the village association (known as **Takku Ligey**) of Diol Kadd in the region of Thiés in Senegal, have established the **Terra, Turismo, Teatro (3T)** (or Land, Tourism and Theatre) **project**, which aims to improve the community's agricultural activities and support the development of responsible tourism and cultural and artistic initiatives. The goal is to establish a social enterprise which will complement activities for the cultural, social and economic advancement of the whole village. The initiative is supported by the Municipality and Province of Ravenna, together with cultural associations and local social and business cooperatives.
- The **Senitalia project**, submitted by the Yakkar migrant association based in Forli, supports the *Organisation des femmes productrices et transformatrices de l'Agroalimentaire* of Rufisque, near Dakar in Senegal. Storage and packing facilities and hence export sales (which it is envisaged will also be directed towards Italy) have been improved. The Senegalese migrant consultancy firm, CONFESEN, which has offices in Padua in Italy and Kaolack in Senegal and provides technical assistance services, is a partner of the project. The Region of Emilia Romagna is a financing partner of the project.
- The Sunugal migrant association, based in Milan, is responsible for the **Defaral sa boppe** (or "self-help") **project** which supports agricultural development activities in an area covering seven rural villages in the region of Thiés. In addition to small infrastructure investment, the project also conducts training, cultural and responsible tourism activities. The initiative involves an extensive partnership both in Italy and in Senegal. A long-standing financing partner of the project is the Municipality of Milan.
- The **Suma Agricultural Cooperative Society project**, proposed by the immigrant and Queen Mother, B., on behalf of the village community of Suma Ahenkro in the Ghanaian region of Brong Ahafo, involves the organisation of local agricultural producers into a cooperative society. The project invests in infrastructure improvement, new technologies and the enhancement of marketing and distribution of produce. B., in addition to being the treasurer of the Ghana Nationals Association of Lecco, where she lives, has also established a migrant women's association with the aim of increasing their participation.
- The Trait d'Union (ATU) migrant association of Turin submitted a proposal for a **sustainable tourism project** in the area of Lompoul in Senegal. The project builds tourist accommodation facilities, organises tours, conducts tour operator training activities and facilitates the inclusion of localities within tourist itineraries. To this end, an EIG has been established. The initiative is being implemented in conjunction with various partners including an Italian NGO, within the framework of a working party set up by the Region of Piedmont and by the Municipality of Turin (which has a cooperation agreement with Louga).
- The Ghana Nationals Association of Turin presented a **project for the establishment of a carpentry workshop** in the district of Awutu-Effutu-Senya. The project invests in

infrastructure, technology and reforestation works. The initiative is supported by a small town in Piedmont, the Municipality of Giaveno, and by the Ghanaian Ministry for Forestry, but has not been able to commence implementation due to the fact that funding from the Region of Piedmont has not been received.

These projects are paradigmatic and representative of the wide range of transnational activities for local development run by migrants and their associations, as is evident from a comparison of these initiatives and all those submitted by Senegalese and Ghanaian migrant associations under the MIDA programme (a total of 172 projects) as well as in response to other calls for funding proposals in Italy.

3. ANALYSIS

3.1 Migration profiles, incorporation modes and transnational relations

The analysis conducted enabled the different migration profiles and incorporation modes of Senegalese immigrants to be compared with those of Ghanaians in Italy⁷. The underlying hypothesis is that these differences impact on the capacity of the respective groups to conceive and implement initiatives for local development.

The Senegalese migration profile is typically male, short-term and marked by frequent returns to the country of origin. By contrast, Ghanaian migration is characterised by family reunion, relatively long-term employment and residence and a lower frequency of travel between the destination and origin countries. Work placement depends on local labour market conditions, with both Senegalese and Ghanaians working mainly as unskilled labourers in the industrial districts of northern Italy, particularly in small to medium-sized enterprises, following migration chains which lead them to concentrate their communities in specific geographic areas. Being typically young and single leads Senegalese migrants to be more mobile than Ghanaians when seeking job opportunities, moving between cities in northern Italy and to other European countries, while Ghanaian families tend to settle in the area where they work. The Senegalese exhibit a greater propensity than Ghanaians to run retail businesses, leading them to interact more closely with Italians. Indeed, middlemen and artists are more commonly to be found among Senegalese immigrants.

Both nationalities cultivate strong transnational ties on an individual and family level and also as groups motivated by solidarity for their communities of origin⁸, but their different migration profiles and modes of incorporation shape their capacity and opportunities to set up more structured local development initiatives in their countries of origin in different ways. It should, incidentally, be noted that the greater tendency of Ghanaians to settle permanently in their areas of residence does not mean that the density of their ties with their families of origin decreases over time. Rather, they continue to maintain relationships with their extended family in Ghana through telephone calls and visits from their friends and relatives.

⁷ See also Bruno Riccio's analysis of the different migration traditions and characteristics of Senegalese and Ghanaian immigrants (Riccio, 2008).

⁸ The transnational mode of organising migration is predominant among Senegalese. They "engage in economic transactions (including trade) across international boundaries, and over considerable distance, spending much of their time away from the place of origin, but returning there at fairly frequent intervals with the overall goal of creating an economic, social and spiritual life for themselves and their families in Senegal" (Riccio, 2004). "The transnational connections and activities are numerous and frequent, comprising hometown associations, [a] considerable amount of remittances and investment in Ghana, and [a] recurrent evocation of the sending context in social and religious gatherings" (Riccio, 2008).

Table 1. Comparison of Senegalese and Ghanaian migration profiles in northern Italy

Characteristics	Senegalese	Ghanaians
Purpose of migration	Work	Work and family reunion
Gender	Male	Male and female
Work placement	Labourers and retailers	Labourers
Length of stay	Short to medium-term	Long-term
Mobile/permanently settled	High level of mobility with frequent returns to country of origin	Permanently settled
Level of interaction with local Italian context	High	Medium to low
Transnational relationships	Strong	Strong
Involvement with associations	Multiple memberships	Mostly single membership

The growing volatility and flexibility of the Italian labour market means that it is relatively common for Ghanaian families to prepare themselves for the need to return to their country of origin. Returning is therefore not merely a long-term goal or castle in the air, but often an almost unavoidable choice in the face of the possible or probable loss of employment and the income required to meet family needs and the high cost of living in Italy. It is worth recalling that, in Italy, those who lose jobs in small enterprises do not receive any significant public welfare support, with unemployment benefits being minimal. This was raised, for instance, during a series of interviews conducted in Turin, where various Ghanaian migrants had found themselves without a job and with little prospect of finding another. Hence their request to use MIDA programme funding to be able to return to their country of origin with their families with business projects. Concrete intentions of returning were also raised when Italian immigration laws were amended in 2002. The new law no longer permitted immigrants to claim back social security contributions paid towards a pension, requiring them to be preserved till the age of 65. As a consequence, many Ghanaian migrants claimed back their pension contributions before the change in the law came into effect so as to return to their country with their accumulated savings. However, the restrictive nature of the law makes migrants who are yet to accumulate sufficient savings postpone their plans to return. These migrants “are slowly concluding that the wish to return is [just a dream]” (Riccio, 2008).

The spheres of life⁹ in which Ghanaians participate revolve around family, work and religion. These spheres of activity seem to circumscribe the possibilities and opportunities for relationships with the local Italian community. Intra-family ties are very strong and take up a lot of time and effort, leaving little room for “weak or bridging ties”. According to a survey conducted in Lombardy, only 3.5% of male and 10.6% of female Ghanaian immigrants associate with more Italians than foreigners, particularly conationals (ORIM, 2007). The quantitative figure alone of the number of Ghanaian immigrants compared to Senegalese immigrants in a particular area does not explain the different relational density with the local context. On the contrary, in the region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia, for instance, this density turns out to be inversely proportional to the number of immigrants of a particular nationality living in the area. Ghanaians, who numbered 3,300 legal residents in 2004¹⁰, are much more numerous than Senegalese legal residents (around 600), yet are much less connected with local citizens and institutions. In this sense, Ghanaians may be considered a relatively invisible or hidden community.

⁹ What is meant by spheres of life is the density of people’s relationships, which for the most part is made up of strong ties in the main areas of interaction.

¹⁰ Figures taken from the *Annuario statistico dell’immigrazione in Friuli Venezia Giulia* (2005).

The Senegalese exhibit a greater capacity to interact with the outside world and to advocate for themselves, while Ghanaians tend to be more reserved and insular. Senegalese adopt more assertive attitudes, whereas Ghanaians avoid conflict with the local community in which they live and work. However, these generalisations need to be qualified in part, since there are also Senegalese people who “follow an inward-looking life strategy, avoiding contact with Italians except for the necessary bureaucratic obligations”, while among Ghanaians, “the presence of children implies a more complex interplay with... institutions...[such] as primary and secondary schools, hospitals, [and] cooperatives and associations providing help ...” (Riccio, 2008).

One reason for the greater introversion of Ghanaians can be traced back to their involvement in Pentecostal churches, which fosters a sense of solidarity and mutual help thereby facilitating greater integration within their context of residence, while cutting them off from the outside world, including non-religious Ghanaian associations. Indeed, situations of conflict have arisen between certain evangelical churches and Ghanaian secular associations. These associations need to increase their capacity for mediation vis-à-vis the churches in order to avoid rifts and facilitate the participation of their members. In particular, it emerged that several Pentecostal churches discourage the involvement of women in lay associations. In contrast with the latter, the Pentecostal churches are highly critical of the secularised lifestyle that is becoming increasingly more widespread in Italy. As noted in Riccio (2008), “symbolically they stimulate a tempered mimesis by allowing the acquisition of the material prosperity of the West without becoming immoral and...‘Western’”. This approach resurfaces in relation to transnational projects for local development, as we shall see below.

Even in the case of Senegalese, the sense of identity and belonging to the Mouride confraternity is strong (Riccio, 2004), but multiple membership of migrants to different kinds of association is also widespread, as we will see below. Consequently, their capacity for involvement in diverse spheres of life spills over into transnational religious and ethnic circles, translocal links connecting the village of origin and the places of settlement, and ties between the Senegalese themselves and between Senegalese and Italians in their places of residence. Through their participation in various forms of associations, Senegalese migrants in Italy who are alone and away from their family create the necessary social capital with their conationals to deal with problems of integration and maintain transnational ties with their places of origin. It can thus be said that, for the Senegalese, the networks created through associations constitute what families represent for Ghanaians, namely, a social space of reciprocity, trust and self-help.

For now, Senegalese networks also seem to be more open towards interaction with Italian communities of residence than the families and associations of Ghanaians. Senegalese migrants are more involved in diverse relational networks, including with local Italian citizens and institutions, as will be seen in the following chapter. Consequently, “the strength of weak ties” increases for Senegalese while Ghanaians remain more attached to their strong or bonding ties with fewer weak ties to the outside world.

Having said that, both for Senegalese and Ghanaians, the capacity to more formally and stably interact with the outside world tends to be concentrated (on an individual level) in certain leaders. These leaders are, however, becoming increasingly aware of the need to further structure their associations, which might otherwise succumb to the so-called “founder’s curse”.

In this respect, quality leaders, including in Ghanaian communities, can within a short space of time lead to an increase in migrants’ capacity to upscale their relationships with local Italian communities in order to access resources to be used for local development in their countries of origin. The cases of the Ghanacoop project and the Suma Agricultural Cooperative Society, and especially the two immigrants behind them, T. and B. respectively, show how within a few years it is possible to develop relationships and initiatives which open up Ghanaian migrant collectives to new opportunity structures in Italy and the country of origin. This means that the trajectories of integration and transnationalism geared towards supporting local development in countries of origin

are not predetermined but, rather, are open to evolution (and regression, as in the case of Senegalese migrants living in Turin discussed below). The MIDA work and research experience shows that, despite the constraints of migration profiles and modes of incorporation, what counts is the evolution of associations and more importantly, as we will see below, the initiative displayed by leaders in engaging in quality interaction with local contexts.

3.2 Transnational associations

Through the work done with migrants, further in-depth knowledge was gained regarding Senegalese and Ghanaian associations¹¹. What emerged is a rich and varied landscape that enabled the identification of certain specific features regarding the different levels of interest and capacity to sustain local development initiatives in countries of origin¹².

Senegalese migrants simultaneously belong to different types of associations which, based on their membership criteria, can be divided into: associations of migrants who come from the same village of origin, associations of migrants who live and work in the same city or province in the destination country, and associations of migrants who belong to the same ethnic group or religious confraternity. Senegalese associations, which are quite diverse and widespread, are aimed at rekindling a sense of identity and solidarity both “here and there”¹³. Among the same types of associations, there are variations in the levels of organisation and membership. For instance, the Senegalese association of Bergamo has over 1000 members while those in Turin and Milan have smaller memberships. The village associations linked to the Sunugal project have around 400 members, while other village associations are smaller. Many associations welcome Italians as members, just as many Senegalese are involved in mixed-nationality associations.

By contrast, Ghanaian associations are more structurally uniform. They consist of associations linked to cities or provinces of residence and have similar names (such as the Ghana Nationals Associations of Modena, Vicenza, Udine and so on). However, within this panorama, there are small village and ethnic associations which call for greater recognition and which organise themselves so as to respond to certain needs both “here and there”. Even among Ghanaian associations, there are varying levels of organisational capacity. For example, the Ghana Nationals Association of Vicenza covers the whole province, has a large membership and is organised into various working committees. Other associations, however, have lower memberships despite the great number of Ghanaian immigrants within the relevant area. Ghanaian associations also insist on Ghanaian nationality for membership, thus excluding the involvement of people from other nationalities. More or less all the associations come under the umbrella of the Council of Ghana Nationals Associations in Italy (COGNAI), which reports to the Ghanaian Embassy in Rome.

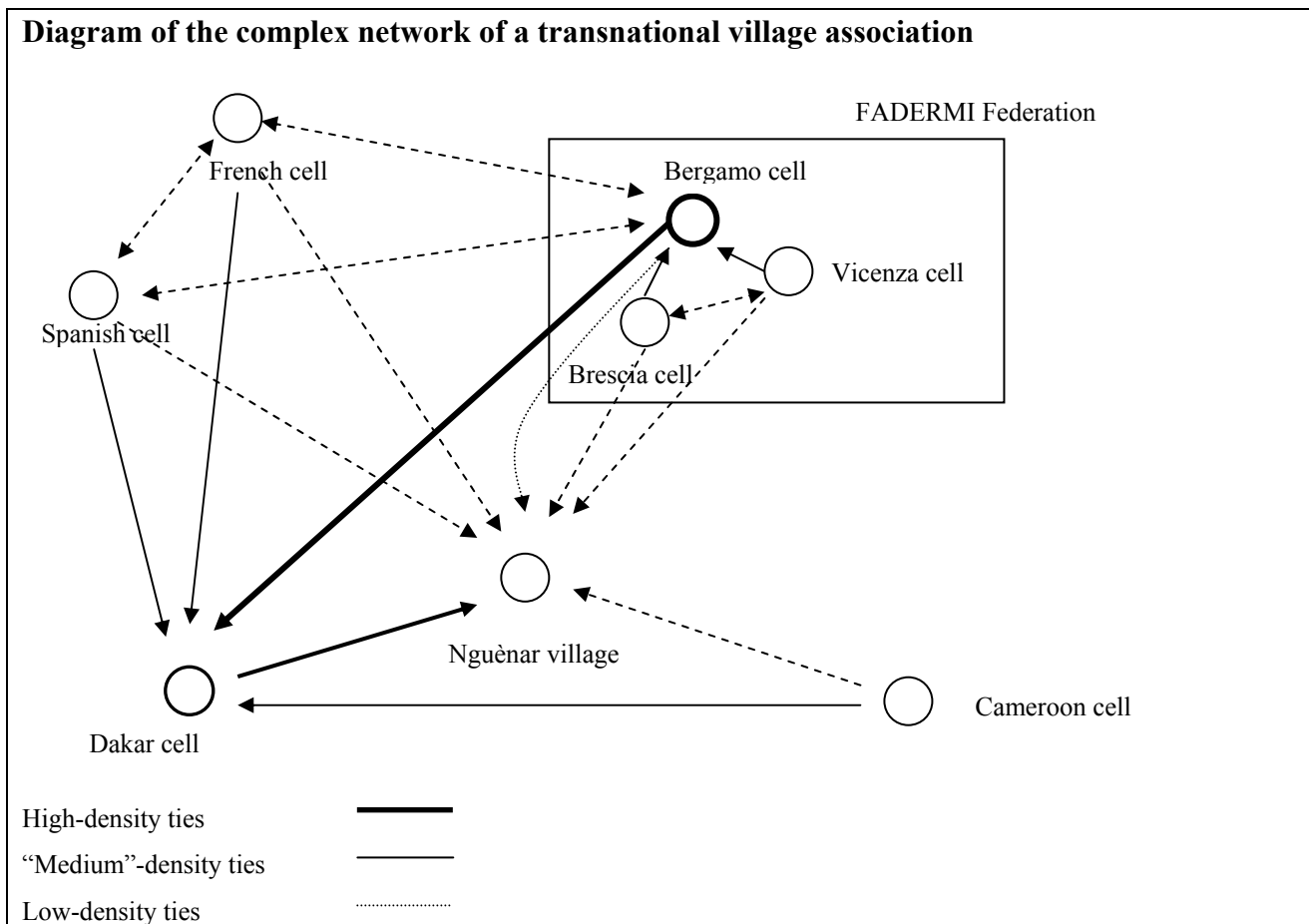
Village associations seem to be the ones most adapted to sustaining the density of transnational - or more precisely, translocal - ties and interest in supporting local development in places of origin. They are organised in networks, linking the village of origin with cells of migrants resident in various communities both in Italy and other European countries. In general, the largest or most organised cell is the one which forges the relationships. However, there are also emulative and competitive dynamics that develop between the various cells, creating a momentum or virtuous cycle that over time boosts the mobilisation of resources towards the village of origin. These transnational ties are heavily bound up with kinship interests. Below is a diagram which maps out the complex web of transnational relationships that characterises the structure of a village

¹¹ For further information in this regard, once again see Riccio (2008).

¹² See also Portes, Escobar and Walton Radford (2007), who analysed the development aid of immigrant transnational organisations, defined as “those whose goals and activities are partially or totally located in countries other than where their members reside”.

¹³ The most advanced associations are currently those of Senegalese migrants. Caritas (2005) ranks them in first position nationally in Italy, with one association per 682 resident immigrants, though our case studies indicate that this is definitely a conservative estimate.

association. The diagram illustrates the network of the village association of Nguénar (in the region of Matam in Senegal), which is organised around cells scattered throughout different Italian cities and in France, Spain and even Cameroon. Some of these cells, particularly those in Bergamo and Dakar, have distinctive roles as hubs in the network. This association is also linked to other associations through a federation known as FADERMI, which unites associations that have Matam in common as their region of origin.



Source: Stocchiero (2006)

The analysis of the different types of association enables a classification of the different composition of their social capital, whether internal (relational embeddedness) or external (structural embeddedness), local (in the place of residence of migrants) or geared towards the place of origin. Transnationalism is a crosscutting feature of the various types of association, albeit with a varying density of ties. There seem to be no transnational associations that are equally established both “here and there”, but rather a transnationalism which is more entrenched “either here or there” (see Table 2).

As already mentioned, it is village associations that are more adept at mobilising themselves for local development in the country of origin. The solidarity that develops between members of these associations for the purposes of improving local integration in Italy is channelled towards accumulating more resources for the family and village of origin. Thus, it is the relational embeddedness in the context of exit that seems to determine the mode of organisation and the activities of these associations¹⁴.

¹⁴ This is similar, for instance, to what happens in hometown associations of Mexican immigrants (see Portes, Escobar and Radford 2007)

Table 2. The social capital both “here and there” of migrant associations¹⁵

Membership	Based on place of origin	Based on place of destination	Based on ethnic group or religion	Gender-based	Mixed
Characteristics	Village associations	Local associations	Ethnic & religious associations	Women’s associations	Civic associations
Purpose	Support for village	Integration	Strengthening of symbolic ties	Emancipation	Cultural, social and economic advancement
Degree of internal cohesion	Strong (linked to kinship structures)	Average to weak depending on local context	Strong	Weak	Varies depending on context
Organisational basis	Networked	Local but with links to the country of origin	Networked	Local	Local but with links to the country of origin
Size	Small at the local level, large as a network	Varies depending on local context	Small at the local level, large as a network	Small	Small
Leadership and capacity of leaders	Strong at the level of hub cells	Varies depending on local context	Strong at the level of hub cells	Varies depending on context	Strong
Degree of openness towards context of reception	Weak	Strong	Weak	Weak	Strong
Degree of connection with the place of origin	Strong	Weak	Strong	Weak	Varies depending on context

Source: Stocchiero (2006). Updated by the author

However, in recent years even associations with a host-context focus (namely, provincial associations and mixed-membership associations) have started to include initiatives in their activities that support development in the country of origin. At the same time, they have tried to avoid these initiatives being tied down to the transnational family relationships of certain migrants and hence to individual interests, so as to steer clear of conflicts between migrants with different origins, or have ensured that these interests are declared transparently so as to monitor them and open them up for the benefit of a wider group. These initiatives take more account of the relationship between integration in the country of destination and local development in the country of origin, and aim to achieve a balance of activities as well as explore an intercultural approach. In this case, it is structural embeddedness in the context of reception that determines the type of organisation and its activities, and which opens itself up to transnational relations.

In addition, several Senegalese migrant organisations have emerged that offer their compatriots services for the implementation of cooperation and investment projects. This indicates a trend towards professionalisation that interacts with the interest of country-of-origin governments in channelling and directing migrant resources towards institutional programmes. These organisations

¹⁵In terms of the classification devised by Portes, Escobar and Radford (2007), political associations are not so common in the case of Senegalese and Ghanaians. Nor, for the moment, are social agencies. In addition, civic associations typically have a mixed membership, are local in scope, and are as interested in integration as they are in local development initiatives in the country of origin.

(for instance, CONFESEN) enter into agreements with the various ministries and agencies responsible for promoting small business, as well as with banks and consultancy companies.

To this end, both the Senegalese and Ghanaian embassies in Italy have negotiated with the various associations for the formation of federations to facilitate coordination. This was the background to the establishment of the Federation of Senegalese Associations of Northern Italy (FASNI) in 2005 (previously, other similar attempts had not lasted). The corresponding organisation for Ghanaian migrant associations, COGNAI, was already in existence.

From the point of view of socio-demographic characteristics and employment status (with reference to the analysis of Portes, Escobar and Radford, 2007), no great differences are apparent between the different forms of association, which all tend to be very inclusive, except in the case of mixed-purpose associations and in those of a more professional nature, where the immigrants tend to have higher levels of education and integration and have been in Italy longer.

As already noted in part, Senegalese associations are more diversified and receptive to the Italian context than those of Ghanaians, and more able to establish relationships and mobilise skills and resources to invest in local development in the country of origin. The various case studies show the dynamism of Senegalese associations, which have garnered large numbers of Italian (individual and institutional) members.

In terms of Ghanaian associations, only the Modena association with its Ghanacoop enterprise has developed any significant relational capital. This, however, is also - and perhaps primarily - the product of political and institutional interest and investment on the part of the various Italian organisations involved. Ghanaian associations still seem to be at the beginning of a journey, which perhaps, as it unfolds, will lead to a breakdown of their apparent homogeneity. In this regard, it is interesting to note that the establishment of Ghanacoop has caused disarray within the Ghana Nationals Association of Modena, which is in need of an organisational overhaul (as we will see in Chapter 3.6). The demonstrative effect of Ghanacoop is leading Ghanaians who live in other Italian cities to embark on similar initiatives without involving migrant associations in their areas of residence. Significant examples of this approach are the cases of B., who, although involved in the Ghana Nationals Association of Lecco, set up a small women's association to support development initiatives in its members' villages of origin; that of T. in Turin, who together with several partners put forward a proposal for an entrepreneurial project in his place of origin and informed - but did not involve - the association of which he is a member; and of A., who likewise established a dedicated association (AIHO) for the development of an entrepreneurial project without involving - and apparently in conflict - with the Ghanaian association in his city.

The specificity of transnational relationships, the opportunities created by the MIDA programme and the demonstrative effect of the Ghanacoop initiative are hence leading to a diversification of Ghanaian associations and to an increase in the relationships established with the Italian context. These associations are small and the cooperation initiatives take up a lot of energy. They call on support from local Italian institutions as well as from institutions in the country of origin, including through organisations such as the IOM. In this way, recursively, a feedback effect is created which furthers the integration of migrants. These aspects are examined in Chapter 3.6.

The nationality factor is significant in the sense that, to date, Ghanaian associations are principally of the type linked to the place of settlement, with few structured transnational activities, but the trends previously mentioned indicate that within a few years, the situation may become more diversified¹⁶.

The diversification of associations gives rise to differences of views on development and conflicts among migrants themselves and between migrants and important reference-points for them, such as the Pentecostal churches in the case of Ghanaians. Indeed, some church pastors view new

¹⁶ In this respect, the results seem to be less definitive and differentiated than those obtained by Portes, Escobar and Radford (2007) in relation to the associations of Dominicans, Mexicans and Colombians in the United States.

cooperation initiatives for local development in the country of origin as being muddied by private interests which do little to foster solidarity between communities “here and there”, unless they themselves seek to embark on investment projects. In effect, across the board in various Senegalese and Ghanaian associations, it is a matter of debate as to whether to back initiatives that focus on community development or projects that are more commercial or entrepreneurial in nature (see Chapter 3.5).

Associations engaged in building transnational relations for the purposes of local development do, however, have one factor in common: they are closely-connected with leaders who both set their views and steer their everyday operations.

3.3 Transnational leaders

The case studies, interviews and longitudinal and participatory observation of the activities implemented by leaders of associations engaged in supporting local development in their countries of origin have highlighted the fundamental role these leaders play in the creation of social capital, both within and outside their associations and at a local and transnational level. These leaders have a migration background that has, over time, been enriched by relationships and skills acquired through their interaction with opportunities that have presented themselves, from time to time, in their places of residence.

The human capital created in the country of origin before migration does not appear to be a decisive factor. Rather, in the case of Italy, the problem of brain and skill waste of migrants is evident. Hence, despite their finding work which does not make full use of their skills, these migrants have sought to make the most of the various opportunities for personal growth offered by their local contexts, by participating in cultural mediation courses, becoming members of cooperatives, trade-unions and small business associations, theatre and performing arts associations, or by representing immigrants in municipal councils and consultative bodies. They are engaged on a cultural, social, political and entrepreneurial level. Hence, when compared with their compatriots, they have developed their relational capital, and through it their resources and skills, much further. They are therefore well-integrated and well-known people who are trusted by their fellow nationals and by local Italian institutions. In short, they stand out as having an exceptional migration profile.

At the same time, these leaders have maintained strong transnational ties with their villages and with the institutions of their country of origin. As a result of their strong engagement with their own personal experiences, they act as bridges between “here and there”, originators and promoters of intercultural and local development support initiatives and holders of specific and diverse visions of development. Their personal stories have also been shaped in the transnational arena, where cultural elements from the country of origin have combined with experiences from everyday life in their place of residence and work. The following are brief summaries of the backgrounds of some of the more noteworthy leaders.

G., was born in Thiaroye, Senegal, on the outskirts of Dakar, where he lived with his father (who is originally from the village of Beud Dieng). He completed primary school and then emigrated to Italy in the early 1990s. Here he did various unskilled labouring jobs but also started working with the Mascherenere Theatre Workshop in Milan, of which he would later become president. Since then, he has been involved in an increasing number of artistic projects based on intercultural themes. He has become a well-known public figure both in Milan and Dakar and has appeared on Senegalese television on several occasions. In 1997, he formed an Italo-Senegalese association called Sunugal¹⁷ (meaning “our boat”) to support local development in seven villages in a rural area of the region of Thiés, including his own village of origin, and to raise awareness of African culture in Italy. G. drew inspiration for this

¹⁷ See the website www.kertoubab.org

initiative from Thomas Sankara¹⁸, whom he sees as his *marabout*. In his village of origin, the initiative has led to the establishment of various literacy programmes for women, as well as the provision of training, the building of small agricultural and electrification infrastructure, and cultural exchange activities.



G. with an Italian friend and agronomist following a press conference in Milan, May 2007. Photo by Laura Davi.

M., a Senegalese man from the village of Diol Kadd, followed his father to Dakar where he grew up and went to primary school before doing various off-the-books jobs. In the 1980s, he emigrated to Italy and worked as an itinerant worker on the Romagnol coast, where he got to know and joined the performers at the Teatro delle Albe in Ravenna. This marked the beginning of a notable career as an actor and playwright, all the while working to rediscover his cultural roots which led him to develop an interest in “returning” to his village of origin. He began travelling back and forth to the village, an experience that inspired him to establish the Takku Ligey (“pitching in together”) village association¹⁹. The association has launched initiatives relating to responsible tourism, agricultural improvement and theatrical/cultural activities with the involvement of experts and institutions from his local Italian community. The idea for the 3T project grew out of these experiences.

B., a Ghanaian woman born in the village of Wenchi, qualified as a nurse and began working in a hospital in the nearby city of Sunyani. She emigrated to Libya to work at the Bengasi hospital and then, because her work contract was not renewed, returned to Ghana. In 1991, she emigrated once again, this time to Italy though headed for the United Kingdom. Instead, she stayed on in Italy to give birth to her daughter, then began working as a labourer, later as a domestic helper and eventually as a nurse (following her participation in a training course, as her Ghanaian qualification was not recognised in Italy). Throughout this time, she continued to assist her family and village, and she became the treasurer of the Ghana Nationals Association of Lecco. Since 2003, when she was named Queen Mother of her village, her involvement has increased. She has established a school in the village and, thanks to the opportunities provided by the MIDA programme, has launched an agricultural development project by setting up the Suma Agricultural Cooperative Society.

¹⁸ Thomas Sankara, the political leader, artist and former president of Burkina Faso who spoke of “daring to invent the future”, was assassinated in October 1987, although the circumstances surrounding his death have not yet been cleared up officially.

¹⁹ See the website www.diolkadd.org



B. in Suma Ahenkro, welcoming an IOM delegation as queen mother, July 2007. Photo by Laura Davi.

M., born in Takoradi, Ghana, finished secondary school and then emigrated first to Switzerland and then to Italy in 1988. Within a few years, he was joined by his wife and two brothers. He began working as a labourer and became a member of the Ghana Nationals Association of Modena, becoming its president in 1994. He has constantly been involved in various fields of activity, including in the local parish council, in the local prefecture council, in the trade-union movement, and in a retail cooperative as an active partner. With the launch of the MIDA programme in 2002, M. and the association, with substantial support from the Municipality of Modena and a local social cooperative, decided to establish Ghanacoop²⁰ to create an export channel for the benefit of farmers in his country of origin and to invest part of the profits generated in the social development of the village of Gomoa Simbrofo. M. has become a public figure and a spokesperson for Ghanacoop, organising and participating in national and international events.



T. during an interview for the Modena Gazette, March 2008, www.gazzettadimodena.repubblica.it

Hence, while the analysis underlined the importance of the agency of leaders as a determining factor of the approaches adopted in supporting local development in countries of origin, these

²⁰ See the website www.ghanacoop.it

approaches, in turn, have more or less been significantly shaped by the kind of interaction cultivated with opportunity structures in the host contexts.

3.4 Interaction with local Italian contexts

In terms of the interaction with local-level opportunity structures in the places where migrants live and work, aimed at structuring local development initiatives in countries of origin, significant differences emerge which are due to various factors including: the prior history of translocal relationships of Italian institutions and local areas where migrants settle, the level of familiarity and interaction of local Italian institutions with migrant associations, the level of political interest, the willingness and capacity of local institutions to work with migrants, the relational capital and trust built between migrants and local institutions, whether the specific interests of migrants correspond with those of institutions, and the interaction of quality institutions with quality migrant leaders.

In the case, for instance, of institutions in Piedmont and Turin, institutional initiatives for development cooperation linked to local NGO activities for the benefit of developing countries have traditionally been directed mainly towards Senegal and not Ghana. This constraint, which predates large migration flows, has led to local institutions (both the Region and the Municipality) being more willing to respond to requests from Senegalese migrants to support their initiatives in aid of development of villages of origin, while there has been much less willingness to support Ghanaian migrants. Hence the opportunity structure was already predisposed to one country as opposed to another, and thus more in favour of supporting Senegalese initiatives compared to Ghanaian ones.

The Piedmontese institutions are circumspect in their relations with Senegalese migrants, but nevertheless open, particularly vis-à-vis more well-known leaders with whom a relationship of trust have been developed – a relationship which, incidentally, evolved within the context of previous integration measures. Indeed, one of the more active leaders acts as a cultural mediator. On one hand, the wariness of institutions is due to the low level of political interest in the opportunity that migrant transnationalism offers for the development of international relations. Yet it also stems from a lack of exposure to migrant associations, which has limited interaction to “a few familiar faces”, who are, in any case, not particularly representative of the variety of associations that exist within the territory. The Piedmont regional authorities have thus given a local NGO the task of developing relations with Senegalese associations, although the scant resources invested have nevertheless limited the relational field, while the Municipality of Turin has included two migrant associations in a working party on cooperation with the region of Louga in Senegal. Hence, a picture emerges of an impasse or vicious circle concerning relationships of trust, in which institutions only work with immigrants they know and institutions only know the immigrants they work with. As a result, the demands of migrants never see the light of day. In the case of Senegalese living in Turin, the migrants seem to hold themselves back and not make their needs known due to the fact that they encounter social stigmatisation based on the involvement of some of their conationals in drug trafficking. This is the only case revealed by the analysis in which a significant problem of integration inhibits the creation of social capital and the establishment of cooperation initiatives for local development.

In the case of Ghanaians, interaction with Piedmontese institutions was triggered by the transnational interest shown by certain migrants in response to the opportunities offered by the MIDA programme. Against the backdrop of a general lack of political and institutional interest, only a small municipality declared itself willing to support a migrant initiative for business start-ups in the country of origin, an initiative linked to another issue that caught Piedmontese institutions unprepared. In reality, the interest of these Ghanaian migrants (representing two associations) in the proposed project was driven by the desire to set up businesses in their country of origin as opportunities for investment and return to their country. The jobs crisis in Turin had left many Ghanaian family breadwinners without a source of income and with a need to arrange for their return. This led them to become more proactive vis-à-vis Piedmontese institutions and to ask them

for support. The provision of such assistance, an issue never seriously considered before, raises new questions. The absence of any Italian welfare policy which addresses immigrant unemployment threatens to create new pockets of poverty and marginalisation. The only possible response for now lies in the transnational mobility of migrants in search of new opportunity structures, which might be in the homeland in the case of migrants who have had a chance to save and hence plan financially for their return, or in other European countries where they might find work and a more accommodating welfare system. The approach of Italian institutions seems to be that of facilitating their return rather than creating new welfare measures, which are much more costly and politically opposed by several political parties.

In this regard, the experience of the MIDA programme with institutions in the region of Veneto has also been significant. The various immigrant associations have actually obtained financial support, not from the Veneto Region's Department for International Relations, which administers funds for cooperation initiatives, but from the department responsible for immigration policies. In particular, it was the public agency Veneto Lavoro that, within the context of its management of work-driven migration flows, financed several migrant initiatives by treating them as forms of voluntary repatriation. In the case of the Veneto region, a certain element of political expedience appears to be at work whereby assistance is given to fund voluntary return, thus repeating the French experience in some respects.

However, in other Italian contexts, even in the absence of pre-existing institutional relations with the country of origin, local-level political interest and innovation has played an important role in encouraging investment in migrant transnationalism to foster a new approach to integration and cooperation between territories. This is the case with Ghanacoop, a cooperative enterprise that exports exotic produce, particularly pineapples, from Ghana and which was established as a joint initiative between the local Ghana Nationals Association, the Municipality of Modena and local business and social cooperatives. The combination of the political interest of a local councillor, the level of quality of the institution and the cooperatives involved, and the skills of leaders of the local Ghanaian migrant association have all led to an initiative which today has achieved great visibility both in Italy and abroad, thanks also to the support of the IOM. Through this initiative, Ghanaian migrants have made a name for themselves with Italians in Modena and other neighbouring cities as great workers and as agents for local development in their country of origin and for the purposes of creating new economic ties and solidarity between Ghana and Italy.

The significance of the political and institutional factor is also evident in the case of the community development project in Kolda, Senegal, supported by the Region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia in conjunction with the Union of Immigrant Communities and Associations (UCAI), which includes a number of Senegalese immigrant associations. The initiative is the product of a political decision taken by the Region to establish a working party on the theme of "migrants and cooperation" (the only one of its kind in Italy) with the participation of migrant associations, and to provide information, training and joint project design services. Through the creation of this forum for debate, participation and work, the enterprising nature of Senegalese immigrants, and particularly of certain leaders, who were the first to propose a community development initiative which builds on their transnational relations, has come to light. A process of capacity-building of migrant associations has also been set in train. The institutionalisation of this process and the Senegalese example later led to support being given to other projects, including one proposed by the Ghana Nationals Association of Udine. Yet it is also factors of a political nature that threaten to make this process futile. The upcoming regional elections in Friuli-Venezia Giulia could in fact see a change in political direction, with the new regional executive disavowing the working party. In this event, unless there are internal conflicts, UCAI would continue to be the main point of reference for migrants. This demonstrates that dynamics are subject both to evolution as well as regression depending on the interplay of various factors over time, and that migrants should rely on themselves most of all and avoid becoming excessively dependent on external institutions.

But it is interaction itself, the interplay and exchange between agents and structures, and the dynamics of relationships within the local context, that generates more structured local development cooperation initiatives in countries of origin. In addition to the fundamental role played by associations and their leaders, an important contribution to this interaction is also made by a number of facilitative and support organisations. As well as the cases already mentioned, including the NGO commissioned by the Region of Piedmont and the working party established by the Region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia, the analysis brought to light other local-level organisations, particularly Italian community welfare organisations, that have supported migrant associations in formulating ideas for projects, forging relationships with institutions and fundraising. Some of these relationships are potentially open to exploitation and subject to opportunistic behaviour. Alliances are formed and conflicts arise between migrant associations, and between the latter and Italian NGOs. In general, however, the interaction between these agents is positive. Compared to the situation at the beginning of the 2000s, various initiatives have been developed that have created new avenues for transnational social action.

The importance of the interaction of quality institutions with quality migrant leaders is also clear in the case of Senegalese migrant projects supported in the Emilia Romagna region. The human and relational capacity of Senegalese leaders and their positive interaction with Italian citizens and local institutions have emerged as key elements in building social capital, which has led to their being recognised as acting in the public interest and, hence, to accessing collective resources. As with the case of the Municipality of Modena, the innovative idea of supporting migrant associations as new agents of cooperation and of relationships between origin and destination countries has also paid off at the regional institutional level.

The case studies show that the dynamic combination and interaction of agents and structures is essential. Generally speaking, there are more opportunities for action where quality self-organisation on the part of migrant agents meets with local institutional quality. In areas where institutions are more accessible, more rights are recognised, including the right to participate in development cooperation for countries of origin. However, from the point of view of dynamics, in the majority of cases it cannot be assumed “a priori” that there will be a correspondence between the quality of agents and that of structures, though it may well result from an interactive process of stimuli and conflicts. As previously seen, in this process migrant associations and their leaders act as catalysts.

3.5 Interaction for local development in origin contexts

Transnational relations and associated local development initiatives in countries of origin are in most cases inevitably interconnected with the personal relationships of migrants. Migrants turn to their relatives and friends for assistance in formulating and implementing interventions, as well as in negotiating with local institutions. Consequently, within migrant associations and organisations involved in development cooperation, there is a debate regarding whether it is advisable to involve the personal relationships of migrants. Those against maintain that the interests of families and relatives can capture benefits from initiatives for themselves, thereby reducing their positive impact on local development. Others believe that it is precisely because of the personal relationships of migrants - and the contacts/ know-how that can thus be mobilised *in loco* - that such initiatives can produce a greater impact.

In the case studies, two different approaches emerged in response to this issue. The first approach recognises the importance of the transnational relationships of migrants which, as already stated, are inevitably bound up with families and relatives in the places of origin, and seeks to build on these relationships transparently while opening up them up to the widest possible local development goals. The Sunugal association, for instance, bases its interventions on the personal relationships of its members but has them overseen by other migrants and Italians in order to monitor these ties and ensure that interests strictly linked to members’ families are not pursued, as well as to combine

local know-how with the expertise and skills of external people and experts. Similarly, the Kolda community development project owes its existence to the personal relationships of Senegalese migrants, which, however, have been institutionalised in the form of the UCAI association, thereby triggering a learning process that has also led migrants of other nationalities to come up with their own initiatives. Migrants involved in UCAI have confirmed that the positive nature of this experience is linked to the careful balance that has been created between the personal interests of migrants and the collective benefits for the community of origin. The case of the Ghanaian B., who has reconciled the interests of her family of origin with those of her village community, especially given her role as Queen Mother, provides another significant example. The Suma Agricultural Cooperative Society project was devised by her relatives in agreement with fellow villagers and local institutions.



The rural landscape of the village of Diol Kadd. Photo by Papa Demba Fall.

In contrast, the second approach steers clear of the transnational family relationships of migrants. Here, initiatives are designed together with NGOs and institutions of the country of origin. The Yakkar Senegalese immigrant association in Romagna, for instance, decided to support the Rufisque women's Economic Interest Group, which it became aware of through a migrant consultancy firm. Similarly, the location in Ghana for proposed exotic fruit crops was chosen by Ghanacoop on the basis of an agronomic study and relationships with local institutions brokered by the IOM. The AIHO association also chose the area in Ghana in which to invest through its relationship with a local NGO. However, even in these cases, the relationships of migrants with people they know in the country of origin were used to gather information and make contacts.

In this regard, it should be recalled that, particularly after years of absence, migrants are not necessarily bearers of any unique knowledge regarding their places of origin. They are, however, the bearers of transnational ties that mobilise the local know-how of their places of origin, bringing it into contact with their own experiences and with the know-how of their places of settlement.

Migrants also function as local development actors and negotiators in their territories of origin. This is particularly true in the case of the leaders of the associations examined. They play a political and a local-development vision-building role, especially in small rural villages of origin, while in the case of business investment projects, their relationship with local institutions is more instrumental and limited.

Hence, it emerges that migrants play a political role vis-à-vis local authorities and partners. The vision of leaders of migrant associations, which is to varying degrees combined with know-how and attitudes acquired in countries of destination, interacts with that of traditional village chiefs and new mayors of rural communities to negotiate initiatives for agricultural and trade development, responsible tourism, and social investment in education and health. Migrant associations also liaise

with local youth and women's associations to discuss village issues and opportunities for local transformation.



Facilities for tourists in Diol Kadd (3T project) and Beud Dieng (Sunugal project). Photos by Papa Demba Fall.

They have visions of development that are more or less modern or traditional and community-based, influenced by socialist or capitalist models. From the cases studied, three different examples of migrant visions and proposals for local development can be cited: a) one migrant association (Yakkar together with CONFESEN) advocates the Italian model of consortiums of small enterprises as a modern organisational model conducive to the amassment and creation of economies of scale among female micro-enterprises that produce vegetables for the Dakar market; b) another migrant association (Sunugal) is attempting to encourage a group of rural villages to jointly plan agricultural development by means of shared infrastructure and trade, while the privatisation of water resources and the limited scope of public support policies are being contested; and c) yet another association (Takku Ligey) supports community development of the village of origin, complementing small agricultural development measures with activities aimed at preserving cultural traditions, a goal which is further pursued by building facilities for responsible tourism.

Initiatives of a more entrepreneurial nature can, in turn, be classified according to two approaches: the first is more geared to establishing a social economy which is inclusive of the greatest number of beneficiaries possible, particularly by setting up cooperatives (in the case of B.'s initiative, for instance, the members of the Suma Agricultural Cooperative Society number over 400); and the second is more market and individual-oriented, with a more limited distribution of benefits (AIHO).



Mosques built in Diol Kadd and Beud Dieng using collective remittances from migrants.

However, the form that migrant initiatives for local development take depends on the existing opportunity structures, on the specific places where measures are to be carried out and on the partners involved. In the case of villages, the prevailing concept is that of rural community development with innovative efforts being made to integrate the latter into trade and sustainable tourism chains that span regional, national and even transnational levels. The priority is, however, to promote a greater and improved distribution of income. In the case of more complex, fragmented and heterogeneous urban and urban-fringe areas, there is a greater tendency for business ventures to pursue higher profit margins for distribution to their members.

The field analysis highlighted the challenge for community development projects in generating social and economic opportunities to combat the rural exodus. Many migrant leaders view their initiatives as attempts at revitalising their communities, and halting or making emigration more informed and focused. The reality is that rural villages are increasingly populated by the aged, women and children, while young people are highly mobile, moving to the city during the long dry season to work in off-the-books jobs and returning to their villages during the wet season to sow and till the fields. But unreliable rainfall is increasingly discouraging agriculture, while handcrafts and small manufacturing do not offer a diversification of income comparable to that offered by the option of international migration. It is significant, for instance, that a *marabout* interviewed in a village had advised one family to do as others had done and send their son off to Europe.



Water well and primary school in Diol, built using collective remittances from migrants. Photos by Papa Demba Fall.

Market communications in the global village and social models spread by migrants demonstrate that emigration is a successful option. Remittances effectively ease the poverty of the families of migrants but do not readily make them autonomous. Consequently, the dependence of families and villages on social²¹ and financial remittances increases. On an individual and family level, these remittances do not as a whole seem to contribute to local development of rural villages, but rather - due in part to the absence of effective public policies on multipurpose rural development - tend to exacerbate the abandonment of agriculture.

²¹ “Social remittances are the ideas, behaviours, identities, and social capital that migrants export to their home communities” (Levitt and Sorenson, 2004)



Telephone centre for families of migrants. Photo by Papa Demba Fall.

In reality, individual remittances are invested mainly in homes, small retail businesses, and services made necessary by migration itself such as cybercafés and telephone centres – not so much in agriculture. Consequently, the choice of individuals and families to invest in opportunity structures that are increasingly urban and emigration-oriented contribute to the exodus from rural villages.



Remittances invested in building homes. Photos by Papa Demba Fall.

In other words, individual remittances are invested in everything other than what might lay the foundations for a conscious approach in favour of community development, as an alternative to Western models though not set in tradition (an approach that the Takku Lige association seeks to support), or that might integrate agricultural support initiatives with complementary, manufacturing and service-oriented activities (such as responsible tourism), in value chains linked to the most dynamic, urban and international markets (which is the underlying strategy of other initiatives

underway, such as Ghanacoop). Such approaches ensure that the mobility of goods and capital is complemented by the mobility of people and ideas²².

Against the backdrop of these dynamics, community development projects would seem to have little likelihood of changing profound processes such as urbanisation²³. Indeed, the field analysis demonstrated that the prospects for those initiatives that seek to exploit these processes are relatively more promising, such as for instance the initiative being conducted in Rufisque, which seeks to capitalise on the big market in Dakar.

These initiatives combine the modern with the traditional in an effort to trigger more or less marked transformations. There is also an associated modernisation of social and economic structures through the creation of new forms of organisation, labour division and roles aimed at achieving increased productivity and new ways of allocating benefits. The transformations wrought impact on both the economy and social and power relations. A case in point is the change brought about by M.'s activities, who over the course of a long period of interaction with Diol Kadd, through a series of school twinnings with Ravenna, has succeeded in changing the attitudes of village elders who are now prepared to accept the concept of secular schools.

There is also evidence of a growing awareness on the part of migrants of the need to move on from a dependence on donor aid to an approach based on capacity-building, the mobilisation of resources and local responsibilities, and self-help. This approach is in part made necessary by the decline in State policies supporting rural development.



Handcraft items made by women from Beud Dieng, Sunugal project. Photo by Papa Demba Fall.

²² From this point of view, in terms of the criticism levelled by Bakewell (2007) at the “mainstream development industry”, namely, that “migration can support development, but it is better if people stay at home ...”, it is interesting to note that the practices of migrants with respect to local development are effectively aimed at encouraging their compatriots not to emigrate. As has been demonstrated by countless studies, while migration is a choice it is also a human trauma. Many migrants claim that if they had actually had the possibility of making a free choice - all conditions being equal - between their places of origin and possible destinations, they would have preferred to stay in their villages with their families.

²³ Bakewell (2007) observes that “What is remarkable about [the] attempts to control rural-urban migration through rural development and controls in urban areas is that they have been largely futile. Urbanisation across the continent has increased regardless of attempts to slow it (Rakodi, 1997)”. He also cites the observation of de Haan (1999) that: “development in areas of origin usually goes hand-in-hand with migration[, and e]xpectations that rural development will decrease out-migration may be unjustified (though it is likely to change the conditions of migration and [the] composition of migrants)”.

The degree of local ownership of these stimuli appears to be decisive in generating an impact on local development. In this regard, in rural villages migrants are the main agents of local transformation, interacting with local traditional decision-making structures²⁴, and dealing particularly with the apathy and disenchantment of locals. Young people view migration as their best option for changing their own and their family's quality of life. Migrants, despite the risks they run, provide proof of this. The leaders of migrant associations seek to combat the disillusionment of locals, also describing the trials and tribulations that go hand-in-hand with migration and the social and work problems encountered in European countries. But the question voiced by young locals, "When will things change around here?", remains unanswered. Hence, there is an asymmetry in relationships, with migrant leaders playing a proactive role and locals passively receiving proposals put forward by the former. It seems almost as if the traditional pattern of cooperation between donors and beneficiaries were repeating itself.



Market garden in Beud Dieng, Sunugal project. Photo by Papa Demba Fall.

The extent of ownership is more significant when migrant cooperation initiatives contribute to supporting processes already set in motion by local organisations, even if the impact is nevertheless limited given the small scale of the interventions.

Migrants find themselves in an ambiguous position. On the one hand, they are aware of the need for locals to own development processes given the failure of the traditional cooperation model. Yet, on the other hand, their strong drive to bring about change leads them to criticise the passive and opportunistic attitudes of locals vis-à-vis foreign aid. As transnational actors, they simultaneously live within and outside their communities of origin.

When placed in this position, some migrant leaders choose to respect the local norms and the pace of life of communities of origin. Others adapt in part to community processes, while seeking to encourage greater responsibility to be taken by locals in conducting the activities envisaged as necessary to achieve the anticipated outcomes, in an effort to achieve a delicate balance between respecting internal processes and providing external impetus. Others again, however, turn their back on customs and traditional behaviours to set an example of change. One instance that may be cited is that of M., who decided to celebrate his wedding without any big parties or great expense in order to encourage his fellow villagers to do the same and invest their resources in more productive

²⁴ In this regard, see the analyses of Levitt (2001) and Quiminal (1991).

activities. Similarly, other village associations encountered during the work conducted under the MIDA programme decided not to participate in and not to support interventions of an entrepreneurial nature. Some migrants point to the negative side of such interventions, protesting that they could lead to the disintegration of local communities and preferring initiatives that are more focused towards community development. These conflicts of vision and interest occur across the board in both migrant communities and communities of origin. When faced with the prospect of participating in a cooperation programme like MIDA, certain exit and voice strategies tend to be put in place.

Migrants and their associations demonstrate particular interest in relationships with local institutions in the country of origin, more so than with local institutions in Italy. When a Senegalese minister or mayor visits Italy, large numbers of migrants participate in scheduled public events, asking for information regarding policies and investments geared to improving the economic and social conditions of their places of origin. Local Italian institutions are, however, considered instrumental for fundraising purposes. In the case of certain projects, migrant associations seek to make their micro-initiatives fit into broader institutional relationships and programmes, so as to produce higher-level impacts. An example of this is the Kolda community development project, which interacts with initiatives of other migrant associations supported by Fons Català²⁵ within the framework of a local development programme agreed with the Region of Kolda and coordinated by a local agency, the Solidarité Intercommunautaire d'Appui à la Santé, Education et Developpement (SICASSED) association. Similarly, B.'s initiative in Ghana has received assistance from local banks and links in to demand from certain industries, while Ghanacoop has developed an international trade network between Ghana and Italy, with support from the large retail chains in Italy and the Ghanaian Ministry for Agriculture. In turn, the IOM has agreed with the Senegalese and Ghanaian governments to mobilise local agencies to provide training and assistance to migrants and their partners.

However, the relationship of migrants with the governments of their countries of origin appears to be polemical. Both actors rhetorically stress the importance of the role of migrants and their participation in local development, yet public support resources and capacities are limited. In various cases, migrants are conscious of the fact that their local development initiatives act as a substitute for public investment, or go towards meeting needs to which local governments are not able or do not intend to respond. Migrant associations know that they are unlikely to be able to rely on the State or "major" international cooperation initiatives and hence seek to encourage a "do-it-yourself" approach in village communities.

The various initiatives set up by migrants, either with the support of decentralised cooperation or through self-funding, are also giving rise to emulative dynamics that put local governments in difficulty, especially in terms of the management of social policy. The weakness of decentralised institutions both in Senegal and Ghana and the lack of coordination and an agreed wider-scale local development plan, such as at regional level, leads to migrants supporting the building of small schools and health facilities in different villages scattered throughout the territory and then asking governments to assign teachers and medical staff to them. However, the human resources are not available and governments cannot meet their cost. Hence, the burden of organising basic local welfare, particularly in rural areas, is shouldered by migrants. At the same time, the private welfare market in urban areas is growing for those who can afford it, including the families of migrants, with a corollary effect of an increase in inequality and incentives for emigrating. In this regard, it is worth recalling the underlying problem of States fulfilling their responsibility in terms of social development and ensuring that basic standards of education and health are met in poor countries

²⁵ The Fons Català is a public development aid fund with a membership of over 200 Catalan local councils. For several years it has been implementing a support programme for migrants for the development of their countries of origin, working particularly with Senegalese and Moroccan migrants.

such as Senegal and Ghana. Not even potential efforts to more effectively coordinate the initiatives of migrants and decentralised cooperation are capable of filling this breach.

3.6 Feedback effects on migrant transnationalism, associations and integration

From a diachronic point of view, local development initiatives in countries of origin have had two effects. On the one hand, they have set in motion new processes of association, formalisation and organisation of transnational relationships, especially in the case of Ghanaians, and on the other, they have reinforced pre-existing transnational processes.

Given the circumstances previously highlighted, Senegalese initiatives are already at an advanced and networked stage, while those of Ghanaians in Italy are still at an early, experimental and individual stage (except in the case of Ghanacoop, which within the space of a few years has made significant progress in structuring itself as an organisation).

Local development initiatives, supported through cooperation, have served to increase the transnational relationships of migrants, consolidated ties which already existed and opened up new connections between migrants and institutions in their countries of origin. Migrants have taken on greater responsibilities which have required them to increase their knowledge and awareness of local development issues, adopting an approach which is, at once, both detached and involved. Such responsibilities, which are often also practical such as managing public cooperation funds, have involved them and led them to take control and bring pressure to bear on local partners²⁶, perhaps exacerbating the ambiguous position mentioned previously. The institutionalisation of transnational local development support practices, via the mechanism of matching funds and the use of decentralised cooperation methodology²⁷, has led migrants to play an even more central role, to forge new relations both “here and there”, and to also invest more of their own resources, compared to what was initially anticipated. In some cases, this outcome is evident. For instance, in the case of UCAI, the procedural working method adopted of institutionally supporting the upskilling of migrants, and dialogue and debate over the priorities of local development initiatives, both “here and there”, has led to a learning process and increased knowledge and awareness of the need to foster relationships with local institutions in order to face and overcome constraints and exploit existing opportunities. This process has had a multiplier effect among migrants, with five new initiatives being launched after three years of operation.

In some cases, all this would seem to have overburdened migrant leaders with responsibilities and work which, except in the case of Ghanacoop, tends to be voluntary. Despite this, migrant feedback on this process is positive since they feel appreciated, more integrated transnationally both “here and there”, and more involved as key and well-established actors – even though, as mentioned previously, they find themselves in a position that is ambiguous and relatively unevenly balanced between “here and there”. In some cases, there is a double presence which encompasses a dual connection to both the place and community of origin as well as the city of residence and Western modernisation. In other cases, the presence or connection is more skewed towards either here or there. In yet other cases, there can be a sense of disconnection from both places, as noted by Sayad (2002).

²⁶ In this regard, Mazzucato (2004) notes that “Migrants realise that, in their absence, the honour they get through financing a project back home largely depends on the receiving committee and the way its people carry out their project”.

²⁷ Decentralised cooperation in Italy is typically characterised by community-level participation involving welfare associations, NGOs that traditionally operate in countries in the global South, but also chambers of commerce and small business and craft associations, which are financed by and work with Municipalities, Provinces and Regions. It could also be described as translocal cooperation or cooperation between parties in specific territories in the North and South. With respect to the co-development activities implemented through decentralised cooperation, see Riccio (2004) and Stocchiero (2005).

The increase in transnational ties has involved actors in both Italy and countries of origin. In terms of economic ties, new import and export relationships have been established, as is the case with Ghanacoop, and still others are likely to be forged through further initiatives. The distribution of African food products in Italy through large retail chains as well as through African shops and Fair Trade outlets takes on a symbolic and intercultural transnational significance. Alongside these goods, different tastes, lifestyles and cultures are spread both “over here and over there”.

In this regard, the initiatives link in with the social interventions and cultural activities of migrant associations both “here and there”. On a social level, the associations support small-scale initiatives for the improvement of educational and health initiatives in villages of origin, while in the places of residence of migrants in Italy, they seek to meet the integration needs of their members. On a cultural level, due in part to the particular background of some their leaders, the associations support cultural activities in the villages of origin and Italian cities of residence. These cultural events, which often rise to national prominence and involve Senegalese and Ghanaian artists of international repute, are useful in raising funds to support local development initiatives.

The political sphere is another important area of growth for transnational relations. Indeed, alongside the traditional individual and social transnational spheres, various migrants have entered into the public arena of relationships with both Italian institutions and those of the country of origin, linked through paradiplomatic relations²⁸. In some cases, migrants play the role of transnational political actors, or ambassadors both of institutions of their country of origin and Italian local authorities (particularly municipalities and provinces), becoming vehicles of paradiplomacy. This, for instance, is the case with several Senegalese migrants who established and maintain the relations of the Province of Pisa, and in particular those of its cooperation agency, with Senegal.

In terms of the feedback effects on migrant associations, certain positive outcomes and several tensions that have arisen should be mentioned. As already noted, migrant initiatives for local development reflect the actual needs of association members and the aspirations of their leaders, that in turn interact with the communities of origin. These kinds of initiatives have also recently begun to form part of the mission and purposes of Ghanaian associations.

However, this new aim may lead to certain problems within migrant associations and raises several questions: Does it take up resources and time that are already in limited supply and could otherwise be spent on integration activities? And could it result in a “crowding out” effect between co-development activities and those geared towards integration? In this regard, the Ghanacoop case demonstrates how the leaders and the very visibility of the Ghana Nationals Association of Modena have been overwhelmed by the cooperative’s dynamics, in the process generating a certain degree of confusion over their respective roles. Over time, migrants have felt the need to draw a distinction or clarify the relationship between the two approaches, namely that of Ghanacoop and of the association, by renegotiating the relationships and the leadership of the organisations. Indeed, T., the leader of both Ghanacoop and the association, felt overburdened by his commitments and has already handed in his resignation as head of the association. The latter is, however, experiencing difficulties in electing a new president and is hence going through a particularly fraught period of having to rethink itself, while Ghanacoop has achieved a high level of operational capacity and visibility. Moreover, the cooperative has attained its independence due in part to investment from Italian partners. This situation could either result in a fall in the number of members of the association or its revival through the emergence of new leaders capable of attracting the support of migrants. It is as a result of these problems that Ghanaian migrants in Modena have joined the Ghana Nationals Association of Vicenza, which is more organised and cohesive.

Interest shown by migrants, the abovementioned demonstrative effect of Ghanacoop, but also the spread of information regarding the MIDA programme and the diverse initiatives launched under its auspices, have led to an increase in the number of relationships between migrant associations aimed

²⁸ On the concept of paradiplomacy, see Keating (1999).

at replicating and mutually reinforcing activities for local development in countries of origin, coordinating initiatives and creating new larger-scale groupings. Examples include the establishment of the Federation of Senegalese Associations of Northern Italy, which has recently been engaged in setting up a guarantee fund to facilitate access to credit for its members both in Italy and in Senegal, as well as the collaboration and network of relationships between various Ghanaian associations in north-eastern Italian cities for the purposes of participating in Ghanacoop by opening new warehousing facilities and African shops. However, the analysis showed evidence of inevitable rivalries and conflicts between several associations, which, however, form a natural part of relational dynamics and create new incentives for action. This growth in interest and activities demonstrates an attempt to overcome the limitations of leaders and resources by means of expanding the membership base of associations.

In this regard, as has already been noted, local development initiatives overstretch and take up a large share of the scarce resources of leaders and their associations. Consequently, across the board in various associations, there is an evident need to groom new people for leadership and develop new skill sets, as well as to build the capacity of associations. In some cases, leaders are purposely attempting to reorganise their associations so as to share out responsibilities and roles, as well as to bring a new younger generation to the fore that is capable of interacting with the Italian context and that of the country of origin. There are also new projects being established that are specifically aimed at strengthening associations, and new associations and consulting companies emerging to upskill migrants for the benefit of cooperation initiatives. In other cases, working parties and procedures are being instituted, such as that supported by the Region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia, which through the benefits of collective action and the division of labour are overcoming the weaknesses of individual associations.

These dynamics ensure that in the majority of cases, a virtuous relationship is created between co-development and integration activities, with the former reinforcing the latter. Hence, it is possible to discern a form of transnational double engagement on the part of migrant leaders and their associations, which is informed and evenly balanced between the places of origin and destination (Grillo and Mazzucato, 2008). The experience of M. is particularly significant in this regard. His numerous cultural and integration support initiatives are interconnected with activities aimed at fostering local development in villages of origin. Similarly, in other cases, local development initiatives have strengthened the position and visibility of migrant associations in local Italian communities. By increasing interaction with various local Italian institutions, the sense of active citizenship of migrants and the access to resources and opportunities for participation in additional initiatives have been improved.

One distinct case did, however, emerge where specific integration problems have led to a revamp and a reorientation of associations towards local development for the purposes of facilitating the return of migrants to their country of origin. This is the previously mentioned case of Ghanaians living in Turin.

Certain constraints which stem from an as yet inadequate level of integration can also hamper the fostering of co-development initiatives. Despite deepening and expanding relationships between migrant leaders and Italian institutions, the latter maintain an attitude of relative wariness which indicates that there are difficulties in building real relationships of trust with migrants. It should be noted, however, that migrant initiatives for local development are marginal within the context of Italian international development cooperation policy as a whole, which in itself is marginal in the public debate on globalisation. Hence, while these initiatives are innovative and essentially positive in terms of their outcomes, much greater efforts at spreading information and raising cultural awareness are needed.

4. WHAT IS CO-DEVELOPMENT?

The experience of the MIDA programme with Senegalese and Ghanaian migrants living in Italy and with their communities of origin provides the basis for a series of empirical observations that enable us to go beyond the theoretical and prescriptive rhetoric of co-development and the triple-win concept. As we have seen, the initiatives that have actually been set up thanks to the transnational relationships of migrants generally contribute to improving the quality of life of communities of origin and of migrants themselves. Their communities of residence also draw benefits from the improved integration of migrants. Nevertheless, all these outcomes are of necessity limited in their scope. This is partly due to the small scale of the projects, a shortcoming which can, however, be overcome by integrating these initiatives into larger-scale local development programmes, as happened with the Kolda project. But this limited impact is particularly determined by political, institutional, social and market structures in the various local areas of residence, as well as at the national (consider the obstacles represented by immigration policies and inadequate State social policies) and international levels (such as World Bank policies favouring the privatisation of water services management, which in Senegal have so far not led to any substantial benefits, but seem instead to have worsened the living conditions of the poorest²⁹). The existence of these structural constraints has also been attested to by several migrants within the context of activities carried out under the MIDA programme. In this regard, the real importance of public investment and migrants, in terms of co-development, lies in the processes set in motion to bring about change in these structures. More important than the improvement of specific living conditions is the essential (albeit limited) say that migrants can have in public debate and decision-making processes with respect to development both “here and there”, even taking into account differences and conflicts of vision among migrants themselves and between migrants and their various communities of origin and destination³⁰. In short, the participation of migrants in the democratic process is the real outcome of co-development.

It is possible to point to the specific nature of the added value that migrants can bring to the development of their countries of origin. To this end, an analysis of the investment of human,

²⁹ The main conclusions of an analysis of the water privatisation process in three African countries (one of which was Senegal), indicate that: “High prices and disconnections must mean that the poorest segments of society are likely to be the main losers from the privatisation process. Where this increases [the] use of unsafe water sources, the consequences will be disastrous for public health. The main winners from the contracts seem to be the private companies whose investments are focused on revenue raising [activities] such as meter installation. Private firms are in a powerful position as it is [they] who receive tariffs and then decide what to pay the government” (Kate Bayliss “Water privatisation in Africa: lessons from three case studies”, May 2001). Recently, the World Bank and Habib Sy, the Senegalese Minister for Agriculture and Water, responded that: “From a state of deficit prior to 1996, the water sector is now in the black and water needs for the capital Dakar are covered through until 2015” (from “Senegal: A model for water provision in urban Africa?” in IRIN, the humanitarian news and analysis service of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Wednesday, 26 March 2008). The World Bank claims that between 1996 and 2003, water production increased by 18 percent, with 81,000 new household connections and 400 standpipes. But these results seem disappointing when compared with increasing water needs. The World Bank findings have been called into question by Aid Transparency's report, which reveals that “the number of connections in the perimeter ... increased from 203,902 in 1996 to 264,161 in 2002, i.e. an increase of 60,259 over 6 years. For a population of 10,000,000 inhabitants, this does not seem to represent a significant achievement. (...) The level of service in the perimeter rose from 72.5[%] in 1996 to 83.1[%] in 2001, although it was supposed to reach 95% according to the contract between the State, SDE and SONES” (from *Water Privatisation in Senegal*: Pambazuka News, 9 July 2006).

³⁰ In this regard, the claim that “the manifold activities of immigrants and their home country counterparts hold the potential for aggregating into an important feature of contemporary processes of globalisation running opposite to the “multinational” logic of corporate capitalism” (Portes, Escobar and Radford, 2007) seems an exaggeration. A more detached view, according to which “social remittances are both positive and negative. While some see migrants as a force for greater democratization and accountability, others hold them responsible for rising materialism and individualism” (Levitt and Sorenson, 2004), is perhaps closer to the reality.

social, economic and financial capital by migrants through initiatives set up under the MIDA programme between Italy, Ghana and Senegal is informative.

If by human capital we mean the specific skills acquired by migrants in their country of destination and usefully transferred to and reinvested in their country of origin, then few such cases have emerged in practice. Indeed, as previously noted, the work placement of migrants within the Italian employment market leads to brain waste. If, however, the concept of human capital is interpreted in a more general and sophisticated sense as also including the acquisition of, for instance, an entrepreneurial spirit and of tacit skills and knowledge (or know-how) in the workplace, then various initiatives demonstrate the efforts of migrants to transfer and integrate this meta-knowledge into their countries of origin. Moreover, as part of the relational process, migrants also acquire human capital through their relationship with their contexts of origin. They learn from the difficulties experienced in negotiating with communities and local institutions, and become increasingly aware of the complexity of local development. Some Senegalese leaders exhibit a long-term commitment which goes beyond a project-based approach, building particularly significant and unique human capital through trial and error. Both G. and M. have now been involved in mutual awareness-raising with locals for over 10 years, a process which has led them to develop more sophisticated approaches and behaviours.

The financial capital mobilised by the collective remittances of migrants through their associations is limited when compared to the large-scale financing of international cooperation initiatives or foreign direct investment (which in turn is rather limited in the case of economic ties between Italy and Ghana and Italy and Senegal). Yet if remittances are considered in terms of the capacity to save that they represent and the local areas where the initiatives they help fund are implemented, then they take on a different significance. Funding from collective remittances of 10 or 20 thousand euro for an income-generating initiative in a village of origin translates into a monthly salary for 10 or 20 immigrants, and an annual income for 50 or 100 people in the village of origin. More specifically, the individual stories of migrant leaders attest to a real financial commitment, which often sees them personally advancing contributions due from other donors. The mechanism of matching funds also enables the value of collective remittances to be tripled (with a collective remittance investment of around 200,000 euro, additional resources of 400,000 euro from various donors have been raised, to give a total of 600,000 euro). Added to this are the loans that migrants take out both in Italy and their countries of origin. Indeed, migrant access to the MIDA programme and the financing it offers represents real security for banks, who are consequently more willing to grant credit. Hence, in the end, the financial capital invested can prove significant for the local development prospects of a small rural village. Yet the indirect impact on individual remittances is potentially even greater. The improvement of local conditions and the demonstrative effect of local development projects may induce migrants and their families to invest their savings in local productive activities as well as community welfare initiatives. This is an area that calls for further in-depth research over the next few years.

However, the most significant form of capital that is mobilised for local development in countries of origin is social capital. It is the multitude of weak ties fostered by migrants in their interaction with local contexts, both “here and there”, which enable them to mobilise know-how/contacts and capital for local development. As we have seen, the added value does not so much consist of migrants’ knowledge regarding their place of origin, but rather their transnational relationships with families and, more generally, including through the latter, with various actors in the country of origin. To these are added the relationships of migrants within the country of destination. As well as raising funds for their initiatives, to be combined with collective remittances, they raise the awareness and involve the expertise of Italian citizens and institutions, including technical experts and entrepreneurs, political officials and representatives, NGOs, chambers of commerce and business associations, trade unions, universities and research centres, and municipal, provincial and regional authorities. Hence, in exemplary cases, migrants generate transnational social capital between communities and institutions of origin and citizens and institutions in their host contexts, thereby

creating a kind of cross-territory partnership. Through their transnational relations, migrant leaders foster new transnational relationships between actors both “here and there”, between two specific territories and hence on a translocal level (for instance, they participate in cooperation between Turin and Louga and Milan and Dakar), and between actors that develop new transnational flows (such as Ghanacoop, which through the export of exotic fruit links various agricultural producers in Ghana with retail chains in Italy). Finally, the social capital created by these migrants carries added value compared to traditional development cooperation which usually ends when project activities are completed. By contrast, the initiatives of migrant associations engage with a relational process that goes beyond the circumstances of individual projects. The continuity and density of transnational ties predate the projects and the projects serve the purposes of these relationships.

5. MAIN FINDINGS AND FURTHER AREAS FOR RESEARCH

The research conducted resulted in various findings which both confirmed the outcomes of previous analyses and brought to light new and further knowledge.

The different migration profiles and incorporation modes of Ghanaian and Senegalese migrants in destination territories influence their capacity to create social capital and to interact with Italian local institutions so as to raise funds and secure technical assistance for local development initiatives in countries of origin. In the case of Ghanaians, introverted behaviour in limited spheres of life, including involvement in Pentecostal churches, seems to limit their capacity to interact with and integrate into Italian communities. In contrast, typically young and single Senegalese migrants are more open, mobile and capable of developing those weak ties that enable them to create various forms of relational capital and be involved in various kinds of associations simultaneously. Nevertheless, the work carried out under the MIDA programme over 5 years has revealed that circumstances can change. Indeed, even Ghanaian immigrants, when encouraged and brought into contact with Italian institutions, demonstrate an interest in and a capacity for developing their transnational engagement in more structured ways.

In addition to these differences in migration profiles and incorporation modes, the interaction with institutional opportunities available at local level in destination territories is a decisive factor which impacts on the structuring of the capacity of migrants to support their villages of origin. The existence in Italian territories and institutions of a prior history of translocal relations with countries of origin prior to the onset of immigration, the level of political interest and willingness of Italian local institutions to invest in the transnational relations of migrants and to create open relationships of trust, the absence of social stigmatisation of migrants, the existence of actors that facilitate relationships, and quality institutions and migrant leaders, are all factors that make a difference to opportunity and interaction structures in the various Italian territories and lead to varying levels of commitment towards local development in countries of origin.

Different types of migrant associations also exist with differing levels of engagement towards local development. Senegalese associations appear to be more diversified and open to mixed membership, including Italians, as opposed to Ghanaian associations. In particular, village associations were encountered that are networked and heavily-focused on supporting their villages of origin, as were new types of associations that are professionally-oriented or aimed at facilitating project design. The institutions of countries of origin and embassies in Italy have sought to liaise with the various associations and to structure these relationships through the establishment of federations of associations. In this respect, there is a process underway that is also leading to a diversification in Ghanaian associations and a correlated increase in their relationships.

Nevertheless, it is the leaders of migrant associations who play a fundamental role in creating the social and financial capital needed to support local development initiatives. What seems to be decisive in their day-to-day transnational experiences and engagement is not so much the human capital created in the country of origin but their capacity to exploit all opportunities for integration and interaction available in their host countries. Although they face major obstacles in building internal cohesion within their associations as well as strong and weak external links with institutions both “here and there” to support local development, the resulting initiatives provide them with a social mobility, status and visibility which seems to compensate for the human and economic costs they incur.

Migrant leaders have a strong vision for and commitment towards the emancipation of their villages. They assume a political role in interacting with their rural communities. They negotiate local development initiatives with traditional village chiefs and new local mayors, as well as with local women’s and young people’s associations. In some cases, they adopt Western-style development approaches, in other cases they create a hybrid between local traditional ways of life and Western approaches.

There is, however, a certain ambiguity in their relationship with local communities. On the one hand, they aspire to bring about – what is, in some cases, even traumatic - transformation, struggling against the apathy and opportunism of locals. On the other hand, they are aware of the importance of respecting the local pace of life and social norms. As transnational actors, they simultaneously live within and outside their communities of origin.

Their projects create real local opportunities for the alleviation of poverty, although it is difficult to see their impacts in terms of basic transformation for local and, specifically, rural development purposes. Furthermore, they fuel the culture of emigration, which seems to represent the most promising option to meet family needs. Urbanisation processes, the degradation of agricultural environments and a lack of State engagement and effective policies, leads migrants themselves and their families to abandon agriculture and spread their small investments over various activities. Dedicated rural community development initiatives run by migrants do not appear to be very effective, while multipurpose opportunities are being sought out which integrate agriculture with activities such as handcrafts and responsible tourism, in value chains connecting the country to the city and exportation. Hence, there is a search for forms of complementarity between the mobility of people, ideas, goods and capital.

Mobility also generates feedback effects. Migrant initiatives for local development in countries of origin are important because they increase transnational relations, thereby improving the ability of migrants to understand and interact with both local and Italian partners. The roots and presence of migrants both “here and there” are strengthened, integrating know-how and cultures, and creating new economic exchanges and forms of paradiplomacy. In this way, the transnational relations of migrants expand and involve diverse actors in the places of origin and destination. Hence, the transnational double engagement of migrants is clearly evident. However, leaders and migrant associations are faced with certain challenges, such as the need to groom new people for leadership, to expand their membership base, to build their own capacity, and to discover new forms of labour division and economies of scale. Similarly, in some cases, local institutional contexts in countries of destination are weak and still partly discriminatory, while in countries of origin, the weakness of the decentralisation process and the lack of coordinated and proactive support policies for migrant initiatives can be even more patent.

Leaders are conscious of these problems and try to counteract them through awareness-raising activities and by also entering into political relationships with local and national powers, both “here and there”, with a view to bringing about change. In this respect, the most important added value that migrants’ co-development can generate does not solely lie in their small initiatives for the transformation of local communities, but rather in their increased sense of active citizenship and in

their role as a voice of change within the democratic process of their places of destination and origin.

The analysis carried out highlights the heuristic significance of performing a comparative analysis through case studies of different nationalities in their diverse local contexts, adopting a dynamic approach in order to determine the possible trajectories of change. Likewise, even the analysis of the recursiveness of social phenomena opens up new fields of inquiry. In this regard, it would be interesting to conduct a more in-depth study of the interaction between the collective and private behaviours of migrants, between the use of collective and individual remittances, and between individual and family interests and perspectives on community development. Another area for further study, once again using a dynamic approach, is the relationship between migrants and public authorities and policies, both “here and there”, in terms of the impacts on democratisation and rights recognition processes. The issue is to what extent can the findings regarding certain questions - such as “how much” these dynamics impact on processes of change - be generalised to a higher level than the localities that were the subject of the case studies. This means establishing research agreements between institutions, raising adequate resources and developing new analytical tools of a quantitative nature. The fact remains, however, that before we start asking questions like “how much?”, it might be worth dwelling on the “whys and wherefores”.

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