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Editorial

A duty to be lucid

It is with a militant article that we are starting this New Year 2007. Hassan Zaoual does not beat about the bush on a subject as delicate a migration. The migrant, for him, is a resource. Even better, he is a key actor of modern economies which deny the importance of this human influx disparaged by politicians. To resume, criminalizing foreigners who have come to work in our land amounts to the amputation of our societies' future.

In *Development and Civilization*, we are happy to cry this out. And yet, observations communicated by network members from the four corners of the world bring us to qualify the author's statements. His theory of "predator" development and of "destructive destruction" in the North-South mechanism therefore deserves to be debated on. Doesn't the economic performance of East Asia, for instance, show that the elite can also pull its people upwards?

It is true with this article as with all those that we have published. You know that our objective is to enliven, in our columns, contemporary reflection on development and on the deadlock that obsession with a one and only economic growth can encourage. Our friend Hassan Zaoual, in freely expressing his strong convictions, helps us in this exercise. Thank you! So react ! Let the others come with their scathing pens. Even if they shake our convictions. The development of all human beings is a goal which demands extreme lucidity on our part.

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Immigration is not always what we think it is

By Hassan Zaoual*

Migrants are quite often subject to political maneuvering, especially during elections. A manipulation which, as Hassan Zaoual shows here, does not render an account of their economic, social and cultural roles.

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As indicated by the majority of lucid reports on development and globalization, economic development, as it is conceived and practised, maintains most migrant countries in a subordinate role within the global economy. It is this failure that has engendered the explosion in terms of migrant influx from the South to the North.

Basically, the formal economies of these countries – which are recognized and counted in official statistics - remain suppliers of products and services of low economic value- added. These allowance economies also engender inequalities in the sharing of their national revenue. Their economic resources are therefore generated more by nature than through creative human work. This is a logical consequence of the manner in which their development is being managed, since, in its proposals and implementation, it forbids the participation of their local cultures, of their imagination and ultimately, of their own creativity.

Countries which provide theories, models, technology monopolize this role, in partnership with the local elite whose sole function is to pave the way to plundering these territories' natural resources. These agreements on economy insure markets for the former and commissions for the latter. An effortless enrichment.

In other words, this North-South mechanism produces a concentration, on one end of innovation and on the other of destruction. It is “destructive destruction”. In the world of official economies, they spend more than they think. In the high ranks of established powers, with their structural over-indebtedness, one imagines virtually living the thousand and one nights of development!

In reality, local elites – the case is blatant in Africa – fulfil the role of a sterile social class in the development and globalization world. The consequences of this, both internal and external, alienation and domination mechanism on the real world are a multitude of economic and social counter-performances that boil down to a “bad governance” which international institutions like the World Bank and the IMF are now recognizing¹.

In sum, it is the crushing failure of development² in countries of emigration which is primarily behind the rising migrant influx towards the highly industrialized countries.

Forces of regulation

Since societies and economies, just like nature, hate blankness, they produce, one way or another, regulations. From this point of view, emigration and the so-called “informal” economies, those that economic experts have neither conceived nor established, provide a role of soldering the gaps in development for all. These “*veiled economies*”³, because invisible and undeclared, are endowed with unusual dynamism. They produce goods and services based on local know-how, coupled with loans from the outside.

These economic goods are within access of the purchasing power and perfectly meet the needs of the masses of populations concentrated in the outskirts of cities in the three continents: Asia, South America and Africa. Their organization is fitted to the sites concerned, mobilizing their cultures, affiliations, networks, social capital... This manner of functioning renders them “dissident” to our paradigms, theories and tools. In relation to the migrant *problem* which is our concern here, they retain in the area a non-negligible portion of the local work force, most likely to move spontaneously towards the highly industrialized countries. The latter are in full crisis and find themselves overwhelmed by the great human influx which development and globalization are

¹ For new research paths in favour of autonomy of territories and populations, see for instance S. Charlier, M. Nyssens, J.Ph. Peemans, I Yepes (*sous la dir.*). A solidarity in action, local governance, social economy, popular practices in the face of globalisation, Catholic University of Louvain, Presses Universitaires de Louvain, 2004.

² Cf. *Défaire le développement. Refaire le monde* (Undo development. Rebuild the world.), *ouvrage collectif de l'association* (joint work of the association) La ligne d'horizon, les amis de François Partant, Parangon, L'Aventurine, Paris, 2003.

³ Cf. *Les économies « voilées » du Maghreb* (The « veiled » economies of the Maghreb), Hassan Zaoual, L'Harmattan, collection Economie plurielle/Série Lire le site. 2006. 295 p.

generating by destroying the living environment in poor countries.

It is not by accident that Muhammad Yunus of the Grameen Bank, instigator of formal micro-credit, obtained the Nobel Peace Prize. He was able to tackle, in an operational way, comparable worlds, those of poor populations, in particular women groups, demonstrating that we can act differently and locally for as long as we can think differently. Even if his action only repeats and renders visible already existing mechanisms in the so called "informal" finance, he has been able to formalize and extend the solidarity micro-credit which happens naturally in these parallel worlds.

Our field surveys⁴ fully reveal the fact that these anti-migration "*shadow economies*" entrepreneurs use financial solidarity mechanisms that are inherent to their own groups (tribes, families, networks, neighbourhoods, etc.). Each actor in the area acts as a bank for the other. It is therefore the common relationship and understanding which insures financing and greater confidence in the economic transactions carried out under the area's moral shade. Without expertise, this actor is gifted with a collective intelligence guided by a "symbolic intelligence" (expression borrowed from Roger Nifle).

It is also important to emphasize on the fact that most actors in these economic activities, which proliferate at small scales, are from internal migration. The latter being excluded from the national formal economies' "free feast of development"; not earning their livelihood through creativity, are obliged to become entrepreneurs. The initiation and functioning of their economic activities takes place under difficult conditions (absence of bank credit; heavy bureaucracy; difficult access to available modern techniques; corruption; etc.). These internal migrants often come out of the poorest regions in these countries, from victim-areas of war or even of genocide.

The predominance of populations from rural areas in "informal" activities in Southern countries can easily be explained by the reluctance amongst generations of urban dwellers, privileged by small or big government institutions and by access to corruption, to undertake mini activities. It is also amongst this populations that numerous volunteers willing to go to Europe are now recruited. In general, despite an urban origin, their educational level is low (high-school drop-outs). The possibilities which the public sector used to offer in terms of stable jobs in civil services have ceased to exist because of structural adjustment plans and, refusing to create micro-activities which are often much more lucrative than a civil servant's salary, they are practically programmed for departure. And yet, in numerous cases, their home families are ready to financially support the realization of a project *in situ*.

Migrants' economic and social role

The migratory phenomenon is not specific to rich countries. It affects the whole planet. From the point of view of migration, a thorough study would reveal that Africa receives a higher intercontinental influx than the intercontinental influx moving towards Europe. The migrant phenomenon is therefore omnipresent due to changes and events that disturb the conditions of each human environment. Didn't Buddha say: "*Only change is permanent*"! In its fundamental principles, even liberalism which dominates globalization would admit the fact that free movement cannot concern only capital and goods, neglecting the most precious capital of all: the human.

The emigrants' economic and social role in the European and North American countries, in relation to their communities of origin, is comparable to that of small entrepreneurs of rural origin who emerge from chaotic urbanization processes in the southern country cities. The *site theory* has qualified them of "*sited entrepreneurs*" to distinguish them from entrepreneurs of the generally accepted economic theory⁵.

True enough, the economic conception reduces man to an "*homo oeconomicus*" who is only

⁴ Cf. *une enquête en cours sur « Les entrepreneurs de l'ombre »* (ongoing research on « *Shadow entrepreneurs* ») GREL/R21, Université du Littoral Côte d'Opale, 2006.

⁵ Cf. *La socio-économie de la proximité* (Proximity socio-economics), Hassan Zaoual. L'Harmattan, collection Economie plurielle/Série Lire le site, Paris 2005

looking to fulfil his own interest. He is programmed to gain and accumulate profit under the threat of annihilation by the law of competition. He is an “*artificial being*” created by the Western economic thinking to mark its territorial limits and above all to obtain the status of a science. This economic conception supposes that this being is selfish, therefore rational and vice-versa. We find ourselves here in pure individualism. It is this definition of man that globalization is proposing and imposing, forgetting that human beings are above all multi-faceted⁶.

But, a close look at facts, particularly in the informal world and that of emigration, reveals other realities. This man of the situation, this “*homo situs*” refuses to be cut to pieces by mercantile and materialist reductionism. He does not separate what we separate in the sphere of our Western disciplines of man. In other words, under our academic canons, he is “*undisciplined*”. It is for this reason that he can only be approached by a thinking that is undisciplined, therefore critical, vis-à-vis the scientific and political discourses that hold an upstage role in the global theatre.

Have documentaries been done on the great number of persons coming from the South who hold top level intellectual and medical functions in European countries? How many laboratories and research centres, in the field of hard or even soft science, have been functioning in France for over thirty years, with only Southern migrants (financed by grants from their governments and/or family and community assistance) since governments, right or left wing, refuse to support French students in research-oriented studies? The “fracture of knowledge” is now happening before 2010.

Big countries such as France will soon be in lack of researchers due to massive though foreseeable retirement. Faced with the imperatives of globalization, government speeches in EU countries are calling for research and innovation as the answer, but with little result on the ground.

To avoid having to delve deeply into the problems of our contemporary societies (social and environmental fracture), the only areas covered by the medias in the service of some political organizations and lobbies, are the suburbs, to better muddle up the political landscape and control the voters in a climate of fear.

Today, the social anomalies of bad development in Europe are such, that micro-credit, spread by the Grameen Bank, is more and more adopted by associations which deal with the reintegration of the jobless. In other words, it is one of the poorest countries in the world, Bangladesh, which is now giving lessons to globally rich countries in matters of fighting the ravages of social exclusion, of unemployment and the impoverishment of European workers and migrants.

As, like a caravan, migration in Europe inescapably follows its route, the recomposing Processes, which happen there, are scenes of the interbreeding weaving. This gives birth to new identities which are mixed and supportive of both the departure and host areas⁷. Thus, where the migration adventure succeeds, emigrants become couriers, mediators, regulators. This is what seems to unfold when we bother to discern the living realities of the migration process.

The migrant, weaver of economic peace

It is undeniable that migrants play a role in economic and social regulation for their countries of origin. Let us take the case of solidarity among migrants towards their home communities. We cannot deny the fact that their remittances are a form of international economic solidarity. The volume of these transfers, not taking into account those which are channelled through characteristic means organized in their areas (informal, undeclared, transmitted through intermediaries, etc.) has become so important for many countries, particularly in Africa, that

⁶ G. Ferreol et G. Jucquois (sous la dir.) *Dictionnaire de l'altérité et des relations interculturelles* (Dictionary of otherness and intercultural relations), Armand Colin, 2003.

⁷ Cf. *Mémoire et apports économiques de l'immigration dans le Nord-Pas de Calais depuis le début du XXème siècle*. (Memory and economic contributions of migrants in the Nord-Pas de Calais since the beginning of the Twentieth century) Rapport d'étude à la demande de la FAAF/Fonds d'action sociale des travailleurs Immigrés, Hassan Zaoual en collaboration avec Abid Ihadiyan (doctorant GREL), 63 p. 1999.

authorities count on this cash flow to ward off the social and political implosion of these said countries⁸.

Therefore, for these governments, as we have already written in these same columns⁹: the current motto is foreign currency! Here, the migrant becomes a weaver of economic peace and, in consequence, an antidote to conflicts and wars. This stabilizing role must be taken into consideration, among the many imperatives which migrant's behaviour replies to.

Everything points to the fact that the causes of migration and its functions are quite numerous and varied. The motivations behind migration are at the same time individual and collective¹⁰. A die-hard economist would see in the migrant only egoistic motivations: the sole desire to raise his living standards independently of the needs of his grassroots community. If this theory explains part of the reality, this latter is not totally reducible to the former.

It is true that the reality of transfers in favour of the home environment reveals a combination of altruism and personal interest in the rationality of the migrant agent. The *myth of return* generally incites the migrant to invest for himself. This can explain the relative importance of real estate investments among migrants in their countries of origin. Therefore, the Murid economy of Senegal, through its international networks in Europe and North America, is an illustration of this process of getting embedded from a distance.

And yet, a significant portion of a migrant remittances serves to support his family, as much in their daily consumption as in their own investments when viable and motivated projects are carried out by trustworthy home members. This is how a reciprocal economy works between the migrant and his network of relations.

In short, the migrant, from this point of view, is at the same time investor, financial backer, and international social worker. Each migrant is already in himself some sort of invisible NGO!

Well before the involvement of NGOs, these behavioural characteristics already gave rise, in France, to unregistered gatherings – by region, ethnic belonging, village – which have accomplished group projects, answering the needs of communities left at home: school, hospital, drinking water, electrification and other infrastructures. These associative gatherings – the most remarked being from Morocco, Mali, Senegal – come to correct the failures of the States who tend to neglect education, health, infrastructures, particularly in the rural areas.

Such projects have seen the day among numerous migrant communities of the Maghreb, and the Sub-Saharan Africa. Here as well, migrants, just like the *"sited entrepreneurs"* in the urban peripheries of Southern countries, repair the anomalies of development as conducted by States and experts. In these *intra-site* North-South cooperation processes which are not always visible, migrants earn prestige and esteem from their home sites. For them, it is also a way of keeping an honourable position in the social hierarchy of the site of origin.

And yet, we must qualify this description, in as much as the migrant is always in danger of becoming the *"site's milking cow"*, a moral blackmail. Some site members find their living standards raised due to the community remittances and want to maintain it independently of their own productive involvement in the community. This way, the transfer of funds can contribute to the subsistence of clandestine passengers in the community. This risk increases with the allure of

⁸ For example, the volume of money remitted by Maghreb migrants became significant only from the 1970s on. In fact, most statistical sources did not start to be interested in this type of transfer till that date.

⁹⁹ Cf. « *Migrations africaines et mondialisation. Les damnés de la terre à l'assaut de la forteresse européenne* » (African migration and globalization. The damned of the earth attack the European fort.), Hassan Zaoual, Foi et Développement, no. 338, novembre 2005.

¹⁰ Cf. *Transferts communautaires et développement économique : l'expérience migratoire*, (Community remittances and economic development – the migrant experience) Abid Ihadiyan et Hassan Zaoual.. Document de travail et de recherche du GREL/Université du Littoral Côte d'Opale, France, mai 2005.

the consumer society that globalization introduces from above. Which, on the other hand, can lead to a dwindling urge to work among the members left behind, in the country, while waiting for an idyllic departure.

In conclusion, if we want to avoid incomprehension and conflicts, all countries should reflect on the possibility of contributing, on a planetary scale, to a “civilization of rich diversity”, capitalizing on both the Southern errors as well as the shortcomings of a Northern society that is exclusively oriented towards economic values¹¹. This “world intercultural governance” would suppose a self-criticism on the part of everyone, to better establish an “intercultural division of creativity” giving value to all cultures and world knowledge. Warming up intercultural relations also means cooling down the ecological global warming by opting for a change which respects cultural diversity and biodiversity.

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Counter-point

A formidable challenge

Migrating is human society's nature. Africa has always had population movements and thanks to migrations, Asian civilisations took shape. Europe would not be what it is without the Celtic, Goth, Hun migrants. The Netherlands and Switzerland owe part of their prosperity to Huguenot refugees. And it is German migrants who facilitated the rapid industrial development of Switzerland.

In the past, how many European families had no other choice but to move out towards the New World? What is the proportion of natives in the American population today? In reality, there is no important culture, no great civilization that has not been enriched by migration.

This denial that we inflict on today's poor foreigner, in Switzerland, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, the USA – denial tainted with racism and nationalism, with no scruples about disregarding human dignity – does it not come from fear of losing our identity in the wake of globalization?

Migration throws us a formidable challenge. That of knowing the causes of migration as well as the situation of migrants, and defining policies to overcome problems, respect human rights. The future of our societies and cultures will depend on this.

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¹¹ Cf. « *Pour un dialogue des civilisations* » (For a dialogue of civilizations), Hassan Zaoual, *Foi et développement* (Faith and Development) no. 300, Janvier 2002