Chapter 4
Research Context and Methods

4.1 The MIGRADAPT Project

This book contributes to wider research efforts undertaken under MIGRADAPT, which stands for: Making Migration Work for Adaptation to Environmental Changes. A Belgian Appraisal.[1] This project is funded by the Belgian Science Policy Office (Belspo) and is a joint collaboration between four Belgian institutions: Liège University's Hugo Observatory (Coordinator); Université Libre de Bruxelles's CEDD (Centre d'Etudes du Développement Durable), University of Antwerp's CeMIS (Center for Migration and Integration Studies); and the Royal Museum for Central Africa.

The MIGRADAPT project has two main research objectives. The first is to examine the role of the environment as a driver for migration from Morocco, Senegal, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) to Belgium. The second objective is to gain a better understanding of the conditions under which migrants in their country of destination – Belgium – can support the adaptation and resilience of their communities of origin. Qualitative research for this investigation has been conducted in Senegal, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Morocco, and Belgium. By focusing on both migrant-receiving and migrant-sending countries, this transnational research aims to examine the migration trajectories of migrants on their way to Belgium and to determine the extent to which environmental stressors play a role in their aspirations, journey, and subsequent transnational practices. This study design enabled the research team to examine and include 'fragmented journeys' of migrants, internal migration (partly) due to environmental changes, and immobile groups. Building from this wider research framework, this book seeks to leave both the Senegalese and Congolese contexts aside and zoom into the Moroccan situation through the presentation of research findings stemming from empirical work conducted with populations currently living in Morocco, on the one hand, and

[1] MIGRADAPT project https://www.hugo.uliege.be/cms/c_4866216/en/hugo-migradapt

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Moroccan migrants in Belgium on the other. By doing so, we demonstrate that the inclusion of multiple perspectives and vantage points is critical to provide a comprehensive understanding of the transnational dynamics that connect populations in their places of origin and destination, particularly in the context of environmental change.

4.2 Research Context in Morocco

As already set out in Chap. 2, it is often understood that climate change intensifies existing risks by acting as a 'threat multiplier' (Zickgraf 2019) – especially in regions that suffer from water scarcity – and is linked to the creation of new opportunities aimed at the improvement of land and water management in the Northern African region (Iglesias et al. 2011). Within the Northern African region, Morocco occupies a special position because of its high sensitivity to climatic changes and its limited adaptive capacities (Schilling et al. 2012; Wodon and Liverani 2014). Despite the observation that the study of environmental migration is still in its infancy in Morocco, the topic of environmental and climate change is very relevant for this area and well-known to policymakers. Similarly, numerous geographers, anthropologists, and sociologists have studied water and land resources and management (De Haas and El Ghanjou 2000; Kuhn et al. 2010), perceptions on extreme weather events and shocks (Wodon et al. 2014), vulnerability and adaptation (Schilling et al. 2012; Sowers et al. 2011), remittances and emigration (De Haas 2003, 2006; Kusunose and Rignall 2018), desertification (Bentaleb 2015), transitory migration flows and climate change (Sow et al. 2016), and the sustainability of oasean systems (Karmaoui et al. 2015). This existing literature makes the Moroccan case interesting to study and explore further.

Fieldwork was conducted under the MIGRADAPT research project to collect qualitative empirical data that would shed light on the unavoidably complex linkages between migration and environmental changes. As explained earlier, this research project focuses on how migration could actually work for adaptation towards environmental/climate change and indeed does with respect to migration to Belgium. It is in this regard that Morocco was selected, amongst other countries (namely Senegal and DR Congo), as a field of research, given the numerical and societal importance of the Moroccan diaspora in Belgium. This conceptual connection between the Belgian and Moroccan cases – which is inherent to the MIGRADAPT project – materializes in this book's penultimate chapter. It must however be stressed that the chapters respectively focusing on Morocco and on Belgium do not entirely overlap and that this somewhat weak connection is already an important finding in itself. While many people migrated from Tinghir towards Belgium (and France), the share of migrants coming from this region is relatively small in Belgium compared to those coming from other Moroccan areas. This suggests the existence of fragmented journeys or that people moving due to environmental factors often do not necessarily migrate far unless they have extensive migrant networks to make this migration trajectory work, concealing the actual environmental drivers of migration. While

many interesting research sites could have been selected within Morocco given the country's overall vulnerability to climate/environmental change, we opted in the MIGRADAPT project for a theoretical sampling procedure to select our research locations in Morocco. The combination of migration factors was especially relevant here as many environmental changes in Morocco are felt in a gradual way. The interactions between environmental changes, population growth, and technological changes could indeed lead to, or be associated with, out-migration from these regions in Morocco. We based the selection of our two research locations – Tangier and Tinghir – on three criteria.

The first is the *variation in vulnerability levels and the differentiated impact of climate change for the local population* (distinct types of vulnerability to climate change). Vulnerability to climate change is dependent on levels of (i) exposure to climate change, (ii) sensitivity to climate change, and (iii) adaptive capacity (Heltberg and Bonch-Osmolovskiy 2011). A second criterion was to select regions that had witnessed *considerable out-migration flows to Europe* and/or to other Moroccan regions. It was further decided to focus on one rural area experiencing labour surplus (Tinghir) and one urban area with an increasing demand for labour (Tangier) to add to a better understanding of how migration within and outside Europe works (cf. functionalist theories of migration). Third, in order to build further on existing research findings and reports, we opted to select regions in which research on migration had previously been carried out. As such, both Tangier and Tinghir had already been studied as part of the EUMAGINE project[2] (coordinated by the Centre for Migration and Intercultural Studies, University of Antwerp) which looked at migration aspirations of people living in Morocco without focusing however on environmental factors (cf. Berriane et al. 2010, 2012). Nevertheless, this project's papers and findings provided useful information about the research context. Based on these three criteria, two areas were selected for this research in Morocco: Tinghir, located in the Todgha Valley in the High Atlas, and Tangier city, located in the Rif region.

The combination of high immigration and emigration and environmental changes in both regions made both cities particularly interesting to study. With regards to vulnerability to climate/environmental changes, the overall consequences of environmental changes in the Atlas mountain region pertain to precipitation and temperature changes, which especially affect agricultural activities. This contrasts with Tangier, which is characterized by a Mediterranean climate and where many people rely on industries and the harbour (Berriane et al. 2010), resulting in a very distinct pattern of opportunities and constraints for people to secure their livelihoods and deal with environmental changes. Although Tangier and its region may be less confronted with environmental changes because the city is an international industrial hub, it hosts a large proportion of internal migrants who came from other regions of Morocco, potentially in part due to environmental changes. The selection of Tangier therefore allowed the study of 'environmental' migrants' fragmented journeys and

[2] http://www.eumagine.org/pages/eumagine_country_details.aspx?cid=1

consider the internal migration flows occurring within Morocco. Both regions are not necessarily those from where most Moroccans living in Belgium originate, mainly the Rif (Nador, Al Hoceima, Oujda, Tétouan) and Souss (Tiznit, Agadir, Taroudant, Ouarzazate) regions (cf. Chap. 2). Nonetheless, a substantial proportion of Moroccans in Belgium are from Tangier and Tinghir. The migration history of these regions can help explain the development of climate change discourses and the injection of policy debates held in Europe. Both cities are characterised by a long, but distinct migration history, and are both sending and receiving regions for internal migration in Morocco, albeit at a different scale (cf. Berriane et al. 2010).

Finally, this book does not only focus on the experiences of people living in Morocco but also on those of Moroccan immigrants living in Belgium. Respondents from the Belgian sample were mainly selected in the cities of Brussels and Liège. In the following sections, more information is provided on the selected sites (both in Morocco and Belgium) in which this research was conducted, on the research methods used, and on associated challenges encountered on the field. An account of the main researcher's positionality and reflexivity will also be provided.

4.2.1 Tangier, the Gateway to Europe

Due to large flows of transit migration over time, the city of Tangier provides an important site of investigation (Berriane et al. 2010). In 2014, approximately 947,952 people lived in Tangier (RGPH 2014). This region is characterised by diversified economic activities and by surrounding villages that have adopted a collectivist model of social organisation. Recently, there has been a strong political will to invest in large infrastructure projects in Tangier, such as the extension of its port and road and rail infrastructures. This has resulted in a rapidly expanding and modernizing city, which has proven very attractive for internal migrants. In particular, Tangier hosts many migrants coming from the Rif area (Berriane et al. 2010) who may have been affected by the impact of increased precipitation and drought (Niang et al. 2014). Recently, a larger number of people originating from Sub-Saharan countries – whether in transit or not – pass through Tangier. This city sparks the imagination of those who dream of Europe due to the large number of boats making the crossing to Spain via the Strait of Gibraltar and because of the proximity of the Spanish enclaves (particularly Ceuta). In addition to these official routes, both in Tangier and in regions surrounding it, there are large human smuggling networks. Over the last years, the Strait of Gibraltar has lost its role as the main route towards Europe. Finally, it should be noted that the city hosts many transit migrants who eventually end up staying permanently (Carling 2007; Simon 2006). The city of Tangier is subdivided in very distinct quarters, all attracting different residents – international communities, 'Tangeriens', and neighbourhoods that attract internal migrants – and also has a large industrial zones.

4.2.2 *Tinghir, in the Foothills of the Atlas Mountains*

Selecting the oasis city of Tinghir as a research site in Morocco can be explained by its high emigration rates over the last century (De Haas and El Ghanjou 2000; De Haas 2006; Kusunose and Rignall 2018), its high sensitivity towards environmental change, and its limited adaptive capacities – the latter being further aggravated by the lack of sustainable policy responses and agricultural practices (Schilling et al. 2012). Finally, the water management and control of Tinghir has been subject to many water wars, laws, and customs (De Haas and El Ghanjou 2000). This region in Morocco provides an interesting site of investigation, in which previous migration and adaptation strategies could play a pivotal role in the migration aspirations due to environmental change. Because both migration and vulnerabilities to environmental change are socially embedded, migration aspirations can vary across different segments of the population.

Tinghir is located in the Drâa-Tafilalet region, in the south of the High Atlas and north of the Little Atlas in south-eastern Morocco. In total, 42,044 people lived in the municipality of Tinghir in 2014 (RGPH 2014) and is mainly populated by Amazighs (or Berber) ethnic groups, who are mainly Muslims. The city of Tinghir is built up surrounding a river's oases, with palm, olive, fig, pomegranate, almond and other fruit trees, as well as (small) wheat and alfalfa fields in the Todgha basin. The local economy was initially based on self-sufficient subsistence agriculture. The source of the river departs from the nearby town, Tamtatoucht, and is used, through a precise irrigation network of open-air water canals and water laws. Water use and the opening of the sideways water canals is highly controlled. Due to water scarcity, permanent cultivation, and customary water and land rights in the oasis, the irrigation pattern of the fields is carefully managed and organised by village communities (De Haas and El Ghanjou 2000; Rössler et al. 2010; Bentaleb 2015).

Depending on their location in the valley (Fig. 4.1), inhabitants face water scarcity to varying extents and cope with it differently. In the lower Todgha valley in particular, surface irrigation water is scarcer, urging agricultural workers to use water wells, diesel pumps (De Haas 2006) or even solar water pumps to intensify production and be able to continue their agricultural activities. A dam is currently under construction near the water source in Tamtatoucht. This region's inhabitants are confronted with various environmental issues, such as decreasing precipitation, river pollution (e.g., washing, lack of sewage system), the erosion of riverbeds and river canals, the lack of modern agricultural techniques, and the fragmentation of land through heritage and lack of juridical regulations, upcoming desertification and sand from nearby deserts, and the degradation of land and biodiversity (Bentaleb 2015). These issues complicate agricultural activities and further investments in this area.

Over the last years, a lot of changes have occurred as a result of successive years of drought, urbanisation processes, and the diversification of economic activities. Changes in precipitation and temperature are mostly felt in mountainous regions, and especially by people relying on agricultural activities. Over the course of the

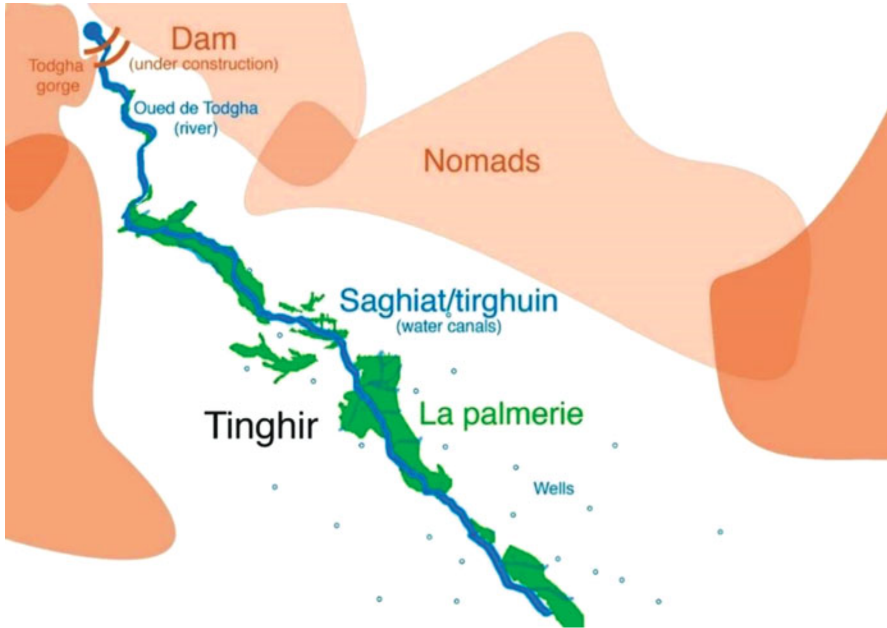

Fig. 4.1 Tinghir and the surrounding oasis

years, the valley has progressively become marginalized due to a strong rural exodus and brain drain towards big cities and foreign – mainly European – countries. Whilst, especially between the 1960s and 1970s, labour migration schemes were put in place to send the region's inhabitants to European countries such as Belgium and France, emigration is still ongoing. Male migrant workers were recruited from all social backgrounds, though more often from extremely poor families. Remittances from migrant workers living in Europe were mainly used to invest in Morocco's 'new' economy, in which remittances are invested in small businesses such as the construction trades, local transportation services, or civil service positions that resulted from increased investments in vocational training, secondary education, and business ownership. Moreover, this accelerated households' move away from the 'old' economy, which was based on land and livestock ownership (Kusunose and Rignall 2018). At the same time, the municipality of Tinghir itself attracts also a lot of immigrants from the wider surroundings (De Haas and El Ghanjou 2000), and nowadays even hosts many retired return migrants that decide to spend time in both their region of origin and Europe as a compromise between their two 'home' countries (De Haas 2006; Kusunose and Rignall 2018).

4.3 Research Context in Belgium

As demonstrated in Chapter Three, Belgium has been a crucial immigration country for Moroccan populations since the rollout of the bilateral agreements tying Western Europe and Morocco from the late 1950s until the 1970s as a way to tackle labour shortages in the industrial, mining, construction, and agriculture sectors. Labour migration from Morocco to Belgium ran uninterrupted until the oil crisis in 1973, after which the predominant trend of Moroccan immigration to Belgium shifted from labour migration to family reunification. Although Moroccan immigration to Belgium has been the object of many studies (Bousetta and Martiniello 2003; Ouali 2004; Martiniello and Rea 2013; Zickgraf 2014; Timmerman et al. 2017), the MI GRADAPT project, which is funded by the Belgian Science Policy Office (Belspo), is a unique study of the interlinkages between populations in three emigration countries – the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Morocco, Senegal – and Belgium. It is particularly innovative in the sense that it seeks to investigate the role that environmental changes and disruptions in these three countries may have played in migration journeys to Belgium, particularly through impacting other traditional migration drivers such as socio-economic.

Belgium is a particularly interesting transit/host country to examine in the framework of a transnational project. Indeed, Belgium hosts several generations of Moroccan immigrants, mainly in its capital, Brussels. According to the Brussels Institute of Statistics and Analysis (IBSA), Moroccans constituted are the third-largest group of foreign nationals (representing 9% of the total foreign population) in Brussels in 2018, after the French (15.2%) and Romanians (9.5%) (IBSA 2018). The city of Brussels in particular hosts many migrants from Tangier, which is one of the two cities studied within fieldwork in Morocco. This allows some comparability across findings in both countries, making it possible to appraise the role of migration aspirations and transnational networks (for instance, why Moroccans would choose Belgium over other destinations) and how diaspora members in Belgium keep transnational ties alive with their family or community of origin.

4.4 Research Methods in Morocco

The data collection and analysis phases followed a Grounded Theory approach (Glaser and Strauss 1967), and especially used these principles to select the research setting and cases with theoretical sampling; the constant comparative method was used to analyse the data thematically. In the sections below, more detailed information about the actual data collection and analysis phases is provided.

4.4.1 Data Collection and Analysis

Qualitative interviews were conducted with people living in Tangier and Tinghir (Morocco) between March and May 2018 by Lore Van Praag. Theoretical sampling criteria for the selected respondents in Morocco were (1) access to migrant networks or migration experience (both those who have and those who do not); (2) age (+18 years old); (3) gender (balance between females and males); and, (4) socio-economic status (variation). A snowball technique was used to recruit the respondents.

To include sufficient people with migrant networks, respondents were selected through connections of immigrants living in Belgium (or other European countries), especially in Tangier. People in the network of the researcher and the broader MI GRADAPT research team were asked to participate and share, upon their consent, the contact details of their relatives, friends, or acquaintances living in Tangier or Tinghir. A second group of respondents were contacted during the fieldwork in Morocco itself, through associations, Facebook posts, contacts obtained through housekeepers, tourist guides, and local conferences. Over the course of the field-work, more specific selection criteria were added to obtain a more varied sample based on the initial theoretical sampling criteria. In particular, special attention was given to the recruitment of women and respondents with a relatively lower socio-economic background. Most appointments were made via Whatsapp, through a local Moroccan number, or in person. Both informal and formal interviews were consid-ered and recorded, whether electronically or manually. While formal interviews were audio-taped, informal interviews were carefully noted down after the interview but not recorded. In total, 13 formal interviews, 3 informal interviews, and 2 expert interviews were conducted in Tangier (18 in total), and 24 formal interviews and 6 informal interviews in Tinghir (30 in total). Out of the 48 interviews conducted, 21 were with female respondents and 27 with male respondents. Age variation ranged from 21 to 70 years. All interviews were transcribed and translated from the respective languages (French, Spanish, and Dutch) into English by the author. All names were replaced by pseudonyms to maintain respondents' anonymity. Fieldwork and interviews were sometimes challenging due to gender issues, trans-lation biases, and fear of political repercussions (cf. research difficulties below). The efforts put in the selection of the respondents has resulted in the following samples in Tangier (Table 4.1) and Tinghir (Table 4.2):

While overall there is sufficient variation in the age of the respondents, the sample was not fully balanced in terms of gender and socio-economic position. Learning from the difficulties encountered in reaching out to female participants in Tangier, extra attention was subsequently given to the recruitment of female participants when conducting fieldwork in Tinghir. Also, the socio-economic backgrounds of the respondents in Tangier were slightly higher compared to those in Tinghir (although none of the respondents interviewed were particularly wealthy). While there is certainly a large number of people in a lower socio-economic position living in Tangier, it proved much harder to reach them due to their scattered location in the

Table 4.1 Respondents interviewed in Tangier

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Birthplace	Occupation
Formal (tape-recorded or written) interviews				
Budur	Female	24	Antwerp	Housewife
Amine	Male	28	Al Hoceima	Shopkeeper
Achraf and Claude	Male	30 and 36	Errachidia and Nigeria	Artist and unemployed
Ali	Male	65	Tangier	Civil servant
Khalida	Female	40	Tangier	Artist
Nizar	Male	24	Marrakech	Student economics
Mehdi	Male	23	Tétouan	Unemployed
Faiza	Female	28	Unknown	Human resources
Sarah and Hasna	Female	38 and 33	Tangier	Beauty salon owners
Sami	Male	21	Unknown	Salesman
Walid	Male	31	Small village	Teacher and hotel employee
Imane	Female	35	Oujda	Cleaning lady
Zakaria	Male	67	Al Hoceima	Tourist guide
Informal interviews (non-recorded)				
Buchra	Female	35 and 23	Sousa	Teacher
Douae	Female	24	Not in Tangier	Housewife
Youness	Male	38	Tangier	Salesman
Expert interviews				
Nabil	Male	40	Unknown	Head of NGO working on migrants in Morocco
Omar, Hachim, Bilal	Males	70	Tangier	Retired meteorologists

city and surrounding areas. The best entry was to observe some courses as a 'researcher as a participant' in a vocational training programme for women and conduct some ethnographic fieldwork, establish informal contacts, and invite people for interviews.

Questionnaires were developed within the broader framework of the MIGRAD APT project. The interview topic lists gauged first to understand the perceived environmental changes in the immediate living environment and, by extension, in Morocco. In order of appearance on the topic list, the following topics were discussed: socio-demographics, living in Tinghir/Tangier, the natural environment and (perceived) changes herein, familial and collective solidarity, and remittances. The interview guide used with respondents in Belgium followed a different yet similar outline, as its focus moved from describing the respondent's situation in their area of origin (prior to departure) and the nature of their migration journey to Belgium to analysing their current situation in Belgium and that of their community of origin, with perceptions of environmental change and transnational practices between Belgium and Morocco serving as a red thread throughout the discussions.

Table 4.2 Respondents interviewed in Tinghir

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Birthplace	Occupation
Formal (tape-recorded or written) interviews				
Loubna	Female	25	Ouarzazate	Student
Malak	Female	40	Village in the natural reserve of Iguernan	(Cattle) farmer
Chafik	Male	64	Tinghir	Hostel owner
Younes	Male	40	In the surroundings of Tinghir	Head association
Mouhcine (Idrissa), Mamoun (friend), Ghadi (friend)	Male	33	Tinghir – 3 km	Cafe owner
Rehana	Female	46	Tinghir	Housewife
Zineb	Female	32	Tinghir	Unemployed
Salima	Female	50	Tinghir	Housewife
Latifah	Female	45	Tinghir	Teacher
Focus group members female association	Female	Diverse	Tinghir	Unemployed
Khadija (group of nomads)	Female	Diverse	Tinghir	Nomad
Nayla	Female	45	Elsewhere	Owner telecommunication shop and association
Safa	Female	24,5	Tinghir	Student accountancy
Chaima	Female	55	In the surroundings of Tinghir	Housewife
Faisal	Male	30	Ait Haddou (quarter Tinghir)	Unemployed truck driver
Rachid	Male	56	Tinghir	Salesman kiosk and president agricultural association of Afanour
Thami	Male	62	Tinghir	Labourer in nuclear power plant
Jamal	Male	40	Tinghir	Journalist
Ben	Male	51	Tinghir (Afanour)	Alderman community Tinghir and president association (geographer)
Houda	Female	51	Ouadza (region Essaouira)	Unemployed widow
Yanis	Male	27	Igoudmane	Guide/farmer
Ghafour	Male	35	Tamtatouchte	Hotel owner
Darid	Male	50	Tamtatouchte	Restaurant owner
Elyazi	Male	60	Tamtatouchte	Housewife
Informal interviews (non-recorded)				
Lakbir	Male	24	Tinghir	Student welding
Muhammed	Male	60	Tinghir	Guardian mosque

(continued)

Table 4.2 (continued)

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Birthplace	Occupation
Nour	Female	45	Tinghir	Head association women
Hakim	Male	40	Tinghir – in the Todgha gorge	Cook in a restaurant, renter of cars and tourist guide
Ismael	Male	30	Todra gorge	Tourist guide
Fadoul	Male	20	Caribbean island	Owner tourist mint tea bar Todgha gorge

Questions about environmental/climate changes sometimes proved problematic in Morocco, as many respondents were not necessarily familiar with climate change discourses, or did not link them to their own living environment. Inspired by Wodon et al. (2014), and in order to address this challenge, more questions were therefore asked about the *weather*, and more particularly about changes in weather events, the consequences of such weather events/changes, and people's adaptive capacity concerning such weather events. Conversely, migration patterns, histories, and trajectories were very easy to inquire about and often even served as topics for 'small talk'. This could be due to the presence of a 'culture of migration' – which refers to the feedback mechanisms of international migration that imply that the sending of information about the immigration country and migration trajectories by migrants results in a particular culture that portrays migration in a particular fashion – and influences the development of migration aspirations in the region of origin (Timmerman et al. 2014) (see Chap. 7). Respondents were further encouraged to reflect upon prevailing political trends, gender inequalities, historical developments (e.g., ethnic wars, water wars, etc.), the welfare system, religion, and the King. This helped to see how they perceived their broader society and particularly how they perceived barriers, opportunities, and conflicts within it. Finally, considerable attention was given to migrants' remittances and support networks, which were often inspired by religious motives.

The data analysis facilitating software Nvivo10 was used to structure, code, and analyse the data. Data coding was first applied in a very open coding way, followed by more axial coding (cf. Corbin and Strauss 1990). These codes were very much in line with the themes questioned in the interviews and served as a first way to organize the data and link codes together. During more in-depth analyses of the themes and the writing of the chapters, these codes were later further analysed using Word and more selected queries in Nvivo. The following main nodes/codes were used as a starting point for the analyses in the book: 'agriculture', 'aspirations', 'climate/environmental change', 'community resources', 'education', 'employment', 'gender', 'socio-demographic characteristics', 'marriage and family life', 'ethnographic fieldwork/methodology', 'migration', 'Morocco', 'religion', 'standard of living', 'social environment and discourses', and 'urban environment'. Based on these more general codes, more specific smaller codes were used and gradually built up along the way. The datasets were analysed separately for Tinghir and Tangier and contrasted against each other throughout data collection and

analyses. Within the MIGRADAPT project, researcher triangulation took place as other project members reflected on these analyses during project meetings, for instance contrasting these findings against empirical research conducted in Senegal and DR Congo.

4.4.2 Research Difficulties and Researcher Positionality in the Moroccan Fieldwork

The fact that the principal researcher was neither a local nor affiliated with the same religion, namely Islam, but a female, tall, higher-educated researcher, with blonde curls and blue eyes, aged 32, always stood out during fieldwork. Being seen as 'the other' allowed me to ask 'culturally inappropriate' questions and to behave in a way that sometimes contradicted prevailing social norms. This naturally caused some awkward moments and resulted in extra help being needed during the fieldwork. Conducting fieldwork and audio-recorded interviews caused additional stress and feelings of mutual misunderstanding. For instance, migrants who had returned from Belgium to Tangier were the only ones who seemed to prefer to conduct an interview within a fixed timeframe. Conversely, the majority of the respondents interpreted interview requests in a very broad way, understanding the interview process as something that could extend over many hours and overlap with other activities such as going for a walk, exchanging several emails, or accompanying respondents to social events or festivities. These long stretches of time devoted to conducting interviews however enabled the main researcher to better grasp respondents' day to day living, lifestyles, and constraints. It is worth noting that, for some respondents, the act of conducting an interview itself seemed to signal previous and current fear of consequences on part of the political regime. Particularly in Tangier, some (mainly male) respondents appeared to be very afraid of the political regime when conducting research (especially in public) due to their perceived limited freedom of speech in Morocco. This led them to refuse that the interview be audio-recorded or suggest that the interview takes place in somewhat remote places – such as the neighbouring beach restaurant or bay, McDonalds, or a secluded bar – or both. This was also due to the fact that most did not want to be seen with a Belgian, female, researcher at their home. Female respondents were in most cases interviewed at home or during local conferences.

Fieldwork and interviews were sometimes rendered slightly complicated due to two gender issues, signalling the need to account for gender considerations in the data analyses as well. A first issue refers to the female researcher who was, in some cases, seen as a marriage candidate, as a subordinate who should not be left alone while walking on the street. 'Hepeating' and 'mansplaining' seemed to be an inevitable feature of the main researcher's exchanges with most male respondents. For instance, male respondents sometimes felt more entitled to tell me what my research, day, or experience was about. Mansplaining was also recurrent as far as the

research topic was concerned. Yet, however inconvenient they may seem, these practices of 'hepeating' and 'mansplaining' could be used as a source of background information on a person's views on the topic of study. As it will become clear in the chapter on perceived environmental changes (Chap. 5), not everyone interpreted and defined environmental changes in a similar way. Many men repeated the discourses on climate change and how it possibly links to migration and displacement, while adding some of their interpretations. This helped to immediately gain insights in the person's views on the topic and assess whether they repeated Western discourses or whether they had additional information or linked it to the local context.

A second gender issue was more related to the data collection process itself. The search for female participants, who were often seen as unsuitable interview candidates by my contact persons, was difficult. Besides, due to higher levels of illiteracy, female respondents more frequently needed a translator. Consequently, sampling strategies changed over the course of the fieldwork as, despite the main researcher's explicit efforts to search for women respondents, male participants would pop up anyway on the street. Another difficulty during the fieldwork was related to the language barrier between the respondents and the interviewer, who is not a native speaker of French, Arabic, or Amazigh. Interviews were conducted mostly in French, but also in Dutch, English, and Spanish. In some cases where a translator was needed to interview older respondents, he or she was sought in the respondent's immediate surroundings (e.g. neighbour, cousin). After transcription and translation of the interview content, the main researcher noticed that translating biases only occurred when the respondent and the translator were from a different sex, and the interpretation of the interviews was done accordingly (which was the case for two interviews, both conducted with the same translator).

This brings us to the final issue of reflection, namely language-related issues. As the main researcher was not proficient in either Arabic or Amazigh, French was instead mainly used to communicate. The fact that the main researcher was also not a native speaker of French meant that plain and straightforward words and expressions were used, thus helping to relate with respondents who had also only learnt French as a second language. In the case of more proficient French speakers, their advanced level seemed to emphasize 'otherness' and gave them an incentive to speak more, to provide additional insights, and to explain everything in detail. Sometimes, the combination of being a non-native French speaker and local dialects complicated communication, albeit never in a sense that communication was made impossible. Together with lack of local language proficiency, additional attention was needed to become familiar with the local customs, cultures, and habits. This already became clear in the way of responding to my requests for interviews and their interpretation. In particular, 'Inshallah' was often given in response to a request to meet and conduct an interview, which was too frequently interpreted by the main researcher as a 'yes'. Only later did the usage of this word by other respondents – although it could certainly refer to a 'yes' – appear more nuanced. As the usage of this word is vague, it also may be used as a polite way to decline interview requests. Similarly, the interpretation of 'time' could differ, but often turned out to have positive sides as well. As many last-minute decisions were made regarding the timing, the researcher

had to ‘let go’ of her very fixed interpretation of time and schedules and be as flexible as possible. If interviews were planned too far ahead, in many cases, they were likely to be rescheduled, cancelled, or even forgotten about. On the other hand, it proved extremely easy to schedule an interview ‘on the spot’ or in the near future. The challenge was to keep the agenda as empty as possible, without losing opportunities to meet new people and respondents.

Throughout the duration of the fieldwork, there were many other ways to become familiar with Morocco, beyond getting to learn more about Moroccan cultures and habits. One was to attend a local conference, as illustrated in the following field notes extract. This is a perfect illustration of how the main researcher became familiar with Moroccan culture and habits, such as eating times, sharing food, the importance of the King, the attraction of conferences for associations, and the functioning of associations in Morocco. As a researcher, the two conferences attended during the fieldwork were very insightful as they enabled me to meet other (international and local) researchers from a wide variety of disciplines, as well as local policymakers, heads of associations, and vulnerable groups. The first conference attended by the researcher was held in Ouarzazate before starting the fieldwork in Tinghir, while the second was in Tinghir itself in the middle of the fieldwork. Some of the interviews were conducted and important contacts for the rest of the fieldwork were made during the second conference. When conducting fieldwork, there was a clear need to understand how locals communicate, how they use social media, at what time they eat, and much more. Surprisingly, attending a Moroccan conference increased my researcher reflexivity and questioned personal characteristics and assumptions. Thus, the first conference attended in Ouarzazate was very illustrative of how one is expected to behave and how this sometimes contrasted with the expectations and assumptions of the researcher. This experience increased the researcher’s awareness of Moroccan ‘rules of conduct’, facilitating the fieldwork afterwards. Below is an excerpt from some of the field notes from the first conference in Ouarzazate, which can be used to further illustrate this point:

> This may sound very academic, but you never really get to know a culture … until you attend a local conference. For my current research project, I did my best to understand Moroccan culture in order to better understand Moroccans’ decision-making processes in life. And as it turns out: attending a conference in Ouarzazate helped me to actually feel and experience Moroccan culture at its best. After ‘intensively’ searching for three weeks to find people in Tangier (Morocco) that were willing to do an interview with me, talking about their migration aspirations and whether this was related to climate change effects in their region of origin, I found out there was a conference organized on climate change in Morocco in the following weeks. My contact – which I found through an announcement in a Facebook group – sent me a message on Whatsapp, to contact through Whatsapp a woman he knew. As already had become clear over the past weeks, Whatsapp was my new way of communication with everyone and even ‘recruiting’ new respondents for my research. Although I love sending smileys, chatting and crazy animated GIFs, I could have never imagined that this would be the start of my new adventure, namely becoming an international speaker at a Moroccan conference on Territorial Marketing. After some Whatsapp messages, a late-night call and the submission of my abstract, I got accepted.
>
> Eager as I was to meet local academics working on the same topic, I could not be fast enough to search for a nice hotel during an important period that would give a boost to my fieldwork

and get me started. Wrong thought! The day before the conference, my contact person on Whatsapp was so kind to share the directions to the hotel. Say what? Yes, apparently, it was all included and I would better be there. Stubborn and slightly confused, I refused as I already had arranged a cab that would pick me up at the airport (at 1 a.m.) and reserved a hotel room elsewhere. Thanks, but no thanks, problem solved. While waiting in the middle of the night for the cab driver, I saw a van searching for people, then heard my name and they politely suggested to stay at their hotel. Despite many more attempts to refuse their offer and a cab driver that could arrive any minute, it was clearly an offer I couldn't refuse. This was the moment I knew this would be a special kind of conference. These initial thoughts were immediately confirmed when around 2ish, in the middle of the night, the conference team was still present to do the registration of all newly arrived conference members, and to show me my shared room. Nice, nice, I gave up my initial private hotel room, to start my registration in the middle of the night and to share my room. Although nobody arrived at night, I could not really understand this type of hospitality – why would they prefer this? I did not really know what to do with my individualist habits and preferences. I secretly wished I could have refused their offer to join the conference van and give up my personal space. I did not only get lost in the sense that I did not know why the conference organizers would prefer this, I also did not know exactly where I was and what they had planned for me throughout the rest of the conference. The conference was in Arabic, in French, and if you wanted even in English. This lack of sense of direction, combined with – in my opinion unseen – terrible time management, I did not have any clue when I would present, where I would present and when we would eat. They seemed to be freewheeling with the conference agenda, in which at least half of the speakers were not present, and sudden changes were made to the conference program, leaving me really lost in translation.

The feeling of being lost just got stronger every second. Firstly, when I was asked to pose for a picture in front of the conference room for local television (note to self: never wear a fleece at a conference again) or when a lady during lunch, part of the traditional festivities of the conference, sat next to me at my table and started eating my bread, asking me for some money. Men all over the conference thought I – a 32-year old post-doctoral scholar – had accidentally shown up at a conference and started to 'mansplain' my discipline to me and research topics like their lives depended on it. During many conversations, I didn't even have to say anything to keep the conversation going, although we were only with the two of us. This was not limited to the Moroccan academics, certainly not, and applied just to all men present. My name had magically changed into 'la mademoiselle charmante' or 'la gazelle' and they were teaching me sociology, like I had no clue whatsoever what that could possibly mean. Hardly asking my real background and expertise, all these men would be very glad to help this helpless student, and were happy to explain my research topic – to me. Was it just me, or would it have been an alienated experience for everyone? Someone even tried to explain to me the Belgian governance structure. Although I know the Belgian governance structure is quite hard to explain – and I fully appreciate their efforts – this started to become quite awkward.

These lost feelings were even more strengthened during the second day, when the organizers told us to pack our bags and change hotels. As I already did not have any clue anymore where I was and what would happen, I did not refuse anymore and just packed my stuff, ready to change hotel in the morning. Wrong thought again! We would drop our stuff and as we were already quite late, we would immediately go to the conference venue. Again, we had to leave our stuff at a random parking lot, which made it difficult to estimate when I would be back and if I would manage to find my own luggage by myself. Being already more at ease during the second day of the conference and trying to not pay attention to the time schedule of the conference program, I was happy to find out that there was a lunch around 3.30 p.m. (instead of 1 p.m.), until 5 p.m., where we shared our food – as is common

in Moroccan culture. Everyone at my table ate with their hands from one big plate and they had a lot of fun with my clumsiness in doing so. The end of the conference came nearer and hours were spent thanking each other – just like the first day of the conference – in Arabic, taking pictures, dancing with the local singing and dance group, and last but certainly not least: the reading of the letter to the King. Thinking of my own king and his family, I asked in which way he would be updated about the content of this letter. 'He would find out' they said.

Surprised, satisfied and still slightly lost, I already longed to go to my hotel room. Feeling quite exhausted and disgusted by all forms of mansplaining, I wished I did not have to talk to people anymore, especially men, or being polite. Honestly, this is often a true wish after all types of conferences – which are always quite exhausting – this time I really meant it and needed it, already partly due to the long working days. I was not able to be nice to any more men that forced me to listen to their ideas about Belgium and the so-called lazy Moroccan immigrants that lived there, being ignored when trying to tell them that I actually was no longer a student and I had passed that period already quite some years now and trying to have an equal conversation without being treated as a silly young kiddo. Still happy with the insights and contacts I derived at the conference, I stepped on the bus to the hotel. Interesting experience. I met a young PhD student that did his research in Belgium in the bus and we talked a bit about Brussels, while the bus slowly but surely drove us into the desert. I have to admit, this is the moment where I felt hijacked as I really longed for some quiet time and wanted my freedom back. Gala dinner party here we come! I immediately thought I would search a cab and return after we had arrived, I really could not take it anymore. However, as there are no cabs waiting somewhere at night in the desert, I could not do anything else but look at the amazing starry night and surrender. My initial female contact that organized my presence at the conference, must have seen 'desperate' written in my eyes, as she left her entire extended family (!) and joined me at my table. Soup was served around 11.30 p.m., nobody was getting worried or freaked out. People were telling each other 'wow, *je suis fatigué*', but waited carefully for the local traditional dances, the poem read out loud by an important local policymaker of the cultural sector, for dinner – all four menus – to be served and to – again – check in at our hotel around 2 a.m. This last dinner showed me how I should have left my initial assumptions behind and delved into another way of living, how time is just a social construct, how sharing is caring and how much mansplaining is still alive and kicking.

While many feelings of being lost could have been easily avoided I guess, this conference gave me a quick insight into the Moroccan culture that focuses on sharing, accepting social obligations and flexible organization style. As ethnocentric it may seem, one cannot easily forget about their cultural background, despite being eager to learn and even attempt to study 'the other'. The ethnocentricity of my experience did not necessarily lie in the acceptance of the differences, but really referred to my internal and very strong resistance towards having less control over my personal schedule during these three conference days. While I certainly do not suggest that I did not have any freedom during this Moroccan conference, I rather refer to the lack of predictability of the recurring events, habits, and frequently made mistakes, which are very common for 'outsiders'. I kind of freaked out when people were really chill, even when a conference slot surpassed its time, not by one minute or even five but by an entire hour or so. Exactly this lack of being able to estimate when I would be home after attending this gala desert party with dancing nomads in tents in the desert, eating our dessert in the middle of the night, caused considerable acculturation stress and made me wish I could be a minute by myself. Familiarity with cultural practices, time schedules and expectations, would make me more relaxed and even enjoy the recurring sharing practices that characterize Moroccan culture and traditions, and understand that sharing is really caring!

This extract from the researcher diary during the fieldwork demonstrates that researcher reflexivity can never be underestimated during fieldwork and is a very powerful exercise that needs to be conducted at all stages of the research: questioning oneself about one's feelings about particular cultural habits and practices, and critically reflecting about what they say about yourself as a researcher and the society/research setting you find yourself in (cf. Finlay 2002).

To conclude, taking up an outsider perspective to conduct fieldwork on environmental changes and how they relate to migration aspirations and patterns in Morocco was overall very challenging but insightful. These experiences during the fieldwork that were related to researcher positionality need to be taken seriously during data analysis as they could signal recurring processes of the local Moroccan cultures of the regions studied that are also challenges, breaking points, or division lines in everyday Moroccan life.

4.5 Research Methods in Belgium

The interviews conducted in Belgium were conducted by several researchers from the MIGRADAPT team between December 2017 and July 2019.[3] The research team conducted 17 in-depth semi-structured qualitative interviews with Moroccans living in the Brussels-Capital Region (City of Brussels, Molenbeek-Saint-Jean, Auderghem, Schaerbeek) as well as in Liège, in Belgium's Wallonia region.

4.5.1 *Data Collection and Material*

Half of the respondents (n = 9) from our sample came from Tangier (either from the city itself or from rural towns located on its outskirts such as Gzenaya and Beni Ouriaghli). The rest came from Larache (a harbour town located 80 km south of Tangier), Tetouan (another harbour town nearby the Spanish enclave of Ceuta and the Strait of Gibraltar), Kaa Asrass (a coastal town 50 km south of Tetouan), Berkane (in north-eastern Morocco), Sidi Slimane (a small city in the north-western centre of Morocco located between Kenitra and Meknes), and Tinghir (an oasis in the Todgha valley). The majority of respondents were men (n = 12). Almost half of the sample (n = 7) had been in Belgium for a period exceeding 45 years, while the other half was split between those who had arrived less than 10 years ago (n = 5) and those who had arrived 10–30 years prior (n = 4). The average age of our respondents was 48.5 years, with a balanced distribution between different age categories (Table 4.3).

[3]The authors wish to thank the respondents for taking part in this research, as well as Maeva Belloiseau and David Mompoint Jeune for their crucial role in the data collection process.

Table 4.3 Respondents interviewed in Belgium

Pseudonyms	Gender	Age	City of birth	Occupation
Formal interviews (tape-recorded or written)				
Farida	Female	46	Tangier	Teacher (on career break)
Hossam	Male	64	Tangier	Transport Agent
Chafiq	Male	63	Tangier (Gzenaya)	Transport Agent
Latif	Male	52	Tangier	Cleaner (owned a butchery in Morocco)
Farid	Male	60	Tangier (Beni Ouriaghli)	Transport agent
Nassim	Male	58	Tangier	Factory worker
Samir	Male	53	Tangier	Social worker
Farouk	Male	57	Tangier	Stopped working due to health issues (former bus driver)
Omar	Male	70	Larache	Retired (ex-factory worker in Belgium, formerly a fisherman in Morocco)
Saida	Female	30	Sidi Slimane	PhD student and freelance journalist
Amina	Female	27	Tetouan	Master student
Cherifa	Female	26	Tetouan	Master student
Hamid	Male	42	Tinghir	Unemployed
Marouane	Male	49	Larache	Instructor at the social welfare services (formerly a teacher in Morocco)
Nabil	Male	50	Berkane	House painter (same job as in Morocco)
Informal interviews (not recorded)				
Rachida	Female	39	Tangier	Secretary
Kamel	Male	40	Kaa Asrass	NGO worker

4.5.2 Research Difficulties and Researcher Positionality in Belgium

Fieldwork proved more challenging than anticipated due to a number of methodological and practical issues which hindered our access to a larger and more balanced sample of respondents – in terms of age, gender, socio-economic background, area of origin in Morocco, and length of stay in Belgium. For instance, migrants who had been in Belgium for longer periods of time (and who were, in many cases, bi-nationals) were more likely to accept an interview than newcomers (defined as migrants who had arrived in Belgium no more than 5 years prior to the interview). Although this is consistent with the long tradition of Moroccan immigration to Belgium and the subsequent large numbers of first-generation migrants who have become Belgian citizens since their arrival (see Chap. 3), this contributed to the distortion of the age balance within our sample.

The research team overcame these challenges by adapting to the research context and notably through expanding the initial sampling criteria to include respondents who had been in Belgium for a period exceeding 10 years, as well as respondents

who came from outside of Tangier and Tinghir (the two initial areas of origin considered by the MIGRADAPT project). The team therefore widened the scope of its investigation to include various experiences of migration between Morocco to Belgium rather than focusing solely and specifically on 'recent' migration trends. Furthermore, although the majority of respondents (and people approached to participate in the interviews) were from Tangier, it appeared far more difficult to identify individuals from Tinghir (in fact, only one respondent from Tinghir could be identified). Many people we approached had never even heard of Tinghir. This can be linked to the fact that, historically speaking, most migrants from Tinghir initially moved to France, followed by Belgium and the Netherlands. These cultures of migration explain why people from Tinghir form a minority within the Moroccan community in Belgium (which is overwhelmingly composed of people coming from the Rif) and the added difficulty of identifying respondents or even intermediaries who could point us to the *Tinghirien* community. As a result, the research team had to deviate from its original intention to concentrate on both Tangier and Tinghir and instead decided to focus on Tangier, incorporating respondents from the greater Rif region (Tetouan, Kaa Asrass, Larache, Berkane) in the sample. Indeed, the geographical and socio-cultural proximity across these locations suggested adequate potential for comparison. Eventually, the sample also included respondents from more distant cities, such as Sidi Slimane and Tinghir, as the respondents in question had internal migration experience (including in Tangier) and proved to have very relevant experience and insights about environmental changes facing Morocco as a whole.

The second difficulty lay in overcoming the apprehensions of many prospective respondents – especially newcomers – regarding our research, which focused on two politicized and thus sensitive topics, namely migration and climate change. Some suspected us of being ill-intentioned undercover civil servants or police officers, thus explaining the difficulties in finding respondents who had arrived recently (less than 5 years ago) in Belgium unless they were here regularly (such as international students). While looking for respondents in a well-known market in Brussels, two Belgian-Moroccans we had initially approached to discuss our research warned us that it would be difficult for us to find people to interview, telling us: 'a lot of people working here are illegal migrants . . . If they see you with your notepads and your glasses, they will become suspicious'. This was confirmed in several instances, where we were greeted with questions such as: 'Are you from the police?' Showing our University ID proved to be a good strategy to dispel their doubts but did not always lead to an agreement to interview. Introducing ourselves as 'students' – which we were – rather than 'researchers' also seemed to cause less distrust. In some cases, we had to adapt the ways in which we introduced the research, avoiding terms such as 'interrogate' (*interroger in French*) and 'migration journey' (*parcours migratoire* in French). Instead, we stressed the environmental focus of the research topic (as the topic of climate/environmental change seemed to be perceived as more neutral and less sensitive than that of migration) as well as its expected outcomes, namely formulating policy recommendations to help improve both migration and climate change/development policies in both Belgium and Morocco, through

knowledge co-creation. Interestingly, when explaining that we were specifically interested in studying the interlinkages between migration and environmental change in the context of Moroccan immigration to Belgium, its (perceived) lack of relevance as a migration driver was sometimes used as an excuse to decline our invitation to interview, the person arguing that they would not be able to provide us with adequate insights. Although we would explain that we were also interested in their perceptions of such disruptions, no matter whether they had experienced them first-hand or not, it was often difficult, if not impossible, to move past this first refusal. This unease can also be exemplified by the fact that a few respondents did not want to speak on the record. In some other cases, especially when entering shops, people politely refused to meet at a later time, claiming that they were busy and would not have time to meet after work either.

Similar to the difficulties encountered in the Moroccan fieldwork, the main researcher was also a young, white, female, which increased feelings of 'otherness', especially when trying to identify potential participants in male-dominated public places. In order to tackle this, prospecting was done in pairs and, eventually, by a male researcher who was able to enter cafes, shops, and organisations that were mainly attended by men without overly standing out as an outsider. This strategy proved more successful to identify (male) participants. It is worth noting that the only female respondents from our sample were either highly educated, or students. Female workers in shops would often cut the conversation short and at times would ask that we speak with their husband instead.

The most successful way to secure interviews consisted of identifying 'gate-keepers' which sometimes led to follow-up interviews and eventually improved access to respondents. This was done by means of contacting the representatives of local non-profit organisations (ASBL) – usually focused on youth, sports, and culture – that served as community gatekeepers and were more inclined to discuss issues with a high social relevance such as migration aspirations, integration, social cohesion, and environmental changes. This allowed the team to move beyond their portrayal as 'outsiders' and to gain access through the support of an 'insider'. Indeed, something that quickly became clear was the inherent bias in presuming someone's nationality, especially as an outsider. As mentioned earlier, this bias could however be reduced as much as possible through targeting shops and associations that clearly displayed their attachment to Morocco or through snowball sampling and individual referrals, especially in neighbourhoods that are known to host large immigrant populations.

4.6 Conclusions

The main aim of this chapter is to set out the methodological context of the research conducted in Morocco and Belgium and to provide more details on the research participants, data collection procedures, and the researchers' positionality as well as on the difficulties encountered during the data collection phase. One main finding

already arises from this chapter. Although there are considerable migration exchanges and networks between Belgium and Morocco, the environment-migration nexus is not necessarily a linear relationship and migrants – including those potentially migrating because of environmental reasons – may follow a more fragmented journey on their way to Belgium. Hence, this also made us reflect upon the rationale of the MIGRADAPT project which supports the hypothesis that migrant networks and both social and financial remittances sent back to the place of origin could contribute to adaptation to environmental changes and relate to environmental migration. By selecting a Moroccan region that is heavily affected by environmental change (Tinghir) and one that hosts high numbers of internal migrants (Tangier), we encountered difficulties matching respondents in Tinghir to migrants living in Belgium. While migrant networks between Tinghir and Belgium clearly exist, they are relatively less-developed than the ones tying other Moroccan regions (e.g. Rif area) to Belgium. Nevertheless, interviews with Moroccans in Morocco and with Moroccan migrants living in Belgium offered a more nuanced view on how environmental changes interact with other social, political, economic, and demographic circumstances across time and space.

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