

Chapter 3

The Scalability of a High Atlas Valley

This chapter deals with *NGO-ization* as a mode of life in the High Atlas. In the whole valley, as I have been told, more than 40 associations are registered. They have diverging motivations, interests, and number of members. Most of them seem to be dormant or inactive. Only a handful are active and doing visible work in the valley. Most of them are community-based organizations (CBO) that organize projects concerning the village in general, such as renovating or expanding the mosque and irrigation channels, organizing public transport for school children and public circumcision ceremonies, or providing drinking water. Besides the local associations or CBOs there are a few non-governmental and non-profit organizations active in the valley that are based elsewhere. Some are from other parts of Morocco, some from outside Morocco. As with the recent and profound infrastructural changes, the number of NGOs has markedly increased in recent years, contributing to the transformation of the High Atlas valley. With their work, they have taken on a significant new role as mediators and representatives for various concerns directly related to shaping the conditions for everyday life in the valley.

First, I will introduce the two main organizations that were important for my work on the ground, the local association Amezray SMNID and the US American NGO *Atlas Cultural Foundation* (ACF). For the sake of the argument here presented and to take into account the chronology of their origins, I will delineate each separately. Though each has its own working model, the two can only be separated analytically. At the time of

my research, they realized almost all major projects in close combination and with a certain orderly division of labor. As a Moroccan community-based organization, SMNID was mainly responsible for the coordination work with public agencies while as a US American NGO, ACF was mainly tasked with addressing international volunteering groups.

Development I: Helping for Progress

Almost thirty years ago now, James Ferguson and Arturo Escobar showed—in their distinct but complementary ways—that development aid and its procedures and processes are (compelled to be) rather dysfunctional. Ferguson (1990) intriguingly argued that the system of development aid produces results that are not initially planned and on occasion not even intended. At the same time, they contribute to a fundamental depoliticization in their respective fields of operation. He thus calls it an *anti-politics machine*. Escobar on the other hand, set about deconstructing the hegemonial discourse of development, which in its historical formation is “giving rise to an efficient apparatus that systematically relates forms of knowledge and techniques of power” (Escobar 1995: 10).

The field of development cooperation is permeated by questions of power and involves various dynamics and actors, such as: communities or societies that want or *need* to develop; elites; experts; and donors who—more or less collaboratively—assume the task of bringing about development. The field equally includes models, ideas, and solutions with which such development is to be achieved. In other words, the peculiarity of development can be thought of as a “*synthèse entre les aspirations d’une élite, les attentes d’une population et les conceptions des bailleurs de fonds*” (Lacroix 2005: 148). Beyond dealing with and problematizing development as discourse, recent scholars have shifted attention to development as a social phenomenon (Sardan 2005) and have highlighted that the seeming coherence of development is first and foremost the achievement of a variety of practices (Mosse 2005; Yarrow 2011). The turn to a more ethnographic approach towards development as practice “constitutes an explicit attempt to reveal the moral and social worlds in

which ideas of development are made meaningful” (Yarrow/Venkatesan 2014: 8). This, however, does not simultaneously constitute an apologetic or uncritical turn, but places the critical engagement as result of “a negotiated outcome of development practice” (ibid.).

In the valley where I conducted my own fieldwork, development cooperation issues have become so salient as to be impossible to ignore. Here, however, development cooperation unfolds less as a playground of an *aid industry* involving nation states and supranational actors, but rather as based on the initiatives of committed individuals. Nonetheless, initiatives do take place within the framework of global and mostly neoliberal policies. The driving force behind these initiatives is the preceding diagnosis of a lack that needs to be addressed. This questionable perspective of deficiency is closely linked to notions of development, especially in relation to the Global South and most notably in Africa (Ferguson 2006).

How this perspective expresses itself locally is suggested by notes from my research journal: “they decided to help them”. *They*, referring to a French couple that together with several people from the village decided to become active and to help. *Them*, that is people of the High Atlas, and in particular the village of Amezray, where I lived and conducted my research. When noting down the remarks, I was sitting in the multi-purpose building of the association Amezray SMNID. A board member of the association was speaking to a group of students from an American school who were visiting the valley as part of an intercultural learning and volunteering program. The program included a meeting with the village’s major association, to learn about their work and their motives for starting the association. The board member continued: “...they helped them, because they saw a lot of things they did not have... they were in need of a lot of things and projects”. Taken on its own, the statement presents a characterization of a community, which appears to be primarily defined by a lack or by an absence. Comparing this absence with one’s own life world or lifestyle creates motivation and reason enough to become active: to get involved in other people’s lives and seek to improve their living conditions. On the one hand, it expresses the profound empathy of the French couple with the people in the High Atlas but it also

operates with a fundamental hierarchical divide that cannot be dissolved by the aid provided.

What, then, does development mean for the valley? In this case it means, above all, a widespread *NGO-ization*, that is, the emergence and growth of associations of different interest groups in the region for the most diverse concerns. But it is also the formation of a specific constellation of people, both local and transnational, who have made it their task and purpose to bring about *progress*.

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The local association Amezray SMNID is a community-based organization, comprised only of people from the village of Amezray. It was founded to organize the interests of the villagers and bring forward improvements of the living conditions. Quite directly, the name of the organization speaks to its motives and the overall objective: *s-mnid* being an adjective/adverb in the local Berber dialect of Tashelhit. The word *mnid* translates to “in front of”, “before”, or “ahead”. The *s* is a preposition that is added as a prefix, expressing movement and directionality. It roughly translates as “to”. Put together then, the term *s-mnid* can be translated as “forward”, “towards what lies ahead”, or also (towards) “the future”. The association would translate it into French as: “*vers l’avant*”.

The relationship established by association president Mohamed with a certain French couple played central role in founding the association. Mohamed had previously worked as a mountain guide in tourism and had become friends with the couple in the course of their touristic visits and hikes through Morocco. Ever more regular visits followed, which eventually led to the foundation of a French association, *Les Amis du village Amezray* (referred to hereafter as AVA). The couple was determined to support the people living in Amezray and wanted to contribute to improve the living conditions. They thus founded AVA together with some friends in early 2003, a private association of *classical* development aid. They started “helping” by collecting donations in France and bringing these to the valley. They consisted both of monetary donations, as well as clothes, books, other materials. The idea was that working together suc-

cessfully and sustainably necessitated the creation of a Moroccan NGO. After Mohamed had promoted the idea among the inhabitants of the village and had explained the objectives, he and 19 representatives of the village founded Amezray SMNID in August 2003, only a few months after the French association had been created.¹

After its creation, the association grew steadily and implemented a variety of different projects concerning the areas of education, health, economy, agriculture, environment, and culture. Overall, as mission statement states, the association was founded “*avec l’objectif d’améliorer la qualité de vie*” in the region. Once a year the association holds its general assembly to which all members are invited and where full account is given concerning the realized projects and the financing. Already in 2005, more than 150 members attended. The association consists of a board, which is headed by the president and which includes other crucial positions such as a secretary and treasurer. The general assembly functions as a setting for the review of past, and the planning of future, activities. It is a space in which to evaluate the urgency, feasibility, and appropriateness of suggested projects. Finally, small votes occur to determine which new projects should be realized.

The projects that the association started with were initially financed completely by the French partner association, while the necessary work was carried out by Amezray SMNID. The first projects were mainly water-related infrastructural improvements, such as building water tanks for the main village and a number of adjacent settlements as well as enforcing the main irrigation channels. They had been built mainly with stones and soil, and thus had to be renewed regularly. Partly rebuilding them with concrete meant securing the water supply for the village’s agricultural production. Other governmental and non-governmental actors would later contribute to financing particular projects.

1 Tellingly enough, the associations logo consists of a schematic map of France, in which a knotted rope unwinds or unties towards the lower part of the logo (representing the southern part of France) and reaches beyond the borders of France. Thus, the close relation to France becomes apparent and images of *pulling on the same rope* and even *handing a lifeline* come to mind.

This included an apiculture project, for example, where materials and knowhow were transferred with a view to hosting bee populations and producing honey. The beekeepers could sell the honey on regional markets. In a similar vein, livestock was donated to economically weak families who could then breed the animals for an additional source of income. These projects aimed at improving the living conditions of the community by introducing and supporting economic opportunities with a mid to long-term perspective. Thereby, people should not just receive help or charity, but be supported in working for themselves and thus “helping themselves” more sustainably.

This was part of national development schemes that the Moroccan government promoted and implemented all over the country and largely followed principles of community-driven development.² In 2005, the Moroccan state had launched its *Initiative Nationale pour le Développement Humain* (INDH), the central development program, which in the wording of the World Bank is a “nationwide social inclusion program aimed at fostering social development and cohesion while furthering more open governance” (World Bank 2017: 1). Change and improvement concerning the “conditions of poor and vulnerable groups” should be advanced “through enhanced economic opportunities, better access to basic services, and improved governance” (World Bank 2017: 1). For the period between 2005 and 2011, INDH had a financial volume of 14 billion Dh, which according to the report financed more than 22,000 activities, translating into the number of 5.2 million beneficiaries reached (World Bank 2017: 2). In 2011, the second phase of the initiative was launched³ and—with constitutional amendments in the same year—the decentral-

2 This included national programs such as the *Programme d'électrification rural général* (PERG), *Programme d'approvisionnement groupé en eau potable des populations Rurales* (PAGER), or *Programme national de construction de route en milieu rural* (PNCRR). See for instance Lacroix (2005: 161-167).

3 The third phase of the initiative (2019-2023) was announced by the king in July 2018 and officially launched in September of the same year. See <http://ww.indh.ma/chantier-de-regne/#discours> (last accessed, 24/08/2019).

ization agenda and mechanisms for greater participation by “citizens and associations” were further promoted and fostered (Bergh 2017).

In direct comparison, however, the contribution of the state development initiative was significantly lower than that of the highly active French association, AVA. From early on, SMNID also started to support the education of school children, by donating books, notebooks, pens, and school bags. Members of the association would also occasionally give French lessons during their stay. Collaborating with AVA also opened up a new distribution channel through which local products could find new buyers. In this way, carpets made in the valley were sold in France. The two associations even set up fixed-price tables to ensure transparency and a regulated procedure. Eventually it financed the construction of a building in the village that was supposed to function as multi-purpose center for Amezray SMNID. It was furnished and then used to hold meetings, store materials, and for educational workshop sessions. It contained the association’s office and even a small library.⁴

Before the state expanded the power lines, and before electricity reached the valley, mostly gas lamps lit the living rooms. Both associations therefore installed a water-driven turbine near the river in 2007 to produce electricity for the village of Amezray. Households were thus supplied with electricity and the purchase of other electrical appliances such as refrigerators and televisions increased. Amezray SMNID also realized other infrastructure projects, such as the construction of a pedestrian bridge over the river, the fortification of water sources for the semi-nomadic pastoralists, or the construction of staircases in the village that made paths over steep slopes more accessible.

4 At the same location, later another multi-purpose building was added to meet the increased demand for premises in order to be able to organize tutoring sessions and workshops. This new building housed the computer club (see chapter two).

Paradigms of Development Policies: Decentralization and Participation

Here it is fitting to include Sylvia Bergh's study on development politics in Morocco, in order to be able to put the association's work into a comparative framework. The study focuses on decentralization reforms and participatory approaches in the context of rural development programs and their impact on local governance.⁵ Based on an analysis of 50 community-based organizations, Bergh provides an intriguing overview of their policies and workings.⁶ As to why local people start an association of their own, she gathered the following:

Regardless of the true impact of donor policy on the creation of associations, many interviewees cited providing basic infrastructure in their village, such as potable water provision, as the main reason for establishing an association. Several created their association as a response to others being created in neighbouring villages. Sometimes this was cited in connection with the resulting ability to request a service such as drinking water from the government. Others put it more directly as the need to be a legal entity in order to implement projects. As one interviewee put it, 'Even the *makhzen* (here used in the sense of government administration in general) won't talk to you if you don't have an association in your village. If they have a project to give to a

5 Bergh herself is an advocate for a participatory approach to development that she wishes to re-politicize. This may stem from her own experience as practitioner in the field of development cooperation with the World Bank. She makes her conviction quite explicit by writing that she aims "to strengthen the case for truly transformative development based on popular participation, and to promote the view that development should be seen as a process of structural change in society rather than as a series of deliberate (outside) interventions" (Bergh 2017: 38).

6 Right at the beginning she specifies that almost half of them were not pursuing projects or were not active at all during her research stays (see Bergh 2017: 172). This is reminiscent of my own context, where on paper there are said to be a large number of associations, but very few are active.

village they always want to communicate and work with an association.' Several other interviewees made statements to the same effect. (Bergh 2017: 169-170)

Besides that, Bergh stresses that political considerations or personal ambitions may also be reasons for founding an association. Further, she lists the variety of projects that she observed. She separates the major work of the organizations into social, infrastructural, and income-generating projects:

- commune-wide circumcision campaigns
- vaccines and medicine
- awareness-raising campaigns on AIDS and prostitution
- maintaining the school buildings
- sporting events for children
- literary classes for women
- forums on rural tourism
- celebration for Amazigh New Year, study of the ancient rock engravings, Tamazight language classes and theater plays
- drinking water provision
- irrigation networks
- road tracks
- mosque construction or upgrading
- local garbage dump (Bergh 2017: 173-175)

Concerning the projects with which associations try to generate income, according to Bergh the findings suggest that one should be cautious in evaluating their capacity to raise local living standards in the long-term. Among those projects she names: textile work and weaving (especially for women); planting of fruit trees; bee-keeping; donating livestock to associations or people; and tourism activities. In the aforementioned introduction we encountered some of these same points.

For Bergh, many of those income-generating projects entail something she calls *management problems* and she elucidates this with an ethnographic example of planting fruit trees:

[...] when the trees are planted on forest domain, the association needs to agree with the water and forestry services how the profits will be shared. This is the case in Tassa Ouirgane [one of her field sites, S.H.] with the carob trees planted with the GTZ. In other cases, the tiny size of farming plots in the mountain areas mean that fruit tree distribution is simply not appropriate. However, they can still be useful to the association, as this example from the association in Tiziane [another field site, S.H.] shows: ‘We took the trees and we sold them to others and we made a list of the people we gave them to (so that we can show the list to the DPA in case they come to inspect the trees). Because it’s better for the association to sell the trees in order to have money to do something else. (*What did you do with the money?*) We bought the pipes to connect the households to drinking water and we repaired the mosque. There were people who didn’t have land to plant the trees so it was better for them to sell them to someone who has land and who has access to irrigation water. That way they won’t die.’ (Bergh 2017: 177-178)

This somewhat lengthy consideration of Bergh’s study is intended to show how flexible, pragmatic, but also diverse the local manifestation of rural development can be (see Vasantkumar 2017). What is important in contextualizing my own descriptions is that the valley of Zawiya Ahansal is by no means an exceptional case when it comes to questions of development cooperation, NGO activity, and underlying ideas and logics of how to “progress” economically. The recourse to Bergh’s findings makes it clear that larger development schemes—such as decentralization and participation—form the policy frameworks in which NGOs in Morocco (must) operate.

Where the depth of Bergh’s study suffers somewhat, however, is the connection of individual CBOs with other (transnational) actors, something that is particularly impressive in the case of Amezray SM-NID. The association focused its initial work and projects on the village of Amezray. Later on, and especially after they had started working together with the US American NGO Atlas Cultural Foundation (ACF), the two central villages of Agoudim and Amezray became the main locations

for implementing projects. In fact, SMNID and ACF designed projects in such a way that the projects would either benefit both communities and the wider valley equally, or would be realized in both villages. From then on, most projects were jointly financed and implemented by the Moroccan association (Amezray SMNID), the French NGO (AVA), and the new US American NGO (ACF). Subsequently, the American NGO would replace the French NGO as the largest donor.

Development II: Restauration and Education

The Atlas Cultural Foundation (ACF) was founded by an American architect in 2009 after repeatedly coming back to the High Atlas Mountains and the particular valley for vacation. Struck by the natural beauty of the landscape and people, she was puzzled by the lack of heritage preservation. The once prestigious saintly houses and granaries (*ighrim*, pl. *igherman*) were slowly falling apart and only as ruins continued to tell a rich and powerful history. This then, was the motivation to start engaging in the region in the first place. In order to start doing work on the ground, three things were indispensable: raising funds and finding donors in the US; getting official documents and admissions from the Moroccan state authorities; and finding local cooperation partners.

The first restoration of an *ighrim* was carried out by ACF together with SMNID and AVA in 2009 and 2010. The building—located in Amezray (upper village)—was constructed in the 17th century with earth, mud, stone and wood, as was typical for the south of Morocco.⁷ It had allegedly been built by a descendant of the valley's founding father, who himself has been an important figure for the history of the valley. The *ighrim* functioned as a fortified communal granary, where grain and other materials were stored or animals housed. In addition, it was used for defense in armed conflicts with neighbouring communities or even with the French army during the time of the protectorate. The other

7 All the buildings are said to have been originally built by craftsman from the territory of the adjacent Ait Abdi territory or from even further south of Morocco with the help of local workers.

ighrim of Amezray (lower village), which had historically served the same purposes, was restored in 2013.

Figure 6: Restored *ighrim* of Amezray (upper village)



In 2011, however, ACF received a statement of partnership from the Moroccan Ministry of Culture in order to manage the restoration of the historic structures of the buildings. The first building was restored in Amezray, while the second—located in Agoudim—was restored in cooperation with the Moroccan Ministry of Culture in 2011 and 2012. In contrast to the village of Amezray, the *igherman* in Agoudim had not been commonly owned as there had been more than one granary for the main village settlement⁸. In fact, four *igherman* were built in Agoudim, as there were four important families who could trace their direct lineage to the founder of the valley. The heads of the respective sacred lineages occupied extraordinary social positions, which was also reflected in the representative buildings. Besides storing goods, materials, and livestock, the *igherman* were also used to host and accommodate

8 For clarification, two *igherman* can be found in Amezray due to the two main settlements of the village: one for the upper and one for the lower village.

pilgrims who come to the valley in order to visit the tomb of the founding father Sidi Said. The other *igherman* were then restored in 2014/2015, in 2015/2016, and the last and oldest one in 2017/2018.

Hence, in the course of almost ten years, all of the six *igherman* of the main villages were renovated and restored by the associations. In a certain way, the restoration, with which AFC and SMNID began their cooperation, touches on an issue that Mandana Limbert has raised for Oman: through this work the organizations have slowly become “part of a national project on heritage and local customs” (Limbert 2010: 123). In the case of Zawiya Ahansal, however, it is not (initially) the state that drives this ‘heritage-ization’ forward. On the contrary, the state is, so to speak, urged to participate by the activity of the NGOs.

There has been a tremendous effort both to realize the reconstruction work itself, but also to create the organizational foundations and conditions to make the work possible in the first place. Getting the reconstruction work in motion meant starting a non-profit organization from scratch. Successful work was only possible through a solid mutual relationship with the local community. Thus, the *igherman* were all restored in cooperation with the local Association Amezray SMNID and partly with the financial participation of AVA and the Moroccan government. The greater part of the funding for the restorations was provided by fundraising and donations from private donors in the USA. Finding the right cooperation partners in Morocco and getting reliable contacts was thereby not always easy or without friction and conflict. Throughout the years of engagement in the valley, however, the organization was able to forge very strong personal and professional ties to the community. The most important of these was most probably the close friendship between Miriam, the founder of ACF, and the sheikh of the *taqbilt*,⁹ who at the same time represented a crucial link to the official Moroccan authorities and to the interwoven social fabric of the valley. The president and her family had eventually moved to the village and were living next

9 The term “tribe” is a contested concept, but which nevertheless has a significant relevance for the region. In the following I will rather refer to the emic term *taqbilt*.

to the sheikh's. Staying and living in the village themselves thereby let them become a part of the community, which contributed greatly to the acceptance and recognition of the work the NGO was doing.

The organization has offered and realized a range of different projects, always in cooperation with Amezray SMNID and often with other partners or experts from Morocco or abroad. Together with architecture students from a US university, to which ACF's president, Miriam, was well connected, a community refuse furnace was planned and constructed in 2014 and 2015. The project aimed to reduce littering around paths, roads or in the river for example. The refuse furnace would then provide a solution for disposing of rubbish in an orderly process without resulting in such toxic fumes as are produced by private waste incineration. As a second step, rubbish bins were to be distributed in the main villages and a weekly collection scheme introduced. The idea was to have Amezray SMNID assume responsibility for emptying the bins and transporting the waste to the disposal facility. SMNID obtained the permission from the Moroccan Ministry of Forestry to build the garbage furnace away from the villages on their land. Accompanying this, awareness campaigns were launched to educate the community about the dangers and health risks of waste and to inform them how to handle it appropriately and in an environmentally friendly manner.

A similar project concerned the creation of community laundry wash station that was realized with the same cooperation partners between 2014 and 2016. In both Amezray and Agoudim, stations were designed near the river, which received water from existing irrigation channels and which were planned in such a way that the effluent water would seep through a natural filter layer of vegetation and rock and not flow directly into the river, thus polluting it.

Apart from the pragmatic improvement of living conditions, the main concern of SMNID and ACF was education. This was also based on an underlying ideology that became more prevalent in the valley, due to the mediation of the NGOs. To state it plainly, this ideology consisted of the growing affirmation of a *promise of modernization* that would ultimately improve living conditions: education, and individual initiative could lead to social advancement and new prospects opening

up. In this context, a tutoring program was set up in 2012, first with one teacher and then with a second who joined the program in 2013. It was in this context the computer club was later integrated (see chapter two). The objective for the program was to support young school children, in particular, who were experiencing substantial difficulties during their first years at school. The reason for this was that teachers—distributed throughout the country by the Moroccan government—often did not speak the local Berber dialect, only Arabic. This meant that, besides the corresponding school subjects, the children were initially confronted with the additional difficulty of having to follow the language lessons. Since not all parents had gone to school themselves, and others did not perceive education as paramount, supporting the children with learning or doing homework was not something that all families could relate to. The tutoring program was intended to improve the starting conditions for all children to successfully benefit from the positive aspects of the education system. Most of the pupils in both villages regularly took part in the private lessons and the success of the program could subsequently be measured in figures: In spring 2015, Agoudim and Amezray pupils had the highest test scores in the province—an enormous increase considering that the valley used to have one of the lowest test scores before.

The educational offering was (somewhat accidentally) bolstered by occasional interactions with tourists and volunteers who came to the valley the one hand, and (much more deliberately) with additional English lessons for older pupils on the other. The latter was offered by the association's staff from winter 2014 on, when the usual seasonal tourism tasks were not on the agenda and the staff was therefore less busy. The English lessons were also further expanded in summer 2017 with the support of the US embassy in Rabat: the embassy granted a fund to pay for teachers and to finance materials for an English Summer Camp lasting several weeks. In summer 2018 the second edition of the Summer Camp took place.

Development III: Intercultural Learning and Transnational Volunteering

Besides the involvement in community projects, the association's main area of activity was intercultural learning programs. These programs were mostly set up either with other associations, such as organizations offering intercultural exchanges and voluntary services, or with educational institutions, such as schools or universities from Morocco or the USA, which had an interest in such educational excursions as part of their curricula. However, they also included community projects, that is, the non-explicit intercultural learning programs, mostly involved the help of volunteers or was often coupled with a community service program. ACF functioned as broker for those intercultural or volunteer exchange programs. In consultation with the respective institution, they put together the program, which could range from a few days up to four weeks, and took care of the entire organization. They offered an all-around carefree package for the visitors or volunteers, so to speak.

Every group ACF would bring to the valley—such as for instance an American School class with their teachers and some staff—had to be officially registered with the local authorities. First, the staff members of the organization had to provide an official announcement letter (*ikhbar*) about the planned program. Second, the staff had to list the detailed personal information of everyone participating in the exchange program. This included, for each individual, their full name, date of birth, occupation, gender, nationality, home address and passport number with its issue and expiration dates. Third, they had to give a detailed overview and description of the planned program. The staff listed all activities and scheduled time for each day of the entire stay. After compiling the documents, they sent all of them to the caid.¹⁰ The official announcement letter as well as the other documents were usually signed and stamped by the local Moroccan association Amezray SMNID that worked together

10 Caid translates roughly as “leader” and is the designation for a local governor in Morocco.

with ACF. The former mostly functioned as a liaison with the official authorities, who wanted to be kept informed at all times.¹¹

The intercultural learning aspect of the project occurred mostly through different building blocks: guided historical tours, providing information about the area, way of life and culture in the High Atlas; similar walks focusing on other topics, such as agriculture or water supply. These were partially carried out with local responsible persons for the respective areas and included: research tasks; question and answer sessions with the sheikh; and crash courses on important expressions and phrases of the local Berber dialect. In addition, the organization promoted a very hands-on approach. Intercultural exchange was also to take place and function through bodily experience and physical work. Enormous attention was thus also paid to volunteer work. This meant that the participants took part in gardening or working in the fields, helped with construction work or the completion of community projects, and supported the teachers in tutoring or even planned and conducted small workshops themselves. There they taught languages (English or French) or mathematics in a playful way, and played together with the children and teenagers. In addition, there were activities of daily life which the participants of the program could occasionally take

11 There is an abundance of stories—the validity of which is difficult to judge—of foreign non-profit or charitable organizations operating in rural Morocco that did not in fact work on community projects or in the field of development cooperation, but tried to missionize and spread Christianity. This is strictly forbidden by Moroccan law and the authorities are said to have expelled the involved persons from the country immediately. I think it is safe to say that though state services often seem rare—indeed almost invisible—in rural and mountainous areas of Morocco, it has ears and eyes everywhere, and is prepared to enforce its sovereignty. In addition, to ensure the smooth and safe course of the program, the authorities provided a police officer that would accompany bigger groups. The officer would wear civilian clothes and was housed in the same place as the visiting group. Rather than monitoring or controlling the activities of the program, he was present as a precaution and expression of support by the authorities, I was told. Moreover, this appeared reasonable as only two auxiliary forces of the Moroccan army were stationed in the valley to guard the office of the caid, but there were not usually any police.

part in or watch, such as weaving carpets, and preparing tea or food. All activities were always accompanied, if not carried out, by staff members of the associations, and they were responsible for advice and permanent translation.

Contrary to the seeming remoteness of the valley, during the main tourist season, from March to October, the valley appeared almost buzzing with volunteers. In 2017, the association organized the program for 16 groups, all but two of them were volunteers from different US American schools worldwide. In 2018, one of the busiest years for the association ever, they hosted 21 groups, out of which 19 were volunteers, again the majority of them were students from the US. In around 80% of the cases, the groups consisted of between ten and 20 participants, only in the remaining 20% was this less. However, these figures apply only to ACF programs. SMNID additionally organized similar volunteer programs on occasion. As a consequence, during the summer holidays in particular, the number of educational programs was so high that over a period of several weeks, activities or workshops took place on a daily basis. These were aimed at local children and young people. Yet at the same time the success of those projects was also dependent on the students' presence and will to participate in the offer.

Brokers of Change

NGOs and their practices are themselves contested spheres, reflecting lines of conflict and processes of negotiation in society at large. Amezray SMNID and ACF are examples of how local interests and problems are connected to a transnational level and *vice versa*. Transnational topics and/or models are then retranslated and re-referenced to the situations and contexts of the particular locality in the High Atlas. The commitment and expertise of the US American founder of ACF and SMNID's amicable donor relationship with AVA, respectively, are at the same time the prerequisite for successful work, yet they can only be brought to bear in their local and social embeddedness. The associations act as intermediaries that link concerns to a wider world and therefore tie new

networked relationships with potential partners. Decisive for this are the two key figures of the respective associations: Mohamed, the president of SMNID and Miriam, the founder of ACF. In this intermediary position, they convey, both explicitly and implicitly, ideas of a good and successful life in accordance with global standards, as well as a possible path to this progress. This occurs, for example, through the professionalization of working methods, the development of financial resources and the establishment of new contacts. They assume a double function of brokerage, both with their associations as new forms of institutions in the particular locality of the High Atlas, and their biography and roles as individuals.

To take an analytical look at the roles of Mohamed and Miriam, and the wider implications of their work, the figure of the broker is quite fitting. Brokers—who themselves work in zones of translation—entail a promise of social mobility and multiple connections. They are “both product and producer of a new kind of society” (James 2011). As middlemen and catalysts, in various concrete manifestations, they facilitate flows and make connections. This culminates in their advantage of “enhanced information and control their networks provides about opportunities, practices and resources” (Stovel/Shaw 2012, see also van Leynseele 2018). Beyond this, brokerage implies a hinge function that connects different levels or authorities while serving to advance a particular project. In the High Atlas Mountains, brokers mediate above all between competing ways of life. Through their own biographies and the work achieved with their organizations, they describe alternative ways of shaping one’s future path. Moreover, with his own biographical story, Mohamed provides a sort of template and guidance for this, as will become clear below.

Tourism as Parallel Structure

Successful activity in the field of tourism is central for the work of the organizations. Organizationally and systematically speaking, there is a difference between SMNID as a community-based organization that facilitates community projects and makes use of state support mechanisms, and ACF as an NGO operating in Morocco, which engages in a

wider variety of development practices. First and foremost, the different organizational methods and communication structures should be mentioned here. At ACF, value is placed on transparency and a structured way of working, especially with regard to strict scheduling and clear and equal communication, which is achieved for example by holding regular employee meetings. Hierarchies ought to be as flat as possible in order to support mutual commitment and personal responsibility. As an NGO that relies on donations from the US, ACF has an accountability obligation to funders. SMNID, by contrast, is organized much more hierarchically, in the sense that information flows down and decisions are always made by the president. When work is delegated to others, it is often perceived as a loss of influence and/or oversight. Spontaneous phone calls between staff and the president were more common than regular coordination meetings or committee work. At the same time, it is the president who is responsible for ensuring that work is done in the best interests of the local community, i.e., addressing concerns, responding to criticism, and providing ongoing support.

In practice, however, both organizations aim at similar objectives and their working methods are very closely intertwined. One decisive factor for successful work seems to be whether and to what extent perspectives can be created with which one can secure an income in the longer term—not only for the community, but also for the staff and organizations themselves. This requires either a certain degree of entrepreneurial success in advance, which can be used to secure the implementation of community projects, and which can potentially be expanded; or, it requires additional, external donors, through which longer-term structures can be set up in order to allow the successful coordination and implementation of community projects. Non-profit community projects are thus based on the economic success of the people facilitating them and on how skillfully social relations can be developed into cooperation networks.

This becomes particularly clear when one looks at the parallel tourism structure of the organizations. In addition to their non-profit work, both had a touristic branch, which provided tourist services either in close cooperation, or independently of one another. The intercultural

learning program and voluntary work was often combined with a touristic component. The touristic part involved, for instance, several day-long hikes through the mountains, sightseeing tours to major Moroccan sites or urban centers, and recreational activities at the ocean or in the desert. Staff members of the respective associations would not only work on coordinating community projects or volunteering programs, but also as tourist guides. Similarly, additional workers would be hired in both areas, for example as construction workers on community projects, or as muleteers on a touristic hiking trip. Moreover, Mohamed, the president of Amezray SMNID had been running a hotel where guests on intercultural programs for US American universities, for example, would regularly stay. As for their touristic branch, ACF created an officially licensed travel agency registered with the Moroccan authorities called *Atlas Cultural Adventures (ACA)*. One reason for the success of ACA is the involvement of the founder's husband, who had been a sponsored mountaineer. This profit-oriented parallel structure of SMNID and ACF was instrumental to cross-financing their non-profit work and to providing for their own income.

Attracting volunteer groups was quite lucrative. At least so much so that there were imitators trying to set up similar programs. While there were other successful players in the field of tourism in the valley (see Chapters 6 and 7), mountain tourism was for the most part either transit tourism or related to tours in the wider high mountain region. In addition to a few domestic tourists, volunteering groups represented a first substantial part of tourism, facilitating the accommodation of guests in the valley for a longer period of time. The distinguishing feature of ACF/ACA, apart from a high degree of organizational professionalism, was undoubtedly the fact that Miriam, due to her own background, was able to target groups of people and institutions that would have hardly been possible for any other comparable actors in the valley. She was able to address a wide international circle of potential (and comparatively well off) customers, such as international schools or US American universities as well as English-speaking outdoor enthusiasts. Previously, the focus locally was primarily limited to France or a French-speaking clientele. The

opening of the valley to the English-speaking world was largely enabled and driven by ACF.

Personal Ties, Transnational Links

At the time of my research, Amezray SMNID was one of the most active and well-known associations in the region. By successfully implementing projects, it had had worked with many partners over time and had constantly expanded the net of cooperative relations. These cooperation relations can also be understood as the result of the president's skillful brokerage and the successfully acquired partners who, in turn, give ever greater legitimacy to the work of SMNID and Mohamed. Such partners have included: governmental agencies such as the *Initiative Nationale pour Développement Humain* or the *Fondation Mustapha V pour la Solidarité*; non-governmental organizations like the private Moroccan *Association des Amis de Zaouiat Ahansal pour le Développement de la Montagne*; a French artist collective called *Fantastique* and, of course; the *Atlas Cultural Foundation*, which has also become an important player in the region itself. *Arconic*, an aircraft group based in Casablanca, Morocco, and the German *universities of Siegen and Cologne* were recently added to the list of cooperation partners.

Together with AVA, Amezray SMNID may initially have been misconstrued, on occasion, as a private initiative of engaged individuals. This may, in turn have led to misperceptions of the respective organizations representing the *development* or *aid industry* in the sense of a more intertwined set of national and global policies of development, including financiers, implementing agencies, and practitioners (Gardner/Lewis 2015; Mosse 2013). Nevertheless, the objectives and working methods of both SMNID and ACF have been informed by underlying ideas of how help can be given and collaboration be achieved with a view to improving the living conditions of the community in question.

In order to realize community projects on the ground, SMNID and ACF rely on concepts and procedures that have their origins primarily in the center of a global *development industry* and not in the localities of actual implementation. In most instances, these are “traveling mod-

els” (Rottenburg 2009: xviii; Behrends/Park/Rottenburg 2014) that are applied in different contexts, offering the same ideas and mechanisms to seemingly similar cases and attempting to translate them to local conditions. The focus is often on the technicalization of a problem, which then enables solutions and answers to be found through rational decision-making processes and targeted planning (cf. “rendering technical,” Li 2007). From a critical point of view, this is often accompanied by a tentative disregard of local knowledge in favor of *rational expert knowledge* (Green 2014; Yarrow 2011; Mitchell 2002)—which generally emanates from the Global North, often with *Western* connotations. It is, to some extent, precisely these concepts and the kind of accumulated expert knowledge that finds its concrete translation in SMNID’s and ACF’s working methods.

The fact that they can carry out their skillful broker function—mediating ideas, concepts and procedures on how to *progress*—is also due to the experiences of the individuals involved. To be this active and successful is certainly also due to the diligence of SMNID’s president, Mohamed, and his well-established connections and contacts. The president was among the first of the village—and valley even—that went to secondary school. He studied several semesters at university, before he took a different path and switched to tourism. He was among the first generation to benefit from the nation-state education system¹², which had previously had no basis in the mountains. Individuals such as himself were thus able to achieve their social and economic advancement through tourism. Many of them, in turn, were later involved, in one way or another, with SMNID or did occasional work for the organization. Mohamed, together with his brother, grew up with his uncle, who was a respected man in the village. Mohamed’s path toward wide-spread respect and influence with his work as a certified mountain guide. For over twenty years, he led hiking trips and tours throughout Morocco, coming into contact with many different people, principally French tourists. This contributed to the development of his personality, worldview, and

12 Here we are talking about only five or six men around Mohamed’s age from the village, who attended secondary school.

language skills. Unlike many men from the village of his or the previous generation, he did not marry in the village or valley. He and his wife met in a tourist setting and subsequently lived in Marrakech, where their children would go to school. They would then spend their summer holidays in Amezray. Moreover, with his income as guide, he was able to build a hotel in Amezray, which offered the most comfortable accommodation in the valley. Based on his own experience, he geared the establishment towards tourists from outside of Morocco, adhering to “Western standards”.¹³ His brother also runs a *Riad* in Marrakech. With his level of education and his professional success, Mohamed was different from virtually all his peers in the village. The difference was especially strong compared to those who continued to follow the way of life and subsistence agriculture that had been common in the valley in the past. Moreover, his level of education and his career path proved indispensable to the founding of his association.

The association is not only a respected and successful organization, built on Mohamed’s previous work with the community. For Mohamed, the association is also a veritable personal success. It enabled him to become both economically successful as well as to gain importance in terms of socio-political standing. It is quite remarkable that though he was an orphan, had to walk to school Azilal for lack of transportation, and did not belong to a former saintly family, he was able to achieve what he did: to find a connectivity with different social worlds in order to expand one’s own possible options and prospects.

Proof of his successful capacity to make connections can be seen in the invitation he received to participate in a televised discussion on the national television station (Channel 8: *Tamazight*) in April 2017. Together with a moderator and two other men—a politician and a president of another NGO—the topic of medical care in the rural and mountain areas was discussed. Mohamed brought in everyday examples from the valley.

13 This is underlined by the fact that the local caid occasionally used the hotel for official meetings and business lunches or dinners. No other restaurant or location in the area was of a similar standard.

He appeared quite competent and serious. Repeatedly he made statements that met with approval. For him, the problem of medical care consisted in the lack of doctors, ambulances, and adequate hospital wards. Where there were any at all, they could only be reached by helicopter. Moreover, this problem could not be considered in isolation as these were ultimately problems of neglect, i.e., a lack of development and infrastructure. Only with roads, electricity, water, and better infrastructure could medical care be adequately ensured. He argued that hiring more ambulances would not help if the roads were not improved so as to provide access to more remote areas. In addition, Mohamed suggested creating a regional medical center. All three men engaging in the discussion eventually agreed that there was an urgent need for such, and that there should be a special minister for the concerns of the mountain regions. After all, the tasks, demands and realities of life there would not be at all comparable with those of the plains. A newly created political office would then provide these regions with the specific attention they urgently need.

The talk show appearance of Mohamed highlights three interrelated points: First, the influence and importance of his position as president of the association; second, his insights in terms of his own perspective on the living conditions in the High Atlas as well as his use of the narrative of the absent state, which is a powerful means of raising and addressing concerns that, in turn, broadly resonate with residents in remote areas; third, Mohamed's framing, which anticipates the positioning of the association—as an actor and stakeholder—vis-à-vis the state.

It was not only Mohamed who had gained socio-political influence through his work with SMNID. Other board members and so-called *educated people* (university attendees) were also well respected. Though educated people may be young, they would hold influential positions within organizations and the community more generally.¹⁴ To a certain extent, this has also challenged the gerontocratic hierarchy that has been so important in the social and political organization of the region. Though the

14 This was not exclusively restricted to an affiliation to the NGOs, but applied equally to positions held in local government or school system.

opinions of the younger generation have become increasingly influential for particular issues in certain working contexts, the gerontocratic principle was and has remained of fundamental importance, especially with regard to family and household.

Associations are reliant on the commitment of educated individuals as tutors, translators, and other staff members. Indeed, they promote the necessity of education for a successful individual career, thus, consolidating the position of the eventually strengthening the *educated class*.

Demands of the Future

The work of the NGOs in the valley becomes understandable above all against the background of desires for a good life, for which these associations stand as advocates and representatives. With the transnational connections they foment, the convictions that inform their project work, and with the way they organize, NGOs contribute to a discourse on the demands of the future. This discourse motivates individuals and the work of the associations equally and entails an amalgamation of tropes such as a need for development, for aspirations, and for economic opportunities. In short, it revolves around the following questions: How can the valley become more visible, integrated into the circulation of economic capital, exchange, and opportunities? How can it be connected in such a way that actors, the state, companies, tourists, and volunteers place it on their map? How can it be scaled up from something easily overlooked to a meaningful engine with significant benefits for everyone? Ultimately, it is through this significance and visibility that people's desire and orientation toward the future in this corner of the High Atlas are formed.

Modernization is an uneasy term and its analytical purchase comes with certain baggage.¹⁵ Yet modernization is also an ethnographic cate-

15 As an eclectic selection from a wide variety of important contributions see, for example: Comaroff/Comaroff (1993); Gaonkar (2001); Kahn (2001); Bhabra (2007); Appadurai (2008).

gory. As such, an ethnographic approximation of modernization delineates quite specific dynamics in terms of everyday life in the High Atlas. With the profound infrastructural improvements of having a paved road, electricity and running water, distinct changes of everyday life become possible. Here I am referring to the pragmatics of modernization in the particular locality. It is hard to deny the benefit of storing fresh meat in a refrigerator rather than in a wooden cupboard. It can be life-saving to have paved roads on which an ambulance can bring a sick person to the nearest hospital, even if it is a two-hour drive away. It is reassuring to receive a phone call from a wife and mother and to know that she will not return home today but the next morning because she was surprised by a violent thunderstorm while herding sheep in the mountains. Those quite specific improvements—roads, electricity, running water, a fridges, televisions, and mobile phones—are imbibed with the notion of modernization.

Figure 7: Herding sheep in the mountains



However, I am not interested in necessarily referring to these occurrences as modernization. Neither do I wish to engage in judging to what extent this process constitutes a positive, desirable, or inappropriate version of modernization. I understand these things as the materiality of change taking place in the High Atlas, and it is certainly true to say that this change is linked to ideas of improvement and progress—as controversial as the discourses around these terms may be.

Livelihood, Aspirations, and Economic Opportunities

Many stories from the past that older men and women have told me were primarily about renunciation and poverty. Money played no role at all, nor was education—where available—particularly important. Ahmed, the head of a household, told me for example, that he and his younger brother had already been herding sheep at the age of eleven or twelve. Not for monetary payment, but for bread. Once he had taken on half a day's march in order to get a handful of grain from a distant relative for a work order. Back home in the late afternoon, he had then grinded the grain and made porridge. Tomatoes, or a selection of fresh vegetables or fruit hardly existed back then, nor could one have afforded them where they did exist. There was mostly grain and a potatoes available. According to Ahmed, sugar and tea had been around since he was small, but they were by far not as ubiquitous as today. He described vividly how he was captivated as a child by the sweet smell of tea, which was prepared only rarely on special occasions and would then spread through the village as a sugary mist of exceptionality.

The economic significance of agriculture has also changed, especially small scale agriculture. Owning a significant amount of farmland or animals is no longer necessarily synonymous with being relatively wealthy—that is, *significant* in local terms rather than in comparison to industrial agricultural operators or livestock farmers and nomads with herds of more than 500 animals. Owning one's own agropastoral resources is generally not economically adequate for a comfortable living. For this, money is necessary. With no industry or companies present, however, jobs are scarce. There are only about three fields with

well-paid job opportunities: working in or for the local administration; as governmental teacher; or in tourism. For all three areas either good contacts and/or a certain educational level are necessary. Additionally, mobility is key given that teachers' working location, for example, is determined by the central state administration. Tourist workers are equally expected to travel as necessary. Indeed, even soldiers or police officers have no ultimate say in where they will be stationed.

Equally, people have been leaving the region permanently or temporarily to work as labor migrants on nation-wide construction sites for many years. Migration to urban centers such as Marrakech, Agadir, and Rabat has also been significant for some time. Currently, a small proportion of families have two homes, one in a larger city where they live most of the time, and one in the valley where they live on holidays or during the summer. Of course, *l-brra*, the Moroccan Arabic term for “the outside” (Elliot 2021), represents an imagined place of longing, but without unfolding all too pragmatic consequences in the High Atlas. Remarkably enough, there is no transnational migration from the valley that is otherwise considered particularly significant for Morocco (Berriane/Haas/Natter 2015a).¹⁶ At the time and to my knowledge, only one person from the whole valley lived in France with his family most of the year.

Still, the younger generation between 16 and 25, in particular, is more and more absent for the better part of the year: younger individuals go to boarding school or university; while those who are slightly older, mainly men, have found work elsewhere. As such, it is generally only men that have the opportunity to migrate for seasonal labor on construction sites or to leave the valley permanently. Several young adults told me, for instance, that they would love to stay in the valley, but there was just no money for them there. That was perceived the biggest problem.

For young women, leaving is not generally an option.¹⁷ They usually live patrilocally in the family household, unless they move into the homes

16 For the relation between village, migration, and state in regarding development, see Lacroix (2005).

17 For the role of women and gender in Morocco see for instance Kapchan (1996), Sadiqi (2003, 2014), Becker (2006), and Newcomb (2010).

of their husband or husband's family after marriage. Even young women that went to university and lived in the city during that period of time would return to the valley afterwards. Thus, they were more constrained by social expectations and restrictions than their male peers, yet they are rather likely to be the driving forces behind new opportunities and improving living conditions in their region. For the valley at least, this appeared to hold true. There was a small group of six young women, many of them the first female graduates of universities in the whole valley, that founded a cooperative for women in summer 2016. They were able to successfully secure funding and cooperation from state agencies (including the Ministry of Forestry, some national Moroccan agencies and the *German Agency for International Cooperation* GIZ). Two years after the cooperative was formed in October 2018, 116 women from the region had already joined the cooperative, producing mainly products such as thyme, saffron and carpets, which were then marketed and offered for sale by the cooperative. At one of our meetings in the office, I asked one of the founders of the cooperative: "What do you wish for, what do you hope to see in five years from now?" She looked at me, started giggling and made a gesture as if she was throwing money around while she replied: "At that point, we'll be a huge, successful company." Becoming serious again, she added that so far the whole two years had been intense work without much in the way of financial recompense. Of course, she said, it had been completely out of the question for her not to come back after finishing university. After all, as the only daughter, she needed to be there for her mother.

Although there is also a need for renovation and construction work in the valley, it is not a field of employment in which a regular annual income is available. Of course, there are opportunities to earn something with such work for some people. There are also a number of so-called craftsmen (*ma'llm*) in the valley who are regularly hired for construction work, i.e. laying concrete and doing masonry. Depending on the amount of work involved, they usually work with one or sometimes several auxiliary workers. While the *ma'llm* knocks the stones to the right size and sets up and bricks wall, the worker brings in material like stones, sand or mortar.

Two other areas where people are earning their money are still to be mentioned: transportation and gastronomy. For the former, there is a distinction to be made between the drivers of minibuses for local passenger transport and those of off-road vehicles (*lbikup*). The minibuses take the same route daily, in the morning to Azilal and back in the afternoon, or on the other route to Tillegouit and back. As the driver of a pick-up truck, however, the routes are not specified. In order to transport spare parts, materials and products, the drivers are often on their way to larger cities such as Beni Mellal, Marrakech, Casablanca, sometimes with a stopover in Azilal. In a way, the drivers are their own logistics companies that can be hired to deliver certain goods. This means that their field of activity and their clients vary. While some take on more regional transports—fodder or animals for example—others have regular customers to whom they are available. In addition, the drivers also operate as taxis whereby they follow their own pre-determined routes but also offer a space in the driver's cabin or on the loading area for a fee. Moreover, there was also one *grand taxi* for the whole valley. The foremen of the local taxi stands in the regional towns or cities coordinate taxis and potential clients respectively. However, from the valley outwards or for personalized routes, one could deal with the driver directly.

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In the foregoing section, I have given an overview of the economic perspectives in the valley as intertwined with their social preconditions. Particularly when only limited means and resources are available, life can become a “breathless race to keep up with the demands of the future” (Schielke 2012: 53). These demands of the future are expressed in an expanded connectedness—through paved streets and reception of the mobile network and mobile Internet—and improved availability of services in terms of electricity, water supply, education and medical care. Indeed, consumer goods, especially refrigerators, televisions and mobile phones, are more important still. Taken as a whole, Samuli Schielke's writings on Egypt are relevant here and need only be translated into the local context of the High Atlas. Refrigerator, television, and

phone “all are significant markers of a lower-middle-class aspiration to live according to the standards of the world” (ibid.: 45). In a similar sense, Shana Cohen speaks of a global market integration, essentially a process of establishing “a universal economic structure through the implementation of uniform reform policies, the domination of neoliberal ideology, and the global production of consumer culture” (Cohen 2004: 3). While studying the urban center of Casablanca, she asserts the rise of a new global middle class, or rather, the claims and aspirations to become part of a global middle class, while at the same time young people are increasingly distancing themselves from civic participation and the national sphere.

Especially for the rural areas of the High Atlas it seems to me that adopting the concepts of class and neoliberal market integration can be somewhat problematic. The question is: what kind of market integration do we actually find there and to what extent it is synonymous with integration into a capitalist mode of production—if at all? Kalyan Sanyal (2007) argued that for the case of India there exists an area or domain outside of capitalist production; an informal area of *non-capital* economy.¹⁸ He analyses this with the term *need economy*, which is subsidized by a transfer from the domain of capital (often in the guise of development and welfare schemes). Hence, it is through policies of governmentality, depoliticization, and post-colonial capital’s logic that people are marginalized and excluded. This perspective at least calls into question the assumptions that far-reaching integration into capitalist modes of production must go hand in hand with the improvement of local economic perspectives, and the extent to which the expansion of distribution chains and available goods heralds an expected economic transition.¹⁹

18 Sanyal perceives post-colonial capitalism as a complex of capitalist and non-capitalist that “extract the story of underdevelopment from the narrative of transition and reinscribes it within a non-historicist framework with the claim that poverty and underdevelopment is the outcome of the arising of capital rather than a residual of the pre-capitalist past” (Sanyal 2007: 255).

19 Conversely, Sylvia Bergh’s conviction seems to support the idea of a necessary and favorable transition on a policy level that would arguably intensify eco-

However, what appears to be accurate and applicable for the High Atlas is the above reference to aspirations and newly raised necessities. Opting out of the demands of the future and living “according to global standards” does not seem to be an option at all. It seems not to be a question of if one is going to take part, but only of *when* it will finally happen. This resonates with several encounters I had with people in the High Atlas, including a woman who proudly showed me her new fridge in a house where the floor was neither tiled nor made of concrete but plain soil. There was also a man who invited me to his house, where he lived with his wife and children. It was located further away from the central villages and he had built it himself, though he admitted—somewhat abashed—that there was neither a toilet nor running water. He quickly added that God willing it would come soon. In other houses, some of which were furnished with imposing tiles and abundant carpets and pillows, television sets or occasionally flat-screen televisions were displayed centrally.

More objects and achievements than before have become important for a successful and accomplished life. In turn, different resources and means are important to acquire such objects and reach such achievements. The possibility of earning money does not open up for everyone, nor is it necessarily desired by all. Clearly, these diverging desires for economic improvement could (re)produce inequalities and contradictions throughout the valley in an intensified manner. Despite modernization schemes and local changes, differences in the country are vast. Ways of life in urban centers like Rabat, Casablanca or Tangier are different to those in the mountains. Becoming part of a global middle class seems more likely or feasible for many people there than in the mountains. An open set of questions remains: What does it actually mean to desire to

conomic integration. Analyzing Moroccan development policy, she criticizes “the councilors’ narrowly conceived development priorities. They are very much focused on basic infrastructure provision in their constituency villages, rather than on developing a commune-wide vision for economic growth, e.g. by attracting private investment, which would in turn increase local tax revenues and the ability to provide public services.” (Bergh 2017: 127).

live by global standards? By whom are those standards set in the first place? Who attempts to adopt and implement them and according to what agenda? Considering the economic opportunities in the valley, it is again necessary to take into account the NGOs. They represent the main actors and drivers of progress as well as of ideas and measures for the improvement of basic living conditions. At the same time, it is they themselves who, as employers, offer local people economic prospects.

Figure 8: Watching television in Taghia



Organizational Structures between Qualification and Confrontation

For ACF staff members, the success of the organization was a promise of future economic security. Due to the organizational characteristics, an initial clarification is necessary here: SMNID and ACF worked very closely together. However, only ACF hired staff in the sense of a contractually regulated employment relationship. Even though some of them also worked or were involved with SMNID, they all lived in the

valley (with the exception of the assistant program manager who lived in Marrakech). The organization provided job opportunities in the very area they had grown up, where otherwise jobs were very scarce. This was especially true for the young staff members, Ouleid and Ali, who started to work for the organization after graduating from university. After spending their college years in Beni Mellal, living in shared flats or student housing, they returned to live in their family home where they could still put to use the English language skills they had attained. They would likely have been able to find another job elsewhere. It would have certainly meant moving away from their family home again and emigrating to Beni Mellal, Agadir, Marrakech, or further afield. While working in the organization they also had the chance to slowly develop more skills while professionalizing on the job. The same is true for the teachers that SMNID employed for the tutoring program. They had the chance to use it as a springboard for other jobs. Two of the long-time teachers even became official teachers in elementary schools.

The continuing qualification and professionalization of staff was something the founder and board of ACF had to come to terms with themselves. They took on the challenge of developing their staff and providing them with prospects. As such, they introduced feedback meetings and yearly evaluation talks. This opened the opportunity for the staff to re-negotiate their salary or working conditions. Quite successively, the organization introduced social services for their employees and registered the jobs with the Moroccan government, thus providing them with social insurance. Besides these social security benefits, the organization also offered ongoing education. For instance, they organized a wilderness emergency medicine course. Several tour guides from another organizations offering volunteer services, intercultural exchange and tourism programs around the world also took part in the course. The costs of running the course were split between both organizations involved as one paid for accommodation and food, while the other paid the instructor, who was flown to Morocco expressly for this purpose. It was the second edition of an expensive program that others working for, or with, the organization had already completed a few years ago. Over

the course of one or one and a half weeks, students learned the basics of emergency medicine.

Despite the favourable working conditions and job opportunities, staff were not always exclusively content. In particular, overlapping aspects of organizational structure, communication, and remuneration were grounds for occasional dissatisfaction. Conflicts over the fair share of profits or adequate participation in benefits were certainly the most pressing issues. It would be true to say that with continuing work experience, the self-confidence and aspirations of employees naturally grow. If the salary does not reflect this development, conflicts may arise. The reason for some of the employees' dissatisfaction also derived from the double structure of the organization, which further complicated matters.

The two employees Ali and Ouleid, for instance, who were employed by ACF with a salary financed via the non-profit branch of the organization (a respectable sum by local accounts) were also working on projects for ACA—the sports and events division of the organization. This was the founder's own company and, in contrast to ACF, it was profit oriented. Much more money was generated there because the offered tours were aimed at *Western* tourists and were, thus, not cheap. Basically, the problem was not directly related to the work of ACF. Ouleid and Ali felt that they did not benefit from this fairly, if at all. As ACF employees, they also did ACA work without receiving the additional compensation they expected. Here, it is important to stress that it was not a question of being paid or not (because they were certainly paid), but first and foremost about expectations. It is also a question of perspective: both had learned a lot in recent years, but they also knew how much money was in tourism and how valuable they and their language skills were. At times, they had the impression that there was not enough exchange regarding their current situation and future prospects. Having been around a while, they increasingly got the feeling that the salary had simply not changed accordingly. I frequently had the impression they were impatient to achieve more and improve their socio-economic situation. At some point then, they addressed the issue and stated their dissatisfaction. This led to a set of meetings, or *employee discussions* as they were called, involving negotia-

tions between staff members and the board, which resulted in a raise and a better social insurance. The organization also supported the staff members in obtaining their official guiding license with the Moroccan authorities. Being a certified guide in Morocco is a very promising business opportunity. Moreover, it constituted a sort of culmination of the organization's efforts to supply their employees with better qualifications. It was also a success story for the employees themselves given that they had started at an entry level, so to speak, assisting and translating, and ultimately climbed the ladder to eventually become fully-fledged guides.

Another problem concerned the hierarchy and communication structure. This affected different areas of the NGO, particularly cooperation with Amezray SMNID. After several years living in the village, the founder of ACF, Miriam, no longer spent her time exclusively in the valley. She traveled back and forth between Morocco and France, where her family had resettled and her daughter was attending school. In her absence Mohamed, Amezray SMNID's president, had apparently been asking the others to work on his behalf. Yet Mohamed too, was often absent as he and his family also lived partly in Marrakech. Despite mobile phones, email and social media, this already complicated transparent communication between all parties involved. On one occasion, Ouleid had been working for Mohamed. When Miriam learned of this, she had told Ouleid he ought to inform her next time he worked for Mohamed. For Ouleid, this was a reason to feel hurt he told me, because it was stated in his contract that Mohamed was effectively his superior should Miriam be absent. He was acting in accordance with his contract while being exhorted by Miriam to keep her informed, he thus felt misunderstood and unjustly treated. This was not a very serious issue that would have had significant consequences, of course, but it illustrated the occasional sensitivity of the staff to their working environment. Yet the vast majority of the work with employers, employees, and customers was harmonious and everybody appeared quite satisfied. Eventually, dissatisfactions and communication problems—which are so typical for many working environments—were also communally discussed and resolved.

For one employee in particular, however, friction remained. Although he welcomed the raise in his wages and also received his guiding license, Ali grew more unhappy with his prospects. During most meetings I had with him, when he was at home and not busy with volunteering or tourism programs, the topic came up. He repeatedly raised doubt regarding the value of his work and his presence on the team, wondering if he was paid fairly and according to his skillsets and commitment. He was set on making a change he said. His doubts were also fueled by the fact that he constantly compared himself with other employees, and was also highly critical of how work was delegated. Basically, the problems arose from the fact that there were different tasks and programs, which in turn were more or less profitable, both for the NGOs and for the staff. It was in this arena that he did not feel like a respected and valued employee. I had learned about the facts described above during my stay in 2017. When I returned to the valley almost one year later, Ali had resigned from ACF. He had been trying to start a new business of his own. He wanted to take over the transportation of groups from Marrakech to the valley for the volunteering and tourism programs. However, ACF had their own cooperation partners and were not overly willing to replace them. For him, this was coherent with his existing impression: that he was not treated with respect. As a certified guide, he wanted only to work in the sports and activity sector. The teaching activities in the NGO were never his preferences, he explained. He would also earn a lot more as a full-time guide now that he worked for an international travel agency. As he told me in English: “a fixed salary is the biggest obstacle to becoming really rich.”

Even if the above descriptions of some lines of conflict only have a minimal influence on the daily work of the organizations, they are a point in case. Conflicts can be insightful and made productive in terms of gauging participants' concerns, which ideas and positions need to be reconciled, and what is at stake. Here it becomes clear that an organization like ACF is faced with the problem of growing and expanding in a sustainable and socially acceptable way. Not only does the board have to operate successfully—and possibly also with additional mechanisms such as the parallel structure of the organization—in order to be able to

continue working on community projects. The organization must also involve and support its employees, provide them with further qualifications and offering them a future. Especially in a very local and confined setting, this is a task that should not be underestimated: reputation and prestige inevitably depend as much on the work an organization does as on how those responsible treat local employees. Especially with regard to financial issues such as the fair distribution of profits and appropriate participation, the field of development cooperation has been said to be characterized by an *economy of suspicion*²⁰, which actors must navigate with caution. This applies, in particular, to those actors that have acquired a particularly influential social and political position through their work and economic resources. The fact that ACF and Amezray SMNID only carry out joint community projects is seen in this light also as precautionary measure.

Whereas the above focused on ACF's role as an employer, the last section will take a closer look at SMNID to shed greater light on its position in the structure of collective cooperation in the valley. SMNID operates as a competing form of organization to the long-standing institution of the village council (*jma'a*), which has been an important organ of regulation, negotiation and work organization for the community. The rise and growing significance of SMNID is grounds for consideration of its wider political ramifications. Has the association taken over and replaced the work of the village council? The village council or assembly prominently pervades the political-ethnological literature on Berber communities (Rachik 2001; Venema 2002; Scheele 2009).²¹ Analytically

20 I borrow this term from Bierschenk/Sardan (1997: 459), which in my opinion speaks well to the conflict situation presented. However, I would like to refer here only to the term as an analytical and descriptive tool for my own ethnographic findings; and without transferring too much of its empirical foundations and ramifications—as both authors invoke the term in the context of central, sub-Saharan Africa.

21 However, there are also more cautious voices regarding the composition and role of the *jma'a*, emphasizing above all the kinship-structured component and a more pragmatic configuration, which seems to me difficult to dismiss, especially for the region of my own research in the High Atlas: “French ethnog-

speaking, I would not set the NGO in strict opposition to the village council. The *jma'a* no longer seems to be the sole form of representation of political hierarchy and structure on the village level. However, it is not a question of either/or. Rather, in Amezray they appear to be parallel and complementary institutions which manage different areas of work and organizational activities.²² Where there are overlaps, this is negotiated carefully.

The *jma'a* also does scaling work by linking local questions back to temporal solidarity, historical conditions and customary knowledge. However, in comparison to the NGOs, this scaling work lacks orientation toward the future and has no potential connectability. It is precisely the multiple possibility of generating and making use of connectivity that seems to be the characteristic feature of NGOs and their hinge function. A crucial interface thereby is necessarily the official authorities and state agencies.²³ Occupying these intermediary positions can also mean becoming entangled in a web of mutual social responsibilities and obligations, which is particularly significant and relevant in terms of what has been written about Moroccan authority (Waterbury 1970; Hammoudi 1997). This also means that it can be strategic and critical

raphers tend to elevate the *jmaa* into a specialized political institution with defined roles and functions. In fact, the *jmaa* did not constitute a specialized political body, but was simply the extension of the patriarchal kinship system. It was not so much a well-defined institution as a mode of expression of solidarity of the small agnatically based group; it had no regular meeting days and no hierarchy. It functioned through tacit agreement of the whole group." (Vinogradov 1972: 76).

- 22 The village council is primarily responsible for land law and land ownership issues, which is particularly necessary due to public or communal land ownership, i.e. land belonging to the *taqbilt*. Administration and supervision of transactions concerning the land is therefore of paramount importance. The same applies to questions of agricultural land use and the joint organization and regulation of irrigation. The specific organizational practices of the association will be illustrated with regard to a new water supply system in chapter five.
- 23 An oppositional or even subversive attitude towards the state is thereby nothing one would be willing to afford and that would certainly be very counter-productive for successful work.

which information is passed on, which tasks are delegated, and to whom. The accumulation of information, responsibilities, and tasks are the expression of—and yardstick for—a position within a hierarchy, and with respect to political influence and power. Aspects of patronage or clientelism also affect the work of NGOs in the field of development cooperation.

At first sight, there appears to be a clear difference in that the *jma'a* is based on kinship structures, while an association—including a board of directors and general meetings—suggests other standards for its organization and composition. These standards are rather oriented towards the required work as well as the efficient performance and fulfilment of these than towards social obligations. Indeed, Amezray SMNID is very transparent with its work. During the general assembly or in other occasional discussion rounds members can debate on pressing topics and envisioned projects. As far as everyday decisions are concerned, however, decisions are taken by the president. He is kept informed about the progress of projects and has an authority that corresponds neither to flat hierarchies nor delegation of work assignments to employees acting on their own responsibility. Contrary to what might be expected from the external presentation as an NGO, there are also no regular scheduled meetings of the members. Central members of the association are in regular telephone contact with one other, and above all with the president. Otherwise, small discussions take place privately or on *suq* day where they are discussed individually with the president or within a small group. Employees have no clear or regulated working hours and—apart from scheduled engagements, when tourist or exchange groups are expected—are potentially always available for tasks assigned to them by the president.

With ACF, however, the situation is very different. Communication is more systematic, meetings are held regularly with employees and work is delegated with a higher degree of personal responsibility. In addition, the founder is keen to maintain a professional working environment with contractually agreed wage work and clear working hours. I hasten to stress again that the working conditions are generally considered very favorable and the partnership between both NGOs runs

seamlessly for the very most part. Nevertheless, from time to time, it becomes tangible that opposing ideas and work routines are in constant individual negotiation. As a tendency, these are contrary forms of management and work.

Forms of contract labor and transparent procedures of making one's own work accountable, in meetings, general assemblies, performance reviews, or employee dialogues collide with an obligation to maintain constant and mandatory availability. As a consequence, it often appears that the loyalty expected is of greater value than critical debate or proactive task management. Adherence to this dictum thus ultimately serves to successively establish and expand one's own position in the hierarchical network. The contradicting modes of organizing work are exemplified by *conflicts over resources* and the scepticism of employees as to how they ought properly to participate.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to delineate the general lines of development in the region, and the concrete projects of the NGOs involved, as well as their impact and the strategies of various participants. It should now be evident that local resources are being used in new ways to participate in transnational interconnectivity and to negotiate what it means to shape a *global Moroccan modernity* within the social fabric of the particular locality in the High Atlas. Although not necessarily explicit, this process is embedded into decentralizing and participatory approaches of grander development schemes. While in the narratives of funding agencies, these imply a progressive procedure, they are also well capable of supporting social ties of obligatory relations and patronage.²⁴ However, what becomes evident from the case of the High Atlas is that the issue is not government implementation of standardized development policies. Rather, it is a question of the individual initiative in the form of a

24 In their slightly different versions and emphasis, Bergh (2017: 234) and Lacroix (2005: 152-153) also point to this.

skillful and binding integration of different actors and participants on diverging levels. It is therefore a question of forging forms of cooperation that are flexible to different interests and can be adapted with the greatest possible benefit. Specifically, such cooperation should benefit both the people responsible for the NGOs as well as those whose living conditions are subject to improvement. It is individuals themselves who transfer and translate these ideas and options to different contexts, making them scalable.

By connecting with new partners, engaging in distinct forms of self-organization, and endorsing individual responsibility, SMNID and ACF have created the appropriate conditions for various community projects in the valley, from restoring the *igherman* to establishing a volunteer program. The two organizations have tied local needs and concerns to globally circulated ideas of a good life and models of how to achieve them. SMNID and all participants involved, are effectively scaling up the valley. They are placing it in a wider sphere of exchange as well as in contexts that previously played only a minor role in how people encountered the contingent affordances of everyday life in the High Atlas. The formulation *scaling up a valley* proposed here emphasizes—in terms of a practice-theoretical approach—that the intermediary position itself, as well as the surrounding concerns, forms of connection and translation, have not only grown historically but are produced situationally. *Progress*, here, is thus a result of the scaling work of the actors—Mohamed and SMNID in particular.

