

AGRUMIG project – ‘Leaving something behind’ – Migration governance and agricultural & rural change in ‘home’ communities: Comparative experience from Europe, Asia and Africa

Donor: European Union (EU) Horizon 2020 Framework Programme (H2020) (grant agreement number 822730)

(Call: Towards forward-looking migration governance: Addressing the challenges, assessing capacities and designing future strategies)

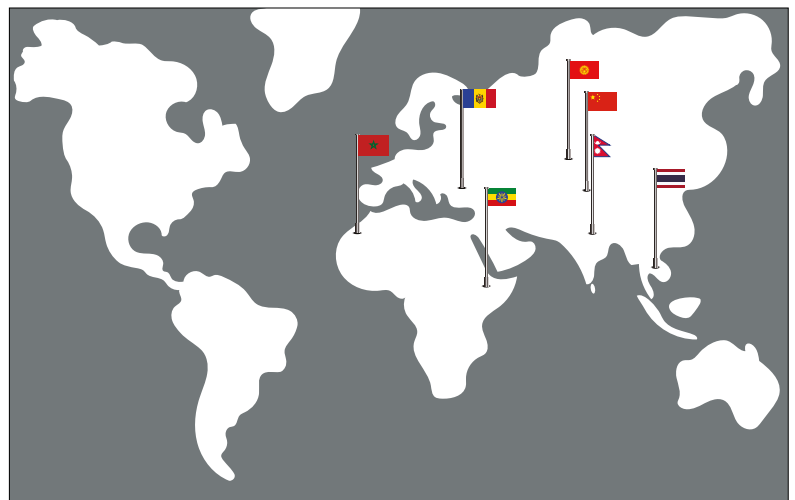
Duration: February 2019 - January 2022

Project coordinator: Prof. Peter Mollinga, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, UK

Steering group: Prof. Peter Mollinga (SOAS), Dr. Fraser Sugden (University of Birmingham, UK), Dr. Liza Debevec (International Water Management Institute [IWMI]) (until March 2020) and Dr. Alan Nicol (IWMI) (from April 2020)

Project description

Unprecedented levels of migration in today’s globalized economy are dramatically reshaping social, economic and political landscapes in sending and receiving countries. For policy makers and practitioners, understanding and responding effectively to such rapid transformation is a pressing issue.



To date, communities facing sociodemographic transformation due to labor outflows have received less attention. Research conducted by the AGRUMIG project focuses on these 'sending communities' in low- and middle-income countries, with a particular focus on transformations taking place in the agrarian sector.

The AGRUMIG project works in seven countries (China, Ethiopia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Morocco, Nepal and Thailand). The project seeks to understand a range of economic, institutional, cultural and agroecological factors that mediate the outflow of labor from rural areas; explain how demographic changes feed back into reshaping rural transformation in these areas; and challenge our thinking on the best policy and practice approaches to govern migration in these contexts. Our emphasis is away from regulating the movement of people to harnessing flows of knowledge and finance as a *result of migration* to help leverage more equitable agrarian change. This includes tackling structural constraints and stresses on economic development, such as gender inequality and youth exclusion.

Our overall aim is to identify policy and practice interventions that harness migration processes and outcomes to stimulate more sustainable, inclusive and equitable growth in rural areas, and reduce the distress so often associated with migration decision-making.

Methods

The AGRUMIG project uses survey and participatory tools to examine the drivers of migration and its impacts on the rural sector in seven countries across Asia, Africa and Europe. The project employs a Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) method (Box 1) to identify key contexts in which unique relationships exist between migration and rural transformations. In parallel, we are engaging with policy makers and practitioners across diverse governance environments, establishing dialogues, undertaking literature reviews and conducting key informant interviews to understand how those constructing and implementing policies and practices (on both migration and rural agrarian change) can help mediate future development approaches and achieve more positive impacts.

Impacts

A key contribution of the project is the identification of strategies that promote safer and more regular migration through supporting change in sending regions – establishing, in effect, a 'positive migration' philosophy. The AGRUMIG project will outline long-term and more evidence-based governance solutions, supported by comparative analysis and tangible indicators that are sensitive to the position and role of migration within larger agro-livelihood systems. The project will also analyze existing contexts and governance regimes on which future responses will need to build, including labor treaties and/or EU partnership agreements, national migration and/or agrarian policies, overseas aid policies and directions, as well as initiatives taken at a more grassroots level by diasporas and/or returnees themselves.



Photo: Fraser Stigden

Box 1. Qualitative Comparative Analysis.

Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) is a method that provides benefits to both academic/scientific scholars and policy decision makers. It enables scholars to produce modest generalizations from cases in a way that reflects the diversity and complexity of the social world. It also allows policy makers to design context-specific policies, thereby potentially enhancing the success of such policies.

The AGRUMIG project focuses on the linkages between out-migration and agricultural and rural change in seven countries (Nepal, Thailand, Morocco, China, Ethiopia, Moldova and Kyrgyzstan). The project sets out to identify the mechanisms that produce the bewildering diversity of outcomes related to out-migration and rural change. QCA offers a promising method to systematically compare the multiple combinations of causes that produce these diverse outcomes, and identify patterns and types of situations and dynamics. Based on this comparative analysis, the AGRUMIG project aims to contribute to the framing of context-specific policies at national and global levels that more effectively combines migration and agricultural/rural change.

QCA (developed by Charles Ragin) is a case-based method that can account for the causal complexity of the world, and the context specificity of causal processes, without giving up on (modest forms of) generalization. Multivariate statistical analysis simplifies causality by assuming causes have independent effects on a phenomenon (with different weights or strengths for each cause). QCA adopts a 'configurational' understanding of causality: the direction of a particular cause depends on the configuration of causes it is part of. For instance, certain participatory processes in natural resources management have been found to produce inclusion of particular categories of resource users in some situations and exclusion in others. A cause may, therefore, have a different effect in different contexts when the 'configuration' of causes it is part of varies. This also implies that differently composed

configurations of causes can produce the same outcome (equifinality). For instance, the enhancement of primary school enrolment rates for girls is caused by a variety of factors in different parts of the world. The AGRUMIG project aims to unravel the causal complexity of the impacts of out-migration on agricultural and rural change.

Another major positive aspect of QCA is that it allows the combined use of very different kinds of data (and thereby potentially facilitates interdisciplinarity). Any type of 'condition' (as causes are technically called in QCA) can be considered for inclusion in the explanation of a particular phenomenon/outcome, no matter how it is measured or expressed. All the different conditions are made comparable by scaling them and assessing whether they are absent or present (or partly absent/present, depending on the type of QCA being used). As many authors emphasize, the larger part of QCA analysis consists of this scaling activity – interpreting data to produce common scales across the situations studied, through close engagement with the data: the greater the depth and detail of the data, the better the design of the scale.

The AGRUMIG project does not aim to simply apply existing QCA methods but also to contribute to its development. While 'configurational causality' is a major improvement on linear, factor/variable-based explanation, it has been questioned whether the way in which QCA links 'conditions' and 'outcomes' satisfactorily captures causality. It has been argued that in the end QCA remains a (sophisticated) correlational approach that captures causality only indirectly. The AGRUMIG project investigates the possibility of developing a mode of qualitative comparative analysis that addresses causality more directly by moving from C-O (conditions-outcomes) to C-M-O (conditions-mechanisms-outcomes) configurations.

Sources:

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Schneider, C.Q.; Wagemann, C. 2012. *Set-theoretic methods for the social sciences: A guide to qualitative comparative analysis*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.



Photo: Fraser Sugden



The project is organized according to the following five work packages:

WP 1 Project management

Leading partner:
SOAS, University of London, UK

Objectives:

- Manage the project legally, contractually, financially and administratively.
- Ensure good quality communication between participants.
- Ensure high-quality reporting of the project results via deliverables and European Commission reviews.
- Ensure successful dissemination, impact and 'uptake' of project knowledge.
- Organize five project meetings.
- Organize the QCA process.





WP 2 Agriculture and migration research

Leading partner: University of Birmingham, UK

Objectives:

- Analyze the relationship between economic, cultural and environmental factors that shape migration patterns from agricultural communities at a local level.



- Analyze how the process of migration itself impacts the agrarian economy, including the (re)production of inequality, changing gender and generational roles, the impact of labor scarcity on production practices, changes in how resources are managed, and the acquisition of agroecological knowledge.
- Assess how this two-way interaction between migration and agrarian/rural change affects the long-term trajectory of migration, including the propensity of individuals to increase migration, engage in a new form of migration, or return to their homes.
- Apply a QCA method to combine data from 19 regions in seven countries to assess the combination of factors that shape the relationship between migration and agricultural/rural change in diverse economic, institutional, cultural and agroecological contexts.

WP 3 Migration governance options research

Leading partner: University of Birmingham, UK

Objectives:

- Review the activities of state or non-state governance actors directly involved in the regulation of migration, including government entities across scales as well as immigration and labor laws of receiving regions, bilateral labor agreements, and supranational governance actors such as the EU, International Labour Organization (ILO) and International Organization for Migration (IOM).
- Review the activities of the governance regimes that shape the conditions of migration, including workers' education and rights, actions by governments and nongovernmental organizations across scales, as well as governance actors who can shape migration pathways in negative ways (e.g., intermediaries who stand between employers, the regulatory authorities and migrants themselves).
- Identify the practices and policies of actors who are not directly engaged in migration governance, yet whose decisions and actions significantly shape the trajectory of farming systems, non-farm rural livelihoods and wider political-economic change in agrarian communities that are a source of migrants.

This includes, for example, agriculture sector policies and practices, overseas development interventions, the practices of global agribusinesses, and the role of the media and education system in shaping livelihood aspirations. Identify how these multilevel governance actions shape the outflow of labor and the decisions of farmers in terms of how they distribute household resources (especially labor) between the agriculture sector and international labor markets, particularly when faced with larger structural barriers grounded in class, gender and social groups.

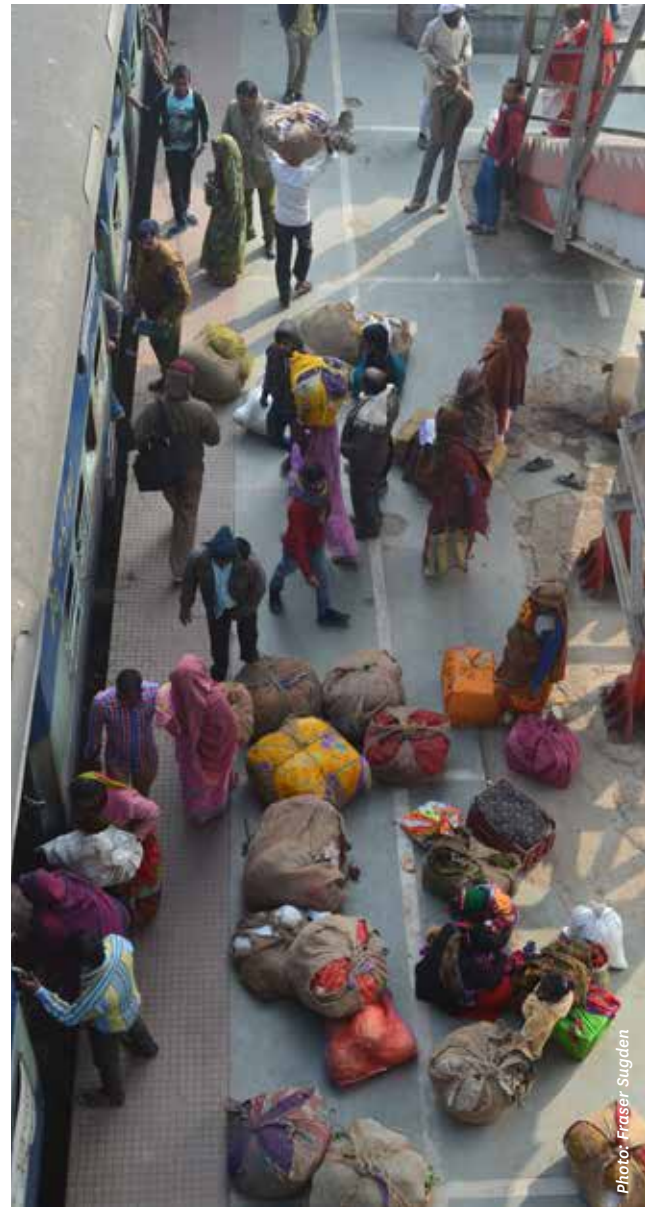




Photo: Fraser Sugden

WP 4 Stakeholder interaction: policy dialogues and action plan formulation

Leading partner: International Water Management Institute (IWMI)

Objectives:

- Under the umbrella of MARIS (Migration, Agriculture and Resilience: Initiative for Sustainability) (<http://maris.iwmi.org>), expand and further develop a functioning network of research, policy and practice institutions and associations working on migration governance at the interface of out-migration and agricultural transformation.
- In each country, initiate national policy dialogues under MARIS that explore and highlight priority policy issues on links between migration governance and agricultural transformation. From these dialogues, establish working groups to contribute to the AGRUMIG-wide community of practice.
- Working closely with key knowledge partners in three of the seven countries (Kyrgyz Republic, Nepal and Thailand), hold national stakeholder policy dialogues that can identify the main pathways and support innovative proposals to identify best practices and strengthen future migration governance/agricultural transformation policies across a range of environments.

WP 5 Impact and uptake: migration governance opportunities and instruments

Leading partner: International Water Management Institute (IWMI)

Objectives:

- Bring innovations in migration governance to mainstream policy and practice in target countries through a combination of policy advocacy, knowledge dissemination and practical demonstration.
- Provide succinct knowledge products on migration governance innovations in the public domain through continued dissemination via social media under the MARIS network.



Photo: Fraser Sugden

Project partners and their contact information

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AGRUMIG Policy Brief Series

This policy brief is one in a series of briefs produced as part of the AGRUMIG project.

AGRUMIG Project

The project titled **AGRUMIG** 'Leaving something behind' - Migration governance and agricultural & rural change in 'home' communities: Comparative experience from Europe, Asia and Africa proposes an integrated approach to migration governance to address the two-way relationship between labor mobility and changes in agriculture and the rural sector. Migration creates challenges for rural 'sending' communities in low- and middle-income countries, yet it can also be transformative. The project engages in a comparative analysis of seven countries (China, Ethiopia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Morocco, Nepal and Thailand) to identify the economic, institutional, cultural and agroecological factors which shape these relationships. It will identify the range of governance interventions that can harness migration to stimulate sustainable, gender equitable growth in agriculture, and reduce the distress associated with migration.

Donor: European Union (EU) Horizon 2020 Framework Programme (H2020) under grant agreement number 822730

(Call: Towards forward-looking migration governance: Addressing the challenges, assessing capacities and designing future strategies)

Project website: <http://agrumig.iwmi.org>

For more information on the project, contact: Angela Haynes, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, UK (ah121@soas.ac.uk)

This project is part of the MARIS (Migration, Agriculture and Resilience: Initiative for Sustainability) network (<http://maris.iwmi.org>)

