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***The Contributions of Highly-Skilled Migrants
to the Development of their Country of Origin:
Highly-Skilled Egyptian Migrants
in the OECD Countries***

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MIGRATION POLICY CENTRE (MPC)

**The Contributions of Highly-Skilled Migrants
to the Development of their Country of Origin:
Highly-Skilled Egyptian Migrants in the OECD Countries**

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Abstract

This paper studies the potential impact of Egyptian highly-skilled migrants (HSMs) residing in the OECD countries on the development of Egypt, their country of origin. The paper discussed the following questions: a) is Egyptian highly-skilled migration to OECD countries a case of brain drain? b) Could it generate brain gain? c) What is the overall potential impact of Egyptian HSMs on the development of their homeland?

Over the last twenty years, migration flows of HSMs from Egypt have been growing and although the majority of Egyptian migration is still directed to Gulf countries, data show that HSMs increasingly prefer OECD countries, in particular the USA and Canada, but Europe as well. Studies on the impact of highly-skilled migration on the development of sending countries usually orbit around the potential loss or gain of knowledge (i.e. brain drain vs. brain gain) that their departure implies for the country of origin.

However, the impact of HSMs also covers other “Migration and Development” areas such as the transfer and productivity of economic remittances and social remittances as influenced by Amartia Sen’s concept of development. Moreover, the possibility of a transnational experience due to the current technologies in the communication and transport sectors puts into discussion the assumption that the physical return of migrants is a prerequisite for the development of the country of origin. The distinction between “permanent”, “temporary”, and “return migrant” becomes obsolete.

This paper explores first the main theoretical contributions influencing the analysis of the impact of HSMs on the development of their country of origin. Second, it analyses the characteristics of HSMs residing in the OECD countries and their potential impact on their homeland. This paper is based on secondary sources of data, such as academic literature and statistical analyses, as well as on the findings of a small survey conducted between March and June 2012, targeting Egyptian HSMs in OECD countries. The survey provides an overview of Egyptian HSMs in OECD countries and analyses their contributions to their homeland according to three clusters: brain circulation; remittances’ transfers and productivity; and the other forms of migrants’ engagement with their country of origin.

This paper suggests that Egyptian HSMs residing in OECD countries can be better considered a case of brain gain than of brain drain. Furthermore, their overall impact on the development of their homeland is potentially quite high and covers human, financial, and social capital. More significantly, Egyptian HSMs in OECD countries show a high level of engagement with Egypt; they undertake various transnational activities and do not consider distance to be an obstacle to their further involvement in Egypt’s affairs.

Key words: Egypt, highly-skilled migrant, migration and development, brain drain, brain gain

1. Introduction

This paper studies the potential impact of Egyptian highly-skilled migrants (HSMs) residing in the OECD countries on the development of Egypt, their country of origin. First, it highlights the main theoretical contributions on the nexus between HSMs and development. Second, it analyses the contributions of Egyptian HSMs in OECD countries to the development of Egypt. Questions discussed revolve around the following:

- a) is Egyptian highly-skilled migration to OECD countries a case of brain drain?
- b) Could it generate brain gain?
- c) What is the overall potential impact of Egyptian highly-skilled migrants on the development of their homeland?

The paper is based on secondary sources of data, such as academic literature and statistical analyses, as well as on the findings of a small survey conducted between March and June 2012 targeting Egyptian HSMs in OECD countries.¹

The survey provides an overview of Egyptian HSMs in OECD countries and analyses their contributions to their homeland according to three clusters: brain circulation; remittances' transfers and productivity; and the other forms of migrants' engagement with their country of origin. It is based on a structured questionnaire containing a mix of open, semi-open and closed questions. Respondents were reached through social networks and snowball techniques and selected according to two criteria: a) at the time of the survey they should have been living in an OECD country; and b) they should hold at least a university level of education.

The survey presents two kinds of limits. First, the size of the sample is small since only eighteen respondents filled out the questionnaire. This is mainly due to the absence of a *vis-à-vis* approach, which created suspicions among potential respondents about the real nature of the survey. Second, the survey relies on snowball technique rather than on a random probability sample. These limits do not allow us to generalize the findings. Nevertheless, the information provided offers a preliminary basic understanding of the profile of Egyptian HSMs living in OECD countries and of their ties with their homeland.

2. The linkages between highly-skilled migration and development: a theoretical view

Highly-skilled migration from developing to industrialised countries has increased considerably in the last thirty years.² From 1980 to 2010 the stock of highly-skilled male and female migrants in OECD³ countries has augmented by respectively 250% and 350% (Institute for Employment Research-IAB 2013; Brücker, Stella, and Marfouk 2013).

¹ The survey was conducted as part of my Ph.D research on Egyptian highly-skilled migrants and the development of their country of origin at the Instituto Universitario General Gutiérrez Mellado, in Madrid, Spain. The research is ongoing and the thesis should be finalised in 2014.

² Highly-skilled migrants are commonly defined as "having a university degree or extensive/equivalent experience in a given field" (Robyn 2001).

³ OECD members countries are: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Various factors explain this growth. An important role has been played by the neo-liberal economic agenda – the so-called “Washington Consensus” – adopted by the governments of most industrialised countries and the main financial institutions, i.e. World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (Castles and Wise 2008). These institutions have promoted neo-liberal strategies⁴ in developing countries that, along with economic stabilization, have resulted in social inequalities and a wider economic gap with industrialised countries. As a consequence, people in developing countries are induced to look abroad for decent life standards (Castles and Wise 2008). As regards highly-skilled professionals, these are unable to practise their careers in relatively good conditions at home and eventually decide to migrate (IOM-ICMPD 2010).

The labour market structure within the countries of origin helps increase the international labour offer of highly-skilled workers. For instance, in the South-East Mediterranean area considerable investments on tertiary education during the past decades have not been accompanied by investments in technology. The result is that the prevalent economic model is labour intensive. The consequent mismatch between the skills learned at the university and labour market needs produces a high unemployment rate among university graduates (Fargues 2010).

International migration is triggered as well by labour demand. To maintain their central position in the prevalent knowledge-based economic model industrialised countries in Europe and North America need a great number of highly-skilled workers not all of which can be found in their stagnant or declining population (Giannoccolo 2006). This generates competition between them to attract highly-skilled professionals from all over the world (Lucas 2005), something that has not been affected by the current financial crisis (League of Arab States 2009).

The debate on the impact of highly-skilled migrants on the development of countries of origin usually orbits around the potential loss or gain of knowledge that their departure implies. The initial approach emerged in the 1970s, under the influence of the economic Historical-Structural paradigm on development. This paradigm considers migration as aggravating the economic situation of the countries of origin. Through migration these countries lose the part of the population that can best contribute to their growth, since usually migrants are young and equipped with an entrepreneurial and risk-taking spirit. The negative effect is further amplified in the case of HSMs whose departure deprives the country of the results of its investments in education and jeopardises its development if they are specialised in labour shortage sectors. Proposals to decrease the negative impact of highly-skilled migration – the so-called “brain drain”- usually focus on limiting it through the respects the principles of ethical recruitment (Fargues 2010),⁵ promoting the return of migrants, encouraging compensation, reparation or restitution for the affected countries (Lucas 2005).

In the 1990s a new literature emerged pointing out that the migration of highly-skilled workers can result instead in a “brain gain”, namely a resource profit over the long term (Hunger 2002). The loss of highly-skilled workers can be countered eventually by new knowledge, skills and information that migrants gain from their experience abroad and can introduce into their country of origin once back home (Kelo and Wachter 2004). This positive interpretation of highly-skilled migration has been reinforced by the emergence of globalization that has called into question the common assumption that the physical return of migrants is a prerequisite in contributing to the development of the country of origin (De Haas 2007). The current global economy and the new technologies in communication (telephone, fax, satellite television and internet) and transport sectors increase migrant ability to be

⁴ These strategies include liberalization of capital and commodity markets, privatization of industry and services and reductions in social expenditures.

⁵ For instance, these principles are embodied in the Commonwealth Code of Practice for the International Recruitment of Health Workers whose main objective is to control the outflow of health personnel in large numbers from regions and countries where these skills are in short supply and high demand.

involved in two or more countries at the same time (De Haas 2008). Migrants, then, adopt, over time, transnational identities and develop double loyalties towards both the country of origin and destination. The distinction between “permanent”, “temporary”, and “return migrant” becomes obsolete.

This perspective shift on migration, from a discrete and definitive move to a continuous and multi-dimensional process linking two countries (Faist 2008), has practical consequences for the study of migrants’ contribution to their country of origin. First, migrants can transfer knowledge and skills between the two countries (i.e. brain circulation) either through a “virtual return” to their country of origin (e.g. remote project/company management, participation to distance *fora* and seminars) or by as participating in transnational activities like networks linking professionals from the country of origin and destination and to joint projects (De Haas 2007). Second, transnationalism has called into question the usual assumption that migrants’ commitment to their homeland – with the related flow of remittances – is inversely proportional to integration and their length of stay in the receiving country (De Haas 2008). On the contrary, the length of stay and the consequent migrants’ integration in the receiving country can facilitate investments in the country of origin (De Haas 2006).

However, discussions about the contributions of HSMs on country of origin development should go beyond the brain-drain-brain-gain dichotomy since, besides their technical knowledge and skills, migrants carry economic and socio-cultural capital as well. As any migrant, highly-skilled professionals may send remittances to their country of origin, invest there and influence its socio-political and cultural environment. The analysis of these contributions has been strongly influenced by Sen’s concept of “Human Development”, which links development to people’s freedom, instead of their income. Human capability, namely people’s ability to lead their life and to amplify their choices, becomes the main parameter of development ahead of income and material growth.⁶ Development indicators are not limited to economic growth, but include socio-political elements that measure the quality of life. These include social well-being, income inequality, gender equality, universal access to primary education, health care and meaningful employment.

For instance, in the past, most of the uses of remittances in the country of origin (for example, on education, health, food, medicines and housing) have been dismissed as mere *consumptive investments*.⁷ They were dismissed thus as, it was believed, they do not generate employment and economic return; they are not, in other terms, *productive investments*. However, if we adopt the concept of human capability as being measure of development these expenditures can be considered productive investment as well. They support the well-being of migrant households, for example, in terms of health and education. Moreover, through them the consumption level in the area increases, together with the rate of working opportunities supporting the well-being of non-migrants as well (Conway and Cohen 1998).

Besides technical knowledge and financial resources, migrants are carriers of “*social remittances*”, which introduce innovation beyond the working ambit into the cultural and socio-political environment as well. Social remittances include new ideas, values, behaviours, and identities that can help the social, cultural and political development of the country of origin. They eventually drive democratization, transparency and the emancipation of vulnerable groups, such as women and minorities. In this sense, migrants associations abroad usually have a key role (Levitt 1998).

⁶ Sen defines human development as “the process of expanding the substantive freedoms that people enjoy” linked to people’s freedom instead of their income (Sen 1999).

⁷ Productive investments generate employment and economic return while consumptive investments concern a capital transfer more than capital creation, such as the purchase of land.

3. A Case study: highly-skilled Egyptian migrants in OECD countries

In 2008, Egyptian migrants abroad were approximately 3.9 million (IOM 2010b) nearly an 80% increase in comparison with the census figure in 1996 of 2.2 million (IOM 2011). Remittances flows towards Egypt are remarkable: without including transfers through informal channels in 2009 Egypt was ranked as the seventh biggest remittance receiving country in the world, with an estimated remittance inflow of USD 7.8 billion (IOM 2010a). The current financial crisis started in 2008 has not affected remittance flows to Egypt. According to the latest estimates of the World Bank they have nearly tripled since 2009, reaching USD 20 billion in 2013 (*World Bank News* 2013). This makes migrants' remittances one of the most important sources of foreign currency for the country, larger than either Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) or official aid.

Egyptian migrants are mainly male and young individuals (Nassar 2008). According to IOM (2011) migrants are more educated than non-migrants since the majority have completed at least secondary education. More interesting still, the percentage of Egyptian migrants with high educational profile has been increasing. During the 1980s only 20% of Egyptian migrants in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries⁸ worked as scientists or technicians while, as of 2006, this percentage doubled to 41%. Meanwhile the percentage of Egyptian migrants working in clerical work, sales and services, and production declined considerably.⁹ This is mainly due to the general improvement in educational level of young Egyptians, induced by a strong governmental policy, and competition with the South Asian labour force for low skilled jobs in GCC countries.

GCC countries are a traditional destination for Egyptian migrants. As of 2006, 46% of Egyptian migrants had moved to Gulf countries, 41% to other Arab states, and only 3% to other countries (IOM 2011). Nevertheless, the pattern of highly-skilled Egyptian migration is shifting from GCC countries to OECD countries (Sika 2010). The 2009 Survey of Young People in Egypt (SYPE) confirmed that non-students are more interested in migrating to Arab countries than students (IOM 2011).¹⁰ The growing flow of Egyptian migrants to Western destinations is, indeed, consistent with the stagnation or even reduction of similar migration flow to the Gulf countries (IOM 2010b). This may be explained by the GCC countries labour demand focusing more on unskilled workers. There is also the fact that lately highly-skilled employment has become financially more rewarding in OECD countries rather than in GCC countries (Sika 2010). Among OECD countries, in 2000, most Egyptian migrants resided in the USA (39% of Egyptian migrants in OECD) and Canada (13%). In Europe, main countries of destinations are Italy (10%) and Greece (7%) (Galal 2007). Migration from Egypt to the USA and Canada is highly selective: in 2001, 79.20% of Egyptian migrants to Canada had a tertiary education level; in 2000 Egypt had the largest proportion of its emigrants engaged in management and professional occupation in the USA.

An IOM study reveals that Egyptian migrants stay in Arab countries an average of 8.8 years, while the mean duration of stay for their counterparts in the West is 15.1 years (IOM 2010b). This may be

⁸ The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is a political and economic union of Arab states bordering the Persian Gulf, namely Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

⁹ In 1985, 20% of migrants worked as scientists or technicians, 9% in clerical work, 19% in sales and services, 9% in agriculture and 43% in production. By 2006, this occupational profile had changed considerably, with the percentage of Egyptian migrants working as scientists or technicians doubling to 41%. Meanwhile the percentage of Egyptian migrants working in clerical work, sales and services, and production declined to respectively 2%, 13%, and 34% (Nassar 2010).

¹⁰ The 2009 Survey of Young People in Egypt (SYPE) is a nationally representative study of a sample of 15,029 young people aged 10-29 years. According to the study, while the percentage of individuals who aspire to migrate to OECD countries decreased from 7.1% to 2.6% of non-students, the percentage of interested in moving to an Arab country rose from 7% to 17.2% of non-students.

the consequence of the different stay and exit regime for foreign nationals in the country of destination. In Arab countries the *Kefala* or sponsorship system prevails. This denies permanent residency and citizenship to foreign nationals (IOM 2010a). Therefore, Egyptian migration toward Arab countries mostly follows a circular pattern since generally migrants move there for few years, come back to their country of origin and then move there again with the main purpose of accumulating savings (Nassar 2008). Instead, in most OECD countries the legal framework facilitates a permanent stay since migrants can obtain the citizenship of the country of destination after fulfilling certain legal requirements and after completing a specified duration of stay. In the case of highly-skilled migrants this regime can increase the risk of brain drain, but at the same time it creates the basis for brain circulation.

4. A Survey on Egyptian HSMs in OECD countries

The survey respondents' distribution by country of destination (see Table 1) is centred in Europe where 12 respondents live, while 7 live in North America. Within Europe, there is prevalence in the northern area (i.e. UK, Sweden, France, and Denmark) in opposition to the southern countries (i.e. Spain and Italy).

Table 1: Survey respondents' countries of destination

Receiving Country	Number of Egyptian Migrants
USA	2
Canada	5
Total in American Continent	7
France	3
Denmark	1
UK	2
Sweden	1
Spain	2
Italy	1
Total in Europe	12

The mean age of respondents is 36.8 years with some falling in the group between 31 and 35 years old (7),¹¹ and some in the group between 25 and 30 years old (6). The rest are older than 36 years (5). As to sex, there is a high predominance of males (15). As regards their education, their level is quite high since half of respondents (9) hold a Master (MA) degree and some are either doctoral students (3) or hold a doctorate degree (Ph.D) (1). The main study area is *Humanities* (7) followed by *Economics/Business Administration* (5). A small group studied *Engineering/Computer Science* (4) and a few studied *Natural Sciences* (2).

Respondents' duration of staying in the country of destination falls equally in the slots from 1 to 3 years and from 4 to 6 years (5 per each slot). Some of them for less than one year (3), few from 7 to 9 years (2) and the rest for more than 9 years (3). Most work in the country of destination (15), while the rest are studying (3). As regards the reasons behind their migration, respondents were asked to indicate the main three factors and had the option to add further ones. As a result, *Better education* prevails (picked 9 times) followed by *Desire of a different life style* (8), and *better career opportunities* and

¹¹ Number in brackets indicate the number of respondents/answers.

Corruption and Injustice in Egypt (7 times each). *Double nationality* and *Adventure and the desire to see the world* were selected 4 times. *Difficult political situation in Egypt* and *Better income* were selected once. Respondents offered as added answers *Better quality of life* and *Disdain of progressive right-wing religiosity*.

4.1 Brain Circulation

In this paper three main factors are considered in determining whether highly-skilled migration is potentially a case of brain drain: a) migrants have obtained their high-level skills (e.g. university degree) in the country of origin. This implies a loss of return for the country of origin on an investment in education; b) HSMs are able to obtain employment commensurate with their educational qualifications in their homeland. The opposite situation, called “brain waste”, means that the presence of highly-skilled professionals in the country of origin is useless since they would not be able to apply their skills; c) HSMs are not willing to transfer their knowledge and skills to the country of origin physically or remotely. In this case, their move would produce a definitive loss of knowledge.

However, other elements are necessary to qualify HSMs as a potential case of brain gain: d) the experience abroad brings an additional value to their initial professional skills (Gmelch 1980 cited in Fargues 2008), which creates the conditions for an advance of knowledge and skills for the country of origin; e) the skills acquired abroad can be applied in the country of origin. Brain Circulation can be effective only if there is, in the country of origin, an environment able to receive and use the new knowledge and skills, such as academic and research institutions or high-tech industries (Gmelch 1980). Then, f) HSMs have the capacity to detect new approaches/ values/practices encountered in their country of destination and in their working environment abroad and to translate these into practical elements to be applied in the country of origin. A concrete approach is essential for a meaningful transfer of external values in the specific political and socio-economic climate of the country of origin. The Table 2 below lists the factors determining Brain Drain versus Brain Gain.

Table 2: Factors determining Brain Drain vs. Brain Gain

Brain Drain	Brain Gain
a) High-level skills (e.g. university degree) obtained in the country of origin.	d) Experience abroad brings an additional value to migrants’ initial professional skills (e.g. new professional skills, language skills).
b) Possibility of obtaining employment commensurate with their educational qualifications in their homeland.	e) The skills acquired abroad can be applied in the country of origin.
c) HSMs are not willing to transfer their knowledge and skills to the country of origin physically or remotely.	f) HSMs have the capacity to detect new approaches/ values/practices and to translate them into practical elements to be applied in the country of origin.

If we apply the above criteria to the Egyptian highly-skilled migration, there is no clear brain drain. As previously noted highly-skilled Egyptian migration is increasing. However, it is mainly the consequence of the oversupply of highly-educated workers in the Egyptian labour market and of the low income returns on educational credentials (IOM 2001). CAPMAS data show that, in 2012, within

the unemployment rate of 12.7%, educated workers faced the highest unemployment rate. The unemployment rate for a university or a higher degree is higher (21.4%) than for people with a secondary school degree (15.1%) (CAPMAS 2012). This is due, in part, to past governmental efforts for improving the educational levels of the Egyptian population: this resulted in a growing percentage of university graduates, more than 40% of the general population in 2005 in comparison with 20% in 1975 (Sika 2010). The private sector in Egypt is, meanwhile, unable to absorb all highly-educated workers. An IOM research piece confirms that the migration aspirations of Egyptian graduate students are *inter alia* shaped by the possibility of finding a job after obtaining their degree. Mainly agriculture and veterinary school graduates hoped to move abroad, while only a small percentage of graduates from computer studies intend to pursue jobs abroad. This difference is the lack of job opportunities for highly educated youth in those specific sectors (IOM 2011). Another element limiting the risk of brain drain is that, as reported by an IOM survey among Egyptian diaspora, migrants are willing to transfer to Egypt their knowledge and the skills acquired in their destination countries (IOM 2010b).

Comparing highly-skilled Egyptian migrants in the GCC countries with the ones working in OECD countries, some elements suggest that these latter have more potential for brain gain: a) they are indeed more exposed to technologies and industrial systems different to the ones in Egypt; and b) they are more in contact with a different socio-political environment and can, therefore, be a better vehicle for the introduction of new ideas in Egypt and for the enhancement of the political and social debate there. The already mentioned IOM survey confirms that migrants from western countries feel that they have increased their skills more than their counterparts in Arab countries (IOM 2010b).

Survey findings: all respondents obtained the University Degree in Egypt save one that graduated in the country of destination. Equal is the number of respondents that obtained the Master Degree in Egypt and the ones that obtained it or are studying for it in the country of destination (5 per each slot). Instead, the survey shows that Ph.D studies are undertaken in the country of destination (4).

All respondents but one thinks that their skill level has increased as a result of staying and working abroad. In the current country of residence the majority works in the field they have studied, a few are Ph.D students (3), and one is unemployed. A large majority believes that *these new skills can be applied in Egypt* (13) and *transferred through virtual seminars/forums* (16). However, respondents denounce the main obstacle as *Corruption* (picked 5 times) followed closely by *Bureaucracy* (4). *Poor or no infrastructure to enable me to apply my skills in Egypt* were picked twice. Nobody selected *Unsuccessful examples I heard about*. Respondents offered as added answers *Absolute disdain for punctuality and objectivity* and *Underemployment* and *Lack of convenient opportunities*.

When asked whether there is any element in their current working environment abroad worth introducing to Egypt, the vast majority answered positively (14). When asked to specify which elements, only three respondents indicated specific and practical items related to their field of expertise such as *Teaching methods at schools and university*, *New technology in pavement design in the US and if implemented in Egypt it will save a lot of construction money and improve the condition of the roads* and *Good pharmaceutical manufacturing practice*. The rest mostly indicated factors related to more general working processes, working conditions and governance issues such as transparency, work ethics, results-based management, professionalism, communication strategy, reporting methodology and organizational structure.

As regards the question whether there is any social/economical/legal element in their current country of residence worth introducing into Egypt, the vast majority answered positively (14). Two respondents answered *No* and only one answered *Not sure*. When asked to specify which elements, only two respondents indicated specific items such as *Food Cooperatives* and *Opening electricity market to investors with special conditions*. The rest of answers are more related to values and governance issues such as respect for human rights, democratic institutions, education system, welfare state, and business friendly climate.

Respondents are equally divided when asked whether they would be interested in returning temporarily to Egypt for short-term or voluntary assignments (8), or not at all (9). One respondent did not answer this question.

4.2 Remittances' transfer and productivity

The volume of remittances that highly-skilled migrants send to the country of origin is potentially higher than in the case of low-skilled migrants because of their higher income. This is, in part, confirmed by the collected data on remittances by country of destination. In the fiscal year 2009/2010 remittances from the United States, where Egyptian migrants are mostly highly-skilled, were disproportionately high (USD 621.0 equal to 33.4% of all remittances) relative to the percentage of total Egyptian migrants there. Remittances from Saudi Arabia, meanwhile, the destination of most Egyptian migrants, are relatively low (USD 217.3 equal to 11.7% of the total share), although these data do not include in kind remittances (Central Bank of Egypt 2010). Another reason may be the higher trust highly educated migrants have towards the formal banking channels for sending remittances. As a survey commissioned by IOM found out, the larger the volume of remittances and the higher the education level of the migrant, the more likely it is that he/she will opt for formal channels of remittance transfers: banks and official money transfer institutions (IOM 2010a). In this way, highly-skilled migrants contribute indirectly to reinforcing the Egyptian financial system.

Highly-skilled migrants with their high salaries are better able to invest remittances in productive activities, whereas low skilled migrants are hardly able to save part of their income after covering their household's daily living expenses (Fargue 2010). Indeed, the more that the country is lacking social services the more households use remittances for nutrition, health care needs and for future unforeseen emergencies (IOM 2010a). Furthermore, in their study of Egyptian migration McCormick and Wahba (2001) found that literate migrants are better able to invest than uneducated migrants since they can make use of the new skills acquired during work experience abroad while this advantage is not offered to low skilled labourers. These are targeted by the company's capacity building policies only with difficulty.

Survey findings: the majority of respondents send remittances to Egypt (12). For them, the preferred means is *Bank transfer* (8), while a few use other options: *Friend/relative travelling home* (2) or *by himself when coming back home* (1) and *Western Union* (2), and *Money transfers* (1). Nobody uses *Post*, *Debit card* or *Money transmitting services*.

Few send money to Egypt for other purposes than personal or family responsibilities (8). The prevalent purpose is investing in *Property or real estate* (4 times), a small group of answers indicated *Setting up Business or running a business in Egypt* (3), the rest of respondents' answers are distributed equally between *Shares in someone else's business*, *Community or Social projects/ Charitable projects*, and *Stocks and other financial instruments (insurances, mutual funds, Islamic finance, etc.)* (twice for each). Nobody indicated *Trading with Egypt*.

Respondents were asked to indicate the main three obstacles to investment in Egypt. Most chose *Lack of transparency and accountability* (10 times) and *Corruption* (9) followed, at a distance by *Bureaucratic hassles* and *Poor or lack of information on investment* (5 each). Other factors received less attention such as *No suitable investment options*, *Too risky*, *Financial difficulty/economic constraints*, *No access to credit* (2 each), *It is more profitable to invest in the country I live now*, *Legal constraints*, and *Taxes and official fees are too high* (1 each). Respondents did not pick either *Poor or no infrastructure to enable me to invest*, *Lack of profitable opportunities in my area*, or *Personal reasons*.

4.3 Other forms of migrants' engagement

Migrants with high education and occupational status are better able to engage in different forms of transnational activism than low-skilled migrants: migrant professionals commonly have a sense of obligation to the institutions that educated them (Castles and Wise 2008). Besides remittances, their engagement can take the form of political or socio-cultural activities and is expressed, for example, through community associations, and participation in political life (De Haas 2006). Highly-skilled migrants, who return to their country of origin, frequently become involved in national and local politics, and migrant communities are often active lobbyists for the promotion of democracy in their country of origin (Jaulin 2010).

Survey findings: The majority of respondents visit their homeland once a year (11). A small group a *Few times per year* (6) and only one *Once in two or three years*. However, they keep themselves *Well informed* about Egypt's status of affairs (11). The rest claim to be *Fairly well informed* (7). Both *Social networks* and *Internet/online publications* are used as main means of information (each 15), followed by *Email and telephone calls with family & friends in Egypt* (12), and *Television* (5). The option *Newspapers / paper publications* was picked only once.

Concerning their connection with some forms of diaspora associations either in Egypt or in their current country of residence, the majority stated a linkage with at least one *Egyptian organisation in Egypt or in their country of destination* (11). Some of them participate in *Egyptian/Arab online networks* (7). A few respondents are members of *Arab/religious associations* (4) and only two of *Egyptian professionals/scholars networks*.

Most respondents believe that they contribute to the development of their country of origin (13). When asked to specify, respondents referred to *Investments in Egypt* (7 times), followed by *Transfer of remittances* (5). However, other answers included *Delivery of lectures* as well (4), *Political activism*, *Participating to online networks* (3 each), *Voluntarism*, *Financing social projects* (twice each). Added answers include *Introducing the last methods in higher education to Egypt*, *Working in an NGO with Egyptian members-advocacy-awareness raising-assistance to local civil society*, *Acquiring new skills and qualifications*, and *Through NGOs and volunteering to organise lectures*.

As obstacles to contributions, respondents indicated equally *Bureaucracy*, *Lack of time*, and *Ignorance and negligence of the staff in Egyptian embassies and consulates* (5 times each). These are followed by *Inability to vote and politically participate while being abroad*, *Corruption*, and *I do not know any development programme for Egypt* (3 each). *Lack of knowledge about any Egyptian / Arab organization*, and *Lack of linkages with other Egyptians in the country they live* were selected once. Nobody indicated *Lack of knowledge about religious organization in Egypt* as an obstacle.

Concerning their opinion on services provided by Egyptian embassies, the majority confirmed *Lack of support from the Egyptian embassy and consulates in their country of destination* (11), while only three answered positively and one declared to have never attempted any contact. When asked to specify the reason for this lack of support, respondents claimed mostly that embassies and consulates do not organise any event or activity for the Egyptian community abroad. The general respondents' impression is that the staff is inefficient and does not care about supporting Egyptians abroad save if they have some personal connection.

When asked for suggestions for the Egyptian Government in strengthening their homeland connection, respondents suggested a database of Egyptian migrants connected with tenders for projects, investment opportunities, volunteering and working opportunities in Egypt. Additionally, they demand a clear vision and strategy on the role of Egyptian talent abroad in Egypt's future, a diaspora's stronger involvement in policy making, and a more active role of the chamber of commerce and embassies in reaching diaspora members and involving them.

Regarding institutional organizations and incentives for facilitating Egyptian migrants' engagement in the development of Egypt, respondents' suggestions include: a development programme funded by

Egyptian migrants; a governmental think tank employing highly-skilled Egyptian migrants contributions; credit facilitation and investment programmes for migrants for private business creation; database and networks of Egyptian professionals abroad; and skills transfer through educational institutions. Respondents pointed out that migrants' engagement needs a corruption-free environment that can employ their contributions: a vibrant private sector and qualified education and research institutions. Voting rights to migrants abroad are also considered important.

As regards the possibility of a permanent return to Egypt, a good number answered positively (8) in contrast to some that answered *I am not sure* (6). Only few answered *No* and *It depends on preconditions* (2 each). When asked to indicate the three most important preconditions, the prevalent one is *Employment with decent salary* (8 times) followed equally by *Regulation and simplified of administrative procedures* and *Change of political scene* (6). *Possibility of professional improvement* and *Improved services and infrastructure* were picked twice while *Improvement of the economic situation* only once. Added answers included *Annihilation of subjective culture and utopia*, and *Better quality of life (e.g. traffic, schools, etc.)*.

Concerning their vision of the current political scene in Egypt, half of respondents believe that the end of *Mubarak's regime will help them in supporting further their homeland* (9). While the rest admits that either *are not sure* (6) or *do not know* (3). Nobody answered negatively. When asked to specify, respondents indicated that they believe that this political change may diminish corruption and shape a more open-minded society, and that Egyptians abroad may be more interested in helping their country. However, answers also show doubts about the final political outcome and the degree of democracy that will finally result, especially given the absence of vision and clarity in the country.

5. Conclusions

The first question that this paper addressed is whether Egyptian highly-skilled migration to OECD countries can be considered brain drain. Comparing the survey findings with the brain drain indicators mentioned previously, these do not endorse the hypothesis that Egyptian HSMs are a case of brain drain. The majority of respondents obtained their university degree in Egypt, and half of respondents holding a MA degree obtained it in Egypt. However, respondents' main reasons for migration was the search for better career opportunities and corruption, which implies that they would not be able to find a job according to their skills in Egypt.

Notwithstanding the fact that most respondents have been living in their country of destination for between 1 and 3 years or between 4 and 6 years, it is possible to conclude that their wish to be helpful to Egypt has not fallen away; though they are not ready to renounce to what they have built in their new home. A slight majority answered negatively as to coming back to Egypt definitely, and, in that case, one of the main preconditions is the possibility of earning a decent income. Moreover, only half of them are interested in coming back temporarily for short term exchange / volunteer programmes. At the same time, respondents do not see distance as an obstacle to their further involvement in Egypt's affairs, as indicated by the majority believing that they contribute to Egypt's development from abroad. Their suggestions on how to strengthen their homeland connection and their engagement with Egypt's development show a strong demand for programmes facilitating their involvement, from policy development to skills' transfer and investment.

The second question concerns whether highly-skilled Egyptian migration to OECD countries can generate brain gain. The survey contains much clearer indications for this. Respondents have improved their skills level through their experience abroad. Most work in the field in which they studied, which excludes brain waste in the country of destination. All respondents but one thinks that their skill level has increased as a result of staying and working abroad. Some have studied for a MA and PhD in the country of destination. Moreover, most believe that these new skills can be applied in Egypt.

With a few exceptions, respondents' answers about elements in their current working environment abroad and in their country of destination worth introducing to Egypt are rather vague. Nevertheless, they indicate that respondents can both detect and appreciate new methodologies, ideas, values to be introduced to the country of origin. This is confirmed by most respondents who believe that the skills acquired abroad can be applied in Egypt and transferred there through virtual seminars/forums.

As regards the last question, the survey findings show that the overall impact of Egyptian highly-skilled migrants on the development of their homeland is potentially quite high and covers human, financial, and social capital. Concerning their economic contributions, the survey confirms that Egyptian HSMs send remittances through formal channels so strengthening the Egyptian financial system. Although only less than half of them invest in Egypt, their investment options are various and not limited to real estate but include productive activities. As seen previously, respondents' level of human capital is relatively high.

More significant than the human, social, and financial capital they represent respondents seem having a high level of engagement with Egypt. Although most of them come back to Egypt only once a year, the majority keeps itself well informed of the country's affairs and are connected with Egyptian associations either abroad or in Egypt. They do not see distance as an obstacle to their further involvement in Egypt's affairs and they undertake various transnational activities (investments, lectures, political activism, online networking, and voluntarism). As noted above, they have a strong demand for programmes facilitating their involvement, from policy development to skills' transfer and investment. However, throughout the survey respondents expressed a sense of neglect by the government and the staff in the embassies and consulates complaining that these do not contact them, that they do not organise activities and that they are not efficient in providing basic services. They denounce as the main obstacles to their further engagement corruption, overwhelming bureaucracy and negligence of embassies staff. There is much hope now with the end of Mubarak's regime and respondents' answers suggest that their involvement would increase should the new political framework help end these impediments.

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