

# The uses of mobile phones and Gifts in marriage in rural Moroccan communities in light of electric energy consumption: Interactive analysis.

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**Abstract.** In an unprecedented global environment marked by energy dependence. Access to electricity in rural Moroccan areas revolutionizing everyday life and ways of social interaction. So that, the uses of mobile phone become normal and more important. This study aims to explore, in light of the importance of access to electricity and mobile phone's uses, the role of the Gift in the consolidation of the social relationships on marriage occasions in Moroccan rural communities; by prioritizing the families' point of view. Based on comprehensive biographical interview; it has been performed during 3 months (June; July and August 2022; because it's the wedding period after the crops-gathering seasons); with 15 families in rural area in south East of Morocco. The verbatim was content analyzed. It allowed us to detect two levels: the first one is based on descriptive logic in relation to families view; indicating the importance of marriage in village knowledge's as well as the role of electric energy and mobile phone in their daily lives. While the second is building on an interactionism standpoint and shedding light on redefinition of social relationships. Results show; on one hand, the importance of electric energy, and on the other hand; marriage as practice governed by social norms that recreate cohesion between families through ritual such as gifts witch have seen a big retreat due to the mobile phone uses.

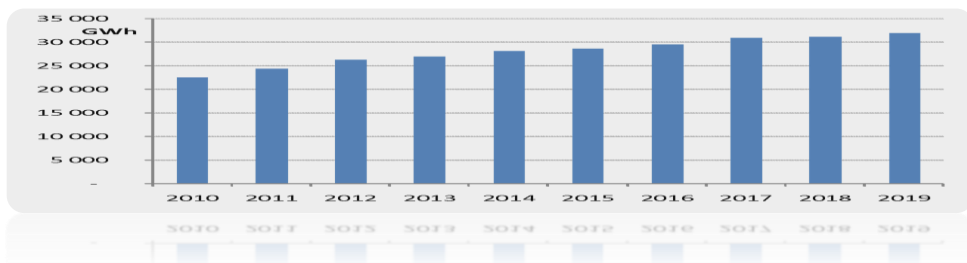
**Index Terms**— Community, Access to electricity, Family, Gift, Marriage, Mobile phone, Rural family.

## 1 Introduction

Rural communities today do not represent ancient communities in the entropic sense. In this study, using the concept of community does not refer to a group of people in a stigmatizing manner in relation to the post-modern surge; because this term made the actions and reactions more comprehensible, it might be easy to explain and predict. It is a basic organizing concept; without it some social facts in rural zones would be incomprehensible.

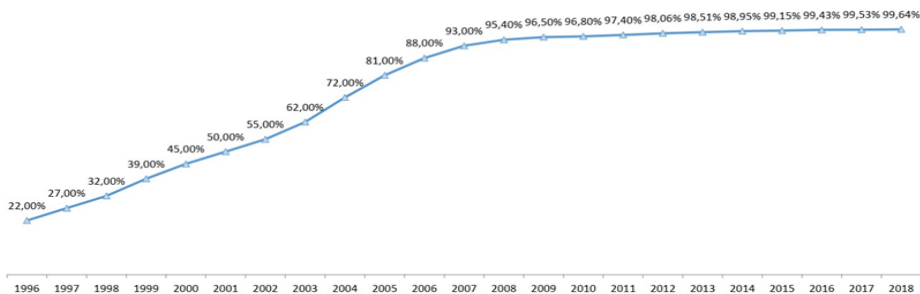
In spite of the fact that Anthropologists Amit and Rapport believe in that the notion of community is variable and vague in its definition; it is becoming an analysis tool [1]. The idea of believing in the existence of stable and unified communities led me to study the impact of: the access to electricity as a new dominant form of energy and its consumption in residential sector which has maintained a high-speed growth recently[1], and mobile phone technology on the network of relationships between families; and to know the extent of the changes it has seen. In this race; despite the many definitions of the concept of community; I will use only definitions that correspond with research direction. Although lifestyles and value models have changed, there have been profound changes due to urbanization; digitalization and electrification; communities remain a reality in some areas and not just a memory of a long time.

At present, there is still a gap in the electricity consumption between urban and rural population in Morocco, the average electricity consumption of each urban household increased from 700 KW/h per year to more than 1200KW/h per year between 2010 to 2019.



**Fig.1.** Evolution in electricity demand (GWH): 2010-2019. (Source: NOE)

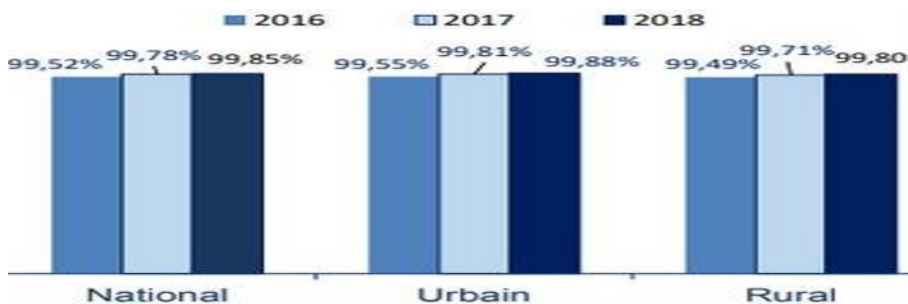
Although diversification efforts have accelerated since 1996, some forms of energy are very present in the Housing sector. Given its current, and future importance, we think that the issue of energy poverty in Moroccan rural areas is not an infrastructural problematic, so much as a process induced by a combination of overlapping political, economic and social factors.



**Fig.2.** Evolution of access to electricity: 1996-2019. (Source: NOE)

But even so, access to electricity is one of important factors that leading to a significant change in the scope of social relations affecting the rural environment, and having impact on the rural population by changing people’s lives, the daily becomes other, activities, relationships and interests are changing[2]. In this sense, different kinships and social

connexions, which represent the basis of village gatherings, displaced to the digital world. So it became necessary to redefine concepts in light of mobile phone technology.



**Fig.2.** Evolution of access to mobile phone services: 2016-2018. (Source: NTRA. July, 19, 2019)

The term ‘community’ to its origins; brings the idea of interdependence and exchange of services by duty. A community, then, is the assemblage of individuals to whom one is bound by this kind of relationship, one defined, we might even say constituted, by mutual obligation and by an exchange of gifts [2]. Community meaning the exchange of goods and services; it is the dealing with relation problems[3].In this sense; community surpass all its members by having its own law even it is a group of people having something in common engaged one another. Belonging together implicate morality and spirituality; because the community in its construction refers to sacrifice and benign fashion. The parties act as unite of solidarity and sharing benefits in common. The sense of community energizes and inspires families to build a common identity at the village or regional level, even though, in the present era, new definitions of the concept of family have emerged in accordance with the requirements of statistical science, and parallel to the economic changes which have introduced new forms of family that are not necessarily considered to be based on marriage, the family in rural areas has not changed its nature; but rather its structure.

In usual sense, Family may first seem to be familiar topic [4]. It is in line with considering it as the foundation and reflection of community, helping individuals to absorb; anchoring values and principles in order to be adapted to the demands of the rural community. This last one requires a common space constituting the framework of the daily life of the population group promoting interrelations; because of existence of the powerful links on which its social structure is based; and also the hierarchical system of authority which is at the origin of the collective judgments and the application of sanctions. The organization of this system is based on the Principe of distribution of benefits based on traditions and neighborhood. At the de bottom of the community; the family as the foundation; does not enjoy complete autonomy, but the weakening of its authority does not mean its total nihilistic position in front of the community. Indeed, externally, the tradition and cultural continuity requires interdependence forming a closed hoop; so; the family is obliged to obey the ideals of the community. Internally the family has its own rhythm in terms of communication methods, division of roles and identification of needs [5]. This margin of freedom is one of important entry points for change in community; in other words; the family manages its relations with the various components of community in more economical ways in time, effort and compensation.in this context; the family would be governed by the alternative between

communitarianism and individualism [6]. To better understand the paradoxical situation that the family knows; it may be necessary working on a social situation that defines an intersection between individualism and communitarianism, because in major events; family specific methods are evident; but with full respect for customs and traditions of the community. The more; there are substantive things that gain credibility through collective agreement. They are facts that exist independently of individuals opinions [7]. Why marriage exactly? Marriage is the great moment in family building; it is an establishing a family which in turn is the backbone of community and perpetuates it.

In usually, marriage takes place after the crops-gathering seasons when peasant obligations are diminished and there is ample to attend these parties collectively. Marriage in Moroccan rural areas is founded straightforwardly upon procreation. The basic idea to belief in the existence of a mystical bond due to procreation by the father did not change. Being the son of such father is the fundamental fact of the rural family and explains almost the majority of the social facts because marriage in its function is a cultural overlay on biologically grounded suite of behaviors. It is evident that marriage serves to identify the genetic father of a female's offspring. Furthermore, from a religious point of view, marriage is a sacred and appropriated bond for the descent of the pond [8]. To attend the marriage is not only to celebrate, but also to get the blessing and pray to the newlyweds. This is the Aura of marriage, which is spiritual in character makes the invitees prepare well through a dress that should resemble that of worship on Friday by wearing white dress; and prepare a gift for it.

The gift from this perspective is not only an economic means of material and in-kind assistance, but also has a religious dimension that is reflected in the confirmation of the bond between families because the gift is more than the gift [9]. In marriage, everything overlaps; to form an interwoven web of rituals and customs that establish community solidification, so, to give is to engage in a link.

During the preparation of marriage, family proceeds to invite guests in two ways; the first is traditional by sending an emissary reporting the invitation for those concerned by marriage at their homes. This way has a major impact on the individual in term of its symbolism. The second one is modern through the using of the information and communication technology especially mobile phone. Becoming a great infrastructure for the daily life of the family, mobile phone performs social functions and extends the family façade. But the emergence of this technology contributed to the rise of individualism which puts the logic of the community to the test. Even the mobile phone is compatible with several types of relationships; it remains a personal territory that is not shared.

Inviting someone to attend the wedding in a direct face to face manner has a positive image in him, that's a sign of appreciation. On the other hand; the fact of inviting through telephone communication reflects the subordination of the person concerned. The difference between the two situations has a significant bearing on the decision whether or not to attend. Then, it is not enough to call on the telephone to invite a villager to attend the wedding. In this sense, the problem path can be shorted in the following format:

Electric energy → mobile phone → invitation marriage → gift (+/-)

So, how villagers represent electric energy as a factor of change in their daily lives, and do the invitation by the mobile phone to the marriage contribute to retreat of gifts in marriage parties in Moroccan rural areas?

## **2 Materials and Methods**

I conducted comprehensive biographical interviews with 15 Families in rural area. A working methodology has been adopted; it's based on research into electric energy as a new dominant form of energy introduced mobile phone as new a communication pattern in inviting to the marriage as a regular collective practice, and witch reestablishes bonds by reviving rituals that contribute in the reinforcing of collective links between families. The interviews have been conducted during 3 months (June; July and August 2022 because it's the wedding period after the crops-gathering seasons); in tree Moroccans southeast districts, by using dialogic approach, a guide of interviews was designed to avoid any deviation in discussions with them [10].

### **2.1 Participants**

15 families belonging to different ethnics. I met them separately and they expressed their points of view. They live in multigenerational homes; houses sheltering not only parents but also grandparents, uncles, aunts, and in some cases neighbors were also with the families in question.

The question of representativeness, in the statistical sense, does not arise in this qualitative research, since it is the suitability of the participants' choice with the objectives of the research that determines its value. So in this study; this is rather of a sociological representativeness.

### **2.2 The execution process**

Before starting, I moved twice to the area where these families live for a stay of three days each, in order to observe the geography of the region and the lives of families. I contacted them to introduce myself and know the degree of interest in participating in this research. Then I explained to them the purpose of the research, the conduct of the interviews, ethical considerations such as the advantages or disadvantages that could be incurred by their participation.

## **3 Results**

### **3.1 First register**

This first level of analysis reflects, in a descriptive logic, the point of families' view about the issue of access to electricity as a new form of energy and its impact on their daily lives. Before, villagers had to use other forms of energy; Woods, Butane, sunlight and Charcoal in limited uses: cooking, lighting and protecting from the cold. But access to electric energy and through various uses of a variety of technological devices at home, families's relationships is subject to the operating area of these devices. The main customs have changed as rural families enter in new consumption system." Before, we had to sleep early in order to weak up before sunrise, but these days; families slowly started to stay up with TV". <sup>1</sup>This point of view emphasized the fact that the vast majority of rural household do function with technological devices thanks to access to electricity. As a sign of entry into modernity, easy to use, and does not require a certain level of education, mobile phone became universally the most consumed technological device. So, given its importance, mobile phone represents the only easy means of communication between families. "Thanks to electricity, my mobile phone is

always charged, and I do not need to ask for a favour.”<sup>2</sup> According to this point of view, individual became more independent to live his relationship not according to family group; but through his own rhythm, he needs only to charge his device to make a change [11]. The rise of individualism engenders a feeling of being virtual native. So, the dramatic rise of individualism in rural areas has begun to hide the possibility of sharing the property with the others. Previously, “we shared everything, no matter how small. But, actually, with abundance, increasing consumption and easy access to things, to share with others is done only on some occasions.”<sup>3</sup> So, access to electric energy is not only a simple physical equipping or infrastructure for improving quality of life in rural areas, but, it an event that reworked village life by introducing new modalities of living in groups. Through mobile phone, relationships to space, time and individuals has been modified. So, every technological progress is paid for by human condition regress. The weakness of solidarity and spirit of community started making a clear appearance through group parties like marriage.

The relationship between family and marriage is found in almost all cultures with exception [12]. This exception is due to the nature of the relationship between men and women in society. The beliefs on the ways in which a man is related to a woman are different from culture to another because within the culture some variations take place.

Marriage in rural areas is regarded as the most important moment of passage from age to age after birth [13]. Its importance is expressed through a series of strictly organized rituals that are customarily bound. “For us; marriage is obligatory for all; whether male or female”<sup>4</sup>. It is difficult to imagine the absence of marriage in these environments. Then marriage does not only mean the union of a man and a woman, but also a union between two families within community. “the congregation has a pond; we pray and work together; and the marriage is an increase in the congregation”<sup>5</sup>. From this perspective, marriage\* is an activity of the community, even though it involves individual cases. “when someone invites you to the wedding, it’s the group, if you refuse; you reject the group.”<sup>6</sup> The legitimacy and aura of marriage is derived from the community. If the form of marriage is regulated by a particular family; procedures are collective in nature. “When we want to marry one of the sons or daughters; it’s not about a single family; but it’s about everyone.”<sup>7</sup> Everyone is concerned and everyone is called to get involved. Marriage is a circle based on collective consciousness, a sense of common original and common customs. Given these reasons, it seems difficult to violate the community conventions.

From a formal point; the marriage has managed to retain its characteristics, however, the practices of families have helped to introduce techniques that accelerate the modifications of its bases. For a long time families invited to the marriage by sending an emissary reporting the invitation for those concerned by marriage at their homes in order to confirm their presence. “Before beginning the ceremonies, it is obligatory; according to customs, to assign someone who will invite the other families. Even if the operation takes some time, the family has enough time.”<sup>8</sup> in some cases of rarities of festival, marriage in rural environments sometimes continue for a week [14]†. Villagers celebrate; discuss and negotiate the affairs of the

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<sup>1</sup> Family N°9, p.22

<sup>2</sup> Family N°15, p. 33

<sup>3</sup> Family N°4, p. 16

<sup>4</sup> Family N°4,p.p 15-16

<sup>5</sup> Family N°3,p.p 13-14

<sup>6</sup> Family N°10,pp 25-27

<sup>7</sup>Family N°1,pp 2-4

community. Gifts collected are used to finance the marriage. This spirit of humanitarian sharing began to give way to technology; specifically to mobile phone technology. "unfortunately, today; families are giving up this method of inviting and simply call over the phone in very short time, which affects the attendance rate."<sup>9</sup>

Inviting a villager by telephone to attend a main event gives him the impression that he is undesirable. So it's very likely he'll be absent. This absence means that the bonds of solidarity and cohesion begin to weaken [15]. The weakness of the spirit of community gives way to the rise of individualism. The fragmentation of the community begins with small facts that undermine community conventions. Invitation by telephone which gives way to absence which means lack of gifts; it impedes the collective reunion of families to talk and negotiate the affairs of the community. These non-human objects have altered human relationships. So every technological progress is paid for by a human condition regress.

The gift constitutes an element of the functioning of the community. Far from being a debt or equivalence relationships; the gift represent the main fold of the continuity of the community spirit where the individual is for the whole [16]. "Integration of mobile phone in family's life has really changed rites and relationships. Instead of we speak face to face we prefer to communicate at a distance."<sup>10</sup> "Sometimes the guest is content only with a call to express his apologies for not having enough time to be present at the wedding."<sup>11</sup> When we are unable to express our point of view directly we hide behind the screen; so mobile phone is an opportunity to escape from the community commitments.

### **3.2 Second register**

The cult of using mobile phone in rural communities is growing with rage [17]. Due, on one hand, to access to electric energy, because, mobile phone services mainly depend on the electricity, and on the other hand, to the sweep of information and communication technology. This truth was evoked by the majority of families. This shows clearly their dependence on this technology [18]. In other words, families are equipped by this apparatus, which represents as sign of modernity and change.

Daily, the villagers communicate directly in their meetings and change opinion about common affairs, but today the encounters are rare. That made many community characteristics disappears. Among these characteristics the contribution to collective affairs according to the logic of the gift. So how could we understand the functioning of the community by looking for what withdraws the gift? This question; I hope it will become Claire as this discussion unfolds. Far from demanding a counterpart in these communities, villagers give for the profit of the whole, to strengthen the functioning of the community. The gift is omnipresent in other forms of course; but the importance that the villager grants to that which delivers on the day of marriage exceeds that which is given in relations of kinship or friendships. In fact, in the community, giving led to strong community relations. It is within these relationships, so; not giving can be understood as an out of these relationships.

As noted above, the practical function of the mobile phone allows families to cope in several situations that require a lot of time and efforts. But this way of doing things is incompatible with the rhythms of community life [19]. Because there are events that require physical

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<sup>8</sup>Family N°9,pp 20-24

<sup>9</sup>Family N°2,pp 5-10

<sup>10</sup>Family N°15,pp 31-35

<sup>11</sup>Family N°6, pp. 18-19

presence as the event of marriage [20]. So we can resent the presence of urgency and acceleration as characters inherent to mobile phone [21]. This acceleration is normally opposed to a regular and slow rhythm of rural community. The mobile phone gives the impression that it can manage time, and enable the accomplishment of so many tasks in a short time [22]. Then; the mobile phone changes perception of time and relationships. In reality, the relationship with time is totally changed [23].

In daily life there is a tendency to participate in activities that do not require enough time and produces immediate results. Attending a wedding requires a longer commitment and no results for the benefit of the individual. This sense of urgency ravages relationships and pushes the individual to react in a subjective manner. The perceived need to fully investor time is incompatible with a slow pace governed by constraints from the distant past. So that; this rigide community temporal horizon retains meaning; it must be consistent with the present time and taking advantage of all opportunities for renewal. The decrease in the gift during marriage in rural communities; side by side with other factors; is at the origin of the fall of many relations of solidarity. Because to give is to engage a bond; and not giving means getting out of the relationship.

## **4 Discussion**

Recently, under background of rural areas development, Electricity, as a major energy source, had achieved greet development by placing many older other traditional sources. The analysis of the families' point of view revealed the deep of changes has affected the systems of relations and ties in Moroccan rural areas. The more, the accompanying development of digital devices such as mobile phone has laid profound cultural and social disruptions. Mobile phone, by definition, demands to be able to do things faster and leads to doing those more and more, because the ringtones it produces have an alert function that requires immediate intervention, this sense of urgency is inherent, and then, the user is prompted to reply to avoid missing the experience. It has become central to the personal communication infrastructure of many villagers and offers more flexibility in their social relationships. Ostensibly; Mobile phone technology aimed at enhancing body capabilities and eradicate distance and time obstacles. In this case; the mobile phone had been regarded as a kind of prosthetic limb to wield and control, and while this might imply a straightforward conjoining of humans and machines, this reinforces the distinction between humans as masters and machines as tools.

From the points of view of the families interviewed, we distinguish two discourses: that of parents who had not the opportunity to have a mobile phone during their youth, and that of young people who are overwhelmed by technological innovation.

For the old men's, the mobile phone contributes to the demolition of the life patterns attached to nature; indeed, according to them; the rhythms of life no longer follow the natural laws that frame social life. Everything becomes digital; relationships; tasks; even moments of rest and meals. A new way of life comes from the screens with all its defects and time constraints. This tendency to believe the combination between the mobile phone and the dominance of a new digital lifestyle is explained by the fact that today villagers are witnessing a frantic rise in the machination of the operations of the mind depends on physical activities previously dominant. For young people, the technology in general and specifically the mobile phone represents a lifeline and emancipation from these hostile places. The digital apparatus, for these young people, provide possible opportunities that exist outside these isolated



environments and submerged by monotony and delay; only the digital objects that surround us allow us to be born in the real world and not the world conceived by these old people. Then, the mobile phone for these antagonists does not have the same value; for the old; it represents a tool for the demolition and execution of the rest of life in harmony with nature. However, young people see it as a necessity that is not opposed to reality and that makes them more and more ease. All families interviewed report that the mobile phone handles their business in terms of communication and life-saving provisions in the event of emergencies. Then the mobile phone becomes a family infrastructure legitimized by the members of the family. However; some ways of doing things are rejected by families especially when it comes to the girl. For them, the mobile phone represents a world agitated by different social and moral ills; and they support a vision that the mobile phone must be monitored by parents. In the same vein, families make the same remark on the issue of couple life, which is threatened by the margins of freedom and initiative that this device allows. The mobile phone, despite the services it provides, remains a strange feature of the rural social fabric due to the potential for change that could plague the rural social system.

## 5 Conclusion

It seems at the first glance to question the relationship of the gift as a human characteristic and the mobile phone as a modern technology; is meaningless. This is because the subject is intersected individually and collectively. The villager is not an aware who is afraid of the gift because it requires a return, but the gift, as a social fact, certainly has a period of validity, this validity derives from the resilience of customs and habits to changes in communities relationships with time. Mobile phone technology represents a system with its own values penetrating the deliberative system of social values and make an essential contribution to the establishment of new relations may be opposed to those of the community.

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