Migrant women, transnational relations and social change: how do Senegalese women combine migration with family life?

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Abstract:

Despite a growing interest in women's mobility, still few studies examine the drivers of women's international migration. Moreover, as the decision to stay or to leave is tightly related to men and women's respective social roles and statuses in the society of origin, to what extent can women develop their own individual migration project in societies based on a patriarchal system such as the Wolof people of Senegal? Combining data from qualitative individual interviews and a retrospective biographic survey conducted in 2012-2013 among both migrant and non-migrant women in a small town North-West of Senegal, we are demonstrating how women manipulate the normative discourse and expectations to either develop their own independent migration project or, for those who are migrating with their partner, find ways to reinforce their role and status in their community through migration. We further discuss the effects of migration on women's marriage and fertility.

Introduction

Despite a growing interest in the characteristics of women migrating internationally (age, marital status, education levels, etc., see Kofman *et al*, 2000; Pessar et Mahler, 2003), still few studies examine the drivers and conditions in which women migrate: their motivations, the social and financial means they manage to mobilize in order to move, how migrant women are perceived in both the country of origin and destination. Moreover, migration is gendered since the decision to stay or leave is tightly related to men and women's respective social roles and statuses in the

society of origin. Therefore, in societies historically based on a patriarchal system such as the Wolof people of Senegal, where women are essentially defined through the roles they are playing as wives and mothers (Dial, 2008), one key question is to what extent women in the contemporary globalized world develop their own individual migration project: choice of country, activity, where in the host country, with whom, when in their life course, how do they manage their family left behind, etc. (Chant, 1992; Biao, 2007 ; Mondain and Diagne, 2013; Toma and Vause, 2013). Combining data from qualitative individual interviews and a retrospective biographic survey conducted in 2012-2013 among both migrant and non-migrant women in a small town North-West of Senegal, we are aiming to broaden the discussion by demonstrating how women manipulate the normative discourse and expectations from their society of origin to either develop their own independent migration project or for those who are migrating with their partner, nevertheless find ways to reinforce their role and status through migration in their community of origin as well as of destination. In the particular context we are examining, migration is circular which means that migrants travel back and forth from their country of origin to the host country for periods of various lengths. Although in this context, international migration remains a male phenomenon, with most migrant men leaving their wife-ves and offspring in the country of origin, women are increasingly mobile thus leading to the following question: how do migrant women manage their family lives, especially in the case of "independent" migrants? In this study we examine the consequences of women's migration on their family life course, focusing on the marriage process and marital stability as well as levels of fertility and issues regarding the care of children left behind. We end up discussing the notions of empowerment and autonomy for women who appear to be extremely ambivalent in their desires and choices.

Theoretical background and main issues

One important bias in studying human mobility from Southern to Northern countries relates to the binary perspective (country of origin/destination) from which the phenomenon has essentially been examined, thus leading to a simplistic differentiation between migrants' realities and that of the natives of the host country. Another, and related bias, is the domination of the

economic lenses through which migration is studied: the amount of monetary transfers, the consequences of migration on local socio-economic development. The introduction by Levitt (1998; 2007) of the notion of « social transfers » that refers to the circulation of ideas, life styles, identities, in both directions (host to origin and origin to host country) during the migration process provides the opportunity to broaden our scope on individuals' motivations to move and how it reflects the social organisation and structure to which they belong as well as the ongoing changes that their society of origin experiences. As such migration is not only a "consequence" of a specific socio-economic situation but can also be seen as a sign of social change. For a growing number of women migration may indeed provide a new perspective for their own future and perhaps their children's. For example, the increased access to education and to the labor market may both constitute a vector for new aspirations and reflect the desire for more autonomy and financial independence; at the same time these women and even those who are still marginalized from these spheres may be witnessing their migrant peers, the latter thus becoming either models or incentives to develop their own individualized professional project by migrating (Navarra and Salis, 2011). These social dynamics are in turn transformed by people's mobility, especially in the contemporary world where social media play a key role as vectors of information and communication, and are widely used by migrants in the context of transnational migration. Windows are thus opened on different life styles and economic opportunities, and this may mobilize women in ways that could transgress the social norms they are supposed to follow.

Socio-cultural norms of the country of origin as well as the interface of the public and private spheres in which social relationships take place constitute central dimensions in order to better capture women's decision making process to migrate (Brettell, 2003 : 147-150). In the Wolof society in Senegal, this interface is marked by the fundamental role played by the ceremonies (weddings, baptisms, funerals) which lead to a tight relation between the social and economic dimensions of daily life. As demonstrated by Buggenhagen (2001), it in this context that individuals, and particularly women, find an opportunity to affirm their status in the society. Money is thus considered for its social value, for the capacity it will provide individuals to fulfill various social obligations. In this perspective, international migration plays a key role by increasing individual migrant women's opportunities to reinforce their kin and family ties and

thus better ensure their social and economic future. In the context of a developing country where social welfare is still limited, and the annual population growth rate fairly high due to a drop in infant and under five mortality rates combined to a still relatively high total fertility rate in the past decades, this is a central issue for people, especially for women who continue to rely on their offspring to ensure their old days. Therefore, women may be torn between their aspirations of migrating independently and their need to adopt behaviours that show their respect for the roles that their society assigns them to fulfill: as a married woman, respecting the "ligéeyu ndey" (which means that they have to respect their husband's authority) and become a good mother, and as a single woman, reassure potential husbands and family in law by a good attitude, morally blameless (Dial, 2008).

Therefore it is essential to examine women's characteristics at the time they are migrating, particularly their marital situation and occupation, and analyze their motivations to move accordingly. Toma and Vause (2013) examined the situation of independent versus partner-related migration from Dakar and Kinshasa and highlighted the importance of education and access to network for these women. As larger cities are often privileged environment for social change, it is also interesting to examine what is driving similar processes in more remote areas and how these are in turn drivers of social transformations. In a small town North-West of Senegal, saturated by out migration to Italy since the mid-1980s and more recently to Spain and Greece (although migrants are turning away from the latter destination because of the financial crisis), how have women integrated the flow of emigrants and in what way are they combining their migrant life styles and their family obligations? To what extent is the ideal marriage model described by Adjamagbo and Antoine (2006) challenged by the migrants' new life conditions in the country of destination (see Ba, 2008 and Babou, 2008 for Wolof Murid migrant women in the United-States)? Despite the normative discourses surrounding the value and power of the patriarchal system, isn't it challenged, as suggested by Buggenhagen (2001), by younger men who, facing the constraints and multiple crises of the contemporary world, not only look for more financial and social autonomy, but also need to rely economically on women, in particular their spouses? Finally, is it possible to predict future behaviours and trends in female mobility in

Senegal, and more generally in African countries considering how the country has integrated the globalized economy?

In the next sections we briefly describe the context and methodology, and then we present our preliminary results and end with a short discussion.

Context and methodology

Our study takes place in Kebemer, a small town North-West of Senegal, on the road between the capital, Dakar, and St Louis and at the crossroads in the direction of Tuba, the Murid brotherhood capital and pilgrim city. Kebemer is part of the Louga district which is located in the Senegalese peanut basin and now acknowledged to be one of the main regions for international out migration to European countries, particularly Italy. Essentially a male phenomenon which intensified with the collapse of the cash-crop economy in the early 1980s, migration has also attracted women, although in a smaller proportion, essentially through the family reunification process. However, partly due to the devaluation of the Senegalese currency in 1994 that aggravated households' and families' economic situation, their participation increased during these past two decades, still through reunification, but also through more independent initiatives even if these remain tightly related to the access to the migrant network. This trend follows the patterns of migration at the national level (Lessault and Beauchemin, 2009). Like men, women are not planning to stay in Italy, but are rather integrated into a circular migration cycle, where periods of intense activity in the host country alternate with visits of various lengths in their community of origin. This area has been studied through two main qualitative fieldworks since 1999 with the migration phenomenon taken into account indirectly (LeGrand et al, 2003) or analyzed in its different dimensions to examine its impact on local social transformation, particularly on women's lives (Mondain 2009; Mondain and Randall, 2012; Mondain, 2014). The latter study has led to the design of a quantitative biographic survey focusing on the effects of migration on socio-demographic behaviours among women, combined with qualitative interviews in 2012-2013 among migrant women. This 13 years follow-up of a same community provides a unique opportunity for deepening our analysis of the effects of mobility on social and family dynamics.

The 24 individual interviews were conducted in 2012 and 2013 specifically among migrant women or women who were planning to migrate. The participants were sampled through three channels: first, by discussing with two key informants in the town, strongly involved in the migrant network and activities; second while conducting the survey in 2012 we were able to identify migrant women. Finally the last channel was more a "snow-bowling" approach, by using our respondents' own networks. Each interview was conducted in Wolof, then transcribed into French and typed by the same person. The interviews were recorded with the agreement of the respondent.

The distribution of our respondents is as follows: 15 women who were still migrating at the time of the interview, 7 who declared not migrating anymore and 2 having the project to migrate. The age range goes from 26 to 58 years-old, which means that some women experienced contexts where the legal requirements from the host country (Italy) as well as the economic climate were more favorable. Most of them had at least a completed primary cycle level of education (CM2 in the Senegalese school system), while five had no education at all except for having attended the Koranic School. The large majority of them were involved in some kind of business in Italy or Spain whereas six of them declared having no activity at all and were dedicated to the care of their household (cooking, cleaning, care for the children if any). Among the five women declaring having no education, four didn't have any activity.

We are using NVivo to manage and classify the content of the discourses into categories (nodes) based on a codebook designed through successive retroactions. This structure allows proceeding to various requests in order to make comparisons considering women's characteristics and search for similarities and differences in their respective experiences. Because at this point our analysis hasn't been completed, we are presenting our preliminary results with no verbatim.

Senegalese migrant women: between continuity and challenge of the social norms

Our results essentially take two main directions: first, we are highlighting the main drivers that lead women to migrate depending on their situation when they decide to migrate. Second, we are

examining the dynamics of gender and family relationships in the context of migration to identify in what ways these affect their agency to decide whether to continue or stop migrating. We then open the discussion on the way women see their future and what are the effects of migration on their life course.

The drivers of Senegalese women's mobility

We will explore three main drivers of women's mobility: their marital status at the time of their migration, their reproductive status and the structure of their family.

Women's marital status at the time of migration. Recent studies on the timing (when and why) of women's migration have taken into account their marital status at the time of migration, while making the distinction between independent and partner-related migration. However, data remain scarce on the effects on their future marital lives whether they leave their country single or married.

Among the 22 women still migrating or having migrated in our sample, six left being either divorced or single and got married while migrating, all with a Senegalese migrant man. Among the two who are planning to migrate, one is single and the other is divorced. All the other women, except for one whose husband stayed in Senegal, joined their spouse in the host country. Obviously to conduct their own independent project of migration, women in our sample needed to be "free" from marital life at the beginning; getting married while migrating is less problematic as shown in a previous study (Mondain et al, 2012) as the couple meets when both are migrants and developing their respective activities. However, joining their husband through family reunification does not necessarily mean for the concerned women that they had no personal project in mind. At first, in our interviews, these women adopted a very normative discourse saying they had come to support their husband in the daily domestic tasks and that despite the openness (perhaps willingness) of their husband for them to work, they preferred staying at home doing the house work. However, these discourses may be part of a strategy by women who try to justify their "lack of luck" in finding a job, or simply their difficulty to adapt to the new environment. At the opposite, women who migrated independently, even if they were integrated into a network of relatives and friends, use a more determined discourse to describe

how brave, courageous a woman has to be to endure the host country's constraints. This refers to the Wolof notion of 'jom' discussed elsewhere (Mondain et al, 2012), meaning that even if the person doesn't succeed in his-her project (in terms of wealth for example), the fact that he-she fights for a living and shows a willingness to support the family, will at least provide 'jom'. A way for them to escape the feeling of total failure is to justify their behaviour through the traditional and unchallenging fundamental Wolof social norms that married women are supposed to follow: "mougn" (enduring, being patient), "ligéeyu ndey" (being obedient to their husband, satisfying him in all dimensions including sexually), "ndiguël" (order, expectation, a wife would say, talking about her husband: "I listen to his 'ndiguël'"). These discourses are particularly salient for jobless women who are entirely dependent on their husband.

Women's reproductive status. One key dimension that has been poorly documented so far relates to women's reproductive status and its relation to mobility. In our sample those who migrated single or divorced, did not position themselves for having a large family: being extremely active in trading, travelling across borders, the possibilities for them to build a family were not maximized. There might be an endogenous dimension in this situation as being childless or with only one child increases the need for the woman to ensure her future by being involved in lucrative activities. Interestingly among the 6 eldest women (over 50 years old) who were still migrating, 4 were either childless or with only one child. At the opposite, several migrant women married and with several children insisted that they wanted to go back to Senegal in order to take care of their young children or look after their elder children left behind and ensure that they would not deviate from school. Therefore, women's situation regarding the care and management of their children appears to be a key issue to further explore (Mazzucato and Schans, 2011; Bledsoe and Sow, 2011 for children sent back to their country of origin).

Migrant women's family structure. Beyond the usual factors such as education levels, marital status or age, an essential aspect of Wolof society (and that should certainly be taken into account for other societies) refers to the size and structure of individuals' families. As Buggenhagen (2001: 374) states:

> "Though the home can be viewed as a constrictive space in which women's domestic labor sustains male productive efforts abroad, the Senegalese household is also a node in women's circuits of exchange. These exchanges include family ceremonies, rotating credit unions, and trading, and as such are the arena in which women implicitly reconfigure relations of gender and generation within their communities".

Women, like men, although in a different way, are subject to lots of expectations from their own relatives, parents, and friends. Hence, as migrants they are solicited for support and contributions to ceremonies both while in the host country and when getting back for vacation or shorter visits. This burden and need increases in case they are childless or belonging to a small family as they are seen as having less financial constraints. Because it is also an issue of prestige for the migrant couple, we found jobless women entirely supported by their husband, mentioning that he would help them facing these personal obligations, or, if the woman has a limited family (e.g. parents died, few siblings), most of her contribution would go to her in-laws; if she gets along well with her husband, he will support her in providing himself what is expected as it is a question of honor and prestige for him as well. Other migrant women were integrated in their own family network in the host country (living close or with their migrant siblings) and shared the burden with their migrant relatives. As such it appears important to consider the structure of the migrant woman's own kin and family. Again, quoting Buggenhagen (2001: 375):

> "While overseas exchange seems like a purely male endeavor, women are drawn into commodity circuits, and are even the driving force behind male migration. In contrast to men, women carry their wealth on their bodies, in the form of cloth, cosmetics, wigs and other accessories obtained from male trade networks, and ostentatiously display their affluence by making large cash prestations during marriages, baptisms and funerals. (…) However, while women are sometimes said to draw value away from the household, on another level men and women are equally interested in the production of blood relations. Foreign commodities and cash, rather than undermining the production of blood ties, are important social media that Murids, and especially Wolof, use to develop social relations".

All these characteristics (migrant women's marital and reproductive status at the time of migration and during migration, the family structure to which they belong) are playing a key role in the decision process to migrate as well as their strategies in terms of professional activity. These also may influence their choice of continuing or stop migrating.

The "life there": agency to stop migrating

Following Levitt (1998, 2011), new behaviours and identities emerge from migrants' interaction with the host society as well as from the way they interpret it through the lenses of their own social and cultural background. Therefore, it is likely that migrant women are torn between their nostalgia of the way of life in the country of origin and their (often silenced) attraction to new attitudes and daily life organisation in the host country. They are exposed to various influences drawing from their own experience, what they have observed among their migrant peers and also from the perception by their non-migrant relatives of the benefits of migration. All women in our sample expressed their wish to stop migrating (for those who were still migrants), for not migrating again (those who were not migrant at the time of the interview), while the two who were planning to migrate said it was a temporary life project and that ultimately their wish is to remain close to their families in their country of origin.

Households' dynamics in the host country. Clearly, this Senegalese circular migration is a compromise between a strong desire to improve one's own as well as the family's life conditions, and the acknowledgement that the host country's life style doesn't fit with migrants' expectations of well-being. Indeed, a consensus appears in the interviews that life in Italy (or in Spain for a couple of women and in the US for one of them) is extremely hard for both migrant men and women, and especially for women who are working whether it is in a formal or informal job (many combine both activities) as they also have to deal with the domestic tasks. The structure of the household in the host country is thus important to consider. For example, several migrant women told that they were sharing the house with their brothers or their husband's brothers and their wives. That meant that women could share the tasks or rely on one or more of the other women if they had no particular activity. Others, on the contrary, were

living alone with their husband and children which meant that they had a double burden of work in case they had a job.

For those in a similar household but jobless, we found a common discourse where women affirmed they had chosen to stay at home to support their husband by taking care of the domestic tasks. These migrant housewives insisted how they "pitied" their husband when they saw how they were living in the host country: getting up early to go to work and having to manage a few basic domestic tasks such as cleaning and cooking. A first level of understanding of their discourse implies that they wish to stay close to their husband to support him on a daily basis. They acknowledge that they are not seeking a job in order to fulfill this role. A second level of discourse could be interpreted as a way for these women to justify their economic inactivity, and thus their inability to offer gifts and participate significantly to ceremonies when getting back to their home country. One leitmotiv is: "chacun sa chance" (it's a question of being lucky). Many women who had not found a job or hadn't really sought a job obviously needed to justify themselves: did these women have a dream of "success" in earning money to be able to sustain their own family and gain some prestige through the gifts they would have been able to provide?

Finally a third level of understanding leads us to consider the indirect discourses migrant women have on young women, either Senegalese migrants or "gnaks" (a negative expression referring to Africans coming from forest countries such as Gabon, DRC, etc.), who could solicit their husband for money or other kind of support in exchange of sexual relationships or even leading to a marriage. None of our participants mentioned that such experiences had happened to them but their discourses were saturated by anecdotes and stories about such women, implying that by staying, they are also controlling their husband's behaviours.

However, other married migrant women in our sample obviously wanted to stay in the host country because they were very successful in their activities, essentially trading. These women would acknowledge in a very positive way the support their husband were providing in the daily domestic tasks rather than "pitying" him, and they seemed to fully accept and appreciate it. Our data doesn't allow us to assess the extent to which such attitudes also reveal new aspirations in terms of spousal and gender relationships, but it could also constitute one motivation for

continuing the circular migration as these women are perfectly aware that once back, they will never find the same autonomy and share of tasks they obtain while in the host country. Along the same lines, women who experienced the daily routine of leaving home in the morning at the same time as their husband to go to work, then sharing the domestic tasks with him (fetching the children at the daycare, do the grocery, clean) may see it as an attractive life style, especially for women, such as those in our sample, coming from a semi-urban area.

Senegalese migrant women's ambivalence regarding their situation and future is emphasized by their feeling of loneliness characterizing the gap in how social relationships are taking place in a European country (with less direct interactions with people, the constraints of work hours and transportation) compared to their home country. All women who did not have any economic activity, ended up spending their whole days watching TV once the usual domestic tasks were completed. Therefore these women could even not feel valued for the roles that are traditionally expected from them in their society as nobody was around to share the day with them. Even for active migrant women, because they are facing many more constraints than in Senegal where they have support for the care of children and help in the domestic tasks, they mentioned feelings of exhaust and loneliness due to the way of life in Europe that restricts time to socialize. However, it is likely that these social relationships and contacts they are missing are partly idealized if we consider all they mentioned about the solicitations to which they are constantly exposed in Senegal and the burden it represents.

Ceremonies and social obligations. As documented by Buggenhagen (2001), the ceremonies constitute a significant burden for individuals who cannot escape from it, otherwise they face the risk of being marginalized from their social and family networks. Typically, migrants are solicited by their extended families, in laws, friends as they are seen to concentrate more wealth than their non-migrant peers. All our participants agreed that they were partly relieved from these obligations while in the host country but overwhelmed when getting back to Senegal. This could explain why some migrants, men or women, are delaying their visits and also why some husbands, despite the past normative discourses that women should not migrate (Mondain et al, 2012), prefer to bring their wife-ves to the host country in order to avoid frequent visits to Senegal.

Regarding family reunification, several women mentioned that their mother in law was not necessarily positive in letting their bride join their husband as they feared that their son would never come back. This could explain why, out of the 13 women who declared having joined their husband, 7 said that the primary reason was health, 5 needed a treatment, often to solve infertility issues (see Bonnet and Duchesne, 2014), and 2 had health issues with one of their children. If such motivations are perfectly plausible, it could also be a way for them to justify a departure not welcomed by their mother in law in particular. It is also worth noting that these women were those with the lowest education levels in our sample and had been solicited by their husband to support him on a daily basis, perhaps in order for them to avoid coming back too often to Senegal. However, the same women even if not professionally active, considered themselves relatively autonomous as their husband provided enough money for the daily expenses including the amount to be sent to the family in Senegal. This leads us to reconsider the notion of 'autonomy' as one silenced dimension may relate to the distance between the couple and the solicitations of the extended family.

Conclusion

We thus end up with a complex portray of migrant women who express contradictory feelings, making it difficult to assess the extent to which they really have the agency to decide what they want to do: continue migrating or stop. Some of them are 'trapped' in a system where they rely too strongly on the benefits they are making to ensure their own living as well as their social stability. These women are often childless or with one child and have experienced unstable marital relationships. Others seem to be less motivated to work but at the same time they prefer to stay close to their migrant husband. Those who decided to come back to Senegal for an unlimited period of time are those with children left behind or young children born in the context of migration. Others were also concerned with the health of one of their parents. Interestingly those women were generally more educated than those who, despite a similar family situation had decided to stay. In that sense, it is likely that more educated women have more agency to decide what is best for themselves as well as for the upbringing and education of their children.

This confirms the findings of other studies (Toma and Vause, 2013), highlighting that more educated migrant women (secondary school and over) demonstrate more agency to make clear choices. In our study, such women express their motivations to find economic activities in the host country or make their own decision to get back to Senegal to care for their offspring or elderly. Less educated women had usually no economic activity and used a very normative discourse about their roles as wives.

Discussion

Taking these dynamics into account lead us to revisit the notions of "individual project" and women's autonomy in a context of globalizing economy where the patriarchal system may be challenged in certain ways while at the same time individuals are forced to justify their choices using the traditional norms of their society of origin in order not to break the social security net constituted by their family and kin network. As Buggenhagen suggests (2011: 376):

> "The volume and velocity of money transfers, merchant goods and the prosperity projected by feasting and gift-giving are at odds with household stories about contracting marriages with absent husbands, and baptisms with unwed mothers. Moreover, these stories are themselves critical narratives of the neoliberal moment and the possibilities the contemporary historical moment offers for social production."

These aspects are also at odds with individual stories describing the difficulties of the migrants' lives in the host countries while they are idealized by non-migrants almost as heroes who are sacrificing their lives for the well being of their families. Hence, if the possibilities offered by the host countries are attractive to more intellectually and socially independent women they may notnecessarily challenge their context of origin as a significant part of their earnings will be transferred through gifts and other contributions. According to Navarra and Salis (2011), most of Senegalese migrant women in Italy are there for professional reasons which leads us to reconsider the discourses where the first reason mentioned by some women was that they were joining their husband. In fact, in many cases, women are also looking for economic success as expressed by this woman in our sample: first she said: "if you migrate with your husband, obey him, support him in all means, do not insist if he doesn't want you to work"; then she added: "I

never looked for a job because it is hard for a woman, I was not lucky and my husband was fine with me staying at home"; and finally: "I came back because there was nothing to do for me there and now I am trying to do some trade with Mauritania" (49 year old woman, primary education level, 8 children). In other words this woman certainly hoped to succeed in some kind of economic activity but for various reasons (her husband was more or less opposed to it, the conditions for finding a job were difficult, her children were in Senegal…) she didn't find it or was not motivated to search. Because she didn't want to stay with no activity she ended up developing her own personal project away from her husband.

Two other dimensions could explain the difficulty for some women to emancipate themselves from the home in the context of migration. A first one may relate to the characteristics of the Senegalese network in Italy: Senegalese migration in Italy has now lasted for several decades; it is largely supported by the Murid brotherhood which has led to the multiplication of "dahira" where the Senegalese community gather (Buggenhagen, 2001; Riccio, 2006). Not being part of these activities lead to the marginalization of the migrants from their own network and perhaps to their permanent emigration from their country of origin. In our sample, several women were insisting on the loss of identity by some of their younger peers, who would for example not dress up traditionally for religious events such as Kokhite or Tabaski. The second aspect may be the worries expressed regarding the instability of Senegalese migrant couples; none of the women in our sample mentioned they had faced such situations but their discourse is full of stories about their peers having encountered conflicts and separations or divorce. This has also been documented by Babou (2002) in the context of migration to the United-States.

Our preliminary results highlight migrant women's ambivalence between more personal aspirations and the need to continue respecting the social and cultural norms of their society of origin. This takes place in a context where the State does not provide any efficient social security net, leading individuals to develop strategies for their own future and that of their offspring, one strategy being to migrate. However it is not clear whether migrating brings sustainable solutions, or if migrants are part of a "culture of migration" (Kandel and Massey, 2002) that blurs their ability to envisage alternative avenues to secure their old age and support their offspring adequately while staying in their country of origin. For example how does migration shape

young people's life projects: do they prefer to leave rather than study? What do their parents want them to do? Take over and migrate or do find a stable job in Senegal? Even if discourses seem to be slightly changing due to the financial crisis that has particularly affected South European countries, breaking the myth of migration would eliminate the fantastic hope for improved economic conditions for their families that migration provides, and for women, the possibility of a 'way out' from a society still extremely heavy in terms of what is expected from them as spouse and mother, despite their increased implication on the Senegalese labour market.

At the same time, however, migration also exacerbates dimensions of women's vulnerability, in case of childlessness or having few relatives. In such cases the privilege status of being the center of the circulation of goods and money in which migration puts them needs to be maintained (Buggenhagen, 2001). Also, for women who started an independent project or became relatively autonomous in the host country, the 'way back' to a dependent relationship to their husband and family in law becomes unthinkable. For these women, continuing to migrate back and forth is the only possibility to maintain both their socio-economic advantage and individual autonomy; however, for many on the long run this situation becomes extremely difficult to sustain and they feel 'trapped' in a vicious circle.

As shown earlier in various contexts, migration affects women's fertility negatively whether migrants or left-behind by a migrant spouse (Brockerhof, 1995 for rural-urban African migration; Massey and Mullan, 1984 for the Mexican-US migration). However few studies currently deal with how women combine the constraints of mobility with their personal aspirations and needs in terms of family building, especially in a country where reproduction and motherhood are central in a woman's life and essential to her social status (Foley, 2007). One avenue we could explore would be to compare migrants' wives fertility levels from our 2012 survey to that of non-migrant couples and contrast it with the discourses of migrant women. This could at least shed some light on the complex relationships between mobility and family dynamics, and to what extent, locally (at the district or region levels) rather than at the national level, it could capture the benefits of a demographic dividend.

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