# Is feminization really on the rise? The case of international migration flows from DR Congo and Senegal.

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#### **Abstract**

Previous research, mostly focused on Asian and Latin American contexts, found that women are increasingly present in international migration flows, especially so as independent economic actors. This paper examines the extent to which these two trends - the feminization of migration flows and an increase in autonomous female migration – can be observed in the African context. It uses data collected within the Migration between Africa and Europe (MAFE) project in Senegal, DR Congo and several European countries. Discrete-time event-history analysis reveals only moderate increases in the likelihood of female migration over time, especially towards Western destinations, but no decline in gender gaps. The collection of rich retrospective information from both current and return migrants allows a more in-depth investigation of the nature of women's moves. Several indicators allow us to examine the extent to which women moved autonomously or in association to their partner. While some evidence of a rise in autonomous female migration was found among the Congolese, no salient change was visible in Senegal. The findings were interpreted in light of the more rigid patriarchal system and traditional gender norms that characterize Senegal in comparison to DR Congo.

#### 1. Introduction

While women's international migration is not a new phenomenon, women have long been absent from research on migration (Morokvasic 2008; Boyd and Grieco 2003). Men were perceived to be the only protagonists of international mobility while women were seen as either left behind or passively following their husbands. However, since the 1980s, research has increasingly brought women at the forefront of attention and argued that a rising global trend towards a feminization of migration flows can be observed (Castles and Miller 1998; Piper 2005). Furthermore, the focus shifted away from the "trailing wives" to autonomously migrating women who worked in the domestic and care sectors, the emblematic figure being the Filipino nannies or nurses (Tacoli 1999; King and Zontini 2000).

More recent work has nuanced such claims, arguing that feminization is neither a new nor a universal trend (Donato et al. 2006, 2011; Gabaccia 1996; Schrover 2013; Piya and Donato 2013). Africa in particular is a region where claims of an increasing participation of women in international migration flows have not really been backed by data, mostly since such data has thus far been unavailable. Taking advantage of a recent multi-sited and retrospective dataset - the Migration between Africa and Europe (MAFE) survey - this paper aims to fill this gap. Our objectives are twofold: first, we examine the extent to which Congolese and Senegalese international migration flows display a trend towards an increasing feminization. Second, we seek to assess whether the profiles of migrant men and women are converging and display similar shares of autonomous forms of mobility, or whether women's international migrations from these regions remain largely dictated by family strategies.

In pursuing these objectives, the paper attempts to make several distinctions, not systematically

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discussed in the literature. First, it is not always clear what is meant by the term "feminization" of migration. While most studies refer to a gradual increase in the percentage of migrants that are female (Castles and Miller 1998; Boyd 2006; Alexander and Steidl 2012), others point to an increase in absolute levels of female mobility (FNUAP 2006), while yet others to an increase in women's economic mobility in particular (Piper 2005; Verschuur 2013). This paper shows that it is important to distinguish between these dimensions and that a relative increase in the share of women crossing the borders is not necessarily accompanied by an absolute increase in their numbers, which nuances the implications of the term. Second, the literature generally considers migrations to be autonomous when the migration project seeks to satisfy the personal economic needs of the migrant (Le Jeune et al. 2005) and when the woman migrates on her own, and not with her husband or in order to join him abroad (Piper 2005). Yet, studies show that the boundary between "tied movers" and "autonomous economic agents" is not so clear-cut (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994). On the one hand, women following their spouse may enter employment at destination (Oso Casas 2004: p.175); on the other hand, kin networks may play a large role in the mobility of single women, which nuances the "autonomous" character of their migration (Comoé 2005).

Another limitation of most current studies is that they approach the question of feminization from the perspective of the destination countries. Furthermore, those that do consider the sending side, examine the intersection of gender and migration within a single culture. In a recent stocktaking exercise, Donato et al. (2006) argue that comparative studies are needed if we want to understand the factors underlying the gender composition of migration. This paper adopts a comparative design and examines migration flows from DR Congo and Senegal, using identical data. Comparing two countries characterized by different migration histories, social and political contexts as well as differing gender regimes enables us to examine how culturally defined gender relations influence international migration, both in terms of *who* migrates and of *how* they migrate.

The paper is organized as follows: the first section reviews the relevant literature on feminization, arguing for more conceptual precision in the definition of the term. The second section briefly describes some differences in the migration histories and gender systems of the two countries under study: DR Congo and Senegal, while the third section introduces the data and the methodology used. The next section presents the results, which are further discussed in a final section.

#### 2. Previous research on the feminization of migrations

#### The multiple dimensions of feminization

It is not always clear in the literature what the phenomenon of feminization actually describes and therefore how it should be measured. Most researchers and policy reports define feminization as an increase in the share of women in the migration stream and therefore measure changes in gender ratios among foreign-born populations. Alexander and Steidl (2012: 224) take this idea a bit further when they state that the feminization of migration is a dynamic process in which "international migrant streams formerly dominated by men<sup>3</sup> gradually become gender-balanced or even majority-female".

Thus, feminization generally refers to a relative change in the gender composition of migration flows. The implicit assumption in this definition, as illustrated in Castles and Miller's (1998) statement that "women are playing an increasing part in all regions and in all types of migrations" (1998: p.37). is that this change occurs through an increase in the *absolute levels* of female mobility. Yet there are very few studies that take both aspects into consideration (Zlotnik 1995; Beauchemin et al. 2013). Notwithstanding, examining only relative shifts can lead to wrong conclusions. For

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> The emphasis is ours.

example, Zlotnik (1995) shows that the rise in the female share of the foreign-born population in post-1974 Germany was not due to an increase in female immigration through family reunification, as had long been believed, but to a larger decrease in the numbers of male migrants.

Yet another meaning is put forward by other scholars, who understand feminization as an increasing migratory participation of women as *autonomous economic agents*, as opposed to dependent migrants. For example, in the recent International handbook on gender, migration and transnationalism, Verschuur (2013) considers that « 'feminization of migration' refers to a specific process, namely, that of women increasingly migrating as independent workers, not necessarily with their families » (2013: p. 150). Similarly, for Oishi (2002, 2005), an important dimension of feminization is not only that women are traveling more, but that they are traveling as autonomous migrants and not only as dependents. Piper (2010) also argues that the « real change of the last decades has occurred in the way they move: more women are now migrating independently in search of jobs, rather than as family dependents travelling with their husbands or joining them abroad » (2010: p. 2)

This paper argues that all three dimensions need to be considered if we want to understand changes in gendered patterns of migration. However, they refer to different aspects, measured by different indicators, and should not be conflated in the same concept, or else this loses its empirical value.

#### Feminization of migration flows: a non-linear and highly contextual trend

Feminization is often presented in the literature as a new and universal phenomenon, going back a couple of decades and uniformly affecting all regions of the world. According to Castles and Miller (1998), the feminization of international migration flows is among the five key trends of the new 'age of migrations'. Nicola Piper similarly states that "the feminization of labor migration has become a well-established fact" (2003: p. 726)

Recent research has however nuanced the scope of such claims. Studies conducted mostly by social historians examining shifts in gender ratios show that feminization is neither a recent nor a linear trend and that it is highly problematic to characterize past migrations as "male-dominated" (Houstoun et al. 1984; Gabaccia and Zanoni 2012). Immigrant flows in the United States displayed an abrupt rise in their share of women between the 1830s and 1860s, and then again in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – up to 50 percent in 1930 (Gabaccia 1996). Similarly, gender ratios among migrants in many European countries were mostly balanced before the Second World War. Netherlands and France even experienced substantial rises in their female migrant population in the interwar period (Beauchemin et al 2013; Schrover 2013) leading Schrover (2013) to conclude that "if there was ever a period of feminization, it was in this interwar period" (2013 p.123). It was through the introduction of guest worker programmes in the two decades following the Second World War that migrant men started outnumbering women in Europe, before women's share started growing again from the mid-1970s onward.

Furthermore, feminization is not a consistent, universal trend. Recent studies document great variations in the evolution of gender ratios both by region of destination and of origin (Zlotnik 1995; Zlotnik 2003; Donato et al. 2006; Donato 2011; Piya and Donato 2013; Schrover 2013; Cerrutti and Gaudio 2010; Massey et al. 2006). On average, shares of female immigrants rose by 3 percentage points between 1960 and 2000 in developed regions of *destination*, but displayed no increase in developing areas (Zlotnik 2003). This apparent lack of change in the latter is due to highly contrasting trends among the various developing regions: whereas the immigrant population in Latin

America and in East and South-East Asia saw their immigrant population become increasingly feminized, Africa and South Asia experienced the reverse trend. Recent work has also revealed important differences in the gender composition of migration streams by their region of *origin*. Flows originating in Africa and North America (mostly Mexico) are the only ones displaying a masculinization since the 1970s (Donato et al. 2011).

Last, in the regions where it did occur, the extent of feminization has not been as substantial as many have claimed. Katherine Donato and colleagues found that when taking into account the fact that immigrant men had higher death rates than women, the increases in the female shares were much more conservative than previously thought (Donato et al. 2011; Donato 2012).

Thus, empirical work does not really support the claim of a recent, linear and substantial global trend towards the feminization of migration flows, but rather "dynamic and complex shits in the sex composition of immigrant populations worldwide" (Donato et al. 2011: p. 512). This calls for a distinction between the feminization of migration and the feminization of the 'migratory discourse' (Oso and Garson 2005; Vause 2009). The latter refers to the increasing conceptualization of women as actors of migration (Vause 2009) and is the more recent and widespread phenomenon of the two.

However, these empirical studies are limited in that they focus exclusively on relative changes – shifts in gender ratios – and pay no attention to variations in absolute terms. This is due to their broad scope and large international comparison. Furthermore, they only use data collected in destination countries (mostly census data) which poses at least two problems. First, it excludes illegal immigrants, which may bias results if the likelihood to enter the country illegally varies by gender. Second, it ignores differential rates of remigration by gender: several studies found that men are more likely to return to their origin countries or engage in secondary migration then women (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Grasmuck and Pessar 2005). In contrast, this paper adopts a sending-country perspective and examines both relative and absolute changes in gendered patterns of international mobility.

#### Blurred lines between associational and autonomous female mobility

For a long time, research has mainly portrayed women as associational migrants, passively following fathers or husbands. It was only in the 1980s that women started being conceptualized as social and economic actors of migration in their own right (Morokvasic 1984; Oso and Garson 2005; Vause 2009). While many studies claim this shift in focus has been motivated by a change in the nature of female mobility and a rise in autonomous forms of migration (Adepoju 2000, 2004; Piper 2010), few have actually examined in a quantitative framework whether this was indeed the case. Those that do so are mostly using two indicators: migrants' motivation for migration and their marital status (often measured at the time of the survey and not at the time of migration) (Massey et al 2006; Quali 2003).

Subsequent work has challenged a too rigid dichotomy between the two forms of female mobility. Studies suggest that the boundary between family and labor migration is often blurred, as women who migrate to reunite with their spouses may subsequently enter employment at destination (Kanaiaupuni 2000). In a study on Senegalese women migrants, Coulibaly-Tandian (2007) shows that family reunification is sometimes a pretext for labor migration, as some women strategically use this channel in order to reach Western destinations. More generally, researchers have argued that in the context of increasing restrictions on international mobility, the channel of migration cannot be presumed to reflect individuals' actual motivations, but rather the most accessible option for travelling abroad at the moment. Since entering as a labor migrant in Europe is increasingly difficult,

candidates to migration may try to claim refugee-status or enter as family migrants if this increases their chances of reaching their destination (Gonzalez-Ferrer 2011).

Research has further challenged the belief that "autonomous" female migrations are indeed independent and has stressed the influence of other family members in the mobility process. In a study on internal female migration in the Ivory Coast, Comoé (2005) finds the migration of unmarried daughters is to a larger extent than that of unmarried sons a strategy decided within the family. The strict control exerted by kinship networks in this form of mobility leads Comoé to conclude that women's autonomy in the migration process remains limited.

Within the Sub-Saharan African context, research has mostly examined internal migration patterns, with some findings emphasizing an unprecedented development of autonomous female moves from rural to urban areas (Findley 1997; Antoine et Sow 2000; Bocquier et Traoré 2000; Hertrich and Lesclingand 2013; Lesclingand 2011). Other studies have, however, underlined the continuing importance of the family dimension in these mobilities (Mondain and Diagne 2013; Comoé 2005; Le Jeune et al. 2005). This paper focuses instead on international migration and uses several indicators to assess changes in the migration profiles of men and women, going beyond the usual measure used in the literature.

### 3. Gender systems and patterns of migration: towards a comparative approach

With few exceptions, research on gendered migration patterns has focused on single case studies. However, a comparative approach is needed in order to understand how systems of gender relations shape international mobility patterns (Green 2002). Comparing five Latin American countries, Massey et al. (2006) show that female migration looks very different depending on how patriarchal the gender system is. They find that in societies where women are more autonomous, independent, and less tied to men as partners, they are more likely to migrate as independent agents (2006: p.89). Similar findings are reported by Cerrutti and Gaudio (2010) in their comparison of Mexican and Paraguayan migration patterns: gender relations (among others) affect the volume of female migrations, the characteristics of women who migrate and the channel of migration (2010: p.111). According to Oishi (2005), the extent and the ways in which women cross the border depends on the "social legitimacy" of this behaviour in a given society, and is deeply rooted in the prevailing social norms about gender equality and women's wage employment. Oishi convicingly shows how the low social legitimacy for female migration in Bangladesh, externalized in restrictive government policies and internalized by the women themselves, is a major factor explaining the low levels of female mobility from this country.

No such comparative research has been undertaken on international mobility from Sub-Saharan Africa. Besides focusing on this under studied context, this paper adds a longitudinal perspective to the above-mentioned studies and examines, in a comparative framework, the extent to which flows from Senegal and DR Congo have feminized over the past four decades, using data from the two capital areas (Kinshasa and Dakar). Our two case studies differ in their economic, political and cultural contexts as well as in their prevailing gender norms, which have shaped different migration histories. The following section briefly discusses some of these differences, focusing in particular on the two capital regions while also situating them in their broader national contexts.

# Migration and gender roles in DR Congo and Senegal and their capital regions

While both countries gained their independence in 1960, Senegal has followed a trajectory of political stability whereas the DR Congo has known violent political conflicts. Though richer in

natural resources, DR Congo is facing a poorer economic situation than Senegal and is ranked as one of the poorest nations of the world. Senegalese international migration has a long and welldocumented history, going back to the First World War when many Senegalese served in France as infantrymen (Robin et al 2000). The flows intensified after the Independence, particularly towards some African countries experiencing an economic boom and to France, where the expanding automobile industry was in need of workers (Pison et al. 1997). The Congolese migrations are more recent and less documented than the Senegalese flows and are to a large extent directed to neighboring countries. Congolese migration to Europe started in the early 1960s, and consisted primarily of elites, students or professionals sent by companies for training in Belgium, the former colonial power (Kagne and Martiniello 2001). The deteriorating economic situation and the political turmoil that resurfaced in the 1990s have intensified the migration flows. Towards Europe, these were increasingly composed of asylum-seekers (Schoumaker et al. 2010). Starting in the 1980s, both countries saw a diversification of both departure regions and destinations<sup>4</sup>, with Italy and Spain attracting a large number of Senegalese, while the United Kingdom and France became an important destination for the Congolese. Dakar gradually became the main departure and return region in Senegal, with France, Italy and Spain together attracting around 45% of international flows from the capital area (2002 Senegalese Census).

There is some evidence of differing gender relations in the two contexts. In DR Congo as in Senegal, women are traditionally subordinated to male authority. In both countries, the positions of social and economic responsibility are undeniably falling on the men (Pilon and Vignikin 2006). Being less educated than men, women are also less present on the labour market where they occupy more precarious jobs. However, the severe crisis that DR Congo has been experiencing in recent decades has been operating changes in these social relations. This is particurarly true in Kinshasa, where women have gradually developed new strategies.(Verhaegen 1990, Mianda 1996, Bouchard 2003, Ngoie Tshibambe 2007; Batumike 2009). As unemployment rose among men, women found themselves forced to take over their husbands' responsibilities, to exit the domestic sphere and take on all sorts of small jobs. According to some authors, the crisis has weakened the men's social position and has forced them to accept the economic participation of their spouses, who have gained considerably in social status and decision-making power within the family (Mianda 1996; Bouchard 2003).

In Senegal, as elsewhere in Sub Saharan Africa, persistent economic hardships have similarly increased women's role in household survival strategies, but the crisis has not been as severe as in Congo, and women's economic participation does not have the same social meaning. Using biographic data collected in Dakar in 2006, Adjamagbo et al (2006:13) find that the ideal model of marriage described by men and women in the capital region envisages the man as the sole provider of the material and financial comfort of the family and excludes women from any work obligation. If a woman does happen to work, the revenues she draws from her activity are often used for her own consumption – in clothes or finery – as it is hardly conceivable for a woman to provide for the family and to challenge thus the husband's economic role. Religious differences between Dakar, where 95% of the population is Muslim, and Kinshasa, 96 % Christian, may further reinforce these norms.

A comparison of men's and women's educational level and activity status between the two capital regions based on recent Demographic and Health Surveys supports these qualitative findings. Gender gaps in both education and economic activity are much higher in Dakar than in Kinshasa: in the former, women are twice less likely to be literate and almost twice less likely to be working then

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> In Senegal, religious networks, and in particular the Mouride brotherhood, play an increasing role in these new migration dynamics, explaining to a certain extent the diversification of destinations (Bava 2003).

men<sup>5</sup>. In Kinshasa, differences in economic activities are much slighter (44% women working at the time of the survey compared to 56% men) and almost everyone is literate<sup>6</sup>.

These differences in gender norms may translate in differences in attitudes towards female migration and practices of mobility. Qualitative evidence suggests that Senegalese women's migration tends to be stigmatized and opposed by the family and the society. For example, Ba (2003) finds that the international migration of women, especially if not undertaken for family reunification purposes, is stigmatized and often associated with prostitution. Those who undertake it have to reconcile their desire to make a living with the risk of challenging the social order and being marginalized. While the "social legitimacy" (Oishi 2005) of autonomous female mobility is low in many different contexts, the stigmatization of this behaviour is a finding that comes up in many studies based in Senegal (Lambert 2002; Dia 2009; Mondain and Diagne 2013), and perhaps to a greater degree than for DR Congo. Unfortunately, so far no comparison on this issue was undertaken between the two contexts, thus our hypothesis cannot be directly verified.

To summarize, traditional views about gender roles appear to preserve a stronger hold in Dakar than in Kinshasa and represent a veritable obstacle to Senegalese women's economic participation. While we are not arguing that Congolese women are fully emancipated or that DR Congo has achieved gender equality, research from the two contexts seems to suggest that Congolese women are subjected to lower social control then their Senegalese counterparts and enjoy a larger autonomy. Given these differences, we may expect to find higher levels and larger increases in feminization and autonomous female mobility in Kinshasa than in Dakar.

# 4. The "Migration between Africa and Europe" dataset

In order to answer our research questions, we need data collected in both origin and destination countries. First, information on migrants as well as non-migrants is necessary in order to estimate migration rates; second, direct information from migrants is required in order to achieve a better understanding of the nature and degree of autonomy involved in respondents' international moves. Due to difficulties involved in conducting multi-sited research, many surveys limit themselves to collecting information on return migrants. However, it can be argued that returnees are a selected group and that their migration experiences are not necessarily representative of the entire migrant population. Furthermore, time-specific data on several domains of the respondents' lives are needed for examining the evolution of the rate and type of international mobility over time.

The Migration between Africa and Europe (MAFE<sup>7</sup>) survey, conducted between 2008 and 2010 in several African countries and European destinations, is best suited for answering our research questions. In a first stage, household surveys were conducted in the Dakar (1200 households) and Kinshasa (1576 households) areas, collecting basic socio-demographic information on all members of the household. The surveys followed a three-stage probabilistic sampling strategy, and are representative of the capital regions. The paper uses this data in order to evaluate the extent to which a feminization of migration flows from these two regions can be observed. The household survey records information on all spouses and children of the household head irrespective of their current

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> 42% Senegalese women are illiterate, compared to 25% men; 45% Senegalese women work at the time of the survey, compared to 65% men.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Indeed, one of the most substantial difference between the two contexts is the absolute level of education. The Congolese, and those living in Kinshasa in particular, have almost all obtained at least some primary level education and are literate at a rate of over 92%, whereas a third of those living in Dakar have no formal education and illiteracy rates are of over 40% among women.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> More information can be found on the projects' website: http://mafeproject.site.ined.fr/en/

location. This is not the case for other family ties such as siblings of the household head<sup>8</sup>. Therefore, the analysis sample for the first research question only includes the household head, his or her spouse(s) and his or her children. The dates and destinations of the first and last trips of all members (present or currently absent) with international migration experience were also collected. This provides the necessary information for calculating the number of *potential* as well as *actual* migrants. Table 1 presents the breakdown of the analysis sample for each country of origin with respect to gender, migration status and region of destination of the first international move for the migrants.

Table 1 Total number of cases by gender and migration status

	DR Congo		Senegal	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Migrants to Africa	477	324	151	77
Migrants to Western countries	166	131	254	147
Total migrants	643	455	405	224
Non-migrants	2588	2977	3117	3424
Effectif total	3231	3432	3522	3648

Source 1 MAFE household data (2008-2010)

Second, a biographic individual questionnaire, identical in each country surveyed, was used in order to collect more detailed information. Non-migrants and return migrants were interviewed in the Dakar (1067 individuals) and Kinshasa (1645 individuals) areas; additionally, current migrants were interviewed in several countries in Europe (200 Senegalese each in France, Italy and Spain; 279 Congolese in Belgium and 150 in the UK). The questionnaire records retrospective information on many aspects of respondents' life histories, such as their family formation history, their occupational, residential and migration trajectories, among others. This data is used to answer the second research question, with respect to the nature of individuals' international moves. Thus, the population of study for this second part of the analysis is exclusively composed of migrants, both current and returnees. Furthermore, only information on migrants' first international migration experience as an adult (between 18 and 65 years) will be analyzed. Table 2 presents the total sample by gender and destination of their first international move.

Table 2 Total number of migrants interviewed by gender and destination

	Congolese		Senegalese	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Migrants to Africa	259	135	109	39
Migrants to Western countries	237	217	341	278
Total migrants	496	352	450	317

Source 2 MAFE biographic data (2008-2010)

While innovative in some ways, the MAFE data is also vulnerable to several limitations. First, the retrospective nature of the individual questionnaire means data suffer from two main biases: on the one hand, substantial selection bias arises due to prior mortality, since estimates are only representative for the survivors; this will particularly affect older cohorts. On the other hand, memory bias leads to inaccurate reporting, either from memory lapses or due to a "conscious misrepresentation of the past". Whereas the first bias is unavoidable, the survey tried to minimize the second by using life-history calendars to collect time dated events. It should also be noted that while the origin samples are representative of the Dakar and Kinshasa areas in 2008, some of the migrants

<sup>8</sup> Only a selected population of the latter would appear in the survey: those who live with the household head or who used to live in the household but are currently abroad *and* they have frequent contacts with the household.

interviewed at destination may not have previously lived in these regions<sup>9</sup>. In the final samples, however, this was the case for only a fifth of the migrants, on average. Furthermore, the estimation of migration risks based on the household data does not take into account the migration of entire households, and may thus underestimate mobility if such cases are common<sup>10</sup>.

# 5. Findings

# 5.1. A feminization of Congolese and Senegalese migration flows?

The first objective of this paper is to examine the extent to which a feminization of Congolese and Senegalese migration flows can be observed. We estimate migration trends according to gender and destination (African versus Western countries) using discrete-time event history analysis based on the MAFE *household* data collected in the Dakar and Kinshasa regions<sup>11</sup>. Individuals enter the risk set at 18 and are observed until their first international migration lasting at least one year or up to the time of the survey, whichever comes first.

A first way to approach this objective is to compare men's and women's migration propensities across several cohorts. This can be done by estimating Kaplan-Meier survival curves, which illustrate cumulative probabilities of survival and also take into account right-censored observations<sup>12</sup>. Three cohorts are distinguished: those aged 50 or more in 2008 (born between 1915 and 1959), those aged between 30 and 49 (born between 1960-1979) and those aged 18 to 29 (born between 1980-1991). The latter are only observed during 10 years. Initially, all 18 year olds are in their origin country (Senegal or DR Congo). The probability to remain there diminishes with age or, in other words, the probability to move abroad increases.

Figure 1 distinguishes migrations towards African countries and those towards Western destinations<sup>13</sup> (Europe and North America). Migrations from the Kinshasa area to other African countries present a relatively clear picture. From a generation to the next, we observe an acceleration of the migration calendar. In other words, the younger generations migrate earlier than the older ones. The intensity of the phenomenon seems also to have increased: the youngest cohorts appear the most likely to have migrated at least once in another African country by the time they turn 23. Last, for each of the three observed cohorts, gender differences do not appear to recede, as men are systematically (and significantly) more likely to migrate then women. Migrations from the Kinshasa area towards Western countries appear substantially less frequent than intra-African migrations. The patterns shown for migrations to the West are less clear-cut. The estimates referring to different generations tend to overlap, indicating neither an acceleration of migration, nor an intensification of departures. In terms of gender differences, only the estimates corresponding to older generations differ. By contrast, gender differences disappear for the two most recent generations, with men and women migrating with the same intensity and the same timing. Contrasting the two figures also shows that migrations to Western countries are much less frequent than intra-African migrations.

<sup>9</sup> For more information on the complex sampling strategy used, see Beauchemin and Gonzalez-Ferrer (2011)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Qualitative evidence does not suggest such a phenomenon is frequent, also given the extended nature of households in Senegal (Dia 2009).

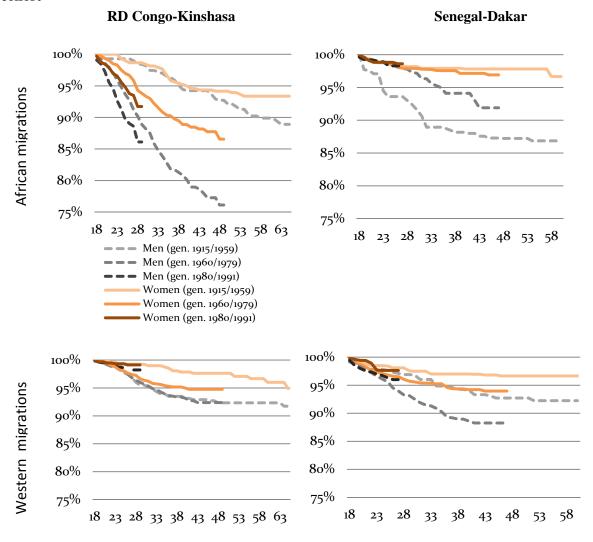
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> As such, the trends we estimate are not representative nationally. However, it could be argued that a higher degree of feminization should be observed in the urban areas, especially in the capital cities, than in the country side (Le Jeune et al. 2005).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> If an individual in the survey is interviewed when 25 years old and has not yet migrated, this does not mean that s/he may not migrate in the future. S/he will appear as right-censored and will no longer be counted as being "at risk" of experiencing the event after 25 years.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> The few cases of migrations to other destinations in Asia, Australia or South America were treated as right-censored.

Migration trends from the Dakar area in Senegal look quite different. First, a decrease in intra-continental flows can be observed. Men belonging to the oldest cohort were significantly more likely to migrate to another African country and to start their migration at a lower age than those belonging to younger cohorts<sup>14</sup>. This has also led to a diminishing of gender gaps between subsequent generations, despite the fact that intra-continental migration propensities among women did not change significantly. A different picture emerges with respect to migrations towards Europe and North America. Both men and women born between 1960 and 1979 are significantly more likely to have migrated to a Western country before turning 40 than born before 1960. Furthermore, although the difference is only significant for men, the calendar of these migrations seems to have accelerated between generations, as the Senegalese increasingly migrate at a younger age. Finally, there is no shrinking of the gender gap between the cohorts.

Figure 1Probability of not having experienced an international migration , by destination, gender and  $cohort^{15}$ 



This analysis carried out by cohorts has several shortcomings. Reports from the older respondents could be unreliable because of recall errors and selection biases. Another way to look at these trends is to follow their evolution over (historical) time. This gives a complementary view to

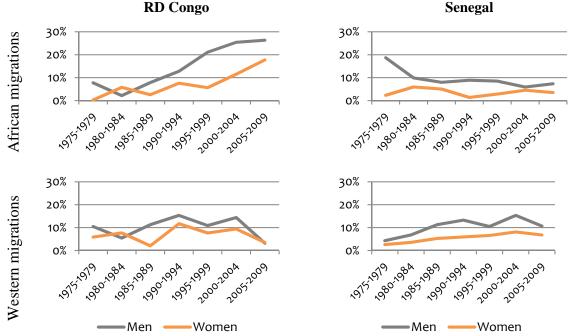
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> 12% of men born between 1915 and 1959 had migrated to another African country by the time they turned 32, whereas this was the case for only 5% of those born between 1960 and 1979.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Kaplan-Meier survival curves

the cohort analysis. A discrete-time logistic regression model allows estimating migration odds separately by gender while taking into account age and period (five-year) effects. These odds are transformed in risks of undertaking at least one international migration between the ages of 18 and 65 ("lifetime risks"). The evolution of these migration probabilities from 1975 to 2008 is presented in **Figure 2**.

As expected, these confirm the broad trends observed with the cohort-based survival functions. With respect to intra-African flows from DR Congo, a clear increase in the risks of departure for both men and women can be observed from the end of the 1980s onwards. This trend should be interpreted in the context of the difficult political situation experienced by the country from this period onwards. Yet, the intensity of female migrations is lower and gender differences persist and are even accentuated in recent periods. These intra-continental trends contrast with the ones towards Western destinations. First, migrations risks are lower: the probability to migrate to a Western destination does not go over 15% for men and 10% for women, at any point in time. The patterns are quite similar by gender: an increase in risks up to the middle of the 1990s, especially among women - which is likely to reflect the repercussions of the severe crises of the 1991 and 1993 - followed by a period of stagnation and then a net decrease of risks in the later periods - paralleling the improvement of political and economic conditions from 2001 onwards. Senegalese flows display different trends: intra-continental moves from Dakar have been slowly decreasing in the past decades, as already seen in the cohort analysis; the gaps between men and women gradually decrease and seem to be fading away after 2000, mostly due to a decrease in migration risks for men. By contrast, trends towards Western destinations show a moderate increase, for both men and women, albeit to a smaller degree for the latter. Thus, gender differences persist across the period.

Figure 2. Life-time risks of undertaking a first international migration between the ages of 18 and 65, by gender and destination



Overall, findings tell a nuanced story with respect to the feminization of Congolese and Senegalese flows. On the one hand, migrations likelihood appears on the rise for Congolese women with respect to African destination and for the Senegalese with respect to Western countries, but the same can be said for their male counterparts. This increase is therefore not accompanied by a reduction in gender gaps. On the other hand, diminishing gender differences can be observed in the

case of intra-continental Senegalese migrations, but this should be placed in the context of a decrease in chances to migrate towards these destinations, especially for the men. If by feminization we understand *both* an intensification of flows and a decrease in gender gaps, we only see some evidence of these trends with respect to migrations from the Kinshasa region to Western destinations, where female mobility seems to have increased more than male mobility, at least up to the year 2000.

# 5.2. A rise in autonomous female migrations from DR Congo and Senegal?

The second objective of this paper is to investigate whether men and women in the two countries are converging in their experiences of migration, or whether their mobility projects and trajectories remain different. In particular, we seek to examine the extent to which women's autonomous migration has increased in recent periods. We use here the data collected through the retrospective biographic questionnaire, both from return migrants interviewed in their origin countries and from current migrants interviewed in Europe. The following analyses all refer to the *first adult migration* undertaken by the individual. We continue distinguishing between migrations to African and migrations to Western countries, but the comparison is limited. Since the survey did not interview current migrants in Africa<sup>16</sup>, findings with respect to migrations towards another African country are only based on those who have subsequently moved to Europe or who returned to their origin country, and who may represent a selected sample.

Several indicators are used in order to apprehend the degree of autonomy of a move.

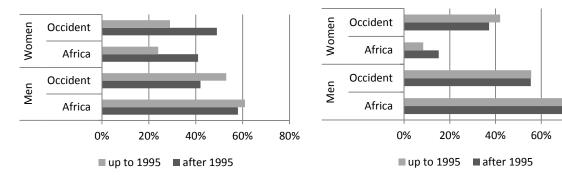
A first, relatively raw, indicator is migrants' family status, and in particular whether or not they were single <sup>17</sup> at the time of their migration. If independent female migration has increased, we should observe an increase, among women, in the share of migrants who are single. We distinguish two periods: before and after 1995, following two considerations. First, 1995 is a natural threshold in both countries: in DR Congo it marks the beginning of the armed conflict (Hesselbein 2007); in Senegal, a period of slight but sustained economic recovery after several structural adjustments begins (Gerdes 2007). Second, the 1995 cut-off point enables us to have sufficient sample sizes in all groups for a meaningful analysis. Figure 3 shows that, prior to 1995, in both DR Congo and Senegal, women were substantially less likely to be single at the time of their first migration then men. However, among Congolese migrants, profiles largely converged by gender in the more recent period, mostly because of a significant rise in the share of women who were not in couple at the time of their migration. In Senegal, on the other hand, no significant change can be observed. On the other hand, a clear difference by destination emerges, as a lower share of intra-African female migrants were single than of women choosing Western destinations.

Figure 3 Share of migrants who are single the year of their migration by gender, period and destination DR Congo

Senegal

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> This limitation only applies to the biographic individual questionnaire; for the household survey, all (current) migrants were reported by the household head, irrespective of the destination.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Not in a formal or informal union.



The partnership status is only a raw indicator, as women could be in a couple and leave their spouse behind, arguably a case of independent economic migration. On the other hand, qualitative work has emphasized the importance of other ties in independent female migration, challenging the idea that their moves are autonomous. The MAFE data includes information on the migration trajectories (dates and destinations) of the respondents' personal circle, including their partner(s), kin and friends. Based on this, the *mode of migration* can be examined, more precisely whether migrants follow their partner abroad (either taking the trip together or reuniting at destination), follow another member of their personal network or move alone to a destination where they have no ties. In the latter case, the migrant makes the trip alone and does not join anyone from their reported migrant network at destination (category "alone" in Figure 4).

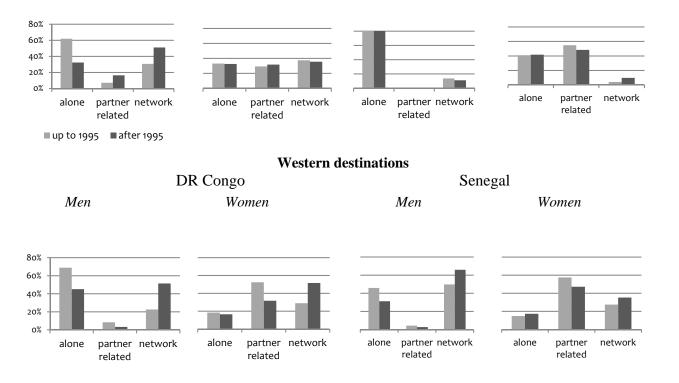
80%

Congolese migrations to other African countries illustrate important gender differences: up to 1995, around 6 out of 10 men migrated to destinations where they had no ties, whereas this was the case for only a third of migrant women. Very few men migrated in relation to their partner (8%) but a much larger proportion of women did so (30%). No change in the nature of female migrations is recorded for intra-continental moves. Female migrations to Western countries display a different pattern: first, the share of women migrating "alone" is much lower than among intra-African moves. Second, the percentage of those moving in relation to their partner has significantly decreased between the two periods. This however translated into an increase in the share of women following other ties at destination, and not of those moving to a destination where they had no connections. This latter aspect also concerns men, and is arguably related to the development of Congolese migration networks.

On the other hand, Senegalese women are, to start with, much more likely to migrate in relation to their partner than the Congolese, and no significant change in the nature of their migration is found. Only a slight – and not statistically significant - decrease in the share of partner-related migrations towards Western destinations can be observed. Again, this is to the benefit of network-related migrations, which increased for both men and women moving to Western countries. A striking difference between intra- and inter-continental Senegalese flows relates to the significance of migrant networks. Few Senegalese moving to an African country report having other ties already present at destination, whereas this concerns a large share of those choosing Western destinations.

Figure 4 Mode of migration from DR Congo and Senegal by gender and period African Destinations

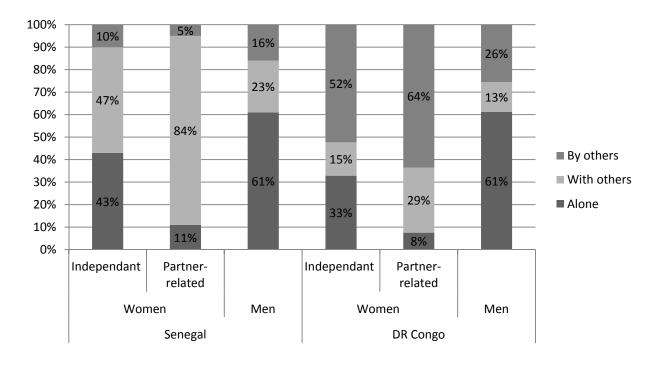
DR Congo		Senegal	
Men	Women	Men	Women



A final aspect considered is the extent of the involvement of other social ties in the decision-making process and the financing of the migrant's trip. A move can be considered more autonomous if it has been individually decided and funded. Findings in both countries show that even when they take place independently of their partner, women's migrations are often the fruit of a collective decision, in which they do not always participate, and this to a significantly larger extent than for men. In Senegal, only 43% of women migrating independently of a partner decided alone of their migration compared to 61% of men. The gap is slightly larger in DR Congo (33% of women's migrations independently of a partner are decided alone compared to 61% for men). Furthermore, Congolese women seem less likely than the Senegalese to take part in the decision-making process, together with other members of their personal network. Given previous findings indicating a larger extent of feminization among Congolese women, this result is surprising and deserves further investigation by future studies.

In this context, it seems that networks (of migrants or of non-migrant kin and friends) play a key role in women's migration process. Prior findings also show that having ties abroad other than the partner are much more important in triggering women's mobility than men's (Toma et Vause 2011). It is however difficult to evaluate whether their effect is to encourage or, on the contrary to control and constrain, women's autonomy.

Figure 5 Migration decision-making



#### 6. Discussion and conclusion

This paper examines changes in women's participation in international migration flows from DR Congo and Senegal, both in terms of level and in terms of the nature of their moves. It uses a novel dataset that collected multi-sited and retrospective information in the capital areas of the two countries and in the most important European destinations of their migrants.

Trends in female migration from the capital regions of DR Congo and Senegal do not seem to parallel those observed in other regions of the world. No evidence of a substantial feminization of migration flows has been found in either context, which confirms previous findings by Donato et al. (2011) with respect to the composition of migration flows originating in Africa. Furthermore, for those destinations where women's migration likelihood has increased, the general structure of gender differences has been preserved as well: gender gaps were reduced only following a decrease in male migration associated to a stagnation (or to smaller decreases) in female mobility. The only exception is migration from the Kinshasa region to Western destinations, where women's share in these flows increased due to a rise in female mobility. This paper thus argues that both absolute and relative changes should be considered in order to better evaluate the extent to which flows have feminized and to be able to explain shifts in the gender composition of the flows. Our argument joins an earlier call by Zlotnik (1995), who urged researchers to go beyond considering only changes in gender ratios, and to investigate the extent to which narrowing gender gaps may actually be driven by a decrease in male migration, as she found to be the case with respect to flows from developing countries to Germany. This, she argues, is a different case scenario, probably triggered by different factors than are increases in absolute levels of female mobility. Unfortunately, most studies do not make this distinction, also due to the lack of adequate data.

Findings based on the MAFE data show some evidence of a rise in autonomous female migration from Kinshasa, especially towards Western destinations. In contrast, no salient change in this direction can be observed in the Senegalese case, irrespective of the indicator used. This challenges previous generalizations based on small-scale and mostly qualitative studies, which argue that autonomous female migration intensified in Senegal (Sakho et al. 2011 Tall and Tandian 2010; Sall et al. 2010). Besides considering the partnership status at the moment of migration and the motivation of the move, the MAFE data allowed us to take into account other social ties besides the

partner that are potentially involved in the migration process. Findings show that while the role of the spouse in driving female migration has subsided in some cases, the role of other networks has increased, especially in migration towards Western destinations. The share of women moving to countries where they have no connection is much lower than for men and has not increased in recent periods. This leads us to nuance the concept of « autonomous » female migrations and emphasize the blurred nature of the borders between « autonomous » and « associational » moves (Lambert 2002; Coulibaly-Tandian 2007).

Overall, Senegalese women seem less likely to migrate than the Congolese and more likely to do so in association with their partner. Furthermore, whereas some increase in more independent forms of female migration can be noted among the Congolese, no substantial change was found in the Senegalese context. The two trends – the feminization of flows and an increase in autonomous female mobility – seem thus to go hand in hand. The flows that have feminized the most – Congolese mobility, especially to Western destinations – are also those where autonomous moves are the most frequent among women. We interpret these differences in light of the more rigid patriarchal system prevailing in Senegal, which constrains women's autonomy with respect to migration but also their participation in the labour market. This translates in both lower levels of female mobility and in a larger share of associational moves; none of these two characteristics seems to be receding in later periods. We argue that a comparative design is necessary in order to better grasp the significance of gender as a socio-cultural construct in migration patterns.

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