Title :

Senegalese migrant women and women left-behind: reinforcement or weakening of traditional social relationships?

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Abstract:

The analysis of international migration from Senegal to Europe is generally perceived as a male activity. Mixed methods research over 5 years undertaken in a small town North West Senegal, "saturated" by out migration to Southern Europe uses qualitative data collected through in-depth interviews from men and women in 2007 and migrant women in 2012, and a quantitative household and life history survey conducted in 2012 focusing on women's life trajectories to demonstrate that Senegalese women over the past two decades have increasingly participated in the migration flows to Europe. We first contextualize non migrant women's daily life conditions, especially for wives 'left-behind' in order to examine the consequences of male emigration on marriage and family dynamics as well as on their economic situations. We then investigate different influences over female migrant decision making and autonomy: whether particular marital statuses appear to facilitate or constrain migration; the extent to which migrant women make independent decisions to migrate and mobilize the required resources from their own social networks or if they remain dependent on male decisions and resources to leave. Non-migrant women provide a lens through which female migration is observed and understood: in particular, do stationary women aspire to migrate or transform their lives building on personal life goals? Preliminary results suggest women are torn between and ambivalent about their need to respect local norms of reproductive, productive and marital behaviour in this patriarchal society, and their desires for innovation in their lives when they observe male and female peers who are migrating.

Introduction

In this study we address the issue of women “left behind” in the context of male driven, South-North migration.. As shown by research on transnational relations (Brettell, 2008), to understand the impact of migration on the society of origin it is essential to consider both sides: that of migrants as well as that of non migrants.

Our study focuses on the case of Senegalese women in a small town located north-west of Dakar in a region shaped by emigration to Europe since the 1980s. Using qualitative interviews conducted in 2007, we focus on the following issues: 1) does the long lasting absence of male migrants contribute to a reconfiguration of left behind women’s roles within the household, whether they are wives, sisters or migrants’ mothers? 2) Considering the image migration and migrant families have in the small town, to what extent has this phenomenon influenced women’s aspirations?

Gender and migration: an overview of the literature

Research on the relationships between gender and migration remains scarce (Donato et al, 2006). Despite the recent increasing focus on the 'feminisation of migration', (Kofman et al., 2000; Pessar et Mahler, 2003), few studies address the consequences of male migration for women who, although “left behind”, are nevertheless active in the migration process. In that sense, migration can be considered as ‘gendered’ since the decision to migrate or to stay is related to individuals’ roles and social status in the society in which they are embedded (Chant, 1992; Biao, 2007; Mondain and Diagne, forthcoming).

International South-North migration has been most frequently addressed through an economic development perspective based on the financial remittances sent to the society of origin. Social transformations remain poorly studied although they are considered a fundamental dimension of societies’ development process (Nyberg-Sorensen et al, 2002). Levitt (1998), for example, refers to “social remittances” to describe the new ideas, ways of life, identities, disseminated by migration processes. It is crucial not to adopt a deterministic and static perspective when considering migration as the dynamic nature of the social phenomenon of migration coupled with individual agency may sometimes challenge social norms and become vectors of social change. Hence the importance of taking into account social relationships, including gender relationships, in the population of origin, the local culture as well as the interface between the public and domestic spheres in order to decipher the context in which these innovations are occurring and appropriated by individuals (Brettell, 2003 : 147-150).

According to Levitt, the new behaviors and views that migrants adopt in the host country are also a function of how things were 'done at home'. The author, quoting Foner (1994), identifies three main "blending scenarios": cases in which existing ideas and practices go

unchallenged; others where new elements are grafted onto existing ones; finally cases of creolization, where new social relations and cultural patterns emerge as a result of the interaction between migrant and the receiving-country . These "blending scenarios" imply that the degree to which migrants' interpretative frames are altered is a function of their interaction with the host society (Portes and Zhou, 1993). The way 'transfers' occur also depends on the features of the transnational system and the social networks migrants are involved in. Therefore, it is crucial to consider how the new ideas, behaviours, identities emerge from migrants' interactions with the host country, but also how these are selected, shaped and re-interpreted through what migrants have kept from their country of origin in terms of culture, social norms and traditions. It is thus important to take into consideration the communication channels as these potentially new social 'models' may be transmitted not only during migrants' visits to their community of origin but also through telephone, Internet chatting and talking (skype for example), video tapes, etc. (Levitt, 1998). These personified channels imply a specific interpretation and selection by migrants themselves which has to be analyzed through their own sociocultural background and also their life cycle stage (in other words, the selection and transmission of new ideas will vary according to age, sex, marital situation and so on). Finally, as Levitt points out, social remittances travel with other types of remittances, and in the case where financial remittances are important for the local populations, the receptivity to social change may depend on the variations in the volume of financial remittances; for example a decrease in the latter might restrict the effects of other forms of remittances.

The effects of migration on non migrant women were studied as early as the 1960s (Gonzales, 1961). In general, authors have questioned the 'empowering' effect of male migration on left behind women, who are assumed to experience an increase in decision making power thus contributing to transformations of gender dynamics and sexual hierarchy within the society of origin (Brettell, 2003: 141). However, the sociological and anthropological perspectives on the subject suggest a more nuanced picture. For rural households impacted by seasonal circular labour migration towards cities, several studies show the transformation of social practices within the rural arena. For example, Nelson (1992), studying the rural-urban migration in Kenya before the independence, suggests that the challenge for women was to make decisions during their husbands' absence while having limited access to land. These women, who had become heads of household after their husbands' departure, faced substantial barriers to improving the farm's situation and consequently became extremely stressed. Their stress was reinforced by fears of husbands' infidelity and daily tensions experienced with their family in law. Similarly, in rural Zimbabwe during the colonial period, left behind wives' feelings of insecurity generated increasing couple instability, these sedentary wives also facing gossip related to their behaviour during their husbands' absence (Schäfer, 2000: 159). Therefore, the challenge for these women was to prevent potential conflicts between

themselves in order to develop collaborative relationships to face economic hazards. Male migration, in this context, not only influenced conjugal relationships, relations within household and between rural and urban environments but also between women themselves.

Other studies of the contemporary period conducted in Morocco (de Haas, 2010), Lebanon (Khalaf, 2009), Burkina Faso (Hampshire, 2006) and Egypt (Hoodfar, 1996) show that changes in women's activities during their husbands' absence do not necessarily imply a sustained structural change in the patriarchal organization of the family and social life of the community of origin. On the contrary, the temporary nature of changes in gender relationships related to migration indicates that the responsibilities and power gained by women quickly disappear when their husbands return and get back to their traditional patriarchal role within the family and the community (Brink, 1991; de Haas, 2010). In addition, while men's absence is likely to imply an increase in their decision power, it also leads to increased difficulties (Khalaf, 2009) as well as social tensions (Ennaji and Sadiqi, 2009; Nelson, 1992).

However, despite these ambivalent effects of migration on non migrant women, other cases demonstrate real steps towards women's empowerment: for example, in Weyland's study, the feminisation of agriculture in Egypt, grounded in the wide-scale emigration of men leaving for the neighbouring Arab states (Weyland, 1993). Women who 'stayed' became more active in the agricultural activities and wage labour, participated more in the public sphere, and, more generally, took responsibilities for maintaining discipline in the household (Brink, 1991: 201). A recent study in Mozambique has shown with statistical data that mens labour migration has a direct effect on women's autonomy (Yabiku et al, 2010). More specifically, the increase of women's autonomy is related to whether or not husbands are successful migrants . However, the authors admit that it is difficult to interpret such results simply through survey data, implying that ethnographic approaches on such topics would be beneficial.

Examining cases of migrant women, we also find mitigated results. Resurreccion and Khanh (2007) show how in Vietnam, where wives leave for the city while husbands have to manage domestic tasks during their absence, the traditional gender roles are re-established when migrant women come back. Other studies focus not only on male but also on female migration when assessing the gendered effects of emigration on non-migrant women. Results from a recent research on women who 'stay' in the Todgha valley, a rural region in South Morocco characterized by high levels of out-migration to Europe, show a slight increase in girls' enrolment in primary school in households involved in international migration (de Haas and van Rooij, 2010 : 51). In addition, migrant women seem to be indirect vectors of change in the gender dynamics in this region. During their summer visits to Todgha, these resident-in-Europe women and their daughters, often educated and relatively autonomous, often become role-models for non

migrant women, thus activating a flow of 'social remittances' (Levitt, 1998), possibly contributing to the transformation of gender structures in the long term (de Haas and van Rooij, 2010 : 59).

In their West African multisite study , Ba and Brédeloup (1997) had already highlighted the multiple dimensions of fuutanke women's migration in Senegal. Although these women's migration remains under men's control, once in their new environment, they benefit from improved living conditions which they exploit when they return (savings, networks or opportunities they may have developed); nevertheless once back in their place of origin, they also face local social constraints, becoming again largely dependent on their husbands' earnings despite the benefits of their stay abroad. Women who stayed, whether migrants' wives or not, managed to get involved in local life, for example by participating in development programs launched by international organisations. Thus the authors argue that more than international migration, it is the contact with an external environment that can lead to a change in gender relationships (Ba and Bredeloup, 1997: 85).

These studies bring a nuanced picture of the effects of migration, whether male or female, on gender relationships in the community of origin. Such perspectives can be paralleled with studies showing that the determinants traditionally used to asses the level of female autonomy in developing countries should be revisited. In their studies on women's mobility in Pakistan and its effects on gender relations and reproductive health outcomes, Mumtaz and Salway (2005; 2009) show that western notions of "freedom of movement" associated in this case to quantitative indicators can lead to erroneous interpretations. In the case of reproductive health outcomes for example (Mumtaz and Salway, 2005), women's unaccompanied mobility (which would be a sign of "freedom of movement") is not associated to their increased use of contraception or antenatal care; on the contrary, accompanied mobility (with a man, thus opposite to the idea of "freedom of movement") is; therefore, the authors argue for an increased consideration of class, gender hierarchies, socioeconomic and cultural contexts (Mumtaz and Salway, 2005; 2009).

In contemporary Senegal it is thus essential to consider left behind women's situation in the context of their social and cultural environment shaped by important social changes related to the increase in schooling and the greater access to information.

'Gender and migration' in Senegal: elements of context

Senegalese migration has been described extensively elsewhere[1]. Here we specifically address women's situation in Senegalese society and their relationship to migration.

[1] See Diop (2008); about Senegalese migration in Italy see Riccio 2006; also see the MAFE (Migration between Africa and Europe) project web site (http://mafeproject.site.ined.fr/en/); also Mondain and Diagne, 2010 (http://www.imi.ox.ac.uk/pdfs/african-migrations-workshops/ceux-et-celles-qui-restent)

Being a woman in Senegal

According to Dial (2008 : 15), « In Senegal, tradition and then the Muslim culture have perpetuated a system of inequality and sexual domination which are justified by their 'nature', tradition and religion » [our translation] In particular, Wolof social norms, - Wolof being the majority group in Senegal- determine the man as head of the household and require that women remain subjected to him and women's inferior position is reinforced by patrilocal norms requiring that the wife joins her husband's home, often co-residing with her family in law and co-wives. Men also have obligations, the most compulsory being the provision of economic support for their family and wives. However, as shown by Perry (2005) for rural Wolof, the knock-on economic changes wrought by free market reform mean that whereas such female subjugation is usually maintained at least in public, through new economic participation in trade rural Wolof women are developing considerable autonomy and in private at least are challenging aspects of the patriarchal domination.

These powerful Wolof social norms reinforce the importance of marriage as it structures the relations within the couple following these principles. However, marital relationships are also being shaken by broader social changes related to economic crisis, urbanisation, girls' increased school enrolment which are contributing to modifications of the family and intergenerational relationships which are at the core of the social organisation of most African societies (Vignikin, 2007). Marriage, conjugal relationships and divorce thus constitute interesting 'proxies' for analysing women's position in Senegalese society and the changing relations between men and women (Antoine et al, 1998; Antoine, 2002; Antoine and Dial, 2005; Dial, 2008). To what extent does migration, both the result and the vector of socioeconomic transformations, affect marriages and their stability?

Women and migration in Senegal

The strength and dynamism of Senegalese female migration should not be underestimated. Although relatively few women currently participate in the international migration flow, their number is increasing. At the same time, studies are multiplying, attempting to capture a phenomenon for which data remains scarce. Sakho et al (2011) suggest the reasons for the lack of visibility of female migration can be found in the stereotypes of the woman traditionally considered as economically inactive and dependent on men; this perspective was shared by Ba and Brédeloup (1997) who argued that African female migration remained under studied until the early 1990s. However, women are far from being absent from international migration flows, including to Northern countries. Hence, Ba (2008: 389) studies the case of Senegalese Mourid women in New York, insisting that for these women, migrating is associated with economic enterprise rather than following or joining their husband or a relative. These very dynamic women could be perceived by their peers as models of success in their

community of origin (Ba, 2008: 390). However, in the public sphere, they find themselves at the core of tensions and negotiations within their own environment where men often stigmatise them using a language of morality in order to try and retain a semblance of control. As shown by Babou (2008), also in the context of the United States, Senegalese Wolof women tend to challenge the traditional organization and structure within family households due to their increased financial and social autonomy. These tensions lead to conflicts at home and often divorce (one of every two marriages among immigrants in the US) (Babou, 2002). How are these transformations affecting left behind women through transnational relations or through returning migrants?

It is important to consider local contexts within the country of origin as the gender and intergenerational relationships may differ. For example, in the Senegal River valley, an area shaped by migration for decades, men's absence does not mean that wives become heads of the household; the management of the family budget remains in the hands of the migrant's mother or his brothers. Such situations seem to lead to an increase in conflicts between spouses and within households, likely to lead to divorce, often initiated by women (Tall and Tandian, 2010). Such responses related to wives' frustration can be interpreted as the expression of new aspirations leading women to question the social norms forcing them to adopt an attitude of patience and acceptance in their conjugal lives.

These issues are related to the access to financial resources and crystallise in the active role played by women in the decision to migrate and the financial support provided, especially in the case of mothers and their oldest son (Sakho and Dial, 2010). Moreover, an increasing number of women have started to participate in illegal migration in order to improve their own parents' life conditions or to support the family they are responsible for; although there is a general silence around illegal migration experiences, women's accounts are even more absent since Senegalese social norms tend to stigmatise female migration in general (Sakho and Dial, 2010).

The case study

Our case study concerns a small town of estimated 18,000 inhabitants in 2010 (Samb, 2010) and where male out migration to Italy has occurred since the late 1980s. Agricultural activities have become marginal in this area, whereas businesses have multiplied. This international migration is essentially circular and migrants, once their legal and job situation has stabilised in Italy, come back regularly to their home town, each year if possible, for several weeks. Their visits provide opportunities for them to extend their families, taking an additional wife, fathering more children or start building a family house, often a luxurious villa which symbolises their financial and social success and ability to provide for their household. Most of these migrants intend to return definitively to Senegal once their objectives met (ensuring that they can support their

families) and expect that the next generation will take over the migrant role (Samb, 2004; Samb, 2010).

This largely Wolof community epitomises Wolof patriarchal and patrilocal social and cultural norms. Many people adhere to the Murid or Tidjan brotherhoods, where men and women's roles are precisely circumscribed, the latter in the domestic sphere and reproduction, the former as family support and bread winners. Geographical proximity to Touba, the pilgrim Senegalese city is obvious through the number of mosques, and coranic schools and local male discourse is full of moralistic and religious overtones. This context is thus likely to reinforce hierarchical social relationships favouring men and the elderly, these relationships being particularly easy to maintain as the extended families live together in large compounds. As a result, addressing the issue of women's empowerment implies the necessity of taking into account household structure and the fact that any married woman is supposed to join her husband's home where, in most cases, his family is gathered.

In order to examine the consequences of international male out migration in Senegal for women left behind in the community of origin, we use qualitative interviews conducted in 2007 among 85 randomly selected men and women aged 18 to 69. The interviews, undertaken by same sex social science graduates, focused on eliciting life histories and current attitudes to and experience of migration in its different forms in the town. Here we mainly use the interviews conducted with women, differentiated according to their relationship to a migrant[2] to explore the following themes: the perceptions of the advantages and drawbacks of migration, the relationships between spouses, motivations for marriage, post-marital residence, education, domestic work and economic issues.

In addition we analyze 24 in-depth interviews among migrant women which we conducted in 2012 along with a quantitative survey on women's life histories. With these interviews we tried to catch the experiences of visiting and returning migrant women as well as the migration projects of still "involuntary immobile" women in the words of Jonsson (2008; 2011).

Migrant wives: managing the absence

Whether married to a migrant or not, all interviewed women outlined two main types of difficulties for migrant wives: facing the daily constraints alone without being able to share their preoccupations directly with their husband, and the relationships with the family in law, usually full of tensions, being exacerbated by the absence of their husband.

[2] Our knowledge of this qualitative database allows us to include, when necessary, men's perspectives.

Financial dimensions

In most cases, tensions crystallise around access to resources, highlighting women's dependence on husbands when it comes to daily expenses. In general, in this context structured around the extended family, the remittances sent by the migrant first go to the close kin (parents or any 'legitimate' household head such as a brother or even nephew) and rarely to the wife (Tall and Tandian, 2010).

The perception of the migrants who become rich and support their family is so strong within the community that their wives are widely envied and considered as free from financial worries or at least in a much better situation compared to other women. However, the reality described by several women contradicts this perception.

> …They [migrants' wives] have problems because people think you have everything. People often lecture you and you have no-one to turn to when you have problems because they say that your husband has emigrated. You just have to sort things out yourself and put up with any problems. People say that your husband sends this and sends that, whereas in fact it's not the case. When you have your husband by your side you can always lean on him in case of need. If your husband is late sending money you can't ask anyone else to help you. And if you do turn towards someone else you are slandered. People think that when we are sent money we waste it (aged 43, migrant's wife, no schooling, 4 children).

> I'm never going to marry a migrant again. Migrants don't provide support for anyone, I mean to say their wives. They give nothing to their wives. All my friends have got migrant husbands. They don't take care of anyone and they give nothing to their wives. (aged 31, divorced, ex-wife of migrant, no children, hairdresser)

These two quotes not only highlight migrant wives' own experience but also their perception of how their peers manage daily life financial constraints with an absent husband. These perceptions are reinforced by women in our sample who were not married to a migrant man.

Migrant wives can nevertheless obtain credit with shop keepers who know they can always turn to the husband when he gets back. Also, although most women, whether married to a migrant or not, identify themselves as 'housewives', the majority, in fact, get by investing in a variety of small businesses, marketing, hairdressing or dressmaking.

A contradictory view of migrant wives thus emerges, from the well off wife with few economic worries to the description of migrant wives having nothing and spending their

time almost begging however successful their migrant husband is. This somehow contradicts the study in Mozambique which showed that women's increased autonomy was associated to their husband's success as a migrant (Yabiku et al, 2010), as in our case, despite an apparent better quality of life, at the individual level, migrant wives remain extremely dependent on their husband financially. Another issue, following the hypothesis that the receptivity to social change also depend on individuals' life cycles, would be to compare the situation where women got married with a migrant man to those who married a man who became migrant later: to what extent does this modify their access to resources and encourage them differently to invest in economic activities?

Migrants' long period of absence

These long lasting absences are a source of conflicts and misunderstandings, and thus appear to contribute to increasing marital instability. Among the reasons for their discontent and well beyond migrants' financial neglect of them, migrant wives also mention that their husbands end up not giving them any news after a while abroad. This is clearly perceived at the community level and lead to unmarried women's distrust in finding in a migrant husband a suitable spouse.

> I: so you don't want a husband who travels a lot?
> R: No, I don't want a migrant husband or if I do I would like to go with him. I don't want my husband to leave me here for 2 years. I don't want that.
> I: why don't you want your husband to stay a long time without seeing you?
> R: because it's hard. You see migrants' wives whose husbands have been away for 4 or 5 years. They just communicate by phone – they can't live together. (aged 23, unmarried, completed primary school, migrant uncle)

This attitude seems to reflect a shift in unmarried women's aspirations in terms of a suitable spouse as in a previous study conducted in the same setting 8 years prior to this one, single women, supported by their mothers, were all dreaming of getting married to a migrant (Randall and Mondain, forthcoming). These young women were at the time witnessing successful men who dedicated their earnings to building luxurious houses and supporting their families (Samb, 2004). The new generations of migrants seem to have more individualised objectives, and their life conditions in the host country is now widely perceived as being extremely difficult, thus minimizing the positive perceptions on migration.

However, it is not the absence per se which is most problematic. In this society where polygamy is very common and where both men and women are locally mobile, women are brought up with the idea that their conjugal life will be structured around their

husband's visits rather than around a constant presence. What women in our sample wanted was a minimum of contact and enough communication between spouses in order to solve the problems that will inevitably arise during their relationship.

> Me, I want a husband who is not a migrant, and that can come every weekend so that I can see him. Husbands and wives should see each other regularly. It's essential to see each other even if he doesn't give you any money. The wife can at least bear the lack of money with understanding. Because at the beginning you knew that your husband was poor but you accepted him like that. (aged 31, divorced, ex-wife of migrant, no children, hairdresser)

Another major cause of conflicts likely to lead to separation relates to tensions within the family in law, most often with the mother and sisters in law. These tensions are not restricted to migrant wives; they affect all married women, especially in polygamous unions where co-wives tend to be in competition with each other. However these tensions are exacerbated when the wife is left alone and cannot turn towards her husband as a witness of unjust behaviours against her.

> I: why did you just say that migration is bad?
> R: because if he had stayed for a long time with me he would have known my true personality so that they don't gang up against me. I had problems but I managed to solve them myself, alone. Before I left him I stayed there for a year and he sent me no money. It's my older sister in Italy who sent me money to support me. She was the only person who knew what I was living through in my married household. In fact she advised me to say nothing to my parents. (Aged 26, ex-migrant husband, divorced, Primary school, no children)

This quote emphasizes how women develop strategies to cope with their in laws during the absence of their husband; among these strategies, the bonds they are keeping with their own siblings (here her sister) seem to play an important role. At the same time her story confirms the general view that migrant women play a very active role in supporting their own families compared to men who prefer to invest in real estate and luxury consumption goods (UNFPA, 2006).

These tensions are also related to suspicions surrounding migrant wives' behaviours and morality as they are perceived as likely to be tempted into adultery because of their husbands' prolonged absences. As a result a climate of surveillance within the family in law develops which ends up in fights and arguments and gossips at the community level

about her behaviour (confirming what has been shown for colonial Zimbabwe: Schäfer, 2000).

In such situations, women who feel isolated within her family in law and in the community, no longer sees any purpose in maintaining a relationship whose concrete dimensions (daily contact by phone, regular visits) have disappeared.

It must be recognised that the situation of daughters in law, whether migrant wives or not, is often difficult as shown in other studies (Dial, 2008) and as suggested below:

> For example, if there are two daughters in law whose husbands have emigrated and the third daughter in law whose husband is there [exactly her situation] they let off all the bad things, all the bad gossip onto the wife of the non-migrant (aged 30, primary, husband's brother is migrant)

In this quote it seems that the woman's sisters in law reject the despise they feel regarding her non migrant husband on her: their own husbands are seen to be contributing significantly to the household's expenditures, whereas their non migrant brother is seen as a non successful man who is more of a burden.

It is thus difficult to conclude to what extent it is the husband's absence which is a source of tensions and contributes to the instability of unions; however it is likely that migration and the long lasting periods of absence exacerbate an already tense situation.

In such a context what are the fault lines that emerge through which women are able to find some autonomy? The cases of women who have divorced and women who are still married but who openly talk about their difficulties can be interpreted as the expression of specific aspirations in the sense that all these experiences and discourses contradict the conventional ones which specify women's submission, patience, necessity of 'mougn'[3] in order to accept and face the difficulties of conjugal life and separation due to the husband's absences. These absences, aggravated by distance create extremely difficult situations leading to conflicts and sometimes separations. As a result, a consensus appears to be emerging in the community of an increasingly negative image of the consequences of migration for domestic life and this seems to contribute to young women's aspirations towards new ideals of conjugal life.

[3] 'Mougn' refers to the attitudes expected from women in their daily lives, in particular within their marital relationships : being patient, accept situations and wait till these improve, not protesting or arguing.

Other women's perspectives: migrant mothers as the main beneficiaries of men's migration?

Mothers' discourses on migration and migrants differ from those of migrant wives, as mothers insist on the advantages of migration in that it allows them to live out their old age in good conditions, provided that their son has 'succeeded' in his migration project.

> R: .It's my oldest son who has emigrated to Italy
> I: Has the fact that he emigrated changed anything in the family?
> R: No, there's no change. He left because he wanted to have something, something to support us and his children.
> I: Does he help you?
> R Ah yes: he's the one who sends all the money for the daily expenditure.
> I Is he the only one to help you?
> R: Yes he's the only one. He's my oldest son. There's only he who looks after the house. (60 year old widow, no education, migrant son)

> All she [the mother] earned, she saved. She saved until one day my mother talked to one of her friends at the market. She told him that she wanted her son to migrate. He told her that if she saved enough money to pay his flight ticket, he would take care of his pocket money. (…). My mother gathered all she had, the money from agriculture, cattle, everything. We sold everything, everything! We did all we could to ensure he would have everything, his passport, and my mother's "tchamin" (friend) gave him 100,000 CFA. God did that he arrived and found a job. Once he found a job he started to send us money until we could reimburse my mother's "tchamin". He sent money until he could manage to get married. He has been able to build this building, then the other building. Until now he sends money and circulates (30 year-old woman, whose elder brother is a migrant).

This quote shows several things: first elder women's autonomy in terms of managing and using their own resources, monetary or social, in this case in order to support their eldest son in his migration project. Second, it highlights the relationships of obligations the migrant has to the people who have supported him in his project (Mondain et al, 2011) and, in case of success, the positive outcomes of his migration for this mother and the rest of the family. Mothers' roles in their son's migration process have been documented elsewhere (Tall and Tandian, 2010) and, if it reflects the need for the elderly, particularly women, to ensure the support for their old days, at the same time, it highlights their relative agency in terms of mobilizing resources.

Many mothers of migrants, unprompted by the interviewer, said that their sons were taking good care of their wives. Does this reflect their awareness of the negative perceptions the people in the community have about migrants' behaviour towards their wives as well as the image mothers in law have as tension-makers? The following case described by a mother is of particular interest as she is lamenting the situation of her own daughter, married to a migrant. However the mother seems a bit uncomfortable when she describes her relations with her own daughter in law:

> I: Your daughter, what caused the problems with her mother in law?
> R: Lots of causes because her husband is a migrant and it's his mother who manages all the household expenditure. My daughter has no control over spending or of the management of the house. Often she (the mother in law) calls her all the names under the sun or, when my daughter is ill she doesn't even look after her. In the end my daughter got fed up and asked her husband to give her a divorce.
> I: And you, what does your son send you in terms of money? Is it you who manages it?
> R: What should pass through them passes through me because my son said " what I am sending you must spend so much on this and that". I just do what my son tells me. And when it's buying bread and food it's his wife who manages that. (aged 44, wife and mother of migrants, no education)

The benefits of migration fade away in women's discourses as their relationship with a migrant becomes more distant. This seems to confirm what the literature has shown elsewhere: remittances are concentrated in the hands of close family, parents, brothers and sisters, wives and children. It also suggests that the perception of African societies shaped by norms of solidarity, and the 'traditional African extended family needs to be nuanced as the society is undergoing substantial social changes (Marie, 2007, Aboderin 2004, Roth 2010).

In general, most women rely on their children for support in old age, and because of the current economic difficulties, migration is perceived as the most efficient and secure solution. However, some dissident voices emerge with mothers preferring to see the huge sums of money mobilised for young men's migration projects invested in local economic activities instead. By expressing these hopes, migrant mothers not only emphasize the wish to keep their family and children around, but may also reflect the end of the myth surrounding migration behind which migrants' difficult life conditions are hidden. More than a view restricted to their own condition, their perspective casts a look on the community's and society's future.

Migrant women and left behind women's aspirations to migrate

Women's aspirations in this small Wolof town are shaped by the social and economic crisis that has been ongoing for decades in Senegal, and it is obvious that migration has influenced them across the year. In this regard their current aspirations are rooted in a several decade long process that in the beginning may have seemed to be the realm of men only but has progressively concerned a more significant number of their female peers.

Aspirations to migrate

It is also through the analysis of non migrant women's discourses that the existence of migrant women from this community appeared. Unfortunately these cases are not described in detail but it seems that these women are not necessarily migrating within a family reunification program. However, the two female respondents in our sample who had migrated did not express a clear motivation to invest in a life abroad for themselves;

> I: What pushed you to migrate?
> R: the first time I went my husband was there. He used to get home late and the work was hard. When he started at 8:00am he finished at 8:00pm. So I had to help him. I came to be next to him, to help him and cook for him. That was one of the reasons I didn't start work quickly. And when I came back here with my children it was he who called me back so I could join him again.

This woman joined her husband in Italy in order to help him by taking care of the domestic tasks – in fact they were a couple fulfilling entirely the social expectations of a Wolof married couple. This somehow contradicts what Babou shows in the context of the US (2008) with Senegalese women challenging the traditional organization within the household and their couple. This could at the same time confirm Levitt's position (1998), arguing that the host country's context influences migrants' perceptions and behaviours; other factors may be considered: the US are more distant geographically, perhaps encouraging women to adopt more innovative behaviours, whereas Italy in a way could be seen more rigid socially (strong catholic influence) as well as closer with more possibilities for visits. In addition, in the case of this woman, the European labour market context made her professional integration difficult, especially with young children. This led her to go back to Senegal; what is interesting here is that, once her children were older, she decided herself to go back to Italy, under the 'protection' of her migrant brother, in order to work on the beaches selling to tourists during the summer season. She could do this because she had the correct papers from her earlier domestic sojourn, but this new role was totally outside the expected role of a wife and mother. Such complex trajectories show how women may be torn between their own personal aspirations and

social norms which force them to respect a certain hierarchy between the sexes restricting their ability to do what they want. The other woman was married to a French man, and thus obtained a French passport which allowed her to circulate freely between the two continents. It is not clear to what extent the marriage was a deliberate strategy or if she took the opportunity later to develop her own business.

Most men clearly affirm their opposition to women's migration and it is thus possible that migrant women are under-represented in our sampling as individuals felt more inclined to talk about migrant men, sons, brothers, uncles or nephews than women. However, these two migrant women clearly affirmed their wish to migrate for the economic benefits and they did so independently of their husbands. On the other hand, they seem to demonstrate how the differences between men and women regarding their aspirations and autonomy are maintained where neither had to go through the complex, stressful and costly processes of getting legal (or apparently legal) documents to go to Europe. Both of them could go to Europe because of their marital status which is totally different from migrant men's situations and thus questions their real autonomy and agency in their migration experience. Perhaps, the main barrier for women in this community is the access to papers, and more inquiry is thus needed to explore women's strategies, if any, to start a migration process.

It is difficult to assess to what extent the experiences of these migrant women are seen as models by non migrant young women. In fact, the women in our sample who clearly expressed their willingness to migrate, did so through the influence of their male peers, sometimes their own husbands rather than referring to migrant women's experiences. The two following quotes highlight two different situations, although both emphasize the desire to get rich quickly: the first one refers to a couple's strategy or wish to migrate, whereas the second clearly refers to a woman's individual aspiration.

> R : We (her and her husband) want to leave so much, even straight away…we could earn money
> I: So if you stay here you can't earn money?
> R: Yes, you will earn money but you earn more abroad, in America.
> I: For you that's the country where you can get rich?
> R: Yes, America and I want to go there.
> I: What sort of work would you do there?
> R: Whatever job my religion allows, for example hairdressing. (aged 25, 2 children, illiterate, no links with migrant)
>
> I: do you want to migrate?
> R: Me, too much
> I: Why?

R: Because a migrant gets rich quickly (laughs) and me, I dream of having a house I've built myself.
(aged 23, unmarried, secondary schooling, migrant uncle)

In the case of the second woman, the excerpt reflects an aspiration which completely contravenes "traditional" wolof expectations that it is the man who is the household head, the *borom keur* and the owner of the house he has built. Yet Babou's study of Senegalese hairdressers in the US (2008) demonstrates that it is precisely such investments in building their own houses that these rich self-made Senegalese women are doing. This is noteworthy in a context where women are not supposed to express too openly their aspirations (Ba, 2008; Sakho and Dial, 2010, for illegal migrant women).

Migrant women's trajectories and how traditional social norms play a key role in their ability to leave

To what extent do migrant women's characteristics differ from those of their male peers? How do Senegalese women manage to develop their own migration project in a society where the social norms related to their roles as spouse, mother and house keeper could be seen as restricting their autonomy in this process? To what extent do these norms in fact help them in their projects?

Through three life histories representing fairly well the complexity of situations we address the above questions looking systematically at the following dimensions: women's motivations to migrate, women's marital status and family situation and arrangements and women's projects.

Adama is 42 years-old, speaks both Wolof and Italian and has no education. Before migrating she was helping her mother at the market, and also did some business activities between Mauritania and Senegal. Observing and supporting her strongly impacted her desire to do something herself and led her to her migration project:

> Before I left to migrate i worked, I helped my mother […] (she changes her tone…one senses an ambition to succeed in life) in teh market as a market woman: my mother sold vegetables and she had a shop. She is dead now but it was she who taught me commerce. This training led me to decide to migrate, especially when I saw certain women, I said to myself I am going to seek 'jom' [success].

In addition, confirming what we suspected from our 2007 interviews, her migrant sisters also influenced her in her desire to migrate, even if their migration was not abroad:

Beug jom rék, outi jom « wanting to succeed», « looking for success», also I had sisters who had migrated. I had one sister who migrated , she lived in Dakar. She was very brave , she is dead now. She helped me and influenced me.

Clearly she is driven by the idea of success in life and admiring both her mother and sister who struggled for their respective lives.

She thus finally ends up migrating in 2000 and joins her brothers in Sardinia who immediately start initiating her to street trading while she learns Italian in the evenings. Adama had left Kebemer while still single and got married with a man from this community a few years later. This man, single when she married her, ended up taking an additional wife. From him she had two children, one son and one daughter. When asked about how she manages her circulatory migration with a 'left-behind' family, this is what she replies:

I : Talking of your children – who did you leave them with?

R : I left them with my sister because my mother wasn't around. My older sister is like a mother for me, she's the oldest of the family. I left the children with her.

I : And you don't have any regrets? Didn't your absence harm the children?

R : No, it wasn't a loss for my children. My older sister looked after them like her own children…wallahi, we have the same mother, same father, and we are best friends, we are very close. When I returned I took my children back

I : And how did you manage the distance from your husband? Leaving him here because your children were staying with your sister but your husband is somethign else.

R : « Sama borom keur » (my husband) […] (laughs), he has another wife so when I go he stays with the other wife, the first wife until I come back. I am the second wife

I : so there's no problem?

R : No, because when we got married I was already a migrant so he knew me already with my work and he's not going to ask me to give it up.

These statements suggest several things: first that the fosterage system common in West Africa works well for migrant women, especially since they in turn provide support for their families through the remittances from migration. Because fosterage is common there might not be any reason for mothers to regret being away from their children. Regarding marriage, it seems to be easier if the woman marries while she is already migrating as the prospective husband may envision the benefits from marrying a woman who provides significant economic support for the family. The polygynous system prevents him from being without a spouse for too long periods as well. However two questions remain: to what extent do men in such situations perceive their role as the head of the household and main family support? Also it is widely documented that polygynous unions are often

associated with intense conflicts between cowives. How does the fact that one wife succeeds in migration impact on their mutual relationships? These tensions may be exacerbated as Adama, like her male peers, has started to build a family house and accumulate the necessary funds to start a business in Kebemer to anticipate her definitive return. In addition, she counts on her son to take over and ensure her old days. In that sense, Adama seems to have gained a complete autonomy from her husband and family in law, who in turn may become those who will count on her support. Also, as she felt herself concerning her own mother and sister, she is now the one who is 'brave' and seen as such. Therefore it is difficult for both her direct entourage and the community in general to oppose migrant women:

> Yes, they [migrant women] are seen as courageous women. Before it was men who migrated. Now women migrate and we do it to have « jom » (seek success). For me it's because I have « jom » that I leave my family for 6 months to migrate. It's explained by the fact that the person is « jambar » (courageous, brave) it's a brave thing to do, those who do it are courageous. Especially for a woman: you leave your children, it's difficult, sometimes you don't want to do it but you have to. Do you understand what I mean?

In this quote what is interesting is that Adama is referring to what any woman in the world who has to manage family and professional life feels. So despite the fact that the Senegalese family system may seem open to separation between both spouses and parents with their children, these situations remain difficult at the individual level.

Let's now turn to Aïda's case, a woman of 48 years old, having a B.A in history and geography and thus perfectly comfortable to speak in French during the whole interview. Because of her education she had several jobs before migrating, including teaching, sewing and doing some businesses. She was married and got divorced before migrating. From this union she had a daughter whom she left to her mother when she migrated. When she emigrated in 1990, she was the 'pioneer' in her family and thus the one who brought her brothers and sisters to Italy through the years. Like many other emigrants from Kebemer, she divided her time between Brescia during the low season, and Pescara during summer to do some street/beach selling. However, because of her strong desire to succeed economically and because of her dynamism, she ended up doing intensive trade within Europe and between Europe and Dubaï. She got married twice, each time with a Senegalese. When we interviewed her she was still married with her last husband whom she had met in Dubaï. Because of the current financial and related economic crisis, she affirms that she does not want her daughter to migrate and instead protects her from the desire to leave.

> **I : Have you thought about someone taking over your role? You talked about your daughter a while ago?**

R : (she interrupts) no, no, my daughter was going to emigrate to Spain but since it is difficult, Spain is worst, when young people from Kebemer who were in Spain came to Italy, I asked them, why are you coming here, with all the cries there are here, they said, don't you hear the cries from Spain […], that's what they said. I said I understand, and my brother went to Spain, my daughter, her husband is in Spain, he just left, he got the document for her to come, I told her, work there is so unstable, she had two sons, this year she just got a daughter, I am grand-mother for the third time. I said, is it really worth going there, she is teaching here in a franco-arabic school, she teaches French, I told her, can't you wait until your husband finds you something to do there, wait, if he finds a job for you then you can leave, otherwise you will stay there unemployed, you are going to cook and stay at home and take care of your children and I will not be there [to help you], it will not solve any problem.

This quote perfectly reflects on the experience of a woman who has gained her autonomy by herself and does not want to see her own daughter end up in a way of life she has herself rejected. Here we can definitely find a strong emancipation behaviour that the mother tries to transmit to her own daughter. In this sense it is quite interesting to note that the direction is from the older generation to the younger one which is not what is usually observed or expected.

Hence, to ensure her old days and not be a burden for her entourage, she bought a piece of land in a village close to Kebemer, Lompoul, where she has started to grow various vegetables. She has now decided not to migrate anymore and considers herself as a 'returned migrant'.

So Aïda is the typical case who had to deal with union unstability:

I : so with your migration how did you manage your family life?

R : luckily I was divorced when I left for Italy.

I : In 1990?

R : In 1990 , I was divorced so I didn't have any problems with a husband and all that. There was my daughter but she was in good hands with her grandmother…….I remarried over there in Italy with a Senegalese man. We lived there for 10 years and finally her returned here. Ok after 10, 9 years he came back and we continued but as we no longer saw each other we got divorced and I got remarried on my way to Dubai. (laughs) It's like that.

I : What really created your break up? Did you have co-wives here?

R : yes, yes, I had co-wives and they don't like us migrant wives, no, no they can't bear us. Even now there are always problems.

For her being « alone » (divorced) made her project to migrate easier, thus reflecting the tensions at that time between men and women, the latter perceived as not supposed to migrate on their own. However, contrary to Adama, ending in a polygynous union was not a good experience as conflicts related to jealousy between cowives led her to divorce a second time. Like Adama, however, being able to leave her child to her mother was helpful and not seen as a problem as such practices are common in Senegal (like in several neighbouring countries).

We will end this portray of migrant women by the story of a young migrant 'candidate', Ndeye, 25 years old, primary school education and who only speaks Wolof. Since she stoped school she has stayed at home doing domestic work. She has joined her sister in Morocco for three months to help her at a restaurant. However she admits that her ultimate goal was to reach either Europe or North America. Her main motivation is to earn money, she did not mention anything about supporting her family although this is an implicit outcome for most migrant. She is still single and clearly does not look for a husband as her strategy to migrate is to get a marriage certificate from a cousin in Spain in order to join him through the family sponsorship program. In her case both motivations and projects blend in one single idea: migrating to make money:

I : When you left what was your main aim?

R : I wanted to go, to emigrate « rèk » (only), that is I wanted to go through Morocco to reach other horizons.

I : Where did you want to go?

R : Emigrate « rèk » (only), look for money

In this sense, her discourse remind that of young men we interviewed in 2007 who had no clear argumentation about their life projects, there were no other alternative than migrating and the main objective was to make money. That this will end up supporting the left behind family is somehow implicit although beyond these 'good intentions', the perspective of the prestige gained from a 'successful migration' is certainly the main incentive, here for both men and women.

Conclusion

Whether migrant wives or not, women expect to be supported by their husband and the wider society expects this to happen too. However, it is through the expression of critical perspective and migrant women's experiences that we can see signs of emancipation and personal aspirations in a context where arranged marriages remain widespread, polygamy is frequent and men regularly assert publicly their authority over women.

Although parts of our results seem to indicate that migration contributes to reinforce men's status by consolidating their role as family supporters, they also suggest that

migration results in modifying the social norms indirectly, where women position themselves *a contrario* by rejecting unequal situations that they are experiencing or that they are witnessing and which are exacerbated by migrants' behaviours. As Dial (2008) suggests, if repudiation is still practised, it is likely that several divorced migrant wives, exasperated by their daily life conditions, have pushed their husband to ask for the divorce in order to free themselves from this burdensome environment (see also Tall and Tandian, 2010).

Husbands' long lasting absences lead their left-behind wives to deal with various people in contradictory ways amidst a social environment made of envy, jealousy and stigma, but also of compassion and support. In the patriarchal and patrilocal context of Senegal, most married women live with their familyinlaw and, during their husband's absence, are under the tight control of the members of this family. In many cases their access to the remittances sent by their husbands is limited and they have restricted power on their own children: in fact they may be criticised more widely because they appear to lack of a father's discipline and we found a case where the mother's authority was withdrawn from her children because she was considered as not being able to cope with their education. Most of our 2007 interview excerpts illustrate migrant wives' feelings of isolation if not anger when situations turn out badly. they also show how women clearly express themselves regarding their situations, highlighting opposite views to those usually disseminated on migrants. In addition, contrary to what is shown by Randall and Mondain (forthcoming), there is a growing perception amogst non migrant women that migration and migrants are not as 'successful' as in the past, and that they are not necessarily supporting their wives. These perceptions tend to contribute to new aspirations in terms of marriage, but also to ideals of individual autonomy. Women of different age groups and marital situations thus emphasized their need and wish to be educated and economically active, including through migration (Perry, 2005; Babou, 2008). Migrants' mothers on the other hand seem to be the true beneficiaries of their sons' mobility,reinforcing the unbalanced situation with their daughtersinlaw.

By examining the cases of migrant women or 'migrant candidates,' we validate some of our previous findings but perhaps in an unexpected way. Clearly, migrant women have to be fairly free in terms of their marital situations in order to migrate, whether single, divorced or in a polygamous union, provided that cowives get along well enough to avoid major conflicts. So in a sense this confirms the fact that tensions exist between gender regarding the acceptability for women to migrate on their own, but at the same time it leads women to admit that being in deviant marital situations (divorced or single even at an age considered as fairly 'old' to get married) helps them in their project.

One question that remains relates to the notion of 'success': what does success mean for these women? Do they consider that despite their unusual family trajectory they can be seen as having succeeded in life as Senegalese women or do they suffer from being

slightly marginalized? Do they as a result put all their energy in supporting their families and making money to somehow rub out the deviant picture they offer to their community? An ongoing study by Chiara Quagliariello on Senegalese women in Italy shows that they are strongly concerned by their image as mothers and wives. As our own interviews have also shown, migrants, including women, are strongly involved in their community in the host country, essentially through religious associations and groups. Such an environment cultivates the social bonds around norms and values largely disseminated by religious leaders regarding marriage and family life which can explain why migrant women can be torn by contradictory desires (however see Babou, 2002 and 2008 for a different perspective based on Senegalese women in New York).

Long absences and short visits have an impact on fertility. Fertility remains high in the small town[4] and childbearing constitutes an essential dimension of being a woman and women's status (Foley, 2007). Having many children reinforces the woman's position within the family and provides her with widespread social respect and admiration, which, in this context, goes along with the idea that the woman belongs to the domestic and reproductive sphere. Such a perspective seems to contradict new ambitions in terms of education, labour market participation as well as choosing one's spouse. By its 'mechanical' effect on fertility, migration is likely to reinforce either the traditional values related to high fertility, along with all the stigma infertile women face thus becoming marginalised within their conjugal household, or to lead to a lower fertility regime where women can develop new roles outside the family. However, it should be noted that high fertility does not preclude many women, migrant or not, from participating in market and commercial activities (also see Perry 2005).

The study presented in this paper confirms the need to take into account the social and cultural context in which the migration process takes place. The difficulty of evaluating the role of migration in women's emancipation, whether migrant themselves or not, leads us to think more in depth of the methodologies to be developed in the future. Oso and Catarino (1996) have already highlighted the pertinence of using longitudinal methods, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches. It is also important to identify the relationships between the different members of the household, both the present and absent ones (Randall et al, 2011). This would make it possible to identify and analyze the strategies and adjustments women operate across time and thus better capture migration's empowerment potential for Senegalese women.

[4] The chief doctor told us that contraceptive use in the small town was lower than 10%.

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