THE IMPACT OF MIGRATION AND MOBILITY ON FAMILY STRUCTURES IN SENEGAL

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, migration has become a central issue in public debates in almost every region of the world. Just look at how the great Western powers like the European Union have barricaded themselves to keep non-Europeans out of the Union's territories (Krastev 2017). Whether based on a security rationale, an economic argument, a civilizational approach, or, more recurrently, a demographic one, the discourse on (African) migration feeds on a variety of agendas, sometimes wrapped in fantasy.

In the countries in the Global South, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, in addition to legal immigration, many countries are confronted with irregular immigration that takes the perilous routes of the desert and the makeshift boats that have turned the Mediterranean into a maritime graveyard.

In this way, migration realities are having a major impact on sub-Saharan societies. The family is therefore the ideal space for observing the consequences of migration in post-colonial societies. There are at least three reasons that justify its relevance. Firstly, African families are not immune to the current challenges of globalization, of which migration and (transnational) mobility are just one of many forms of expression. Secondly, migration most often implies the loss of a family attachment. The would-be migrant is not an isolated individual but is caught up in networks of relationships, of which the family is often the central element. Finally, in the African context, migration is still largely a collective affair. This ranges

from contributions to send a family member abroad, to money transfers that are, to a certain extent, a counter-gift to the efforts made collectively to carry out the migration project. Finally, the migrant who leaves takes with him the hopes of an entire family or even a community, and when he succeeds, he shares the benefits of his success with the whole family.

In the Senegalese context, there has long been a *tradition of mobility and migration*, particularly in the regions around the Senegal River valley and towards France. Senegalese immigration has diversified over time, both in terms of profiles with *the growing arrival* of Senegalese migrant women and destinations (Spain, and Italy), via *zones of departure*, which have expanded to include regions that were traditionally little affected by migration. The growing presence of women raises new questions concerning the relationships between family and migration: whether it's a question of maintaining family relationships at a distance, bringing up children in the absence of the mother, and so on.

This article seeks to explore the transformations that migration brings to Senegalese family structures, with particular emphasis on the impact of gender in both the motivations for leaving and the effects on families.

BETWEEN PERMANENT AND CHANGING PATTERNS OF SENEGALESE MOBILITY

A culture of mobility has taken root in eastern and northern Senegal since the successive conquests of the Great Empires of Ghana and Mali. The movement of the populations of these regions accelerated with the colonial penetrations (1880–1945). This led to temporary migrations, more or less forced, encouraged by the construction of railroads and roads, or land clearing for cultivation of crops intended for export to France and the rest of Europe. The Soninkés and Haalpulaar of the Senegal River valley, a strategic trading area astride the major routes of the ancient trans-Saharan trade, first made contact with Europeans as early as the 15th century. After the conquest, the colonial administration imposed coercive measures (forced labor, taxes paid in cash, etc.) on the Senegal River valley populations. These measures contributed significantly to the first internal seasonal migrations as people were looking for money to pay taxes or due to forcible displacement to work on major projects. The Haalpulaar and Soninké ethnic groups were heavily involved in these early migratory flows. The milieu Soninké area (Upper Valley), the first departures were reported around 1900, while in the Fouta en milieu Haalpulaar area (Middle Valley), until around 1910, population movements triggered by colonial measures led to people fleeing military recruitment campaigns. These soldiers were the forerunners of the first migrations to Africa, but also to Europe, where they remained after the great wars. Between 1915 and 1918, some 100,000 African fighters (*Tirailleurs sénégalais*) were sent to the fronts of Verdun and other battlefields.

As a result, migration was encouraged by recruitment. "It was a time when agents of major companies and various governments were stationed in sending countries to encourage and supervise the departures of migrants or contract workers" (Guengant, 1996: 111). During the 1950s–60s, immigration to France was 'free', Senegalese, Mauritanians, and Malians needed only an identity card to enter France. Grouped around small clusters of former sailors established in the Marseilles, Bordeaux, or Le Havre region, from wherè they arrived by boat, they redeployed to industrialized areas: the Rhone corridor up to Lyon, the Seine valley up to Paris - great host regions for Haalpulaar migrants.

Following the oil crisis of 1973, France, the main destination for Senegalese, introduced an arsenal of measures to control the influx of immigrants, while at the same time – paradoxically – authorizing family reunification and settlement under the 1974 law. However, in 1974, with rising unemployment and mass lay-offs in several industrial sectors, Senegalese migrants found themselves in a precarious situation. In France, despite the arrival of the left-wing government in the wake of the 1981 elections, the desire to control entry remained unchanged, and against all odds, new entry regulations were introduced, transforming the country from a privileged destination into a transit point for other destinations such as Italy and Spain.

Until the mid-1970s, Senegalese migrants' destinations followed a bipolar trajectory: an African migratory pole essentially concerned with cross-border countries and African eldorados (Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, and Congo), and another European pole oriented exclusively towards France and, a lesser extent, Germany. These poles had centuries-old commercial, historical and geographical links with Senegal. From the 1980s onwards, the growing complexity of entry conditions led to the emergence of new destinations which, a priori, neither history nor geography linked to Senegal. Italy was the destination of vacationer ambulant vendors on the beach in summer, and returning to Senegal in winter. The settling of migrants in the peninsula was the result of an internal redeployment from Southern cities to the industrial North, and a change in occupation from merchant to operaï (worker), thereby increasing the potential for integration. It attracted migrants who had previously settled in France or Africa.

As a result, the Senegalese gradually diversified their destinations. In the early 1980s, New York saw the arrival of many Senegalese migrants. Initially, merchants who had come to buy their goods on Broadway began relocating to the low-cost apartments between 114th Street and the confines of Harlem and the Bronx. The Senegalese merchants who used to purchase electronics there were the first to migrate to the United States, where many Senegalese migrants arrived from the mid-1980s onwards. Upon their arrival, the Senegalese

occupied a famous hotel on 50th Street, before moving to Harlem and the Bronx and settling permanently in the country. Enticed by the potential for professional integration in other States, Senegalese emigrants moved to Atlanta, Detroit, and Ohio (Tall and Tandian, 2011). In these States, they work in the industrial sector and in hairdressing salons targeting an African-American client base, styled by Senegalese women. The country offers easy residential integration, identity checks are rare, and the opportunities for professional integration are commensurate with the size of the country, even if obtaining a Green Card is difficult. These first merchants were later joined by young urban residents from France and Canada, and migrants from the Valley. They settled in Brooklyn, where they took over the Fulton Street shopping street, which they happily renamed Fouta Street after their homeland.

Over the years, the old image of the illiterate, rural migrant has given way to a new profile, educated and urban, sometimes professionally active, driven by a desire to constantly explore new destinations, with which they have no special affinity, whether linguistically, historically, or geographically.

This relative ease of integration made Italy a preferred destination for Senegalese after 1990. Spain, thanks to its entry into the European Union and the start of a number of major projects, has taken up the baton. These countries made Southern Europe the primary destination for Senegalese migrants after 1990. A number of studies have shown that Southern Europe was the first destination of choice for would-be migrants. In fact, South Africa, which at one time was a preferred destination for Senegalese, was simply a destination for those who waited in vain for the opportunity to reach Southern Europe. Difficult security conditions curbed intensive departures to South Africa, but in certain cities such as Durban, the links between the Indian diaspora and the Senegalese migrant group facilitated their integration. However, "the diamond clusters remain very active in the Southern African subregion. They circulate and settle there either through marriage or in search of business opportunities, the two motivations remain linked" (Bredeloup 1993).

Senegalese migration to the Middle East also generates significant flows. But apart from a few categories of migrants, residential and professional integration is difficult. The conditions for wealth creation are available only to a few professional groups, freedom of movement is limited, family reunification is controlled, and female migration is poorly promoted. All these factors mean that migration to these countries, despite their religious ties with Senegal, remains underdeveloped.

The countries of North Africa are home to Senegalese who have settled there, often after having spent some time there, on their way to Europe. These countries (Morocco, and Libya) tend to be transit countries on the way to Europe. With entry requirements becoming more complex in many countries, the exploration of new destinations seems increasingly original. Argentina, for example, has seen a massive influx of Senegalese since the country regained economic stability.

WOMEN AND THE RENEWAL OF MIGRATION PROFILES

It was not until the late 1990s that research into Senegalese migration began to consider the place and role of Senegalese migrant women in migratory flows, even if they did exist, albeit with short stays abroad for some, while for others the purpose of the journey was to join a spouse. In the early days, the few Senegalese women migrants followed their husbands or were students. Senegalese migrant women worked in professional sectors such as hairdressing, catering, commerce, and so on. These Senegalese migrant women carried out similar activities in their country of settlement to those they practiced in Senegal.

In many Senegalese families, the departure of migrant women led to a process of 'roles negotiation', while at the same time triggering negative socio-cultural perceptions of them. In such cases, migration has often been associated with 'unnatural' or even 'risky' practices, often viewed as an offense against societal morals (Ba, 1996; Sow and Antoine, 2000; Rosander, 2004). Senegalese migrants who reach France are sometimes portrayed, rightly or wrongly, as prostitutes who fall victim to mafia networks. This image conceals the many examples of Senegalese women who migrate alone and engage in a variety of legitimate business activities (Coulibaly-Tandian, 2008). More open to change, and less liable to family pressure, some of them make commercial investments and accumulate substantial capital. These success stories reinforce the desire amongst Senegalese women back home to migrate. Unfortunately, this is reflected in the growing number of women among Senegalese clandestine migrants arriving in Spain by pirogues. These Senegalese women migrate alone or together with their brothers or neighbors. The fact that they take part in these extremely risky journeys illustrates their determination and desire to achieve autonomy.

Spain and Italy, until recently viewed as new Eldorados, have received many Senegalese women migrants. The United States has played a major role in the feminization of Senegalese migration. Senegalese women migrate there autonomously and integrate into specific employment sectors, such as hairdressing or catering, which is a way to perpetuate their domestic activities in Senegal.

For Senegalese migrant women, high qualifications do not mean automatic professional integration. Their path to employment often suffers from stagnation. This can be explained by their difficulty to 'mourn' their educational credentials in order to enter other fields with few or no

qualifications or to take another training course to reconvert into another sector. Indeed, surveys have revealed that Senegalese migrant women are more reluctant to take up unskilled work or redeploy into another field (Coulibaly-Tandian 2015).

Moreover, Senegalese women who migrate within the family reunification framework are often portrayed as risky 'followers', whose departure is based exclusively on the decision of the immigrant spouse. Their image is that of dependents, rather than protagonists in their own lives. Indeed, most of them remain inactive for a long time and are perfectly satisfied with reproducing their previous role and status in the destination country. However, as their stay in the host country becomes longer, these women gradually begin to play an active role in a migration whose ultimate aim is to earn a living.

In the context of inter-African migration, three male-initiated family reunification strategies have been identified. The first one is that migrants who are engaged in commercial activities marry in general with their matrilateral (parallel or cross) cousin in their village of origin, upon completing their first or second stage of migration. Thereafter, their wives join them in the destination country for a while.

This is the most common strategy. The second strategy is that other migrants contract a long-distance alliance with a female cousin from their village, whom they subsequently arrange to bring over. The third strategy is evident when some migrants choose their spouse in the host country, from within the migrant community, if this includes large family segments. In the latter case, the migrant avoids interrupting his or her professional activity and massively redistributing his or her savings to members of the extended family in the home village. He usually sends his wife's parents a lump sum, which they use to organize a modest ceremony. What is more, the ceremony in the host country is unlikely to be on the same scale as that in the home village, as it used to be, due to the foreigner's status in the host country and the absence of extended family.

While family reunification is essential for the psychological and social well-being of the migrant, in other circumstances it sometimes contributes to social confinement, as in the case of young girls pulled out of school to be married into a polygamous household. This phenomenon is becoming increasingly rare due to the draconian administrative conditions imposed on family reunification.

The work of Marie Boltz-Laemmel and Paola Villar (2013: 5), suggests that the main reasons for migration are clearly different between Senegalese men and women migrants: for the former, the reasons are economic and professional, while for the latter, they are conjugal: young wives join their husband's household after the celebration of the wedding or the birth of the first child. This divergence reflects the gendered organization of household budgets, which is justified by custom or Sharia law: the man is expected to take care of the material needs of his wife and dependents (Semin, 2007), even if this means migrating, while the wife is expected to ensure the efficient day-to-day management of these resources within the household.

However, the many crises affecting sub-Saharan countries have prompted women to position themselves as actors in the struggle for survival, to the same or even greater extent than men. In Senegal, as in many sub-Saharan countries, families' precarious situation has largely contributed to a *feminization of survival* (Sassen 2006), in a context where the male model as the sole provider of resources for the family is no longer sustainable in light of the many crises shaking the local economy and consequently household budgets. 'Resourcefulness' has become a way of life for Senegalese migrant women, and for many of them, migration is often seen as the quickest and most efficient way to gather the necessary resources and succeed, especially with agriculture undergoing a crisis due to the combined effect of a deteriorating climate and marketing difficulties (A. Tandian and O. K. Coulibaly-Tandian, 2016). Between 2008 and 2012, women accounted for 17% of Senegalese migrants abroad (ANSD 2014, cited by B. Ndione 2018). In Spain, in 2017, women accounted for 20% of Senegalese migrants (B. Ndione 2018).

Senegalese female migrants are essentially divided into two categories. The first category concerns 'elites and middle classes' who have high qualifications and integrate well-paid skilled jobs; as for the second category, it represents 'traders' who develop informal transnational trade networks. In Spain, Italy, and France, Senegalese migrant women's employment in the underground economy often makes their situation even more precarious, marginalizing them and accentuating their invisibility, since their professional activity is obviously not included in labor market statistics. Many of them have skills and qualifications that are neither recognized nor suited to the types of jobs they perform (Oumoul Khairy Coulibaly, 2008).

EFFECTS OF MIGRATION ON FAMILIES IN TERMS OF GENDER

If the migration of men has been analyzed in classic terms of attractive factors and the transfer of funds to their families back home, female migration has raised new considerations. In an African sociological context where a large proportion of domestic tasks are carried out by women (married or not), female migration raises questions about long-distance motherhood for mothers who have left their children behind (Batiga, 2021).

In the case of women, the question of transnational households or families is even more compelling. Considering the

role played by women in caring for vulnerable family members (children, elderly and sick parents, and parents-in-law), we are witnessing a sort of care drain (Hochschild 2004), i.e. a transfer of emotional resources from poor countries to the major urban centers of the North. While men export their labor power, women seem to export much more than just their physical power: they export emotional resources (A. Hochschild, *ibid*.; J. Falquet et al. 2010), which will be consumed in various forms of economy and services (home care, care of children, the sick or elderly, prostitution, etc.). More generally, the absence of women raises even greater questions about household stability than in the case of men.

The risks associated with the long-term absence of one of the parents range from marital breakdown to child abuse, not to mention the family conflicts that often arise from the management of funds transferred to the family by the migrant. For example, it has been shown that in certain situations, the absence of the father creates an irreparable void. Children, being unable to work through their pain, recreate a mythical figure, a situation that plunges them into a state of u nreality that does little to foster the construction of a solid identity. When both parents are absent, the same mechanism of idealization of the family occurs, to the detriment of the grandparents (A. Tandian and O. K. Coulibaly-Tandian, 2016). The migration of parents is sometimes also experienced as a source of guilt by children. They feel responsible for the departure of their parents, who are working to improve their situation. The result is a sense of guilt that may be overt or covert, or at least partly a transfer of guilt. Indeed, parents who go abroad 'abandoning' their children argue that they are sacrificing themselves for their children (A. Tandian and O. K. Coulibaly-Tandian, 2016).

However, the positive impact of migration on families should not be overlooked. A large proportion of migrants' income is transferred back to their country of origin to meet the needs of their families and communities. In Senegal, on the Dakar-Thiès-Touba-Saint-Louis axis, the most important transfers, in terms of frequency and amounts, are those sent by migrants to their households of origin with the aim of meeting daily expenses (Boltz-Laemmel and Villar, 2013: 10). In terms of education, studies have also shown that children from families receiving funds sent by migrant parents were less likely to fail at school, as the funds were used to send them to private schools.

Senegalese migrant women are more pragmatic and short-term, prioritizing the family's needs (food, clothing, housing, education, health), whereas men are more interested in saving or investing with a view to generating higher future incomes. From this point of view, fathers' migration is often the most profitable in terms of financial resources. Cash transfers can sometimes reconfigure relationships within the family. According to Boltz-Laemmel and Villar (2013:110), in Senegal, money transfers are based on specific relationships between the sender and the recipient that vary according to the following dimensions: gender, the shared family bond, acquired social status and, finally, economic status. The combination of these characteristics leads to different profiles of dyadic relationships between members of the original household circuit, as well as outside it. Moreover, the recipient of transfers is not necessarily an individual but may be a group, such as the household as a whole, or specific nuclei. Several factors come into play to understand how family relationships are reconfigured when one of the parents migrates.

FAMILY STRUCTURE

Depending on whether the migrant's family, or part of it, is in the country of origin or destination, we may be dealing with an immigrant family, a blended family with part of the family in the country of origin, or simply long-distance parenthood, where the father or mother looks after their children, sending regular remittances through family members who exercise parental authority or guardianship for minor children. Migrant children live either with one of the two parents who stayed home or with a member of the extended family when the father and mother have both left. The next of kin becomes the guardian: grandparents, aunts, and uncles. For mothers looking after other people's children in the destination country, this situation places their own children in the global care chains (Hochschild, 2004), with close relatives as the final link in this long process of delegated care (Batiga, 2021).

Male migration is more often confined to remittances, while wives have to bear thev of looking after the family, household duties, relations with in-laws, and so on. To compensate for delayed or low remittances, some wives back home do not hesitate to invest in income-generating activities or in rotating savings schemes (tontines). By positioning themselves as household managers in the absence of their spouses, Senegalese migrant women are reconfiguring their social position. Rather than being confined to the domestic sphere, they are acquiring roles in the public arena, gaining access to the property for or thanks to their spouses, and initiating and supervising worksites or projects on behalf of their spouses or in their own name. Some even acquire a degree of financial autonomy, partially or totally freeing themselves from dependence on their migrant husbands. So, while the migration of men opens up a margin of freedom for Senegalese migrant women, it often propels them to become the main contributors to maintaining the household. Such situations often destabilize certain sociocultural systems, calling gender relations into question. In some cases, on the other hand, marriage to a migrant abruptly interrupts a school career, at the expense of the in-law's ambitions, who have high hopes for the future and hypothetical success of the migrant son-in-law. The young bride becomes the in-law's maid of all work (A. Fontaine, 2017).

On the contrary, the departure of Senegalese migrant women poses the challenge of carrying out all those tasks traditionally attached to the social role of woman and wife, the househusband being an almost non-existent figure in the Senegalese family tradition. In addition, not all migrant parents have the resources to bring their families to Senegal, or to afford regular trips to visit their families. Factors such as the number of children, the relationship to migration, and the level of education (insertion factor) influence the likelihood of a family living at a distance (Beaugendre, Breton, and Marie 2016: 41). In other words, parents with a high level of qualification, therefore with significant income, a relatively limited number of children with a certain relationship to migration, will find it easier to bring their children over, or at least to reduce the effects of their absence through more regular travel to their country of origin. This is where the difficulty lies for people in irregular situations.

RESIDENCE STATUS OF SENEGALESE MIGRANT WOMEN

Another decisive factor is the migrant woman's residency status. This largely determines relations with the family, since it is the primary condition for social and professional integration in the host country. Migrant women in an irregular situation are unable to find decent, legal work that provides them with a regular income they can draw on to send home to their families. Neither can she reunite with her family. And even worse, she is unable to visit her family regularly, at the risk of being denied entry at the border on her return. As a result, many female immigrants experience important family events – weddings, births, deaths, etc. – at a distance.

Long-distance marriages have become a common feature of Senegalese society. Their development in recent years is largely correlated with changes in the international migration of Senegalese to Europe. From the 1990s onwards, the tightening of entry and residence conditions in a number of countries of destination for Senegalese (France, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Spain), the closures and restrictions on movement for migrants, the more complex conditions for family reunification, and difficult access to a European labor market subject to strict regulations, have all been structural factors behind the occurrence of these marriages in the Senegalese context (Niang-Ndiaye, 2021).

For example, migrant children feel the impact of their parent's absence. Indeed, beyond the psychological aspect that the presence of the parent (father or mother) can play, close contact with the child enables him/her to be monitored on a daily basis. At the same time, it should be pointed out that certain school events (school holidays, parents' invitations, award ceremonies, school reports, etc.) often remind the migrant's child of his or her parent's absence. For this reason, some migrant children envy their peers who live with their parents. The psychological consequences of 'distant suffering' are far from having been fully grasped, on the part of both the immigrant and the family back home.

DIGITAL MEDIATION OR CONNECTED FAMILIES

The evolution of communication technologies has largely mitigated the effects of separation in time and space. While they do not replace interaction and physical presence, they enable parents and children to share a certain virtual closeness through images and sound, partly compensating for absence. Screen mediation paradoxically reveals that family members separated by migration can only be partially available (J. Lachance, 2021:107) to each other since these virtual interactions remain transient before parents and children return to their separate routines. To a certain extent, virtual presence only increases the pain of physical absence, which reactivates with every long-distance conversation.

The predominance of Senegalese migrant women as 'dependent spouses', the invisibility of women's work (such as domestic duties), the restrictions placed on their right to work and to take part in activities viewed as offenses or breaches of public order (such as sex work) mean that a growing proportion of Senegalese migrant women are poorly represented in the statistics.

Senegalese migrant women may themselves constitute obstacles to their integration into the labor market, by embarking on job-seeking activities that are not in line with their skills, their career plans, the demand of the job market, their lack of knowledge of their rights, and so on. As for the lack of professional assessment, the valorization of migrant women's know-how is not often part of their routine.

How can we ask Senegalese migrant women, who are used to working for free, to give value to what is still viewed by everyone as invisible? This can be exemplified in domestic duties. By working in marginal jobs or in the grey zone of labor law, they have little access to social justice. Due to a lack of clear-cut career plans and the ignorance of their rights as workers, Senegalese migrant women are subject to exploitation and discrimination of all kinds in terms of remuneration and working conditions: the right to vacations, medical benefits, working hours, mistreatment, humiliation, insults, racism, sexism, employment contracts, and so on. More often than not, Senegalese migrant women remain in ignorance of the existence of trade unions that can plead their causes.

Moreover, given their lack of knowledge and command of the language, Senegalese migrant women have been unable to develop their individual potential. This situation puts them at a disadvantage and is a handicap to their development. Isolation, lack of language skills, and their illegal residence

status prevent any form of mobilization or collective action. Even when unions do exist, they are either reluctant to publicly expose their precarious situation or they simply lack the union culture and discursive skills needed to make their voices heard. Furthermore, it is not always psychologically or morally comfortable to assume and claim victim status. As a result, Senegalese migrant women cherish what is left of their dignity.

CONCLUSION: THE URGENT NEED TO MAKE WOMEN VISIBLE IN POLITICAL PROGRAMS AND MIGRATION PROJECTS

In Senegal, over the last few years, scientific productions have continued to support a 'feminization of migration', as if women were in their first days on the migratory routes. It should be recalled that in several countries of transit or short-stay settlement (in Africa, Europe, and the Americas), Senegalese women made their presence felt before the arrival of their male compatriots.

From another perspective, women have migrated and continue to migrate for the same reasons as men. They contribute actively to the mobility of the latter in a variety of ways.

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Many women sell their property when it cannot be mortgaged to finance the travels of their husbands, brothers, and children. They embark on risky migratory routes and travel to remote destinations, contributing generously to material and immaterial transfers for the benefit of the populations left behind in their countries of origin. At present, they are playing the fundamental role of sending their children 'back home' for a 'traditional education' which is supposed to be less lenient.

In Senegal, there is an urgent need to raise the visibility of women in programs, projects, and political decisions related to migration and the mobility of the population, as these still continue to be sexist to the detriment of women.

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