Are family and material ties with the origin country determinants for return?  
A Comparative analysis of Senegal - DR Congo

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Short abstract
This paper uses a mixed methods approach to examine the impact of transnational family and material ties on return migration to Senegal and DR Congo. It compares the case of migrants from these two African countries which have experienced different political, economic and social evolutions and where migratory traditions are not the same. This comparison is based on the quantitative biographic dataset of the MAFE project that includes individuals surveyed both at origin and in Europe. Results show that migrants who live with their family in the destination country tend to return less to their home country, and this is even stronger for Congolese migrants. Findings are interpreted in the light of qualitative analysis data collected among return migrants in the regions of Dakar and Kinshasa.

1. Introduction
Over the past decade, return migration has become increasingly relevant in the literature of international migration. Transnational theory raises the important role of economic and social links with the origin country for the preparation of return (Cassarino, 2004). However, the lack of adequate data does not allow the development of extensive empirical studies about the impact of these links on the return. Available data have mainly been used to study the intention to return or the emigration of immigrants, but less the return itself to the origin country. The topic was rather treated in the perspective of destination countries. Yet, the phenomenon of return migration is likely to interest origin countries since it can be useful to transfer human and financial capital acquired abroad by migrants (Ammassari, 2005). Furthermore, as the OECD report on return migration asserts, to define adequately assistance policies or incentives to return, it is useful to consider not only individual characteristics of migrants, but also those related to their family and migration trajectories of migrants (Dumont and Spielvogel, 2008).

This paper aims to know if the family and material ties that migrants maintain with their home country during their absence have a positive impact on their decision to return, and if the effect is reversed when the links with the destination country are stronger. One consider the case of sub-Saharan migrations in Western countries, comparing migrants from Senegal and DR Congo, two countries which have known very different political and economical evolutions, and where social norms and migratory traditions are not the same. The quantitative data for this study comes from the MAFE project (Migration between Africa and Europe), which collected life-histories of migrants and return migrants in origin and destination countries. The results are interpreted in the light of qualitative analyses of nearly one hundred semi-structured interviews conducted with returnees in the regions of Dakar and Kinshasa during several field trips between 2009 and 2012.

2. Literature review
a) Empirical studies on the link between the family situation of migrants and return
The literature shows that the location of the migrants’ families strongly influences their decision to stay abroad or to return to the origin country.

On the one hand, migrants whom relatives are in the origin country during their stay abroad seem more likely to be in the idea to return. This emerges from a study on immigrants in Belgium showing that, when married immigrants arrive alone and are not joined by their wives, returns are more frequent (Perrin, 2004). Literature on migrants from Senegal (Baizán et al., 2011; Sinatti, 2011) and Morocco (de Haas et al., 2009) show that living temporarily away from his family is not uncommon, but migrants who left their families behind have in mind that they will return. De Haas and Fokkema (2010) explain why some Moroccan migrants do not proceed to a family reunification. Life at distance is sometimes a constraint, given their economic or administrative situation, preventing them bringing their families at destination. But it can also be a choice because they do not want to expose their children to discrimination and racism in Europe, or because they fear that their wives and children become westernized and lose their religious faith in leaving Morocco. These migrants tend to return at the end of their working lives because there is no more reason for them to stay.

On the other hand, migrants tend to stay or want to stay in the destination country if they have built or reunify their family there, as exposed in studies on Mexican migrants in United States (Massey et al., 1987), refugees in Sweden (Klinthall, 2007), immigrants approaching retirement age in France (Attias-Donfut, 2006) and skilled migrants in Australia (Khoo et al., 2008). These authors point out that migrants wish to stay abroad in the interest of the future of their children, which is more promising in the destination country. Indeed, migrant parents attach a lot of hope to the educational success of their children (El Hariri, 2003). In the case of Moroccan migrants in Europe, most of those who have reunified their families do not return permanently to Morocco at the time of retirement because their children, who grew up and were educated in Europe, and their wives, who enjoy more rights and liberties there, disagree with the idea of returning. Women and children form a kind of coalition of “no return”, anticipating of the limited perspectives and reintegration problems that they might face in Morocco (de Haas and Fokkema, 2010).

Concerning single migrants, they seem to return more often than those who are married and have children at destination, as indicate studies on Sweden (Klinthall, 2007) and Belgium (Perrin, 2004).

b) The material situation

Some studies have analysed the effect of the localisation of properties on the return of migrants. Since it may reflect the place where migrants want to live, it seems to be a good indicator of the highest attachment or implantation.

A survey on the transition of immigrants to retirement reveals the preference to stay in France for those who have purchased a property there (Attias-Donfut, 2006). A qualitative study about Moroccan women also shows that they most often want to stay permanently when they are homeowners in France (El Hariri, 2003). This is also the case for the Egyptians, Ghanaians, Senegalese and Moroccans who are in Italy and Spain and who hold an affair (de Haas and Fokkema, 2011).

In contrast, when migrants are owners in their home country, it has a positive impact on the return. Among Moroccans, those who have invested in Morocco have more chances to expect a return (de Haas et al., 2009). As highlighted by Carling (2004) in the case of Cape Verdean migration, to have a house is a precondition for returning. Similarly, becoming a homeowner in the origin country is also the aspiration of many Mexican migrants (Massey et al., 1987), and the return is more likely when they have achieved this goal (Massey and Espinosa, 1997). For the Senegalese migrants, having his own house is also the highest priority. It means the reaffirmation of their roots, the belonging to
Senegal and is a condition to return. Like the house, productive investments that many migrants perform in Senegal also show their attachment to their country (Sinatti, 2011).

3. Objective and hypotheses

This paper aims to know the role of the family and material ties that migrants maintain with their home country during their absence on their decision to return.

Two main hypotheses are tested:

1. Migrants who develop strong links with the destination country, in particular through the fact of having there their family and properties, would be less likely to leave everything they have built to return, especially in the case of DR Congo.

2. Inversely, it is expected that those who have maintained ties to the origin country, through their family and properties left behind, are more likely to return, especially in the Senegalese side.

4. Data and methods

This study is based on the quantitative data of the MAFE project (Migration between Africa and Europe) and on qualitative interviews conducted with Senegalese and Congolese returnees. These two types of data are complementary: the quantitative approach emphasize on the research of representativeness and the qualitative one on the understanding of individual behaviours, representations and strategies taking into account that they are part of a particular cultural, political and historical context.

a. Quantitative data

The MAFE-Senegal and MAFE-Congo data were respectively collected in 2008 and 2009 using almost exactly the same questionnaires. Therefore, they are are strictly comparable. These data provide two major advantages to study the determinants of the return of Senegalese and Congolese who migrated out of Africa. Firstly, they are transnational, which means that they have been collected in both origin and destination countries. Senegalese migrants were surveyed in France, Italy, Spain and in the Dakar region, while data on Congolese migrants were collected in Belgium, UK as well as in the Kinshasa region. Secondly, the MAFE data are biographical. Questionnaires allow the collection of retrospective individual trajectories of migrants, and it is possible to know, year by year, their housing, family, administrative, professional situation, etc. These data make possible the analysis of the determinants of returns, which requires information both on the life course of migrants already returned and on the trajectories of those who are still abroad.

b. Qualitative data

Nearly fifty semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted with returnees in the regions of each capital (Dakar and Kinshasa) during several stays of fieldwork between 2009 and 2012. The sampling of respondents, which took mainly place in public spaces such as on public transport or in the street, intended to include returnees with diverse characteristics and migration experiences. The interview guide aimed to retrace the life course of migrants, to understand the circumstances of departure and the way how migration happened, but also to focus on the family and material ties maintained with the origin country. We emphasize especially on the subjective point of view of migrants in relation with their migration experience. It was thus possible to perceive the degree of attachment that people developed with the host society during their migration and the links they have kept their home country.
An important limitation must be pointed: the interviews were only conducted with return migrants. Although they represent some diversity, that some have not returned voluntarily and would rather have continued to live abroad, it would have been also interesting to carry out interviews with migrants who have not returned.

Bibliography


