International migrations of Congolese and Senegalese women:
new forms of autonomous mobility or persistence of family migration patterns?

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I. Introduction

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

The patterns of female migrations and the mechanisms underlying this phenomenon have mostly been analyzed in the context of Asian and Latin American migrations to Europe or the United States (Truong 1996; Pessar 1999; King and Zontini 2000; Catarino and Morokvasic 2005; Massey et. Al 2006). Much less research, especially of a quantitative nature, focuses on African women's international mobility patterns, as data are lacking. Focusing on internal migration, recent work has emphasized an unprecedented development of autonomous female moves from rural to urban areas within several African countries (Findley 1997; Antoine et Sow 2000; Bocquier et Traoré 2000; Lesclingand 2011). Other studies have, however, underlined the continuing importance of the family dimension in these mobilities (Mondain 2009; Comoé 2005).

To our knowledge, these issues have so far been less investigated in the case of African women's international moves. This paper aims to fill this gap by focusing on two **questions:**

1. First, we examine the extent to which Congolese and Senegalese international migration flows display a trend towards an increasing feminization.
2. Second, the paper seeks to assess whether more autonomous forms of female mobility have emerged, or whether, on the contrary, African women's international migrations remain largely dictated by family strategies.

In pursuing these objectives, the paper attempts to make several distinctions, not systematically discussed in the literature. First, it is not always clear what is meant by the term "feminization" of migration: while most studies refer to a gradual increase in the percentages of migrants that are female (Castles and Miller 1998; Boyd 2006), others point to an increase in absolute levels of female mobility, while yet others to an increase in women's labour mobility in particular (IOM 2010). This paper will show that it is important to distinguish between these dimensions and that a relative increase in the share of women crossing the borders is not necessarily accompanied by an absolute increase in their numbers, which nuances the implications of the term. Second, the literature generally considers migrations to be autonomous when the migration project seeks to satisfy the personal economic needs of the migrant (Le Jeune 2005). Yet, the phenomenon is more complex and other dimensions should also be considered. Besides the reasons behind the move, its autonomous nature may be reflected in the mode of migration (whether migrants follow their partner or other members of their personal network abroad) or of travel (whether they travel alone, in couple or with others) and could be further apprehended in the decision-making process as well as the financing of the trip. This paper uses several indicators to measure this phenomenon, showing that the frontier between "autonomous" and "family-related" migration is more blurred than it is often assumed.

Finally, the comparison between two African countries characterized by different migration histories, social and political contexts as well as differing gender norms, will enable us to bring out the complexity and the heterogeneity of African women's migration patterns.

II. Data: the Migration between Africa and Europe project

In order to investigate these two aspects one needs data collected in both origin and destination countries. Information on both migrants and non-migrants is necessary in order to estimate migration

risks, while direct information from migrants[1] is required in order to achieve a better understanding of the nature and degree of autonomy of a move. Furthermore, longitudinal data is needed for examining the evolution of the extent and type of international mobility over time. The recent Migration between Africa and Europe (MAFE[2]) survey is among the few quantitative sources, especially in the African context, that allows answering our research objectives. A transnational sample was achieved as migrants were interviewed in several European destinations (200 Senegalese each in France, Italy and Spain; 279 Congolese in Belgium and 150 in the UK) and non-migrants as well as return migrants were interviewed in the capital regions of Senegal and DR Congo (1067 individuals in the Dakar area and 1645 individuals in the Kinshasa region). A biographic individual questionnaire, identical in each country surveyed, was used in order to collect this data. The questionnaire recorded retrospective information on several domains of respondents' life histories, such as their family formation history, their occupational, residential and migration trajectories, among others. In this analysis, only information on migrants' first international migration experience as an adult (between 18 and 65 years) will be analyzed. Thus, the population of study for the second research question is exclusively composed of migrants, both current and returnees. Table 1 presents the total sample by gender and destination of their first international move.

Table 1 Total number of migrants interviewed by gender and destination

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

Source 1 MAFE biographic data (2008-2010)

In addition, a household survey was conducted in the Dakar (1200 households) and Kinshasa (1576 households) areas, collecting basic socio-demographic information on all members of the household. Information is recorded on all spouses and children of the household head irrespective of their current location. This is not the case for other family ties such as siblings of the household head[3]. Thus, the study population for this analysis only includes the household head, his or her spouse(s) and his or her children. This provides the necessary information for calculating the number of *potential* as well as *actual* migrants. The dates and destinations of the first and last trips of all members, present or currently absent, with international migration experience were also collected.

Table 2 Total number of cases by gender and migration status

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

Source 2 MAFE household data (2008-2010)

While sampling for the biographic individual component of the survey is not random[4], the household survey followed a three-stage probabilistic sampling design and is representative of the capital areas.

III. Methodology and Results

a. Do we observe a feminization of Congolese and Senegalese migration flows?

[1] Due to difficulties involved in conducting multi-sited research, many surveys limit themselves to collecting information on return migrants. However, it can be argued that returnees are a selected group and that their migration experiences are not necessarily representative of the entire migrant population.

[2] More information can be found on the projects' website: http://mafeproject.site.ined.fr/en/

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

[4] With the exception of the survey carried out in Spain, where a sampling frame was available. For the other countries, a mix of sampling methods were used and quotas were applied.

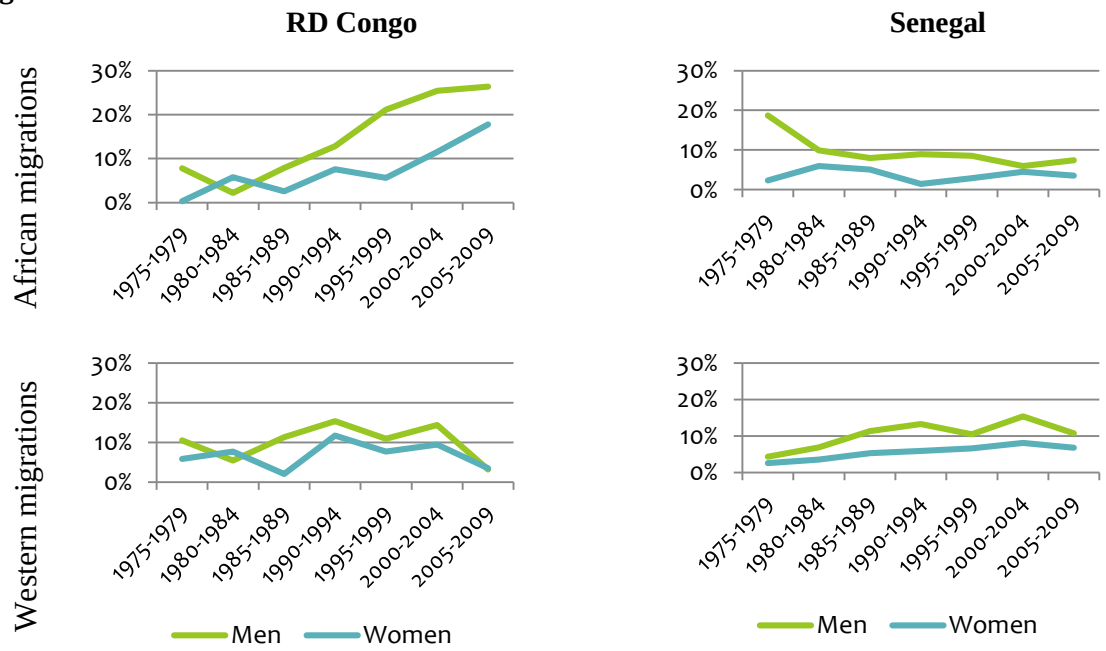
We first seek to bring to light the Congolese and Senegalese migration trends according to gender and destination (African versus Western countries), in order to examine the extent to which we can observe a feminization of these flows. These trends are estimated using discrete-time event history analysis based on the MAFE *household* data collected in the Dakar and Kinshasa regions. Figure 1 presents the evolution of life-time risks of undertaking at least one international migration between the age of 18 and 65 and lasting over one year, by period, starting from 1975. All models control for age and (five-year) period, and are run separately for men and women. Furthermore, since migrations towards African and Western (European and Northern American) destinations do not follow the same trends, they are analysed separately.

With respect to intra-African flows from DRC, a clear increase in the risks of departure for both men and women can be observed from the end of the 1980s onwards. Yet, the intensity of female migrations is lower and gender differences persist and are even accentuated in recent periods. These intra-continental trends contrast with the ones towards Western destinations. First, migrations risks are lower: the probability to migrate to a Western destination does not go over 15% for men and 10% for women, at any point in time. The patterns are quite similar by gender: an increase in risks up to the middle of the 1990s – which is likely to reflect the repercussions of the severe crises of the 1991 and 1993 – followed by a period of stagnation and then a net decrease of risks in the latter periods – paralleling the improvement of political and economic conditions from 2001 onwards.

A different picture emerges with respect to Senegalese migration flows. Intra-continental moves from Senegal have been slowly decreasing in the past decades; the gaps between men and women are not very large and also seem to be fading away after 2000. By contrast, trends towards Western destinations show a moderate increase, for both men and women, albeit to a smaller degree for the latter. Thus, gender differences persist across the period.

Thus, findings tell a nuanced story with respect to the feminization of Congolese and Senegalese flows. On the one hand, migrations risks appear on the rise for Congolese women with respect to African destination and for the Senegalese with respect to Western countries, but the same can be said for their male counterparts. Thus, this increase is not accompanied by a reduction in gender gaps. On the other hand, diminishing gender differences can be observed in the case of intra-continental Senegalese migrations and inter-continental Congolese flows, but this should be placed in the context of a decrease in chances to migrate towards these destinations, especially for the men.

Figure 1. Life-time risks of undertaking a first international migration between the ages of 18 and 65, by gender and destination



A second way to examine whether an increased feminization of Senegalese migration flows can be observed is to compare men's and women's migration propensities across several cohorts.

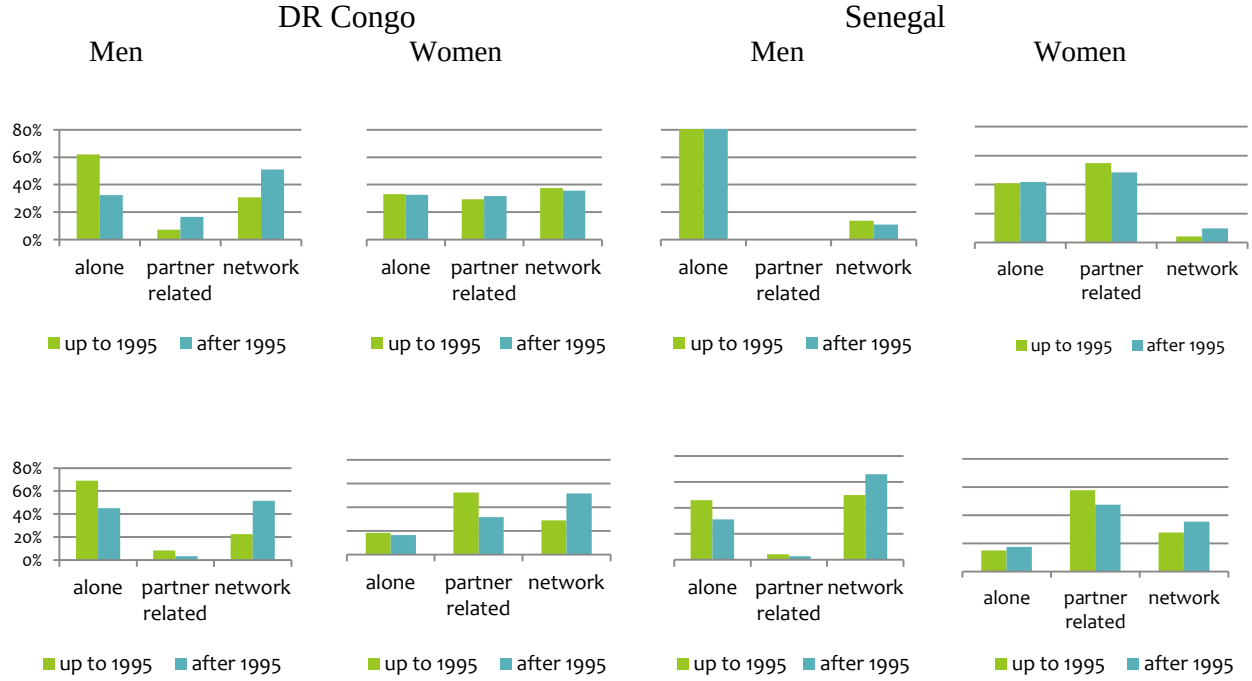
This can be done by estimating Kaplan-Meier survival curves, which illustrate cumulative probabilities of survival and also take into account right-censored observations. In other words, they represent the distribution over time (here, function of age) of the probability *of not having experienced a migration*, by gender and cohort. Results, not shown in the extended abstract, generally confirm the above-mentioned trends.

b. Do we observe a rise in autonomous female migrations from DR Congo and Senegal?

The second objective of this paper is to investigate whether men and women in the two countries are converging in their experiences of migration, or whether their mobility projects and trajectories remain different. We use here the data collected through the retrospective biographic questionnaire, both from return migrants interviewed in their origin countries and from current migrants interviewed in Europe. The following analyses all refer to the first adult migration undertaken by the individual. Several indicators are used in order to apprehend the degree of autonomy of a move.

First, the *mode of migration* can be considered, more precisely whether migrants follow their partner abroad, another member of their personal network or move to a destination where they have no ties. In DR Congo, the share of migrant women who migrate to a destination where their partner is located has decreased in what concerns Western destination, while the share of those who follow other family members or friends has increased. This second aspect also concerns men, and is related to the development of Congolese migration networks. No change in the nature of female migrations is recorded for intra-continental moves. On the other hand, Senegalese women are, to start with, much more likely to migrate in relation to their partner than the Congolese, and no significant change in the nature of their migration is found. Only a slight – and not statistically significant - decrease in the share of partner-related migrations towards Western destinations can be observed.

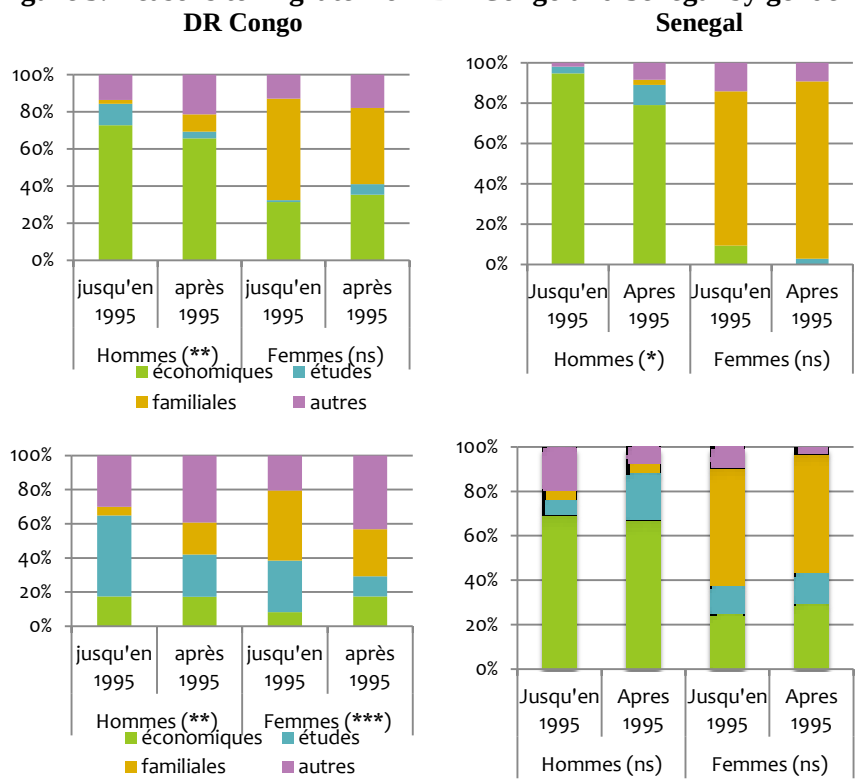
Figure 2. Mode of migration from DR Congo and Senegal by gender and period



Second, the autonomous nature of a migration can be apprehended through the *reasons motivating the move*. Responses from an open-ended question were recoded into four categories: economic, family-related, study and other reasons. Family related reasons are still predominant in female migration flows, especially among the Senegalese. Yet, the importance of economic reasons grew significantly for Congolese female migrations towards Western countries and only very slightly (though not significantly) for intra-continental Congolese moves and Senegalese migrations to

Occidental destinations. A modest convergence between male and female migration projects can thus be observed in these flows.

Figure 3. Reasons to migrate from DR Congo and Senegal by gender and period



A final set of aspects considered is the extent of the family's involvement in the decision-making process and the financing of the migrant's trip. A move can be considered more autonomous if it has been individually decided and funded. Findings in both countries (not presented in the extended abstract) show that even when they take place independently of their partner, women's migrations are often the fruit of a collective decision, in which they do not always participate. In this context, it seems that networks (of migrants or of non-migrant kin and friends) play a key role in women's migration process. It is however difficult to evaluate whether their effect is to encourage or, on the contrary to inhibit, women's autonomy.

Discussion and conclusion

Overall, trends in female migration from DR Congo and Senegal do not parallel those observed in other regions of the world. No evidence of a substantial feminization of migration flows has been found in either context, and for those destinations where women's migrations risks increased, the general structure of gender differences has been preserved as well. There is some evidence of a rise in autonomous female migration from DR Congo, especially towards Western destinations. In contrast, no salient change in this direction can be observed in the Senegalese case. Furthermore, Senegalese women seem less likely to migrate than the Congolese and more likely to do so in association with their partner. We interpret these differences in light of the more rigid patriarchal system prevailing in Senegal, which constrains women's autonomy with respect to migration but also to their participation in the labour market. Finally, our results lead us to further nuance the concept of « autonomous » female migrations. The various aspects of this phenomenon that we considered do not always go in the same direction. Women migrating alone have not necessarily decided their migration independently from a parental or patriarchal authority, just as women joining their partner abroad were not necessarily passive in the decision-making process. Furthermore, the notion of autonomy is by no means static. For example, women who follow their partner abroad may very well acquire a certain extent of autonomy via their gradual incorporation in the labour market. Here, our findings join previous qualitative evidence emphasizing the blurred

nature of the borders between « autonomous » and « associational » migration (Lambert 2001; Coulibaly-Tandian 2007).

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