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Migrations between Africa and Europe

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MAFE PROJECT Policy Briefing No. 1

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Project overview

African migration has become a major concern for European policy-makers. New policy measures are under development, but are not always based on a good understanding of the underlying causes, nature and consequences of African migration. The Migration between Africa and Europe (MAFE) Project aims to overcome this lack of understanding by collecting and analysing a new and unique set of quantitative data. Underpinning MAFE is the recognition that migration is not simply a one-way flow from Africa to Europe. Rather, return migration, circular migration and transnational practices are significant and need to be recognised in policy design.

This briefing introduces MAFE research and illustrates, using preliminary findings, how its innovative approach and methodology will contribute to improved knowledge and understanding to develop sustainable migration policies.

Migration between Africa and Europe: The need for data

National and international policy-makers have been paying increasing attention to African migration over the past decade. In 2005, the European Council adopted the Global Approach to Migration; this was followed both by a regional dialogue, the Africa-EU Partnership on Migration, Mobility and Employment, which builds on the Rabat, Tripoli and Lisbon declarations, and bilateral dialogues with 'priority' countries in sub-Saharan Africa. However, data upon which to develop a good understanding of the factors, trends and implications of Euro-African migration remain very limited. In the case of African migration, conflicting accounts about the overall volume of migration (over 50 million according to the African Union in

2006, whereas UNDP and ILO estimate just under 20 million for 2010) within and from Africa reflect the paucity and poor quality of data sources. At the international level, large datasets capture measures of international migration by collating static national-level census data, such as the Docquier–Marfouk dataset on international migration by gender and educational attainment based on OECD's Database of Immigrants in OECD Countries (DIOC); the UN Population Division's Trends in the Total Migration Stock; and the Global Migrant Origin Database assembled by the Development Research Centre on Migration, Globalisation and Poverty (Migration DRC). Whilst these are very useful, such data give poor insights into the causes and consequences of migration. At the other end of the spectrum, a wealth of qualitative data has been produced on migration flows or migrant groups. But data from qualitative studies often lack comparability and are obtained from non-representative samples.

However, some relatively rare large-sample micro-data (data relating to individuals) collection initiatives have generated very interesting results, both in advancing collection and analysis methodology, and in generating insightful findings. These include the Mexican Migration Project (which began in 1982), now being extended with the Latin American Migration Project (since 1998), and the Eurostat-funded project on Push and Pull Factors of International Migration which looked at migration from Africa to Europe (which began in 1997).

The MAFE Project builds on these advances in international micro-data collection and analysis, and adapts them to the study of migration between Africa and Europe.

How and what does MAFE contribute? An overview of MAFE research areas

The first fully comparative results of the MAFE Project will become available in 2012. Following this, in-depth research will be carried out on the following themes and research questions:

- **Patterns of migration**: How selective is migration according to age, education, gender, etc? Is the selectivity of migration dependent on context and time? How does the migratory journey take place? What itineraries do migrants follow? What is the extent of circular and return migration? Do return and/or circular migrants display specific characteristics?

- **Determinants of migration**: What are the key determinants of migration for Senegalese, Congolese and Ghanaian migrants? What factors influence return migration and the successful reintegration of returnees?

- **Migrants' socio-economic trajectories:** How do migrant skills, investment or other transnational practices contribute to development in their country of origin? In what ways do integration in the country of destination or (re)integration upon return influence the developmental impact of migration?

- **Migration and families**: What are the impacts of migration on family arrangements? Are transnational families becoming more common? What triggers families to reunify or remain transnational?

Providing robust quantitative data on migration trends and patterns

The MAFE dataset will be the first large-scale dataset on migration between Africa and Europe of its kind. It will compile approximately 6,000 individual (1,500 *each* in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana & Senegal, and 1,500 *in total* of Congolese, Ghanaians & Senegalese migrants across six European destination countries) and 4,500 household records (1,500 each in DR Congo, Ghana & Senegal). Moreover, the dataset has the potential to be extended to include a wider range of places both in origin and destination.

FIG 1. THE MAFE PROJECT'S MIGRATORY SYSTEMS
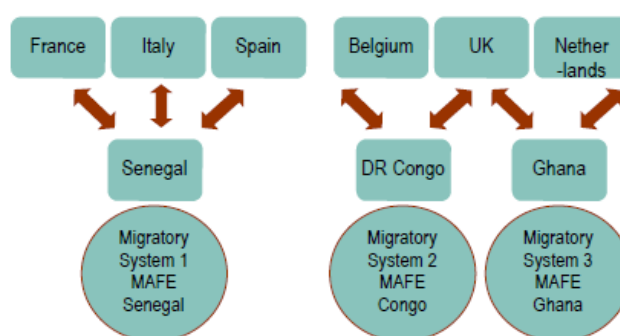
In Africa, the samples in the current version of the MAFE dataset are representative of migrant and non-migrant populations in major cities (Dakar, Kinshasa and Accra), although surveys were also conducted in the region of Kumasi in Ghana, which includes rural areas. All these locations constitute major departure points for international migration and are therefore particularly useful study sites.

So far, MAFE household data have been used to look at the impact of migration on cities in the countries of origin, and in particular at migrant investment on housing (Lessault *et al.* 2010). This initial research indicates that households with migrants are generally better-off in terms of housing conditions than those without family members abroad. However, the direction of causality between wealth and migration is not clear. Further investigation tends to support the hypothesis that migrants usually hail from relatively better-off households in the first place. Moreover, migrant investments in housing are rarely used to directly pay for renovation or improve housing conditions. These investments can nonetheless contribute to the improvement of housing conditions in Dakar, notably via investments in the rental market.

At the macro level, findings will produce robust quantitative evidence of the scale and prevalence of African migration between the two continents, and of specific streams. Analysis of MAFE data to date suggests that there has been a limited increase in the rate of emigration to Europe (Flahaux *et al.* 2010) over the last 20 years.

This goes against the current political discourse describing rising 'tides' of destitute African migrants invading Europe. The final results, based on a large quantitative dataset, will lend greater policy impact to previous qualitative research on circular migration, and on transnational practices in particular.

Comparing different international migration streams

The MAFE Project was designed to collect data in several destination countries. Two or three destination countries were selected for each of the three migrant groups (see Fig 1): One being a former colonial power (e.g. France for Senegalese, the UK for Ghanaians, and Belgium for Congolese), while others were relatively 'new' destination countries without colonial ties and with less historical migration. Observation of preliminary MAFE data supports the view that colonial ties appear to be weakening and no longer provide a suitable model to explain African migration. Belgium is no longer the first destination for Congolese migrants, and France is no longer seen as the destination of choice for a significant proportion of Senegalese migrants.

Comparative analysis of the data will enable researchers to disentangle general processes from national specificities. For instance, whereas overall a greater share of African migrants go to other African rather than to European countries, clear differences appear when comparing DR Congo and Senegal. Most Congolese emigrants stay on the African continent, whereas the Senegalese tend to go further afield to Northern countries, in particular to Europe and North America.

FIG 2. SHARE OF MEN AND WOMEN MIGRATING TO COUNTRIES IN THE GLOBAL NORTH
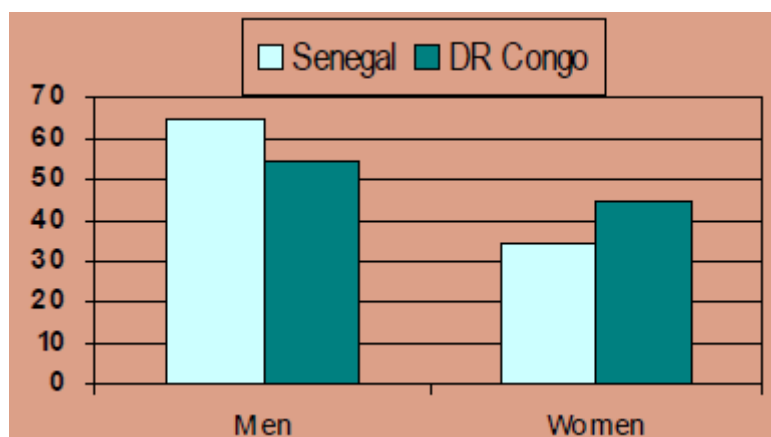
The use of standardised questionnaires for the three African migrant groups will also allow us to identify and explore distinctive migration strategies and selection processes. Migration to Europe appears to be more or less selective at departure and at return depending on the country of origin. Migrants from the DR Congo are more educated than those from Senegal. Interesting differences are also revealed in terms of gender: Congolese women are more likely to out-migrate than Senegalese women, while the latter are more likely to return (Flahaux *et al.* 2010).

Comparing migrants, returnees and non-migrants at origin and destination

Most studies and policy to date have viewed migration between Africa and Europe as a one-way flow and essentially focused on explaining departure only. Almost all migration research focuses *either* on place of origin *or* of destination, whereas MAFE has collected data at *both*. Our

research thus recognises the significance of, and explores, the full spectrum of movements: Out-migration, return migration, and circular migration (see section on 'Uncovering return migration').

Central to MAFE's investigation is the desire to better understand the causes and consequences of migration, which requires comparison of the characteristics, motivations and circumstances of different groups living in different countries, both in Africa and in Europe. An analysis of the causes and consequences of out-migration calls for parallel data on those who have already left (current migrants at destination and returnees in origin countries), and on those who have never left (non-migrants in origin countries).

Besides, by tracing migration routes back to the 'starting point', researchers can see how conditions in places of origin contribute to migration patterns. The factors and impacts of return are also explored by contrasting data from returnees in origin countries with those of migrants still in destination countries or non-migrants in countries of origin.

Understanding the factors and implications of migration

In addition to evidence relating directly to migration, the MAFE Project has collected in-depth biographical data on education, housing, family, marital status, work, and social and economic histories through a questionnaire survey conducted with individuals who are both migrants and non-migrants. Biographical questionnaires include questions about the family and friends of the individuals surveyed, from which clear information about the key role of networks in migration can be derived. This is central to developing a sophisticated understanding of the migration decision-making process, as migration is now often seen as a strategy taken beyond the individual level to maximize collective income, and/or to minimise or spread risk.

Distinguishing between characteristics and outcomes for different categories of migrants and non-migrants further allows us to explore drivers and outcomes of migration. For example, MAFE researchers have started investigating the relation between migration and the capacity to invest in Senegal (Mezger and Beauchemin 2010).

Initial findings comparing Senegalese migrants and non-migrants suggest that the migration experience does stimulate investment in Senegal (see Fig 3). A migrant who is still living abroad or who has returned home is twice as likely to own or acquire land or property in Senegal as someone who has never migrated. Focusing on migrant characteristics shows that migration might play a role in reducing inequalities in terms of investment capacity. For example, women and less-educated Senegalese are usually disadvantaged in their access to assets, but this disadvantage disappears after they gain migration experience.

FIG 3. RATE OF ASSET OWNERSHIP FOR MIGRANTS IN EUROPE, RETURN MIGRANTS AND NON-MIGRANTS IN DAKAR, 2008
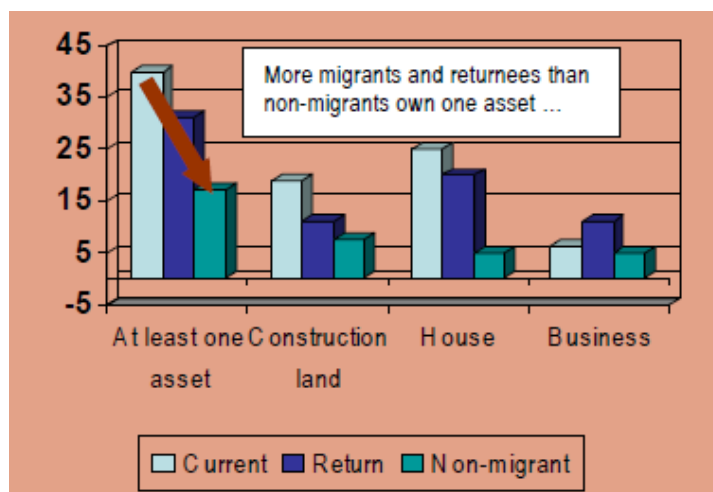
Exploring the dynamics between migration and socioeconomic, demographic and political changes

A further key strength of the MAFE dataset has been to collect and collate data that stretch back over a long period of time. The surveys have collected retrospective data (on a yearly basis) on individuals and on members of their personal network through life histories. In addition, MAFE researchers are assembling contextual data which introduce data on economic, political and demographic variables over a period of time to match the retrospective survey data collected. These data are to be used to study the influence on or sensitivity to changes in migration data of these 'external' variables. Introducing the dynamic time element is especially useful in understanding a number of aspects of migration, including: How migration and its outcomes change over time; how long-lasting effects are; and the directions of cause and effect. Preliminary research using MAFE data from DR Congo has looked at the impact of political and economic crises on migration flows. The results suggest that, when controlling for political conditions, deteriorating economic conditions only increase migration to Africa (Schoumaker *et al.* 2009). In contrast, migration to Europe seemed largely unaffected by economic conditions and varied essentially in relation to the political situation in DR Congo.

Uncovering return migration

In the past, estimates of return migration were few and far between, and often questionable at best. In many cases, in the context of African migration in particular, return was assumed not to happen at all. The phenomenon of return has thus long suffered from being statistically invisible, which automatically translates into being invisible in institutional and political discourses. MAFE data can contribute a more sophisticated analysis. Beyond identifying profiles and trends, the collection of detailed data on migrant characteristics and histories, and contextual data over time, allows MAFE to investigate the *factors* and *implications* of return. These retrospective data have for example enabled researchers to construct a 'survival estimate' of return. This analytical tool measures the likelihood of migrants staying in the destination country rather than returning, in relation to the time elapsed since their arrival. Initial findings using this tool suggest, for example, that those who migrate to another

African country have a much higher probability of returning and re-migrate more frequently, compared to those who migrate to European countries.

Preliminary assessment of the data on Congolese and Senegalese migrants sheds light on the prevalence of return. It shows that, after 10 years, a third of Senegalese return from Northern countries, and two-thirds return from other African destinations. Data for DR Congo show a similar pattern. In terms of characteristics, skilled migrants do not appear to return more often than less-skilled ones. Also, Senegalese women are more likely to return than Congolese female migrants. Looking at the field of employment upon return, using data on age and occupation, it appears that retirement is not the main motive for return. The average age of return migrants is 45 years, and over 70 per cent of returnees take up an economic activity, with most of these going into 'self-employment'.

Further analysis in Senegal suggests though that self-employment might represent a 'survival strategy' for those migrants who did not prepare their return well, or for whom return is not 'voluntary', or when migration may have been too short to accumulate sufficient savings and/ or know-how. This situation might also reflect the lack of salaried opportunities in country-of-origin job markets for returnees to use the knowledge and skills which they acquired via migration.

Key resources

Key MAFE Working Papers:
Flahaux, M-L., Beauchemin, C. and Schoumaker, B. (2010) 'Partir, revenir: tendances et facteurs des migrations africaines intra- et extra-continentales.' MAFE Working Paper 7. Paris: MAFE Project, INED.

Flahaux, M.L. and Mezger, C. (2010) 'Returning to Dakar: the role of migration experience for professional reinsertion.' MAFE Working Paper 8. Paris: MAFE Project, INED.

Lessault, D., Beauchemin, C. and Sakho, P. (2010) 'Migration internationale et conditions d'habitat des ménages à Dakar.' MAFE Working Paper 11. Paris: MAFE Project, INED.

Mezger, C. and Beauchemin, C. (2010) 'The role of international migration experience for investment at home: the case of Senegal.' MAFE Working Paper 12. Paris: MAFE Project, INED.

Schoumaker, B., Vause, S. and Mobhe, A.M. (2009) 'Political turmoil, economic crises, and international migration in DR Congo. Evidence from event-history data (1975 - 2007).' MAFE Working Paper 2. Paris: MAFE Project, INED.

MAFE working papers and briefing papers are available online at: <www.mafeproject.eu/publications>

Other useful readings
Black, R. and Sward, J. (2008) 'Measuring the Migration – Development Nexus: An Overview of Available Data.' Migration DRC Briefing Paper No. 13, Brighton: Development Research Centre on Migration, Globalisation and Poverty, University of Sussex.

Grillo, R. and Mazzucato, V. (2008) 'Africa<>Europe: A Double Engagement'. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 34(2): 175-198.

Lessault, D. and Beauchemin, C. (2009) 'Migration from sub-Saharan Africa to Europe: still a limited trend.' *Population & Societies*, No. 452. Paris: INED.

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Website

www.mafeproject.eu

SOCIO-ECONOMIC SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES RESEARCH