

**"Migration is not just about moving (...)
it's trying to exist in the eyes of your community".**

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Summary

In recent years, Senegalese people have migrated on a large scale, leaving to conquer new territories, multiply their settlements and optimise their opportunities and chances of success. Migration plays an important part in the socialisation of Senegalese people, as proverbs and songs are used to build the individual. So migration cannot be analysed as a phenomenon but as a social fact. To travel is to exist in the eyes of one's community.

Introduction

Senegal is a country with a long tradition of migration, and its people are known to be "great travellers". Today, they are travelling further and further afield to conquer new territories, multiply their locations and optimise their opportunities and chances of success. In Senegalese society, travelling is associated with a positive act, as it is supposed to build the individual. Moreover, through migration, people can acquire material and/or immaterial goods.

Today, the desire to migrate has accelerated with the impact of mass-audience television channels on the population, reinforcing this illusion. Through the magic of images, these television channels cultivate an attraction, an image of elsewhere that nurtures a culture of migration. In local discourse, returning migrants evoke an idyllic image of migration against a backdrop of pride.

For would-be emigrants, the parallels with the beauty of the images of the technologies conveyed are quickly made and contrast with the images of a region of origin hit by all the difficulties of achieving fulfilment (chronic unemployment, job insecurity, idleness, lack of training, etc.). What's more, returning migrants use photos and videos to convey a glowing, easygoing image of migration. From then on, migration enables people to acquire a positive and/or positivised image of themselves in the collective consciousness, competing with traditional channels such as lineage or membership of various networks. Belonging to this new migrant caste propels its members to a new social status.

As such, a differentiation emerges between migrants and non-migrants, fuelling the desire to migrate and the myth of "elsewhere". This construction of identity, fed and maintained by returning migrants, is at the root of a new "way of life" characterised by new physical and linguistic expressions and new behaviours. Such a situation gives rise to cases of exclusion and latent conflict, especially in a Senegalese context where the search for better living conditions is cited by the population as one of the main reasons for migration.

ut this quest for the best and for elsewhere is also strongly linked to the difficulties of certain sectors that are driving the national economy. This is particularly true of the fishing industry, whose income-generating potential has declined in recent years.

In regions where fishing is one of the main sectors of the economy, a process of impoverishment has hit local communities that were previously spared the erosion of income. These populations have always been able to rely on resources from the sea for both their subsistence and their income from the sale of fresh or processed products by women. Clearly, the stagnation of fishing techniques, the increasing scarcity of resources and the impact of fishing agreements in the absence of rationalisation of catches have plunged a dynamic economy into precariousness, mortgaging the living conditions of entire families.

The crisis in agriculture and fishing has accelerated the number of people moving abroad. These departures are certainly the result of personal initiative on the part of the candidates, who are

nevertheless supported by their families and by networks of friends and intermediaries who pay for their services.

Candidates caught up in the itinerant trade and underground activities better known as the informal sector have savings from their activity but above all from their ability to live in a rustic way. Others are supported by their families, mainly their mothers, who can sell jewellery or mobilise resources through tontines or savings and loan associations.

Analysis shows that the majority of young people taking the pirogue route to the Canary Islands are those who have less support or social networks abroad and in their country of origin. Despite the scale and publicity surrounding canoe departures, there are still young people who take the "legal" route thanks to the help of relatives living in Europe who send them either the documents they need for the journey (invitations to take part in trade fairs, certificates of reception, pre-registration for school, promises of employment, etc.) or money to buy a visa and cross the border by plane to Europe.

Draconian measures are being taken by the Senegalese government, and would-be irregular migrants are being tried and imprisoned.

It should be remembered that in Senegal, recent irregular departures and those in progress towards the Canary Islands date back several years. As far back as the 2000s, many people, the majority of them young, took the option of travelling by sea to Europe, particularly Spain, under the slogan "Barça ou Barsaax" (Go to Barcelona or die).

Making their fortune in Europe with makeshift boats is a cherished wish for many people, who hope to fulfil their dreams and exist in the eyes of their community. Unfortunately, many of them have been sent back to their countries of origin. Their dream of exile in Spain fell like a house of cards after braving the perils of the sea.

This article is divided into three parts in addition to the introduction and conclusion. The first part sets out the methodological approach, with a reminder of the stages involved in collecting qualitative and quantitative data, the empirical obstacles encountered and the methodological negotiations made, and finally the question of ethics. The second part looks at the people interviewed.

They are made up of working migrants, would-be migrants and their parents. The third part analyses the role of the family in the migration project and the perception of the success or failure of the journey.

1. Methodological approach

This article is intended to be comprehensive, taking the migration issue at source by interviewing candidates for irregular migration in their regions of origin in Senegal (Saint-Louis, Louga, Tambacounda, Kédougou and Kolda) as well as resource persons. We were obliged to use a network sample (snowball sampling), an approach that required us to mobilise efficient social networks to build up our sample.

At the time of collection, the choice of interviewing people separately was an option to avoid methodological bias and above all to allow our interviewees to avoid feeling any embarrassment or pressure from their peers at the time of the discussions.

We interviewed 1,614 people, broken down by region as follows: Kolda (235), Kédougou (315), Tambacounda (334), Saint-Louis (270) and Louga (460). The uneven distribution can be explained by the intensity of migratory flows, but also by the age of migration, depending on the region studied.

We conducted three types of interview at the time of collection: non-directive interviews, semi-directive interviews and directive interviews depending on the actors to be interviewed. However, these different interviews will enable us to verify the evolution of migration and the attention paid by the populations to certain elements that feed the underlying/profound/structural causes of the migratory phenomena

within the South and South-East regions (Kolda, Tambacounda and Kédougou). They allow us to delve deeper into certain points in order to measure the influence of historical, cultural, economic, social and political practices and factors on migration in Senegal, and especially in this part of the country.

Our qualitative data collection tools are designed to take account of the unemployment, underemployment and poverty of potential candidates for migration. We looked at informal migration networks, analysing the roles and activities of so-called professional smugglers; the day-to-day experiences of returning migrants and potential migrants; the image that the latter form of Europe and how they construct the 'migratory imaginary' that fuels the 'desire to leave' or the 'dream of Europe'.

At the time of collection, we favoured an individualised approach, giving preference whenever possible to a sufficiently free space to speak, detached from the presence of relatives.

All the people interviewed were informed in advance of the objectives of the study, and they were also told that they were free to express themselves without being exposed to any prejudice. Their anonymity was also guaranteed. This was very important, because in recent months a number of publications relating to migration have appeared in the press without the interviewees having given their prior consent for their first and last names to be mentioned.

2. Profiles and figures of candidates for migration and migrants

In the northern regions of Senegal, the majority of respondents were aged between 15 and 30 (90%), compared with 70% in the southern and south-eastern regions. People aged between 31 and 45 in these two regions represent 10% of the sample. This information tells us something about the youth of migrants and would-be migrants.

In the South and South-East regions (Kolda, Kédougou and Tambacounda), single people dominate the sample, accounting for 45% of those aged 15-30, compared with 30% of married people. Among respondents aged between 31 and 45, single people accounted for around 15%, compared with less than 10% of married people. Among the married, those who have been married for between 5 and 10 years dominate (40%). Those married for less than 5 years follow at over 30%, and finally those married for more than 10 years at just under 25%.

In terms of marital status, monogamous couples dominate, with a rate of around 60%, compared with 40% for polygamous couples. This phenomenon is related to the youth of the population surveyed and the duration of marriage, which is between 5 and 10 years.

In the northern regions (Louga and Saint-Louis), the marital situation is almost the same as in the south and south-east. The majority of the population are single. They account for 50% of the 15-30 age group, compared with 30% of married people. And in the 31-45 age group, they represent around 10% compared with 5% for married people.

In terms of length of marriage, unlike the South and South-East regions, where we found a large number of people married between 5 and 10 years ago, in the North, those married for less than 5 years dominate, with a rate of 40%, followed by those married for more than 10 years (30%). Marriages that have lasted 5 to 10 years represent only around 5% of the sample.

In terms of marital status, monogamous couples dominate, with a rate of 65%, compared with 35% for polygamous couples. This correlates with the youth of the population and the length of marriage.

Our surveys show that most single people, whether married, divorced or widowed, claim to have children. Among single people, 45% say they have children, compared with around 10%. Among married people, the figure is around 30% compared with just over 5%. Children were also reported among the separated/divorced and widowed.

In the northern regions of Senegal, when asked "Do you have children?", 40% of single respondents said yes, compared with around 25%. In the category of married respondents, around 10% answered positively compared with 5%.

In the South and South-East regions, respondents born in rural areas outnumber those from urban areas. For example, in the 15-30 age group, 60% of respondents were from rural areas, compared with around 20% from urban areas. The same is true for the 31-45 age group.

However, the opposite is true for the northern regions. In fact, in these regions, whatever the age group considered, people from urban areas are well ahead of those born in rural areas. In the 15-30 age group, 60% of respondents were from urban areas, compared with around 20% from rural areas.

In the South and South-East regions, those who had attended French schools were in the lead, followed by those who had attended Koranic schools, the literate and finally those who had attended Arabic schools. Thus, among the Peuls, who are the most numerous in our sample and represent around 55% of enrolments, those who have attended French school account for around 35%, compared with just over 10% for Koranic school, around 5% for literacy classes and around 2% for Arabic.

In the South and South-East regions, among married people with children, those who have been married for between 5 and 10 years come out on top with around 35% of frequencies. They are followed by those married less than 5 years ago (around 30%). Those who have been married for more than 10 years come last. In terms of marital status for those with children, monogamous couples dominate, with a frequency of around 45%, compared with around 35% for polygamous couples.

However, in the northern regions, those who have been married for less than 5 years dominate (around 45%), compared with around 30% for marriages lasting more than 10 years and around 5% for marriages lasting between 5 and 10 years. In terms of marital status, children are more important in monogamous marriages (around 50%) than in polygamous marriages (around 25%).

In the South and South-East regions, we looked at the number of children according to marital status. Among married people, the number of 1 to 3 children is the most common, followed by 4 to 6 children and more than 6 children. In fact, among monogamous couples, those with 1 to 3 children come out on top with a rate of around 35%, compared with around 10% for those with 4 to 6 children and around 5% for those with more than 6 children. And among polygamists, the majority (over 20%) have 1 to 3 children, compared with around 7% for those with 4 to 6 children and less than 5% for those with more than 6 children. The majority of divorced people (almost 60%) also have 1 to 3 children, compared with around 20% of those with 4 to 6 children and just under 10% of those with more than 6 children. Among widowers, too, those with 1-3 children dominate (around 60%), ahead of those with 4-6 children (around 20%) and those with more than 6 children (just under 10%).

In the northern regions, on the other hand, the question of the number of children is also analysed according to the marital status of the respondents. For example, among monogamous couples, those with 1 to 3 children (around 50%) were compared with those with 4 to 6 children. And among polygamists, those with 1 to 3 children (around 25%) dominate over those with 4 to 6 children (around 10%). In this area, separated and widowed couples have no children.

With regard to the desire to migrate and the age of prospective migrants, we note that in the Tambacounda region, almost all the people we spoke to felt that there was no ideal age for travelling. According to our interviewees:

"There is no ideal age for migration. There are young people under the age of 18 and adults over 45 in the ranks of emigrants. Fathers of families who abandon their wives and children" (A relative of an emigrant, Tambacounda).

"Age has nothing to do with the desire to migrate, at least not to our village. It all depends on the candidate. If they have the courage, they can go (...) migration is a matter of choice, not age. Age doesn't matter" (An emigrant, Kolda).

"Those who migrate are getting younger and younger (...) young people tell us that they have taken responsibility for themselves! That's why young people often leave school to migrate" (Teacher, Louga).

It should be pointed out that it is difficult to maintain that there is an ideal age to migrate, as it was found that in the different regions studied (Tambacounda, Kédougou, Kolda, Louga and Saint-Louis), the average age of returning emigrants and would-be emigrants is around 23, although in the ranks of active emigrants "we find all age groups, even those under 16", as one returning emigrant told us.

Early age and marriage seem to justify the need for self-fulfilment through travel, especially in a context where many families have more than 6 children.

3. Migration: between success and failure

While the image of the emigrant who has succeeded remains positive for him and his family, it is quite the opposite for the emigrant who has been repatriated or returned against his will. The case of the latter is explained differently by our interviewees. While for some repatriation is synonymous with shame, for others it should be seen as a source of motivation for both the person concerned and their family.

"For repatriated emigrants, everything becomes difficult. They start their lives all over again. They lose everything they had when they left. That's why some repatriated emigrants prefer not to return home. They are deeply ashamed. Failure is a heavy burden they carry" (Teacher, Tambacounda).

"Repatriated emigrants are not well received in their localities. Even in their own neighbourhoods, they're frowned upon. For me, repatriation is a total failure for the returnees" (President of the Makacoulibantang parents' association. Tambacounda region).

"When you're repatriated, your whole family goes with you. So we're an investment at a loss. When you die, it's a disaster. Sometimes worse still, you become a bum, human waste, and you're lost to yourself and to the community when you drift off to Europe" (repatriated emigrant, Louga).

The weight of failure is felt in the repatriated emigrant's family, because his journey is often the fruit of many sacrifices: selling jewellery, mortgaging land, taking out financial loans, etc. Clearly, in the families of repatriated emigrant, there is a great deal of sacrifice. Clearly, in emigrant families, the trip is like a project that must generate a return on investment. So repatriation is seen as a loss. This is why some unfortunate candidates for return to their country of origin are rejected and socially excluded, as we were told by interviewees in Kolda and Tambacounda respectively:

"The repatriated emigrant loses all esteem. His return is a disgrace both for him and for his family (...) The person who has failed on his journey loses all privileges and all esteem; his repatriation is a disgrace for him and for his whole family" (A repatriated emigrant. Kolda).

"The repatriated is discriminated against in his own family as well as in his entourage. They are considered to be cursed. In Senegal we have the habit of saying that a child's success lies in the hands of his mother. As a result, they make a complete break with their family. They give no sign of life and nobody knows where they are. They feel guilty for their failure" (repatriated emigrant, Tambacounda).



Existing in the eyes of prospective migrants means building a house and making investments.
House built by a migrant in Louga.
Migrant shops and hardware stores in Kolda



Clearly, it can happen, and more often than not, that repatriation, which is a source of discrimination and shame, affects not only the emigrant but his whole family. A mother may pay the heaviest price for the failure of her child's journey. She may even be heavily stigmatised, because in the Senegalese imagination, a mother may be seen as the main person responsible for her child's failure. The wife's blessing from her husband is often invoked to justify the success or failure of a child.

While repatriation may be understood and experienced as a feeling of social exclusion, things may be understood differently by some migrants and their relatives.

"Repatriation can be a source of motivation. Family members in particular motivate him so that he doesn't get discouraged, while helping him prepare for another departure" (repatriated emigrant, Louga).

Based on the experience of our interviewee, repatriation can be seen not as a disgrace or a failure, but simply as an unfortunate chance. As a result, repatriation seems to be a source of motivation to start all over again and prepare for a new start, hence the recidivism of some would-be migrants.



Saint-Louis, repatriation of irregular migrants

Moreover, for a teacher in Kolda, "the repatriation of a candidate for migration must be a source of motivation for the candidate. (...) it's an opportunity, unlike those would-be migrants who lose their lives

along the way. Many die during the journey. Others are imprisoned and God only knows what they endure in prison. So anyone who has been lucky enough to be repatriated should give thanks to God for having escaped all these things, death and imprisonment".

Repatriation as a source of motivation explains the recidivism of many candidates for irregular migration, unlike others who are imprisoned in a transit country or who have "stayed on the roads of adventure". In Morocco, Senegalese migrants complained to the consular authorities following the imprisonment of their compatriots for 10 years in Nador.

"(...) on 5 October 2021 in Rabat, Ms Seynabou Dial, the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Senegal to His Majesty Mohammed VI, King of Morocco, notified the Association of Senegalese in Nador that she had taken this case seriously and said that she was going to contact the relevant authorities to assist these Senegalese detainees. "I received the letter dated 27 September 2021 in which you brought to my attention the difficult conditions of three Senegalese nationals imprisoned in Nador. In return, I would like to thank you warmly for this fraternal gesture towards my fellow citizens. Further to your letter, I have contacted the Senegalese Consulate General in Casablanca to follow up this matter".

Indeed, if the repatriation of candidates for irregular migration is compared with the situation of those who have "stayed on the roads of adventure" and those who are imprisoned in the country of destination or transit, it will be easier to understand that "return is an opportunity" despite the dismay and consternation felt by the families of origin.

Conclusion

In Senegal in recent years, migration has given rise to numerous questions and research that have influenced policies. Nevertheless, the phenomenon remains difficult to pin down because of the ambiguities that lie behind certain concepts. While drought and lack of employment are frequently cited as reasons for Senegalese migration, many other factors come into play and often escape the mechanistic analyses that attempt to explain the desire to leave and the choice of migratory destinations.

Indeed, if the previous "painful" events in the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla in 2005 were a measure of the determination of would-be migrants, more recently, journeys by desert and sea have revealed the intensity of the desire to seek their fortune abroad. Migration should be seen as a way of demonstrating one's "existence" in the eyes of one's community.

And in Senegal, this explains why migration is at the centre of people's discussions. It has even become one of the rare topics of discussion that brings together all sections of the local population, whatever their age, sex, ethnic group, level of education, professional status, etc. This has been made possible above all by the fact that, on the one hand, in the system of local representations, phototypes are frequently evoked when talking about migration; and on the other hand, for the majority of Senegalese, the journey is not simply synonymous with acquiring a stable job, but symbolises the path to be taken to make one's fortune and acquire social prestige in the eyes of one's peers.

Clearly, for would-be migrants, the journey is a possible shortcut to absolute economic success, without which they will have lost their social dignity in a Senegalese society that has increasingly become a society dominated by appearances.

In the regions studied, and in Senegal generally, the image of the successful migrant is valued, in contrast to that of the migrant who returns home empty-handed. One of the people we spoke to told us during a discussion:

"We have every reason to leave! Imagine a man my age who leaves for Europe with no qualifications and no training, and after two years returns to Senegal to build beautiful houses, drive beautiful cars and so on. He comes back to his country to find his friends who are overqualified and overqualified, but who are living in the doldrums. It's enough to make you

wonder whether those who prefer to stay in the country are not wasting their time, despite their studies. In the long run, people may even say to themselves with certainty that the young people who have chosen to migrate are right about the others. That is something that whets the appetite for wanting to migrate" (Amadou, 17, Candidate for migration).

The perseverance of would-be migrants shows us the extent to which they do not expect much from their State of Senegal in order to fulfil themselves. For them, the only way to a bright future is to migrate. In short, "Migrating is not just about moving, it's about trying to exist in the eyes of your community".