

# Lost in migration or actors of mobility? Patterns of circularity of Senegalese migrants

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## **1. Questioning circular mobility: an empirical gap**

During the last century, migration was conceived as a permanent process involving dislocation and resettlement, as a uni-linear, one way, univocal displacement movement. According to this perspective migrants left an origin country A in order to join and permanently settle in a destination country B. They eventually returned back to departure country A for good, after having completed their migratory experience, often coinciding with the retiring age.

Migrants were perceived as foreigners interfering with the process of nation-building and were newcomers expected to cut through their bounds with their own nation. They were expected to assimilate as quickly as possible with the culture and loyalties of the receiving society (Meeus, 2010).

On the other side in some countries, among which Germany in particular, guest-worker programs were put in place between the end of the Second World War and the oil crisis of 1973, entailing that the migrant workers came as temporary 'guests' and were expected to return to their countries of origin after a limited number of years and be replaced by new, younger workers. Come è noto, however, the expected pattern changed: many of the temporary workers already in Europe ended up settling permanently and reunifying their family in the destination countries. Thus, what began as temporary migration became permanent for many (McLoughlin, Münz, 2011).

While temporary migrant workers programmes came to an end in the early 1970s, regulated temporary migration of third-country nationals to Europe has continued, albeit in a less systematic way. Today's immigration systems in Europe prioritise migration on a temporary basis, with the vast majority of work and residence permits offered for one to two years. What is new to the current discussion is that the European emphasis on time-limited migration is

fusing with the emerging concept of circular migration (*ibidem*: 8). Over the past three decades, both researchers' and policy-makers' interest in the phenomenon of return migration has been steadily increasing.

In the last decades cross-border mobility has been sustained by cheaper transportation costs, making return a multiple-stage process rather than a univocal, unidirectional and definitive practice. Technological means of communication have favoured the development of flows of information, as well as the strengthening of cross-border linkages sustained between origin and host countries, while allowing migrants to better prepare their return. As a result migrants have been increasingly engaging in repeated migrations, spending sometimes prolonged periods between origin and destination countries and entailing multi-residential strategies. As a consequence, the emphasis turned from 'movement' and/or 'settlement' to 'circulation' or 'temporality', shifting the focus on return as an integral part of the migration process.

As of the late 1980s, the transnationalist paradigm raised as a new approach in migration studies, defying the dominant methodological nationalist perspective (rif.) and leading to a more critical construction of space and time in migration studies. Thanks to the insights into transnationalism return has been no longer viewed as the end of the migration cycle but as rather constituting a stage in the migration process (Cassarino, 2004).

Furthermore the transnationalist approach questioned the binary structuralist vision of cross-border movements, taking into account the circularity of migration movements as enabling the capability of migrants to cherish their multiple belonging and to mobilize resources between origin and destination contexts. In this perspective return migration becomes not only an integral part of the mobility of migrants, but assumes a key-role in the maintenance of transnational relationships, as part of a circular system of social and economic relationships and exchanges which facilitates the (re)integration of migrants while conveying social, economic, human and cultural capital.

Such literature intensively contributed to the development of policy measures addressed to circular and temporary migration. Although multiple approaches and practices are applied by different actors, the core idea of temporary and circular migration policies, which imply back-and-forth movements and the eventual return of migrants to their countries of origin, have become more attractive to the EU institutions and to various national governments, on the grounds that they would enable European economies and public coffers to benefit from migrant labour while minimizing the social impacts of immigration (McLoughlin, Munz, 2011: 15).

The notion of circular migration has been furthermore placed in relation to current debates on migration–development linkages, as a possible answer to the key-issue on how to maximize benefits and minimize costs of international migration. The idea underlying the implementation of such programs is that of endorsing a “triple-win” solution: 1) destination countries would benefit from a steady supply of needed workers in both skilled and unskilled occupations, without the requirements of long-term integration; 2) countries of origin would gain from the inflow of remittances; 3) while migrants would be enabled to reinvest their skills and their savings upon return.

However it has been underlined that such policies are still based on scarce empirical knowledge (largely of descriptive nature) and on the lack of a multi-dimensional approach in the analysis of the phenomenon (through the integration of micro, meso and macro level variables).

Furthermore they still neglect heterogeneity in the background and the motivations of migrants, assuming return migration as a unitary and homogeneous phenomenon. As Cassarino stresses (2004) Today return motivations have become diversified and concern different categories of migrants, such as labour migrants (Kubat, 1984; King, 1986), migrant-students (Glaser, Habers, 1974), highly-skilled migrants (Lowell, 2001, McLaughan & Salt, 2002; Iredale & Guo, 2001; Vertovec, 2002; Cervantes & Guellec, 2002), entrepreneur-returnees (Cassarino, 2000), refugees and asylum-seekers, etc.

Finally....(vedi meeus e dahinden) mancanza di una prospettiva dinamica nello studio dei processi di mobilità circolatoria ; inoltre limiti metodologici nel "captare" la mobilità

## 2. Symbolic and structural role of return and circular migration in the Senegalese case

A rich literature on transnationalism has provided much insight into the capability of Senegalese migrants of activating mobility circuits of people, goods, ideas, investments, etc. between Europe and the country of origin. The volume of literature produced on the migration organization of this community is surprising when compared to its relative numerical significance in the international context (% della migrazione Senegalese in Europa: - sulle migrazioni totali; sulle migrazioni africane; sulle migrazioni sub-sahariane).

Some elements of Senegalese migration in particular, however, have attracted the attention of scholars on migration, identifying it as a paradigmatic case of transnationalism, and making it a fertile ground for analysis. The high propensity to return, the high mobility between countries of origin and of migration, the maintenance of strong emotional, cultural, economic, social and religious ties with the country, the strong attitude to sending remittances, are valid arguments for the candidacy of the Senegal case as *the* model of migrant transnationalism. However all these arguments do not suffice, as these are elements that can be identified at various degrees in almost every migration diaspora.

Three main elements stand out however, as specific for this community (Casagnone et al., 2005; Riccio, 2008; Lacroix, Sall, Salzbrunn, 2008; Grillo, Riccio, Salih, 2000; Schmidt Di Friedberg, 1996), attracting attention and stimulating a rich empirical research, mainly based on a qualitative approach. Questi sono tutti legati in qualche misura al concetto di ritorno e di circolarità....

The first is related to the organizational structure of Senegalese migration, which has been, since its origin, predominantly based on male temporary labour flows. While in France a gradual process of family reunification and settlement of stable families occurred, in countries of more recent migration (notably Italy and Spain), the male rate is still clearly dominant, however much more than in other migrant communities. In 2008 the men share was of 84% in Spain, 87% in Italy; 54% in France. Even if those countries are seeing a steady, albeit slow increase of family reunifications, women and children still tend to remain in Senegal, representing a structural constraint and the strongest motivation to return. The resistance of Senegalese society to the migration of female family members, especially in rural areas, is largely driven by the need for conservation of the traditional community. Women in fact guarantee economic, organizational, social and cultural survival in those villages where men are mostly absent. Moreover, they are in charge of the reproductive tasks within the family, as the basis of the economic and social fabric. Furthermore the weak tendency of female migration has been associated with an attitude of resistance to dangers of "modernity" and to exposure to western immorality in terms of lack of faith, sexual permissiveness, racism and ignorance (Riccio, 2004; Castagnone et al, 2005). However since the last decade in particular, a growing, even if still not substantial, process of autonomous migration of women has been observed, especially from the urban areas and towards the most recent destinations of Senegalese migration, i.e. Spain, Italy and USA (Tall, Tandian, 2010; Sakho, Diop, Awissi-Sall, 2011).

Even towards children an emphasis on avoiding them the difficulties associated with integration in Europe has been highlighted, with a preference to provide them with a first socialization and an education in the country of origin (Benenati, 2002), eventually joining their fathers at a more advanced age.

The second element that characterizes Senegalese migration is the role played, especially in international migration directed to Europe or USA, by the powerful network of the Islamic Mouride brotherhood. In Senegalese migration, as in no other, is the close interweaving of the religious and the economic phenomenon, that provided an effective support structure to international migration, through a network of highly efficient information sharing, support in the

first settlement and integration in the labour market, especially in the trade sector, but also in the low-skilled employment sectors (Castagnone et al. 2005; Ceschi, 2005a; 2005b). The extraordinary phenomenon of Touba, the capital of Mouridism in Senegal, attests and spatially represents the symbolic and material power that the transnational Mouride institution has been able to mobilize, through an efficient channel of convoy of collective remittances by *talibés* (disciples), and through a huge volume of individual investments in real estate and business (Riccio, 2004; Gueye, 2001; Bava, 2002; 2003; Guolo, 2001; Schmidt di Friedberg, 1994a; 1994b, among others).

The third element consists of a very strong symbolic apparatus that celebrates migration on the one hand, and cautions return as the necessary and inevitable completion of the heroic departure on the other. A Senegalese proverb says: "It is the character that pushes to departure, but it is the courage that will bring you back" (*Fulla mooy wutti, waaye fayda mooy gnibbis*). And one of the many Wolof proverbs on migration, advises: "Who in expatriation will act as a hard-worker, will come back home to live like a king" (*Ku tuki di badolo, bo ngibe don bur*).

The same terminology shows how migration is associated with a warrior's path, after which the migrant receives the consecration, and also attests how challenges and tribulations of the migratory experiences are assumed and accepted in advance. In this modern epic, the return is a "dramatization of success", stimulating a desire to emulate (Dieng, 2001, 56). The migrant who passes the different tests and accesses such consecration is no more *Modou Modou* but becomes *Goulu*, an all-round person who has completed his initiation rite (Fall, 1998). The epic provides the sense of migration as an initiation research, and if exile has replaced the initiation in the sacred wood, migration represents the updated way to acquire skills, maturity, experience, courage (Dieng, 2001, 55). Furthermore among Mourides this self-representation is even stronger as knowledge and work are deeply associated (Riccio, 2001b, 591). The uprooting from the land of ancestors, when leaving the African continent, is thus well recovered with rites and amulets of departure that symbolically bridge the gap and ensure the protection of the ancestors (Castagnone et al., 2005).

This powerful symbolic apparatus constitutes a deep motivation to migrate through the enhancement of migration as an heroic enterprise, the course of which implies the return and consecration by the origin society, as its natural closing.

Senegal is all in all the place where migrants maintain their roots, thanks to a strong sense of belonging, and to the family left behind who gives input to the "journey". Staying between the two worlds means a dependency on Senegalese society. This feeling resides both in the collective imagination and in the expectations of the family left behind, as a member of it sent abroad. The money itself sent back to families, beyond the practical necessity, is viewed as a constant uninterrupted link, a promise of return, which contains the implicit idea of travel as a transitory stay abroad, symbolizing the condition of being between two worlds, among which the centre of attraction is the community in Senegal (Castagnone et al., 2005).

### 3. Research objective, data and methods

While consistent qualitative empirical research on different groups and areas was undertaken mainly through ethnographies or sociological in-depth qualitative studies, relatively little quantitative evidence exists in the West African region, and more particularly in the Senegalese context to corroborate the existence, size and characteristics of return flows. The most comprehensive insights into return migration to Senegal were provided by the DEmIS survey (Déterminants de l'Emigration Internationale au Sénégal), which was carried out in 1997/1998 in the framework of the project "The Push and Pull Factors of International Migration" and under the coordination of Eurostat and NIDI. The surveys on Migration and Urbanization in West Africa (REMUAO) conducted in Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal in 1993 provide another, yet even earlier, data source for the study of return migration flows to the region and to Senegal (Mezger, 2008: 2).

However, no empirical research has been able to account for practices of circularity, looking systematically at repeated migrations and returns. The MAFE data, on which this study is based, allow instead the longitudinal reconstruction of the migrants' whole paths of mobility, including movements between origin and destination countries.

The research here presented draws in particular on quantitative data issued from the "MAFE Senegal" project<sup>1</sup>. "MAFE Senegal" (Migration between Africa and Europe) is an international research project on migration between Africa and Europe, and in particular between Senegal and Italy, France, Spain. The research yielded a new data set on Afro-European migration between 2007 and 2008, through comparative surveys in both sending (Senegal) and receiving countries (France, Italy, Spain), and consisted in an household survey held in the region of Dakar and a biographic survey undertaken in Senegal, Italy, France and Spain.

The sampling scheme adopted in the research consisted of:

- For the household survey, a first phase of multi-stage sampling in the Dakar region (selection of primary sampling units -PSU's- from the Senegalese population census data; selection of households in each selected PSU; selection of individuals within the household).
- For the individual biographic survey, a second phase of sampling in Europe consisted in interviewing eligible<sup>2</sup> migrants whose contact had been provided by the households surveyed in Senegal. This first sample was complemented with other samples obtained through two main techniques: 1) quota method, combining various recruitment channels: migrants' associations, public places, and snowballing techniques; 2) probability sampling method in Spain, which used the Municipal Population Register (Padrón) as a sampling frame to draw a random sample of people born in Senegal and living in Spain at the time of the survey. This register presents the unique advantage of including undocumented as well as documented migrants (Beauchemin, González-Ferrer, 2009: 9).

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<sup>1</sup> Results presented in this article have been obtained using the MAFE-Senegal survey. The Senegalese part of the Migration between Africa and Europe (MAFE) project is coordinated by INED (C. Beauchemin), in association with the the Université Cheikh Anta Diop (P. Sakho). The project also involves the Pompeu Fabra university (P. Baizan), the Centro Nacional de Investigacion Cientificas (A. Gonzalez-Ferrer), and FIERI (Forum Internazionale ed Europeo di Ricerche sull'Immigrazione; E. Castagnone). The survey was conducted with the financial support of INED, the Agence Nationale de la Recherche, the Ile de France Region, the FSP programme entitled 'International Migrations, territorial reorganizations and development of the countries of the South'. The Italian research activities were co-financed by the Compagnia di San Paolo of Turin.

<sup>2</sup> Interviewees had to be individuals: (a) born in Senegal, (b) with Senegalese nationality at some point in his/her life, (c) who had migrated to Europe for the first time at age 18 or older and, (d) aged between 25 and 70 at the time of the survey. In all countries, the samples were stratified by sex (half men and half women) and age (with each sex, half aged 25-40 and the other half aged 41-70). Specific regions within each destination country were also selected, instead of carrying out the surveys over their whole territory (Beauchemin, González-Ferrer, 2009: 8).

The sample of respondents is composed of current migrants in Europe (Spain, France, Italy); return migrants in Senegal; non migrants in Senegal (see tab. 1). Data used in this paper are referred to the individual sample of current migrants interviewed in Europe (601) added up to 208 return migrants interviewed in Senegal.

**Tab. 1: Sample of the research**

	Spain	France	Italy	Senegal	Total
<b>Current migrants</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>201</b>	0	601
<b>Returnees</b>	0	0	0	<b>208</b>	208
<b>Non migrants</b>	0	0	0	859	859
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>1,067</b>	<b>1,668</b>

Source: MAFE-Senegal Survey

The population of surveyed migrants (current + returnees) amount to 809 individuals, among which 58% are men and 42% women. Women were over-represented in European samples, with the objective of including an equal share of males and females, in order to allow gender analyses<sup>3</sup>.

The biographical nature of data allows to look retrospectively at individuals' migration experience and to analyse extended periods of migration experience. Thanks to their retrospective nature, the MAFE data allow to generate unique comprehensive and longitudinal quantitative evidence on the paths undertaken by Senegalese and all along their life course, allowing to retrace the whole migration trajectory of individuals through their different steps, including temporary and permanent return to Senegal.

Some main bias derive from the sampling frame in the MAFE research. In particular data mainly giving account for a particular type of migration: directed to the three selected European destinations, failing to acknowledge other increasingly important destinations, as the USA, or other Europe countries; and "successful", i.e. migrants captured in the survey are the ones who managed to reach Europe, excluding those who were on their way to Europe, without reaching it as final destination.

Furthermore, for the fact of having sampled migrants already settled in Europe, mainly individuals with Europe-oriented projects were selected.

While, finally, intra-continental movements (both in West Africa and in North Africa) appear as a crucial dimension of mobility from Senegal (cfr. chapter 2), the MAFE survey could only randomly give account of it, mainly through the sample of returnees interviewed in Senegal who previously broadly circulated in the African space. To have a full picture of this second type of migration, the research should have ideally sampled migrants also in African destinations. Nevertheless, as we will see in next chapters, intra-continental migration inevitably emerges as an essential part of the Senegalese mobility scenario.

In this article the circularity of migrants will be addressed, reconstructing retrospectively the paths of migrants who had temporary returns and subsequent re-departures from Senegal. In particular, the temporal, iterative, and the spatial dimensions of temporary returns will be taken into account.

The temporal dimension will look at the lengths of returns. The MAFE data captured two types of return: 1) returns longer than a year 2) short returns, lasting less than a year, undertaken for holiday or business reasons (visits to see relatives, stays for holidays, pilgrimage, participation in family events such as a wedding or a funeral; or for economic reasons, such as the preparation or management of investments in the home-country, transnational productive activities, international commerce, etc.) **or with the intention to settle back in Senegal.**

<sup>3</sup> Senegalese women in 2008 were : 16% in Spain; 13% in Italy; 46% in France.

In this paper a systematic account of the two types of returns will be provided, looking at their characteristics and analyzing their intensity and repetitiveness across time.

Furthermore the spatial dimension of circularity will be approached by studying the different models of circularity taking place from different areas of migration (distinguishing between the European and African ones).

The direction of re-migrations will then be under consideration, looking whether migrants build bi-polar and multi-polar returns, i.e. if they circulate between the country of origin and a single destination abroad or they develop more complex multi-local circular patterns and, if so, what are the privileged areas of circulation.

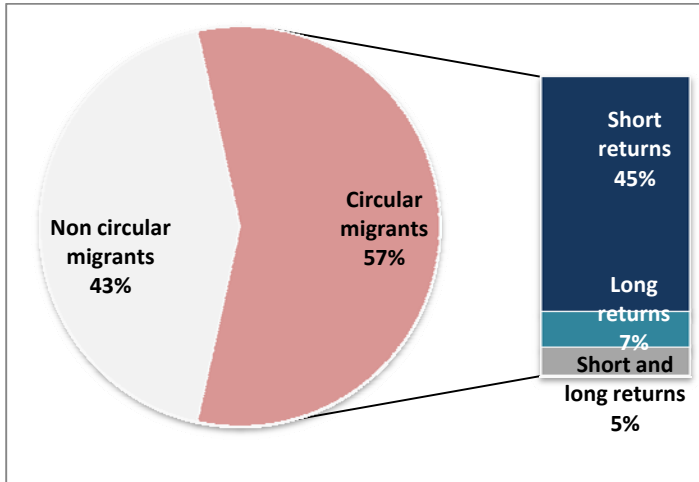
Looking at short-term circularity, the short returns intensity will be taken into account according to the different areas of migration.

All these elements will help to shed light on two parallel systems of circular mobility developing from different geo-political contexts, comparing African and European destinations, and responding to different migration systems and structural frameworks in Senegalese migration.

#### 4. Two models of circularity at comparison: the circular mobility from African and European destinations

At first glance, data tell us that out of 809 respondents, those who registered long or short returns during migration are 460, i.e. about 57% of the total respondents.

**Graph. 1: Circular migrants in the MAFE sample**

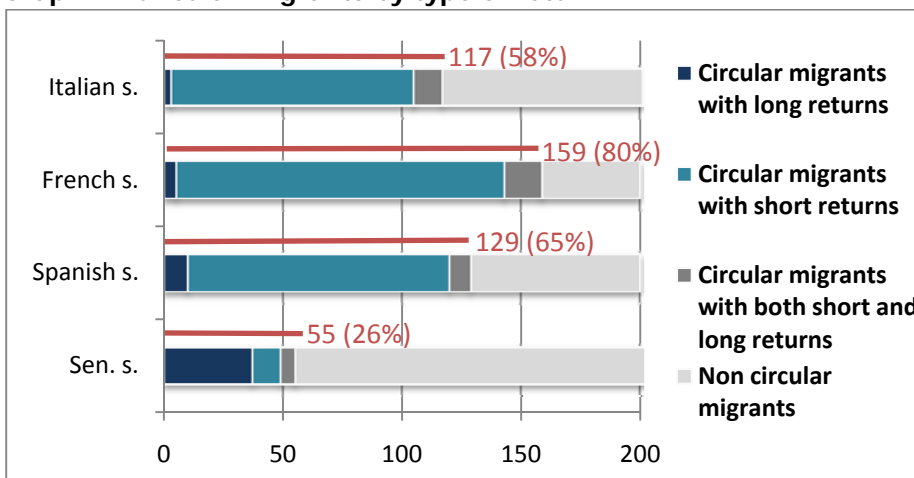


Source: MAFE-Senegal Survey

Among the circular migrants, namely those who undertook temporary return and then re-migrated from Senegal, we can distinguish two main types: those who returned only for short periods of less than a year (45%), those who had only long returns, lasting more than a year (7%), and those, finally, who adopted both forms of mobility (5%).

As we can also read from the graph below, the most mobile group (regardless of the type of return) is that of migrants residing in Europe: 80% of Senegalese in France, 65% in Spain, and 58% Italy, have experienced temporary return, among which, mainly short-term ones. To a much lesser extent (26%), also the returnees experienced circular mobility before their re-settlement in Senegal, but in reverse to the other groups, as they mainly undertook long-term returns. A third group finally, composed mainly of Senegalese living in France and Italy, experienced both forms of mobility.

**Graph. 2: Circular migrants by type of return**



Source: MAFE-Senegal Survey



Looking now in more detail at the episodes of returns and their characteristics, we note for interviewees in Senegal an elevated total number of returns (60), from two to four times greater than those undertaken by other samples (25 in the Spanish sample, 27 in the French one and 16 in the Italian one).

Looking at the length of returns, we note that approximately one third (28.9%) lasted more than five years, extending, for three cases, to more than 20 years.

**Tab. 2: Number and length of long returns (absolute values)**

Length of long returns (> 1 year) (absolute values)						
	Es	Fr	It	Sn	Total	%
<b>1-5</b>	17	17	13	44	91	71.1
<b>6-10</b>	5	7	2	7	21	16.4
<b>11-20</b>	2	3	1	7	13	10.2
<b>20+</b>	1	0	0	2	3	2.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>209</b>	

Source: MAFE-Senegal Survey

Coming back to the data displayed in table 1 and 2, short returns (of less than a year), as previously mentioned, are much more numerous: 408 people, about half of total respondents, undertook short returns during their migration experience. However, again the phenomenon varies considerably within the four sub-samples: 60.5% in the Spanish group made short returns, 77.5% in the French one, 55.7% in the Italian one, compared to 8.6% of the group of returnees.

**Tab 3: Number of individual short returns**

Number of short returns per migrant (< 1 year) (a.v.)					
	Es	Fr	It	Sn	Total
<b>1-5</b>	108	82	67	17	274
<b>6-10</b>	10	34	21	1	66
<b>11-20</b>	3	28	19	0	50
<b>21-40</b>	0	11	7	0	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>408</b>
<b>%</b>	<b>60.5</b>	<b>77.5</b>	<b>56.7</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>50.4</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>209</b>

Source: MAFE-Senegal Survey

The French sample is the one with a greater number of individuals who had repeated short returns for several years. This can be explained by the fact that it is an older migration. In Italy there are fewer migrants with short returns, but with a comparatively high number of returns per person. Migrants in Spain show a large number of migrants with short returns, but a smaller number of individual returns. The returnees, as shown in the table above, had a few short returns, compared to a large number of long returns.

#### 4.1 Long-term circularity: mainly a sub-regional migration strategy

Circularity is a dynamic phenomenon based on returns and re-departures, which develops longitudinally over time, along the course of the migration experience. For this reason, a useful approach can consist again of a diachronic look at the migration events, according to a fragmented journey perspective (Collyer, de Haas, forthcoming), in order to reconstruct the circulation pattern of repeat migrants.

The analysis of trajectories of those who experienced prolonged returns in the countries of origin and later re-migrations, through the sequence analysis tool, allows us to grasp some key-information on the phenomenon. In particular, the following graph helps us to visualize retrospectively the concatenation of the outward and inward mobility, re-tracing the individual paths and their composition. It also allows the depiction of the places of migration episodes, noting how they are embedded in different trajectories, at which point of the path, and in which geographical coordinates of the migration experience.

Again, as for similar sequences displayed in chapter 5, each line represents an individual and is composed of different segments which represents the migration episodes. Those segments are units holding the same graphic length; the aggregate length of each sequence will thus be determined by the total number of the migration spells for each interviewee.

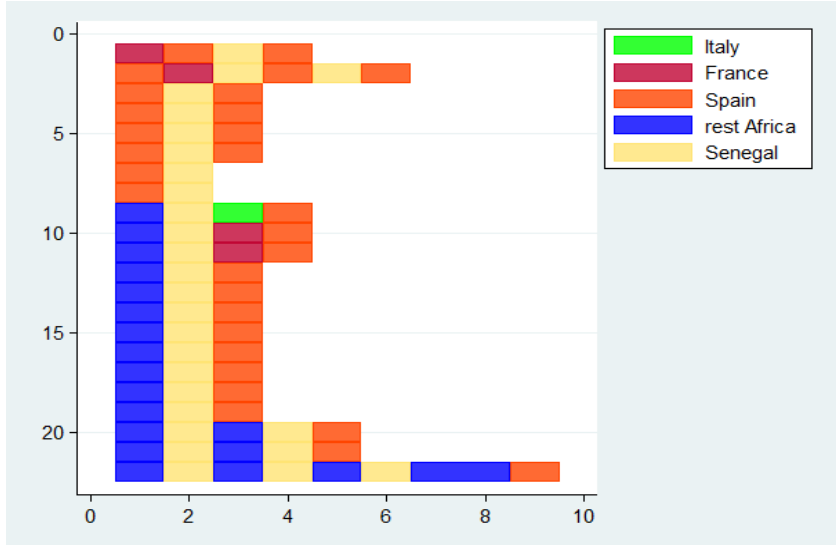
As an example we'll take three examples in order to facilitate the reading of the graphs. If we start by looking at the first row of graph. 3, we can see that this migrant had a first migration in France, then moved to Spain, afterward he/she registered a long (>1year) return episode in Senegal, after which he/she came back to Spain, where he/she was residing at the moment of the survey.

The first line of the graph. 5 shows a migrant who went to Italy, then came back for one or more years to the home country and left again for Italy.

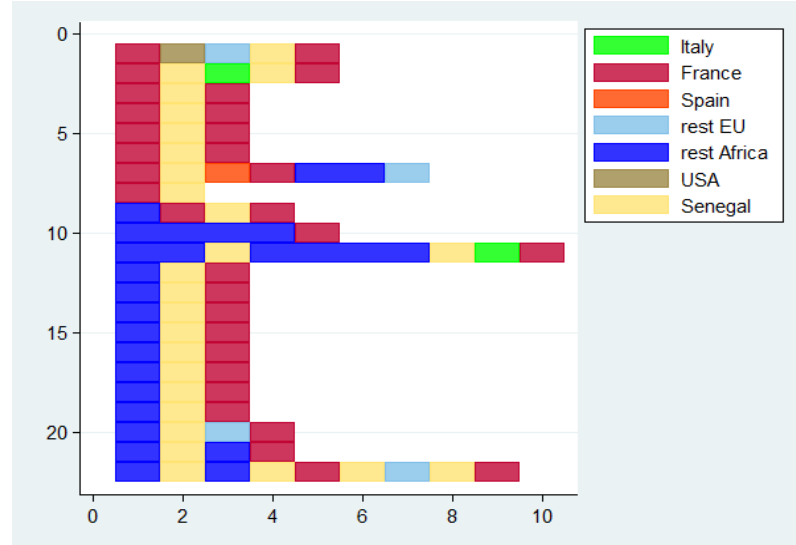
Finally, the first line of the graph. 6 tells us that this migrant undertook a first migration to Italy; then had two further migration episodes in France; then experienced a return to Senegal after which he/she moved to an European country other than Spain, France or Italy, and subsequently followed to France. The last episode is a (supposedly permanent) return to Senegal, as we treat this group as returnees, although unobserved re-departures may occur.

SEQUENCES OF MIGRANTS WITH RETURNS of >1YEAR, by sample

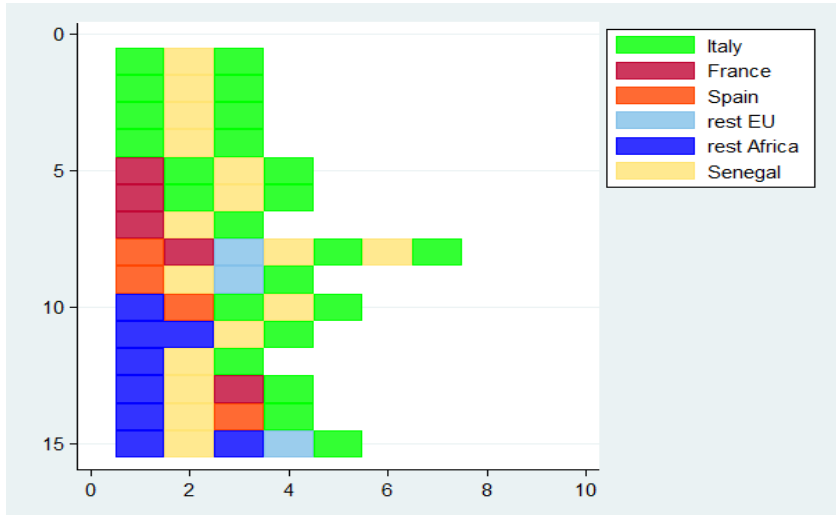
Graph 3 SPANISH SAMPLE



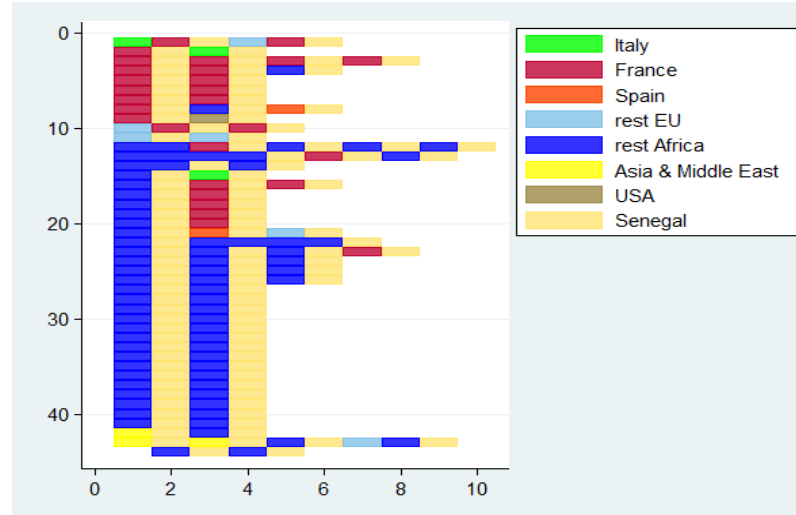
Graph 4 FRENCH SAMPLE



Graph 5 ITALIAN SAMPLE



Graph 6 SENEGALESE SAMPLE

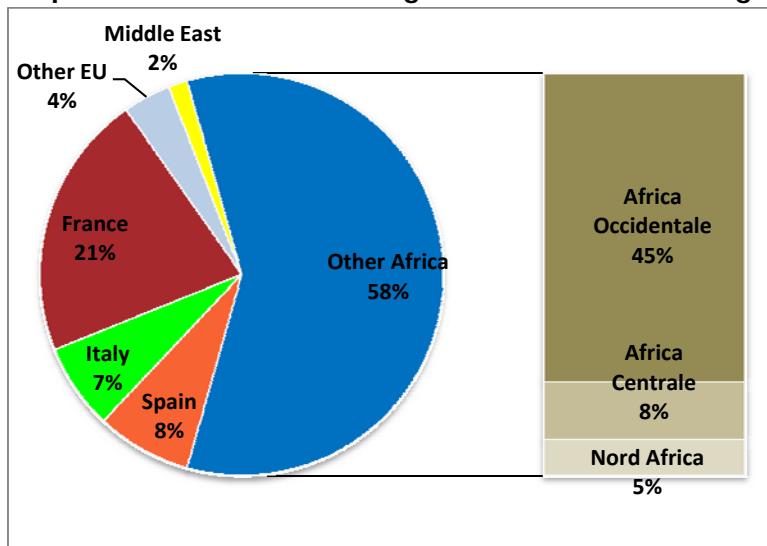


Source: MAFE-Senegal Survey

If crossed also with the following chart (graph. 7), we find evidence that the long-term circular migration is a form of mobility adopted mainly by returnees, as already mentioned. Furthermore the great majority of long returns (58%) take place in the intra-African, principally intra-regional, context (to a lesser extent in Northern and Central Africa). Also graph 11 of Chapter 4, showing the migratory trajectories on a calendar-based time axis, allows us to clearly visualize returnee migration patterns, as: 1) *numerous*: one returnee out of three has undertaken between one and ten different migration episodes (including temporary returns) before re-settling for good in Senegal (see table 4 Chapter 4); 2) *short-term*: i.e. lasting on average about half of the years than those directed to Europe (see tables 4-5 Chapter 4); 3) *intermittent*, i.e. characterized by a relevant alternation with periods spent in Senegal, that may extend also for several years.

The returns (with consequent re-departures) significantly took place from France, but mainly not in recent times, as the graph 9 of Chapter 4 shows. In particular, the returns from France take place between the late 1970s until the early 1990s, a period characterized by a tightening of French immigration Laws and policies encouraging more active return, as well as retirement returnees (Metzger, 2008). As will be discussed later, in fact, the circularity is closely related to regulatory frameworks in migration, which affect the chances of return (and re-departures).

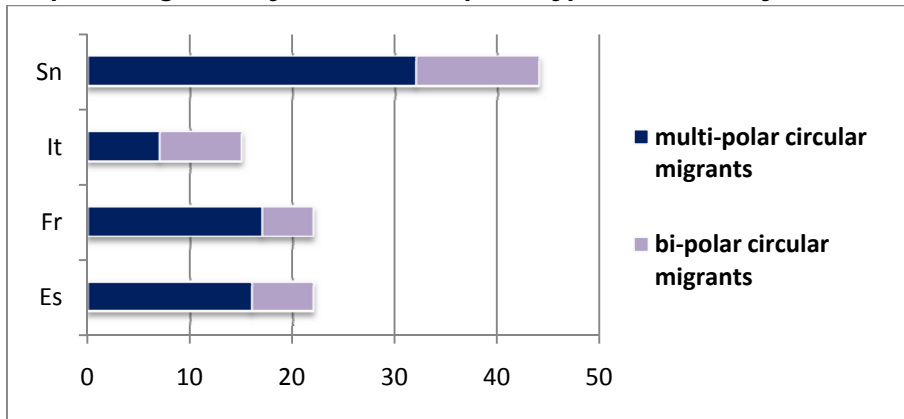
**Graph 7: Areas from which migrants come back for long returns in Senegal**



Source: MAFE-Senegal Survey

While short returns, as we have seen, are by definition bi-polar, i.e. they take place between European destinations and Senegal, implying a temporary return from a permanent place of residence abroad, the frame is different for those who undertake long returns, who, coming from a first migration country, may then leave again for a new further destination. Through returns and the new outward migrations, circular migrants may follow bi-directional (between Senegal and migration to a single country) or multi-directional (i.e. between Senegal and multiple countries of migration) paths.

**Graph 8: Migrants by multi and bi-polar type of circularity**



Source: MAFE-Senegal Survey

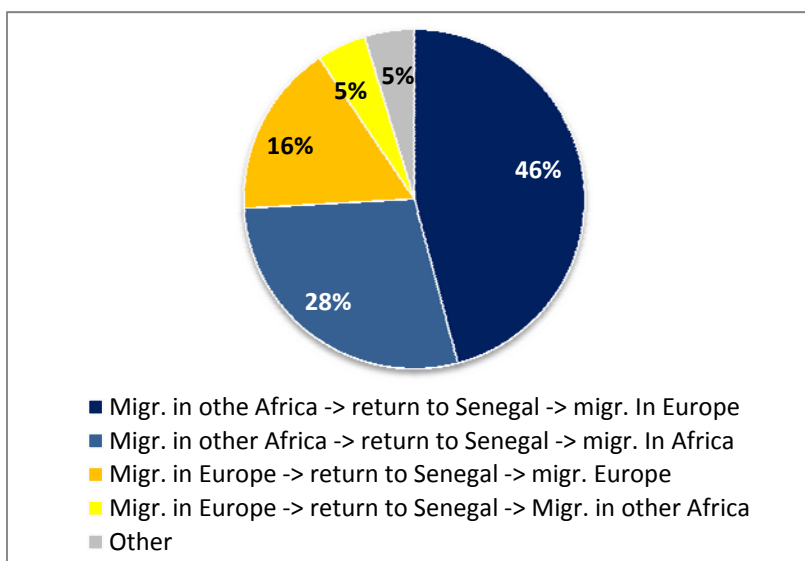
Among the 100 long-term circular migrants, 30 have undertaken bi-polar migration and 70 multi-polar migration.

The first group had one (or repeated) returns from country A with following re-migrations to the same country A. As an example see the first lines of the sequences displayed and already commented on in graphs. 3 and 5.

The second group (with multi-polar circularity) have migrated to a first country A, have come back to Senegal and have left again for a country B. An example is previously provided through the reading of the first line of graph. 6. This type of cyclical movement can also be repeated more than once, but always using the same mechanism of extension of migration to new destinations after returns.

Among multi-polar circular migrants, the dominant pattern (46%) implies that individuals return from migration in other African countries and then set off towards Europe. It is again useful to remember that this data is strongly affected by the sample design that captured migrants who successfully reached Europe. As a consequence, this figure is probably over-estimated.

**Graph 9. Return migration multi-polar patterns**



Source: MAFE-Senegal Survey

A significant number of trajectories (28%), however, after returns from African countries, involves re-departure for other destinations always within the intra-continental space. As shown in the table below, circular migration is mainly carried out within the Western sub-region, while all the returns that occur from the countries in Mediterranean Africa lead afterwards to Europe.

**Tab 4: Multi-polar circular migrations: countries before return and after re-departure**

		EUROPE					OTHER AFRICA			Mid. East	USA	Total
		Italy	France	Spain	West. Europe	East. Europe	North. Africa	West. Africa	Centr. Africa			
EUROPE	Italy	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	France	3	0	2	1	1	1	2	1	0	1	12
	Spain	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
	West. Europe	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
	North. Europe	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
OTHER AFRICA	North. Africa	2	4	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	8
	West. Africa	2	14	11	1	0	3	14	3	0	0	48
	Centr. Africa	1	1	1	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	7
	Mid. East	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	3
	Total	9	22	15	6	1	5	21	4	1	1	85

Source: MAFE-Senegal Survey

21% of multi-polar returns, then, originate from Europe: 16% of these lead, after the return, to new re-departures toward other different European countries, while 5% generate new migration in the African space.

This bi-polar pattern is observed mainly among European destinations, in particular Italy (8 out of 42), France (14 out of 42), Spain (6 out of 42), but also among other countries of intra-African migration, and within Western Africa in particular.

**Tab 5: Bi-polar circular migrations: countries before return and after re-departure**

	Italy	France	Spain	Other Africa	TOT
Italy	8	0	0	0	8
France	0	14	0	0	14
Spain	0	0	6	0	6
Other Africa	0	0	0	14	14
TOT	8	14	6	14	42

Source: MAFE-Senegal Survey

The picture that emerges from these data confirms that internal migration is a still active mobility practice which reproduces intra-regional (and sub-regional) mobility and has been rooted in the African livelihood system since pre-colonial times (see chapter 2). These have in fact been historically characterized by temporary, seasonal and circular patterns.

As Jonnson highlights (2009) in the Comparative Report on African migration trends issued from the research program on 'African Perspectives on Human Mobility', alongside a

diversification in destinations of forms many internal African movements entail bipolar movements from one location to another, while all the countries highlight a growing prevalence of temporary and circular migration. Most migration from and within the sub-region includes temporary cross-border workers, professionals, female traders, clandestine workers and refugees. It is essentially an intra-regional (mainly from the northern zones to the coastal regions), short-term and male-dominated (Adepoju 2009) migration.

We must also necessarily take into account that the geo-political space in which sub-regional circular migration is oriented is the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Here, the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, signed in Lagos in 1979, guarantees Community citizens visa free entry into Member States for ninety days (Adepoju, 2009). It also agrees rights of residence and establishment. As a result, the formation of the ECOWAS stimulated the kind of homogeneous society which once existed in the sub-region, restoring a free-movement common space inhibited especially since the post-colonial times.

It should nonetheless be considered that although there are no barriers at borders to nationals of ECOWAS space and a regime of free movement is in force, migrants are anyway subject to administrative controls at the border post and at numerous roadblocks and security checkpoints on international highways. Here delays, harassment and extortion of travellers are carried out by the police and border officials taking bribes as forms of unofficial tolls (Adepoju, 2009; Brachet, 2009; de Haas, 2006). It has been underlined how most of the ambitious targets fixed by the ECOWAS initiative were not fully achieved, because of minimal or little institutional resources, as well as economic and political instability in several countries (Adepoju, 2009). Furthermore the level of application of the Protocol remains at a national level (Brachet, 2009).

We find also forms of long term circularity in Europe, although to a much lesser extent, involving mainly direct migration to France and to a lesser extent, to Italy and Spain. This fact is evident in light of the restrictive regime here in force: the stable access to legal migration title is crucial for enabling circular migration. As a matter of fact in the European samples, characterized by more rigid legislative barriers, the long-term circulation is weaker and the disincentives to return are larger. The precarious legal status, subject to periodic and uncertain renewals in Europe, inhibits the option of a permanent return, as it would hinder possible following re-departures, in case of need. In this perspective the migration option should be read as a permanent insurance sustained by personal and collective, material and immaterial costs. Irreversibly giving up the migrating capability to legal conditions (obtained with difficulty over the years) would mean wasting such investment.

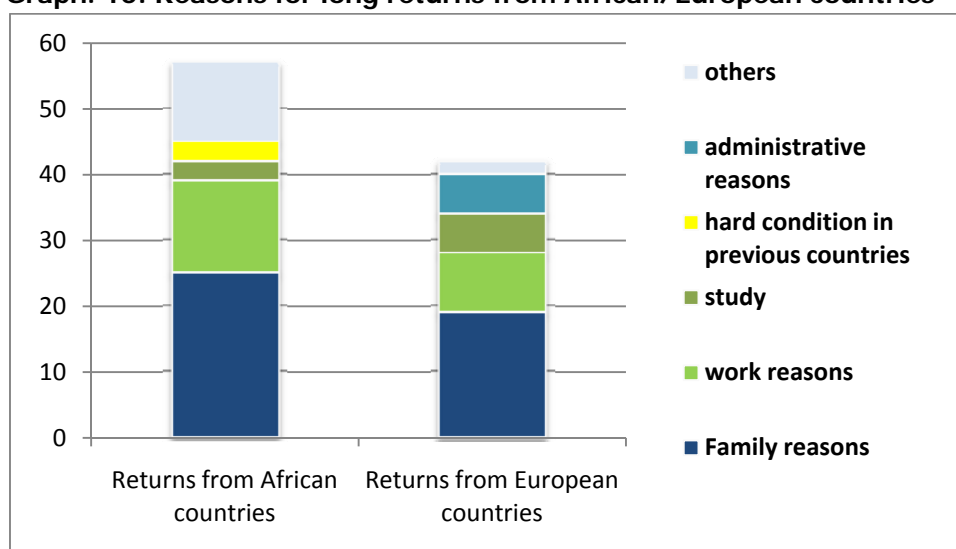
Those benefiting from a stable status and a long-term residence permit are able to go back and forth freely, and to build in their "free" practice of space, a territory adequate to their needs and aspirations. This is not the case for those who own short-term legal documents or are undocumented. As a consequence the two groups of migrants do not develop the same territorialities (Simon, 2008, in Hily, 2009: 27). As Sinatti (2010) suggests, the majority of returnees feel free to relocate to Senegal only after having obtained a permanent right of overseas residence. The illegal status of migrants, if not always an insurmountable constraint, however, emerges as a major cause of non-movement (Baby-Collin et al. 2009: 108 The transnational circ).

We have seen how the (long term) circularity in the African space is mainly attributable to ancient mobility patterns oriented in the sub-region. To what extent on the other side, can return migrations be connected to circular strategies, intended as the rational behaviour of optimizing or re-optimizing one's economic, social, and personal situation and of taking advantage of opportunities in both the host and home country (Constant, KF Zimmermann, 2007)? To which extent are they would-be permanent settlement followed by re-migrations related to failed returns, or to new (and better) opportunities that may arise abroad?

As Sinatti suggests (2010), successful migration in the Senegalese perspective could be intended as a definitive reunification with the family in improved economic and social conditions, not forgetting the prestige aspects and the status upgrade. Consequently unsuccessful returns would be the not (economically and socially) sustainable ones. Uncertainties associated with the socio-economic reinsertion of returnees is a strong obstacle to permanent returns and the cause of failed attempts in the re-settling back of many migrants.

The following graph shows the reasons for the return to Senegal according to two groups: returnees and migrants of the three European samples. Again, as in Chapter 4, the objective here is to offer an overview of the subjective reasons that migrants themselves offer for the choice of return, of their orientations, projects, options, narratives through which people describe themselves (Grillo, 2007), rather than giving account of the actual drivers of returns.

**Graph. 10: Reasons for long returns from African/European countries**



Source: MAFE-Senegal Survey

If migrants leave in order to take charge of their duty towards the household and the group of origin, driven by a sense of duty and honour (*jom*), the major reason for return has to be again found in the family context. In fact, in both groups the dominant rhetoric around return is associated with family, linked in particular to the need to get closer to home and especially to children. In some case returns are caused by illness or death of close relatives (parents or partners), which require the presence and assistance of family members abroad.

Among all the logics that structure migration and guide the design of the circulation territories, the family unit, *sensu largo*, undoubtedly plays a central role. "La sphere socio-spatiale de la famille s'impose comme l'un des lieux majeures ou s'elaborent les strategies qui mettront a profit les opportunités, les differentiels existant à travers des differents points de l'espace de vie tissé à travers les frontieres, celui où s'elaborent, en definitive des nouvelles territorialités » (Baby Collin et al., 2009).

The work motive comes in second place. Some migrants come back after having accomplished their period of work abroad (some declared to have left on appointment of their employer in Senegal - cf. Chapter 4). Others, once the job contract expires, become unemployed without being able to find another employment. Other respondents, finally,



opted to come back to Senegal with the goal of setting up a business or to take care of their investments already set up in origin country.

Thirdly there are those, especially migrated in Europe, who after the end of a period of study or training abroad, settled back in Senegal.

Among those who have returned from Europe, we find a group of migrants who have come back as undocumented, some of whom were expelled. The return migration in fact may also play the function of the re-formulation and re-organization of the migration project. It can be functional as a new departure for other destinations that cannot be directly reached from the current country of migration because of insufficient available money or difficulties in obtaining the documents necessary to enter the aimed- for destination. In this sense, circular migration can perform a function similar to transit, as a movement aimed at the re-adjustment of the trajectories and the re-planning of the migration project.

Some returns from African countries have taken place because of difficult conditions in those countries. It should not be underestimated that political and economic instability is one of the major factors that impacts on migration routes within the continent, feeding mainly regional circular movement (Ndiaye, Robin, IMI). In particular the reported cases are referred to the *coup d'état* in September 2002 in Ivory Coast, after which several thousands of migrant workers left the country. Other individuals instead migrated to Mauritania, a Senegalese historical destination of migrants, where in 1989, following Mauritania-Senegal border tensions, ethno-political upheavals culminated in the expulsion of Senegalese and Black Mauritians from the country. In the wake of this crisis, Mauritanian-Senegalese relations degenerated and the balance of power in the country tipped. It was only in 1991 that an agreement was negotiated by the Senegalese President Abdou Diouf to re-open the borders between Senegal and Mauritania (Di Bartolomeo, Fakhoury, Perrin, 2010).

Among other reasons there are returns due to illness of migrants themselves or to retirement.

Even if the return is inscribed in the common horizon of migration and is the ultimate goal of the migration experience for most, according to Robin et al. (2000), 96% of migrants who plan return have not yet set the date on which it could actually take place. Whenever they take place, about half of them are not considered as definitive by the migrants, who are potential candidates for re-departure. The return to the origin country often does not mean breaking with the previous migration experience; the alternative to re-emigrating is preserved, notably by the upkeep of a valid visa or residence permit (*ibidem*). A research into the entrepreneurship of Senegalese immigrants in Italy highlighted how, when business projects are developed in Senegal, returns configure mainly as a shift of the barycentre in favour of the Senegalese pole, and rarely as a final return and a breaking of the migration experience (Castagnone, 2007). Return, in other words, should not be intended as a "closure of the migration cycle, but rather as one of the multiple steps of a continued movement" (Ammassari and Black, 2001, 12, referring to King, 2000).

## 4.2 Short-term circularity: lost in migration or transnational economic actors?

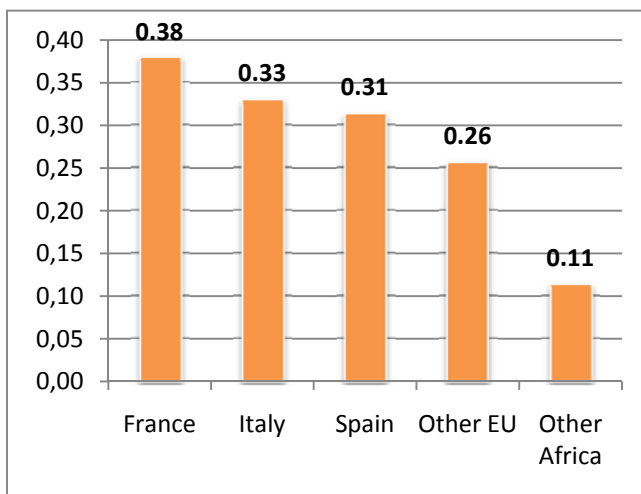
Besides a long-term mobility, subject to legal restrictions and the risk of inhibition of future re-departures, we observe - as already mentioned at the beginning of the chapter (see Figure 2) - a lively parallel mobility supplying temporary short-term, but constant and repeated over the years, returns. Migration in African countries seem to be participate only marginally in this mobility pattern.

The following chart shows the average rate of short returns by country of migration, obtained by dividing the total number of returns by the total number of years of 'active' migration experience (net of returns).

Among the different samples, the French one shows the highest rate of short returns (on average): the mean being one return every three years (0,38). The Italian and Spanish samples show respectively a mean of 0,33 and 0,31. On average, other European countries and African destinations show an even lower rate (respectively 0,26 and 0,11).

At first sight the returns also seem to be affected by a time effect: from a first observation of data they start to occur after a few years of residence, probably after having obtained a stable legal status and having accumulated enough savings to meet the expenses related to returns. This could explain the higher rate of return to France. Deeper explanatory analysis, such as an event history analysis, should be here performed in order to test this hypothesis.

**Graph. 11: Short return rates (mean) by areas of return**



Source: MAFE-Senegal Survey

Short-term circularity emerges therefore eminently as a European mobility strategy, opposite to long-term circularity and as a predominantly African strategy. As already noted, the legal status of migrants abroad has a profound impact on the opportunities for circular mobility during migration. In this perspective the absence of a stable legal status inhibits the propensity to return permanently or for long periods. In this sense, short and repeated returns, the so-called "shuttle mobility" may reflect in some way the lack of choices available to migrants (Jones, Murray, 1986).

However, the short and intermittent circularity should not only be interpreted as a second-best option, as it entails broader social, cultural, economic significance worth considering.

If definitive return is the common horizon, it is often delayed or even unrealized for very long periods (the myth of return), the periodic short returns emerge in this perspective as

"the outcome of compromises made between permanent return and the conflicting benefits offered by staying in migration" (Sinatti, 2010: 1). In this perspective the ideal organization is the transnational one, also evocated as "shuttle mobility" (Pastore, 2008): "living part of the year in Italy and the other part in Senegal, making the best of the two countries" (Riccio, 2004: 933).

The well acknowledged transnationalism of the Senegalese diaspora is fed to a large extent precisely by this tension and strong intention to return. Mobility capability and the willingness to circulate are fundamental aspects, around which is built the life abroad. Faced with the difficulty of embarking on a final return, short-term circular mobility assumes the function of keeping the rope taut with the country of origin, maintaining and renewing ties, feeding the networks, providing information for a possible future return, etc.

In addition, the intermittent returns have an essential function of symbolic reproduction. They serve to maintain social prestige, represent the reward for the effort abroad, renewing the sense of migration, which is based on material basis (work, income increase), but also on symbolic roots (prestige, increased social status). This condition of privilege has nonetheless to be re-negotiated at every return, re-fed through the distribution of money and gifts, through the visits, etc.. (Castagnone et al). These same returns feed in turn the imagination of the left behind, through the ostentation of the accumulated wealth, forming a symbolic stimulus to departure and nurturing a culture of migration. Thanks also to return, temporary migrants have emerged as new figures of social success (Riccio, 2007: 48), "contemporary heroes who embody the new ways of social mobility, spreading models of existence and life styles that go beyond the mere material success".

Thus back-and-forth mobility is the *fil rouge* that acts as a bridge between the two sides, reconnecting the individual to a collective identity and experience, and having as a reference the parental group in the country of origin, thus helping cultural and symbolic assimilation to the host country. One of the perceived highest risks is in fact that of being *lost in migration* or marrying a philosophy of life different from the one of origin, losing one's roots and breaking the social norms of the sending society (Castagnone et al., 2005). The Senegalese who, on return, show accentuated individualistic behaviour, and do not adhere to the rules of reciprocity and redistribution that regulate relations between members of society, violating the pillar values of the Senegalese society, are derisively nicknamed *toubab*, "white", being deemed in some way as "deviant". In this sense, the Mouride brotherhood ethics conveyed in migration, at least for part of the followers, are a form of protection from upheaval and the possible loss of the origin society's values, and, as already pointed out, contribute to a strict work ethic (Castagnone et al., 2005; Riccio, 2004). This shows that the act of migration is embedded in the social, familiar, communitarian and religious system, exhorting the actors to maintain links with the community of origin. This device protects against the weakening of social ties between migrants and those who did not migrate, the left behind. The connection with the country has nothing natural, it is a construct that evolves and changes over time, during the migratory journey (Lacroix et al., 2008) and which needs to be renewed and fed over time.

The transnational condition (being "in between" two worlds) is also however a card functionally played by Senegalese migrants both during migration (through the cyclical returns, *the "va et vient"*), and at the time of the permanent return to Senegal, particularly in terms of optimization of the transnational social capital. This same capital will prove to be decisive at the time of final return in the construction of a project of re-settlement and economic re-integration through job search or start-up of a business.

Neither should we underestimate the economic role of shuttle migration in relation to commercial businesses activated by migrants between sending and destination countries. There, a universe of activities issued from a "business world" of nomadic entrepreneurs (Peraldi, 2001), including a wide range of formal and informal activities and transactions not

necessarily professional, is in place. These activities rise and feed on the transnational context mapped out by migrants between Senegal and Europe, sometimes drawing complex routes, which are largely based on Mouride networks. These trade routes have developed since the '60s, through migration in France (Bertoncello, Bredeloup, 2000; Ebin, 1992; Bava, 2000, 2002; Peraldi, 2001), and have established over the years, until today, a fertile economic ground "from New York to Naples, through Istanbul et Marseille" (Bava, 2003). In Senegal, the Mouride brotherhood has actually produced a complex system able to play as an identity spiritually and spatially framing and associated with a transnational economic system.

These multiple circulations of persons, goods, cultures and worships in a network set up between several areas illustrate a socialization of spaces, as supports of such transnational mobility that migrants are organizing in "circulatory territories" (Tarrus, 1989, 1993). The latter concept, without removing the issues of ownership or symbolic space, evokes the social rhythms, the identity processes, imagination, usage, practices, interactions and negotiations, that provide sense to territorial support. It does not refer exclusively to the crossing of border space, but to the density of a territory including different social times, different identities and histories of groups using it (Bava, 2003).

Defined by Peraldi (2001) as a "bazaar economy", the economic system activated by transnational migrants entails two articulated competencies: on the one side cross-border mobility, on the other relationship proficiency and communitarian cohesion, which make it possible to convert solidarity and trust networks established in migration into productive and cost-effective relationships, despite the absence of legal regulation (Peraldi, 2001). The given word's game ??, reputation and control on relationships are sufficient to guarantee transactions between trading partners (Lacroix, 2008).

In the typology of economic transnationalism formulated by Ambrosini (2009), four different degrees (from the lowest to the highest) of transnational engagement are to be applied, when dealing with migrant business.

The first, the lowest level, the "symbolic transnationalism" entails a symbolic connection between origin and destination countries, where transnational practices consist of evocating atmospheres, cultures and practices from the origin country. The second level, the "mercantile transnationalism", implies a movement of merchandise from origin countries and the displacement of economic operators. The third degree, the "connective transnationalism" consists of physical or immaterial transfer of money or messages. The fourth and last level of economic transnationalism, classified as "circulatory" is at the top of the scale of intensity and involvement in transnational ties, implying common physical movements across borders, with repeated trips between the sending and receiving countries. The transnational trade activated by Senegalese migrants is a pertinent example of the latter level of economic transnationalism.

Street trading in particular has been in Senegalese immigration in Italy since the early 1980s, a lifeline for those who had no professional training, and prevalent particularly among those who were undocumented. This activity created a niche market ensuring an independent activity, to which immigrants could easily access thanks to family and previous personal experience gained in the country of origin in the informal sector. The option itself of trade in Senegalese migration has been associated with a strategy of integration into the labour market that has favoured the freedom of movement and autonomy in the management of working time. In this framework the choice of self-employment in the destination country can also be read as functional to the "back and forth" mobility (Riccio, 2007; Castagnone et al., 2005), allowing prolonged and frequent returns between origin and host countries. This situation of "dual presence" (Riccio, 2009a; Ceschi and Riccio, 2010), which is a counterpoint to the "double absence" of Sayad (2002), allows the articulation of experiences and practices of migration in relation to a double territorial orientation and a bifocal logic.

## Conclusions

It has been highlighted on several occasions how the final return is embedded in the migration project of Senegalese abroad. The condition that most Senegalese share is that of living in migration as a temporary experience with the permanent feeling of the future return (Castagnone et al., 2005; Mboup, 2000; Sinatti, 2010). Continually deferred, permanent return acquires the status of a myth, assuming the characteristics of a delayed-release planning, a goal pursued and not well defined in different ways and times. This sentiment, that has been defined as "low desire" (Castagnone et al, 2005), is a state of mind that accompanies the daily lives of migrants abroad oriented towards an undefined and idealized future.

While for most Senegalese migrants *successful* return is in fact still associated with *definitive* return, this desire for permanent resettlement in the home society often does not mean actual economic advancement. As a result long-term returns emerge as attempts characterized by uncertain outcome and strong reversibility through new re-departures, in a prolonged condition of "unsettled return" (Sinatti, 2010).

Some empirical evidence based on previous work (Megzer, Flahaux 2010; Chauvet, Gubert, Mesplé-Somps, 2009) demonstrated the positive performances of returnees in the economic re-integration in origin country. Notwithstanding those works fail to, or only marginally succeed in, capturing the unsuccessful return experiences (unsatisfactory access and integration in labour market or failure of business activity) having led to new re-departures and to "settlement in mobility" (Morokvasic, 2004). In the analysis of return migration it is thus necessary to consider the failed returns generating further re-departures and circular movements in order to fully understand the phenomenon in its complexity. The figure of migrants "stuck in mobility" seems thus opposite, but complementary to the one of transit migrants, "stuck in immobility", who are stranded and unable to continue, indefinitely prolonging their stay in intermediate countries, waiting to reach the goal fixed in advance.

At the same time migrant circularity can be read as the result of constant adaptation and in-progress adjustment of the migration project, fluid and changing, continuously faced with opportunities and obstacles between one-off migration from the home to the host country and back home, and new possible migration options. It is the case of some registered multi-polar circular movements initially developed within the African space, then leading to Europe. Not being able to get to the aimed –for destination directly from the first country of migration, these migrants return to Senegal and re-program from here a new departure. As already shown in the analysis on transits (see chap. 5), even returns prove migration to be an ongoing process, subject to a continuous tension between imagination, plans, desires, projects, that fold, re-formulate, adapt, organize creatively according to the opportunities and constraints.

On the other side, temporary short-term circulation, taking place mainly between Europe and Senegal, appears as a compromise, a second-best choice, in relation to the difficulties imposed by labour and legal status and by increasingly restrictive immigration policies which inhibit fluid mobility between the territories of origin and destination.

In the analysis of returns, however, the benefits that regular "comers and goers" may obtain by multi-local residential strategies, making of mobility an economic, social, cultural resource, through a "globalization from below", should not be underestimated.

In this perspective back and forth movements may also be the product of a calculated mobility strategy embracing the best of both the country of migration and country of origin, accumulating human, economic, social trans-national capital conditions, and funded and feeding on the "in between" condition, as in the case of transnational traders.

This second, quite distinct, form of circular mobility attests to how the policy regime in destination countries plays a key role in shaping forms, intensity and reversibility of

circularities. In this view, while temporary and circular migration policy tools are increasingly advocated and implemented by European governments, structural constraints and the role of states and other institutions still represent one the strongest limits to a genuine self-determined circularity.

## **BIBLIO**