

# Why and how do people decide to migrate?

Drivers, migration propensities  
and future migrants' perspectives

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# Outline

- *Key questions and aims*
- *Research areas and methods*
- *Findings*
- *Concluding remarks*



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# Research questions

## *Within the overall FUME project*

- Which are the most significant contributions of the qualitative research in the countries of origin (WP6.1) to develop future migration scenarios to the EU?

## *For the origin country case studies*

- How do local factors (intertwined with meso/macro determinants of migration) shape the propensities to migrate (either internally or internationally) or to stay?
- To what extent does the “urban experience” (as a result of internal movements) inform the decisions to migrate abroad and influence the choice of Europe as prospective destination?

*[not the study of migration in urban context but how urban experience shapes migration practices]*

# Aims

- To adopt **an actor-centered approach** to support the development of the narratives on **future migration scenario**  
(focus on the relationship between subjective motivations and meso/macro determinants of migration);
- To examine the interrelations between the contextual factors of migration decision-making and those involved in the nexus between **internal - international migration trajectories**.
- To assess to what extent the selected cities **are still a “stepping stone” for migration abroad** for many internal migrants who arrived in these cities at different times  
(from rural areas and secondary towns);

## Main outcomes

- Cities (the urban experience) play a key role for potential international migrants as a “field of evaluation” of their migration decision.
- The individual capability to migrate to Europe is always more the result of intertwined **causalities, unplanned chances, and fortuitous circumstances**, changing along the life course and the migratory trajectories.



Not only the routes of migrants are not-linear and fragmented (step backs, restarts...subjected to changes along the route) but also their *trajectories of migration aspirations and decisions*.

# Methods

## Selection criteria of the case studies

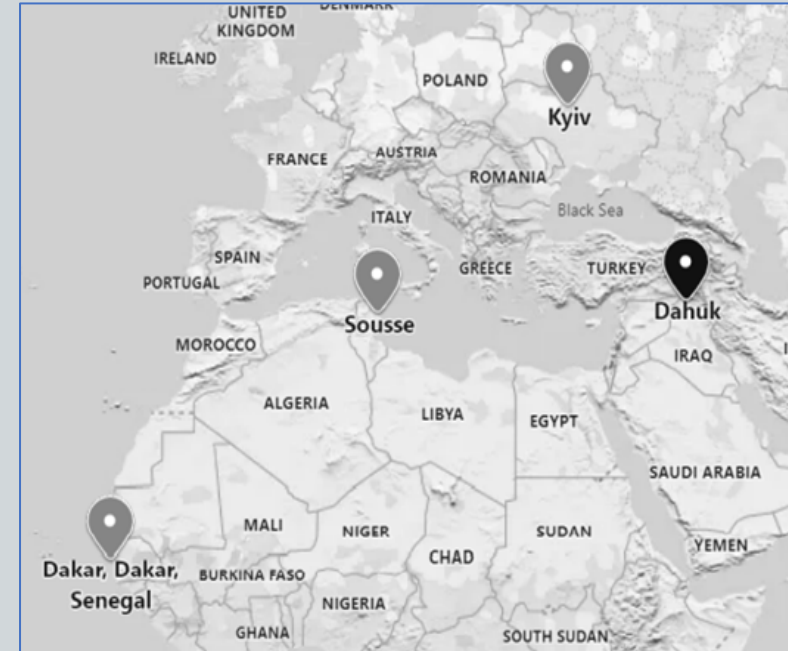
- **Cities** as important **destination of multiple trajectories of internal mobility** (e.g. seasonal, commuting, intra-regional...);
- **Cities** as significant “**starting points**” and “**stepping stones**” for international migration;
- **Four main origin areas of migration to Europe** (Sub-Saharan and Northern Africa, Middle East and Eastern Europe);
- **Variety, variability** of interlocked factors influencing international migration to EU (e.g. social, political, economic and environmental...);

## Characteristics of the interviewees' selection

- **Variables** : Gender / Education / Occupational status / Age

**Sample frame:** selection based on different period of migrants' arrival and settlement from rural areas /secondary cities

- **Newcomers** : settled in the last 5 years)
- **Long stayers** : since 5 up to 10 years)
- **Settled migrants:** settled over 10 years)



## Fieldwork – Differences towards mobility perspectives

- The time of arrival to the current place of residence is an important factor in the migration decision-making (except for Ukraine)

**Settled migrants** - Mostly coming to the city in search of better life perspectives.

**International migration is mostly a perspective and a wish for their children.**

*R: What would encourage you to send your children abroad?*

*I: Thinking about their future. I lived for 46 years, do you think I can live for 40 or 20 years more. Nobody knows about his fate. I want them to have a better life. I no longer care about anything else (TunMig06)*

**Newcomers** – Youth, longing for better life perspectives, ready to go abroad, at the available opportunity.

- They have fewer anchors to the current place of residence;
- Importance of the growing internationalisation of higher education
- *“It is a generation that is most interested in technology and globalization”. (TunExp05)*

*“[...] when people move from one region to another, it is mainly to look for another opportunity. [...] If they do not find their chance in the three big cities [Tunis, Sfax, Sousse], they will look elsewhere” (TunExp03)*

*“In 2015, it was normal going to Kyiv or another city for studying. Now, going abroad to study has become the norm” (UkMIg02, Focus Group)*



## Fieldwork – Migration propensities and Environmental changes

Changes of environmental conditions are **not mentioned or perceived as a direct reason for migration abroad.**

- Most often environmental changes do not usually lead to the complete abandonment of land and international migration, but rather to patterns of internal short-term mobility (*Senegal*)
- It is interesting to note that along with water shortage the increasing air pollution in urban areas is a factor often mentioned when considering to leave abroad (*Tunisia*)
- Environmental factors have little to no impact as a migration driver (in case mostly due to water scarcity tied to political insecurity affecting the management of dams) (*Iraq*)



# Fieldwork – Cities as an ambivalent experience

## Settled migrants

***"Dakar is different, is not Senegal! [...] In Dakar, people adopt the 'European way of living'. Things that you cannot find in other regions can be found in Dakar".*** (SenegalMig26).

***"When you are young, you grow with the idea that Dakar is "The City"! Dakar attracts the curiosity of everyone and you want to go see what's going on there"*** (SenegalMig25)

***"I had a lot of positive changes in my life here [in Dakar] but I didn't achieve my goals. I only manage somehow to feed my family"*** (SenMig20)

***"Honesty I am not ready to stay longer [in Senegal]...I need to overcome a painful enduring precariousness"*** (SenMig28)

## Newcomers

***"Dakar is the springboard for Europe."***

***"If someone comes to Dakar it is nothing more than the beginning of the journey. [...] In Dakar we try to earn a living little by little and if we are given an opportunity...we take our chance!"*** (SenMig24)

***"I think in the future more and more people will leave because if people can't find what to do in this country, they'll just leave. [...] If I could go today, I would do it"*** (SenegalMig26)

## Fieldwork – Mismatch between “aspiration” and “migration”

- **Aspirations to move abroad do not necessary translate into a concrete plan to migrate to Europe**  
Legal migration is increasingly perceived as an **unattainable goal** rather than a **feasible, planned project**.

*"I haven't been abroad yet, but **what remains difficult is getting the visa. You just have to bide your time. If your turn comes, you will leave**" (SenegalMig03)*

*"I fell stuck! I could also go back home because my family owns a land but not the proper means to cultivate"*

*"I don't have a specific destination. **Wherever you go, you don't leave without having their swallow. You must first have a secure contact before disembarking. Before leaving, make sure you have a family or a host, a contact person to be able to reach your destination**" (SenMig16)*

- **Little or no aspirations to migrate (Ukraine)**

To have the capabilities to move does not imply the aspiration to migrate. When nationalistic sentiments are on the rise, remaining and working for one's own country is a mission...a moral duty:

*"Well, people just think that everything is much better there in Europe in terms of economic and in terms of some political management there, but **all this can be done in Ukraine as well. We just need to put an effort, instead of thinking about any opportunities in other countries. You need to look for opportunities to bring your country to a new level. Because, I believe that Ukraine has a very high potential in this regard**". (UkMig25)*

## Key takeaways

*“You just have to bide your time. If your turn comes, you will leave”*

1. The “**urban experience**” plays a key role in understanding the individual propensities to move abroad: a **field of evaluation** of the aspirations to move or to stay put;
2. Cities are still, largely a **stepping stone** for further migration abroad but always more often they become a **final involuntary destination** by default than by choice;
3. **The trajectories of migration aspirations are fragmented** and change over individual lifecourse and along the migration routes (differences with respect to the time of arrival to cities);
4. Aspirations to leave abroad do not translate into “Europe” as main place of reference. Migration destinations are mostly the outcome of **an evaluation of the availability of reliable networks of relations**
5. The comparative research highlights not only the influence of different socio-historical backgrounds on the decision to migrate, but also the **increasing attitude to rely on informal networks** against the reduction of legal migration channels.

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# Thank you for the attention!



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