



**PACES**

Making migration and migration policy decisions  
amidst societal transformations

# Final Conference Proceedings

4-5 June 2026 | Université Sorbonne Paris Nord | Campus Condorcet

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Université Sorbonne Paris Nord

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**PACES (Making migration and migration policy decisions amidst societal transformation)** is a 40-month research project (2023-2026) that examines decisions to stay and migrate over time and space, researches the politics of knowledge in migration policy and seeks to use its insights to inform future migration policies and governance. PACES is carried out by a consortium of 14 partners in Europe, Africa and the USA.

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The views presented are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the views of the institutions with which they are affiliated.



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## Overview

The PACES Final Conference, held on June 4-5, 2026, and hosted by the Université Sorbonne Paris Nord (USPN) at the Campus Condorcet in Aubervilliers, France, served as the culmination of this EU Horizon Programme-funded project dedicated to examining the complex dynamics of migration decision-making and migration policy development amidst global and local societal transformations. Bringing together a consortium of fourteen research institutions spanning Africa, Europe, and the United States, the project aimed to investigate the factors influencing individual choices to migrate or stay as well as the assumptions and ideas that underpin contemporary migration policies. For the Final Conference, USPN affiliated PACES researchers, Antoine Pécoud and Filip Savatic, invited a diverse roster of fourteen external guest speakers, including scholars, civil society representatives, and institutional actors from around the globe. This ensured that the two-day event went beyond presenting the scientific outputs from PACES, connecting project researchers with colleagues working on similar themes in academia and beyond, and serving as a forum for fruitful dialogue on topics of mutual interest.

The conference began on Thursday morning with a high-profile “Opening Session & Keynote Lecture,” open to the public and setting the tone for the event. **Simona Vezzoli**, the Principal Investigator of PACES based at the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS) of Erasmus University Rotterdam (Netherlands), began by synthesizing three years of collective research, presenting key findings on how migration aspirations are formed and evolve across time and contexts, as well as on the assumptions underpinning migration policies adopted across Europe. Following this overview, **Ash Amin**, Professor Emeritus at the University of Cambridge (United Kingdom) and recipient of a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) for his contributions to the social sciences, delivered a keynote lecture entitled “Urban foreclosure and its foreshadows: Inside the ‘black hole’ of Naples.” Through his lecture, Amin reflected on theoretical frameworks which link urban environments to broader social questions of belonging and exclusion, drawing on his extensive work in cultural and economic geography as well as recent fieldwork in the Castel Volturno neighborhood of Naples. He notably highlighted the way in which origins (African and Napolitano), spatial segregation, and limited governance shape or “suspend” the lives of local residents, (fail to) generate systems of intracommunal solidarity, and fuel resentments and disillusionment. Simona Vezzoli, Antoine Pécoud, and Filip Savatic concluded the session by connecting Amin’s work with PACES findings on the factors which shape migration aspirations, and the ways local realities (im)mobilize individuals seeking to improve their life circumstances.

The first thematic panel on Thursday afternoon, “Migration Decision-Making,” examined why individuals choose to leave their places of residence across a variety of local contexts and circumstances. **Jessica Hagen-Zanker** of the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) and Overseas Development Institute (ODI) (Norway and United Kingdom) kicked off the session by mapping the multi-level determinants that shape international migration aspirations, drawing upon findings from the MIGNEX project, and moving beyond simple economic models to include a number of key social, political, and environmental variables. **Dereje**

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**Feyissa Dori** from Addis Ababa University (Ethiopia) then explored the religious motivations that drive migrations from the Hadiya region of Ethiopia to South Africa, highlighting the overlooked role of faith and other so-called “irrational” motivations in mobility decisions. Finally, **Omolola Olarinde** from Elizade University (Nigeria), examined the gendered economics of migration, drawing upon findings from the DYNAMIG project. She specifically presented her research regarding how shifting household financial responsibilities in Kenya, Morocco, and Nigeria alter traditional migratory patterns, identifying an emerging trend where women’s migration is increasingly encouraged as a means of acquiring capital even as gender norms hold women back from realizing their aspirations. The session concluded with a discussion led by PACES researchers Oliver Bakewell and Ralitzia Dimova from the University of Manchester (United Kingdom).

The second thematic panel on Thursday, “(Non)-Migration Policies and Migrant Decision-Making en Route,” shifted the focus to the factors which shape the social and spatial trajectories of individuals on a migratory journey. **Ruth Achenbach** from Goethe University Frankfurt (Germany) presented findings from the ASPIRE project (a PACES sister project), examining the “role of longing and belonging” in the (im)mobility decisions of (privileged) Japanese migrants in Germany, and illustrating how emotional attachments to places can supersede “rational” economic incentives. **Julia Van Dessel** from Oxford University (United Kingdom) broadened the scope in her presentation of EU migration deterrence efforts, tracing the content of information campaigns designed to disincentivize migration and the increasingly widespread use of digital mechanisms to restrict the ability of individuals to retrieve information online. She highlighted the (post)colonial legacies in which these information campaigns and practices are embedded, as well as the limited impact they have on individual migration aspirations. Finally, **Lea Müller-Funk** from Danube University Krems (Austria) addressed the “involuntary immobility” of individuals fleeing violent conflict, analyzing how education and welfare policies shape the aspirations of forced migrants, and highlighting the mechanisms which further individual (im)mobility in transit spaces. The panel concluded with a discussion led by PACES researchers Lucia Mýtna Kureková, from the Institute of Forecasting of the Slovak Academy of Sciences (Slovakia) and María Jesús Cabezón Fernández from the University of Alicante (Spain).

On Friday morning, the third thematic panel, “Knowledge of Migration Processes and Migration Policy-Making,” interrogated the intersection of information production, political populism, and migration governance. **Ferruccio Pastore** from FIERI in Turin (Italy) delivered an analysis of “magical thinking and policy opportunism,” dissecting how populist leaders accept irregular migration as a way to limit negative economic effects of restrictive migration policies. **Sadio Soukouna** from the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM) (Canada) brought critical attention to the Sahel region, examining how knowledge regarding migration governance is produced and contested amidst ongoing crises, with a focus on non-state actors who fill gaps in capacity and shape public policy responses to (forced) migratory flows. Finally, **Audrey Lenoël**, affiliated with the Collège de France and the Institut Convergence Migrations (France), contributed insights from the MIGCHOICE project, examining projects financed by the EU Trust Fund (EUTF) for Africa which aim to discourage migration by fostering local economic opportunities and addressing supposed

“root causes” of emigration. She highlighted the problematic assumptions which underpin the EUTF’s projects, and the narratives which sustain them across contexts, despite significant evidence showing their lack of effectiveness in shaping migration aspirations. Riccardo Biggi from the University of Leiden (Netherlands) and Filip Savatic from the Université Sorbonne Paris Nord (France), facilitated the ensuing discussion focused on how academic knowledge (fails to) translate into effective and humane policy frameworks.

The fourth and final thematic session on Friday, “Migration Decisions in a Changing Landscape for Development Aid,” included a second presentation of PACES outputs, with a focus on policy-relevant findings derived from the project, followed by a roundtable discussion of the ways in which recent changes to development aid funding may shape migration decision- and policy-making. The session began with a formal presentation by **Abigail Goldfarb** from the Migration Policy Institute Europe (MPIE) (Belgium) of ten policy recommendations that stem from PACES research. The subsequent roundtable discussion, prepared and moderated by **Camille Le Coz** of MPIE, featured **Matiada Ngalikpima** of Expertise France, **Cynthia Lavison** of FORIM, **Jason Gagnon** of the Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, and **Hélène Thiollet** of CNRS & Sciences Po Paris (all four institutions in France). The group engaged in a dialogue regarding how recent transformations in the architecture of international development aid are shifting the priorities of donors in the face of new geopolitical realities, leading to the strategic use of migration as a means to further interest and financing (“migration-washing”) despite limited changes to projects on the ground, and increasing the relevance of non-state actors such as diasporas.

The conference concluded with short forward-looking segment entitled “The Final Conference as Point of Departure,” designed to frame the event not as a terminus but as a catalyst for future scholarship. **Simona Vezzoli, Antoine Pécoud and Filip Savatic**, delivered concluding remarks that reiterated the project’s commitment to long-term data analysis and the generation of new knowledge beyond the project’s formal conclusion at the end of the month. They emphasized that the rich datasets collected across numerous countries in Africa and Europe would continue to yield insights for years to come. The proceedings closed with short reflections from PACES researchers, offering personal accounts of their hopes for how the collaborative spirit fostered at Campus Condorcet would endure, ensuring that the questions raised during the conference would continue to animate their work and the field of migration studies.

## Conference Sessions

### Opening Session and Keynote Lecture

The opening session of the PACES Final Conference explored migration decision-making through the lens of social transformations and the precarious realities of marginalized communities. Simona Vezzoli, Principal Investigator of PACES, presented key insights and findings from the project. In particular, she emphasized how aspirations to migrate are volatile and shaped by a complex interplay of local conditions, social norms, and structural constraints; findings from Ethiopia, Nigeria, and Algeria suggest that while capitalist

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modernization creates uncertainty and hope, policy interventions often fail because they do not consider the underlying factors which shape aspirations to leave one's home. Complementing this, Ash Amin's keynote lecture focused on his recent fieldwork in the Castel Volturno neighborhood of Naples, positing that, in the "social margins," time becomes textured and suspended for dispossessed African migrants who, despite facing illegality, exploitation, and trauma, create generative spaces of co-existence. These marginal communities allow fragments of their pasts to resurface, transforming survival into new forms of social power and networks that operate outside formal structures and foster care and collective identity. The support structures developed by individuals who arrived to Castel Volturno from Africa stand in contrast to the relative desolation of poor and dispossessed locals of Napolitan descent who reside in segregated but proximate areas, and who await limited to nonexistent support from public authorities.

Together, these perspectives suggest a research imperative to understand how the migration experience fundamentally alters one's relationship with time, shifting individuals from future-oriented planning to present-oriented survival when confronted with difficult conditions. The synthesis points toward a nuanced view where the spaces of migration (whether in the volatile aspirations of potential movers or the suspended lives of those already on the margins) are not merely zones of loss but sites of emergence. In these spaces, the suspension of life under illegality paradoxically offers protection and allows for the reconfiguration of identity, revealing the need for policy approaches that support informed agency and recognize the deep, often traumatic, continuity between past, present, and uncertain futures.

## Migration Decision-Making

The first thematic panel of the conference focused on the factors which shape whether individuals aspire to migrate and take action to realize that aspiration. The three presentations collectively highlighted the complexity of migration decision-making, moving beyond economic determinism. Jessica Hagen-Zanker presented an analysis of MIGNEX project data revealing that drivers such as poverty and livelihoods often exert contradictory effects; while hardship fuels the desire to migrate, extreme poverty simultaneously constrains individual capabilities to leave. She identified corruption as a consistent predictor of resolute migration aspirations, yet emphasized that determinants sitting at multiple levels (individual, household, and community) can push individuals in opposing directions. During the discussion, it was suggested that the impact of distinct factors depends heavily on the specific configuration of conditions in any given setting, offering an avenue for further research.

Complementing this structural view, the other two panel presentations delved into the cultural and social norms that mediate migration aspirations. Omololá Olarinde presented results from the DYNAMIG project, focused on women in Kenya, Morocco, and Nigeria, and arguing that while economic roles are shifting, entrenched caregiving responsibilities continue to limit women's ability to translate migration aspirations into action. Dereje Feyissa presented his recent work on the Ethiopia-South Africa migratory corridor, showing how migration can be framed as a "prophecy fulfilled," with evangelical Christianity

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providing spiritual resources to individuals navigating risk and hardship. He illustrated how religious belief can function as both an enabler of mobility and a framework for sense-making. During the discussion, questions were raised as to whether a religious impulse might eventually turn against migration as prophetic benefits are not realized, and how one can disentangle the interplay between “spiritual” and economic motivations.

Together, the insights presented suggest that migration can neither be understood nor influenced by a perspective focused exclusively on material factors (or “root causes”). Analyzing migration requires looking at how overlapping identity markers and intangible factors like faith and emotions interact with structural constraints. In terms of potential implications for policy, the various findings point towards a need for tailored approaches that recognize the temporal and contextual variability of migration drivers, acknowledging that norms around gender and spirituality can either amplify or dampen the desire to move regardless of economic incentives. This nuanced perspective offers significant avenues for developing a further research agenda regarding the factors shaping migration decision-making and the ways in which policy interventions can impact them.

### (Non)-Migration Policies and Migrant Decision-Making en Route

The second thematic panel featured three analyses of distinct migration dynamics (from privileged or “high skilled” migration, to irregular migration deterrence, to forced migration) across different contexts. Ruth Achenbach presented findings from the ASPIRE project (a PACES sister project), regarding Japanese migrants in Germany. In particular, she demonstrated how professional belonging and lifestyle preferences play a central role in decisions of whether to stay, return, or move onward, revealing gendered and life-stage variations, all within the context of “privileged” and legally secure migration statuses. In turn, Julia Van Dessel presented recent findings from her research regarding EU efforts to deter (irregular) migration across West Africa via information campaigns and novel digital surveillance mechanisms. She offered a critique of “border spectacles” and reflected on the (post)colonial legacies of modern (cyber-)bordering strategies and information campaigns. Finally, Lea Müller-Funk presented findings regarding the mobility of Syrians fleeing violent conflict, emphasizing how non-migration policies (notably related to education and healthcare) act as critical drivers for displacement when state provision fails, forcing refugees into strategies of active waiting or parallel investment. This connected to PACES findings regarding the role of non-migration policies in influencing migration aspirations and decision-making.

The three presentations collectively underscored the limitations of efforts to deter migration and the necessity of a postcolonial perspective to understand policy development. As noted in the discussion, information campaigns designed to discourage migration often prove ineffective because recipients perceive them as propaganda, failing to account for the structural inequalities that propel movement. The research presented also suggests that continuities exist in how the “other” is constructed, from the cultural alienation felt by skilled Japanese workers in Europe to the surveillance mechanisms applied to West African mobile users seeking information about migration opportunities. Moreover, policy frameworks that emphasize reinforced border controls overlook the

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reality that non-migration policies, such as access to social rights and services, are equally influential in shaping decisions, particularly in conflict-prone regions where survival depends on informal social protection.

The session also highlighted the emotional and cognitive dimensions of mobility, aligning with broader PACES findings on aspirations. Concepts such as “professional belonging” and the ambivalence experienced during “involuntary immobility” demonstrate that migration decisions are not merely rational calculations but are deeply rooted in feelings of in/exclusion. Whether through the lens of Japanese migrants navigating cultural dissonance or Syrians managing uncertainty, the panel revealed a common complexity in human agency. In this way, it offers a lens to analyze migration outcomes that complements PACES findings regarding the factors impacting decision-making of people on the move.

### Knowledge of Migration Processes and Migration Policy-Making

The third thematic panel shifted the focus to the assumptions and factors that underly migration policy-making. Through their work, Ferruccio Pastore and Audrey Lenoël both critiqued the significant gap between policy narratives and empirical realities in migration governance. Pastore focused his presentation on the way populist leaders manage the cognitive dissonance between migraphobia and economic dependence on migrant labor through “magical thinking,” believing that deterrence measures and awareness campaigns function effectively despite evidence to the contrary. Similarly, Lenoël’s analysis of data from the MIGCHOICE project reveals how a policy model linking entrepreneurship and vocational training to reduce migration has become institutionalized in European governance, even though ethnographic evidence demonstrates that migration decisions are driven by complex factors like dignity, family obligations, and uncertainty rather than economic incentives. This “traveling” model is applied in policies seeking to address the supposed “root causes” of migration, despite significant evidence that such interventions fail and that adaptability to local conditions and contexts is necessary for projects to achieve their ostensible objectives. Both presentations suggest that policy frameworks often rely on simplified causal stories that persist due to the way certain narratives bolster political legitimacy, with limited concern for effectiveness.

The question of who produces knowledge about migration and how it is validated is central to Sadio Soukouna’s contribution, which shifted the analytical focus from states and international organizations to non-state actors (local networks, community leaders, and NGOs), thereby challenging our understanding of migration governance, particularly in areas experienced multiple crises, such as the Sahel region in West Africa. This perspective highlights that policies are co-produced through interactions among diverse actors rather than imposed solely by states. In the West African context, non-state actors have played a central role in responding to forced migrations, with state responses in turn reactive to the demands and actions from those actors, as opposed to leading initiatives to address human movements. At the same time, Soukouna raised critical methodological challenges, noting that fear, surveillance, and political repression in conflict zones can render certain spaces inaccessible to researchers, potentially skewing knowledge production and introducing systematic biases into research outputs.

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Collectively, the panel underscored the challenges inherent in migration governance. Lenoël emphasized the way the present often feels more uncertain than the future for many migrants, making migration a rational pathway for stability. At the same time, Pastore illustrated how governments maintain mass irregularity as a sub-optimal equilibrium that satisfies contradictory political demands. Soukouna furthered the analysis by demonstrating how governance involves informal social protection and local negotiation, dynamics that are often missed by researchers. Together, they call for a deeper examination of how knowledge gains authority, why certain explanations remain politically persuasive despite limited support, and the need to incorporate diverse perspectives, including from actors marginalized by conflict or populist rhetoric, into migration policy analysis.

## Migration in a Changing Landscape for Development Aid

The final thematic session of the conference featured a presentation of the policy implications of key PACES findings and a reflection on the policy outreach conducted by the PACES team throughout the past three years. This presentation was followed by a roundtable discussion focused on the potential impacts of recent changes to development aid on migration decision-making and policy-making, bringing together researchers with civil society and institutional representatives based in Paris for a multifaceted dialogue.

First, Abigail Goldfarb presented the following ten policy-relevant findings from PACES:

1. Decisions on migration policy are based on different assumptions across migration pathways and the use of evidence in policymaking also varies across policy issues.
2. Migration policies have relatively limited influence on migration aspirations compared to stronger personal drivers and structural conditions, with facilitative policies generally more effective than deterrence measures.
3. There is a shared preference for regular migration channels among migrants and European publics.
4. Knowledge of migration policies—and the impact they have on migration decision-making—increases as the migration journey progresses.
5. Migrants often lack reliable information about migration policies and their rights—both during the journey and in destination contexts—while policy communication efforts remain misaligned with their information needs.
6. Public attitudes toward migration and migration policies are more nuanced and moderate than commonly assumed.
7. Persistent inequality and relative deprivation will continue to fuel migration aspirations, especially as people’s exposure to information—and to others’ living standards—expands.
8. Concerns about physical safety often outweigh economic considerations as key drivers of both departure and decisions along the route.
9. Access to welfare benefits influences migration flows, but the relationship is far from straightforward.
10. Return migration decisions are not a mirror image of initial migration aspirations.

These findings offer a potential basis for developing useful policy recommendations to improve migration governance. Ultimately, Goldfarb emphasized that, with respect to

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future engagement between researchers and practitioners, it is important to co-design research questions early, use trusted intermediaries, produce layered outputs, build in explicit reflection moments, and sustain relationships over time to ensure maximum impact.

The roundtable discussion offered four distinct perspectives regarding shifts in development assistance and its potential impact on migration. The session highlighted the growing tension between the political mainstreaming of migration objectives in development cooperation and the operational realities on the ground. Matiada Ngalikpima (Expertise France) and Jason Gagnon (Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne) both reflected on the way policy narratives increasingly frame migration as a central pillar of development strategies (involving partnerships, a focus on remittances, etc.), while the actual work of development actors remains focused on core sectors like employment, education, and governance. Gagnon emphasized that migration should not be viewed merely as a symptom of underdevelopment but as an intrinsic component of development itself, linked to labor markets and demographic transitions. However, this integration is occurring amidst reduced budgets for aid, creating a complex landscape where the multifaceted impacts of interventions on migration aspirations are acknowledged but often fail to translate into coherent operational shifts.

Compounding these challenges is the issue of "migration washing," as critiqued by H el ene Thiollet (CNRS / Sciences Po Paris), where development projects are rebranded to address migration concerns primarily to secure funding without altering their fundamental activities. This strategic reframing risks undermining the authenticity of development goals. In response to these shifting priorities, Cynthia Lavisson (FORIM) highlighted the need to recognize diaspora organizations as playing an increasingly important role in development. She emphasized that diaspora communities should be considered co-creators of policy rather than simply conduits for the implementation of projects. Her work and organization defend the autonomy of diaspora-led initiatives, especially as funding shifts away from development priorities towards migration control. Ultimately, she argued that effective engagement requires moving beyond instrumentalization to support long-standing, legitimate actors who design projects with communities, ensuring that mobility is treated as a source of enrichment rather than just a security risk to be managed.

The panel offered a rich dialogue through its diverse perspectives. The session highlighted a consensus on the necessity of a nuanced view of migration as an inherent part of development, and on two significant dangers: the systematic twisting of development agendas toward mere control and deterrence, and the instrumental use of migration concerns solely to attract funding without substantive change on the ground. The divergence between political rhetoric and field realities underscores the need to protect the autonomy of development actors against policies that prioritize deterrence over human mobility. Overall, this multifaceted discussion brought together individuals from diverse backgrounds spanning academic research, diplomatic expertise, and grassroots civil society, to critically examine how migration is conceptualized and managed in an era of shifting development paradigms.

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## Photos

All photo credits to Sarah Njoroge from the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS) of Erasmus University Rotterdam.

### Opening Session and Keynote Lecture



### Migration Decision-Making





### (Non)-Migration Policies and Migrant Decision-Making en Route



## Knowledge of Migration Processes and Migration Policy-Making

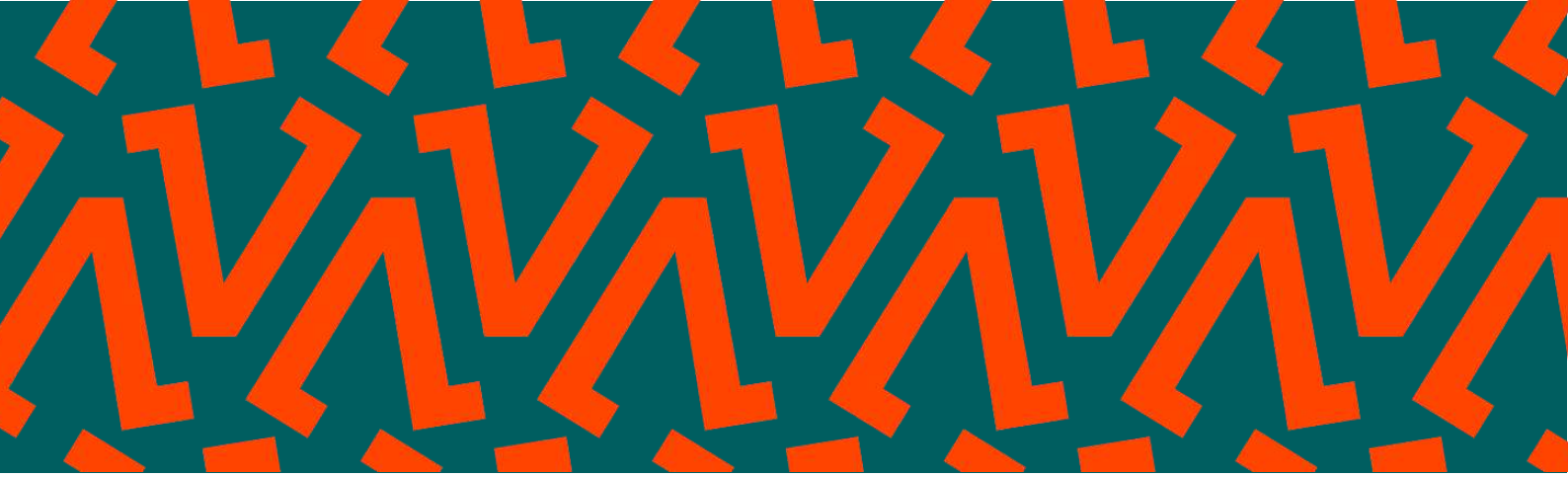


## Migration in a Changing Landscape for Development Aid



# Appendices

Full Conference Programme



# PACES

Making migration and migration policy decisions  
amidst societal transformations

## PACES FINAL CONFERENCE

### Full Programme

**4-5 June 2026 | Université Sorbonne Paris Nord | Campus Condorcet**

Centre de Colloques | Place du Front Populaire, 93300 Aubervilliers, France

Bâtiment de recherche Nord | 14 cours des Humanités, 93322 Aubervilliers, France



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## WELCOME AND CONTACT INFORMATION

**Bienvenue and welcome to the PACES Final Conference!** We are delighted to welcome you to Paris and the Campus Condorcet for what promises to be two days of enriching discussions on migration decision- and policy-making.

The PACES project, a European Union Horizon Programme funded consortium launched in 2023, has brought together researchers from 14 institutions across Africa, Europe and the United States to examine the factors shaping individual migration decisions and the assumptions underpinning migration policies

Over the past three years, the project has generated a wide range of scientific and policy-relevant outputs, reflecting the breadth and ambition of our collective endeavor. The rich data collected across numerous countries in Africa and Europe will continue to be analyzed long after the project's formal conclusion, and we look forward to the scholarship that will emerge from it in the years ahead. As the project draws to a close, we are proud to share its findings with a wider audience through this final conference.

For this conference, we wanted to do something a little different. In addition to presenting the project's results, we chose to open the floor to a wider community. We have invited researchers, as well as civil society representatives and institutional actors, from around the world to come to Paris and share their work – both with each other and with the PACES team. Their contributions speak to the same pressing questions that have animated our project, and we are delighted to provide a space for this exchange.

We are especially honored to welcome **Ash Amin**, Professor Emeritus at the University of Cambridge, as our keynote speaker for the opening session. A highly distinguished scholar, Professor Amin was awarded a CBE (Commander of the Order of the British Empire) by the United Kingdom for his outstanding contributions to the social sciences, and his work has profoundly shaped how we understand cities, society, and belonging. It is a privilege to have him with us.

Following the keynote, nine invited scholars will present work bearing on the project's core research themes: the drivers of migration decision-making; the relationship between (non)-migration policies and the choices made by individuals at various stages of migratory journeys; and the processes and assumptions that shape migration policy-making.

The conference will close with a roundtable session featuring a presentation of policy recommendations derived directly from PACES project findings prepared by the project affiliated team at the Migration Policy Institute Europe. This will be followed by a discussion between four Paris-based researchers and civil society and institutional representatives regarding the implications of the project's insights given significant recent transformations to international development aid.

We are deeply grateful to all 14 invited guest speakers for their time, insights, and willingness to engage with the themes of this project. Our sincere thanks also go to the administrators at the **Université Sorbonne Paris Nord** and **Campus Condorcet** who assisted with the organization of this event.

Finally, we wish to express our heartfelt gratitude to the entire PACES project team. It has been a genuine pleasure to work alongside such dedicated and talented colleagues. We look forward to the conversations that continue long after this conference.

We hope you enjoy the programme!



Antoine Pécoud

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## ABOUT PACES AND THE FINAL CONFERENCE

**PACES (Making migration and migration policy decisions amidst societal transformation)** is a 40-month research project (2023-2026) that examines decisions to stay and migrate over time and space, researches the politics of knowledge in migration policy and seeks to use its insights to inform future migration policies and governance. PACES is carried out by a consortium of 14 partners in Europe, Africa and the USA. The project has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon Europe research and innovation programme, under grant agreement N°101094279. For more information, visit the project website: [www.iss.nl/paces](http://www.iss.nl/paces).

### PACES Final Conference

The PACES Final Conference will bring together the project research team and 14 external guests for two days of discussions on project outputs and external research on related themes. The conference features a public exposé of the project’s key findings and a keynote lecture, followed by three panels on core themes, showcasing invited scholars researching migration decision- and policy-making. The conference concludes with a roundtable discussion between scholars and representatives from civil society and international institutions, exploring the policy implications of project findings amidst ongoing transformations in international development aid. The conference will take place at the Campus Condorcet (*Centre de Colloques and Bâtiment du recherche Nord*) in Aubervilliers, France.

### PACES Leadership

Simona Vezzoli

*PACES Principal Investigator*

International Institute of Social Studies (ISS) | Erasmus University Rotterdam

Kortenaerkade 12, 2518 AX, The Hague, The Netherlands

### PACES Final Conference Team

Antoine Pécoud

*Professor of Sociology*

Filip Savatic

*Postdoctoral Researcher*

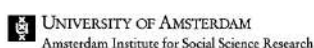
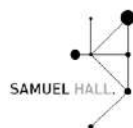
Institut de Droit Public, Sciences Politiques et Sociales (IDPS)

Université Sorbonne Paris Nord

99 avenue Jean-Baptiste Clément

93430 Villetaneuse, France

### PACES Partner Organizations



## THURSDAY | 4 JUNE 2026

09:00 *Welcome*

### Opening Session & Keynote Lecture

Centre de Colloques | Room 100

**09:30 Key findings and insights from the PACES project**

Simona Vezzoli | Erasmus University Rotterdam (ISS)

**10:00 Urban foreclosure and its foreshadows: Inside the 'black hole' of Naples**

Ash Amin | University of Cambridge

**10:45 Discussion**

11:30 *Group Photo & Lunch*

### Migration Decision-Making

Bâtiment de recherche Nord | Room 0.010

**13:30 The multi-level determinants of international migration aspirations**

Jessica Hagen-Zanker | Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO)

**13:50 Sacred imagination and capability: The spirituality of Hadiya migration to South Africa**

Dereje Feyissa | Addis Ababa University

**14:10 'Men respect women who have money': Migration decision-making in Kenya, Morocco, and Nigeria amid shifting household economic responsibility**

Omololá Olarinde | Elizade University

**14:30 Discussion**

Oliver Bakewell & Ralitza Dimova | University of Manchester

15:00 *Coffee Break*

### (Non)-Migration Policies and Migrant Decision-Making en Route

Bâtiment de recherche Nord | Room 0.010

**15:30 On the role of longing and belonging in privileged migrants' (im)mobility decision making: A spotlight on Japanese migrants in Germany**

Ruth Achenbach | Goethe University Frankfurt

**15:50 EU migration deterrence efforts from West Africa to digital spaces**

Julia van Dessel | Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB)

**16:10 Mobility struggles in contexts of violent conflict and involuntary immobility: The role of changing life aspirations, ambivalence, and attribution style**

Lea Müller-Funk | Danube University Krems

**16:30 Discussion**

Lucia Mýtna Kureková | Slovak Academy of Sciences

María Jesús Cabezón Fernández | University of Alicante

17:00 *Conclusion*

19:00 *Dinner in Paris*

La Ferrandaise | 8, rue de Vaugirard, 75006 Paris

## FRIDAY | 5 JUNE 2026

10:00 *Welcome Coffee and Pastries*

### Knowledge of Migration Processes and Migration Policy-Making

Bâtiment de recherche Nord | Room 0.010

**10:30 Magical thinking and policy opportunism: How migration populism works day by day**

Ferruccio Pastore | FIERI

**10:50 Knowledge production on migration governance in crisis contexts in the Sahel**

Sadio Soukouna | Université de Québec à Montréal (UQAM)

**11:10 Migration decision-making and policy-making in West Africa: Insights from the MIGCHOICE project**

Audrey Lenoel | Collège de France

**11:30 Discussion**

Riccardo Biggi | University of Leiden

Filip Savatic | Université Sorbonne Paris Nord

12:00 *Lunch*

### Migration Decisions in a Changing Landscape for Development Aid

Bâtiment de recherche Nord | Room 0.010

**13:30 PACES policy recommendations**

Abigail Goldfarb | Migration Policy Institute Europe (MPIE)

**13:50 Roundtable**

Matiada Ngalikpima | Expertise France

Cynthia Lavison | FORIM

Jason Gagnon | Independent Researcher

Hélène Thiollet | CNRS & Sciences Po CERI

*Moderator*

Camille Le Coz | Migration Policy Institute Europe (MPIE)

**14:30 Discussion**

### The Final Conference as Point of Departure

Bâtiment de recherche Nord | Room 0.010

**15:00 Concluding remarks**

Simona Vezzoli | Erasmus University Rotterdam (ISS)

Antoine Pécoud | Université Sorbonne Paris Nord

Filip Savatic | Université Sorbonne Paris Nord

15:30 *Interviews with PACES researchers: reflections on the project and final conference*



Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

## GUEST SPEAKERS

### Ash Amin



**Ash Amin** is Emeritus Professor of Geography and Fellow of Christ's College of the University of Cambridge. He is known for his work in urban, cultural and economic geography. He writes about cities and regions as relationally constituted; globalisation as everyday process; the economy as a cultural entity; race and multiculturalism at the intersection of biopolitics and vernacular practices, slums and dwelling practices; and the changing meanings of Europe. He has held Fellowships and Visiting Professorships at a number of European Universities, was the founding co-editor of the *Review of International Political Economy*, and is on the advisory board of a number of international journals. He is a Fellow of the British Academy and of the Academy of Social Sciences, and Foreign Member of the Italian Accademia Nazionale Dei Lincei. He holds an honorary doctorate from Uppsala University and was Foreign Secretary of the British Academy from 2015 to 2019. He was awarded a CBE (Commander of the Order of the British Empire) in 2014 for his contributions to social science, and the Olof Palme Visiting Professorship by the Swedish Research Council, which he held at Uppsala University in 2021.

### Audrey Lenoël

**Audrey Lenoël** is an independent researcher affiliated with the Collège de France. Between 2020 and 2026, she was a postdoctoral researcher and scientific coordinator at the Institut Convergences Migrations, a project of the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS). Her research focuses on the social and political effects of international migration and migration policies in migrants' countries of origin, particularly in North and West Africa. After completing a PhD at the University of Bristol on women left behind in Morocco, she contributed to several international research projects, including on return migration in Senegal (TEMPER, EU FP7), the effects of development interventions on migration aspirations and decisions in The Gambia, Guinea and Senegal (MIGCHOICE, IOM), and migration and poverty in Djibouti (World Bank).



### Cynthia Lavison



**Cynthia Lavison** is currently Head of Advocacy at FORIM (Forum des Organisations de Solidarité Internationale issues des Migrations), a national platform founded in 2002 that brings together approximately 1,000 diaspora-led non-profits carrying out activities to foster integration in France and on-the-ground development projects across the Global South. Prior to this role, she served as a policy analyst and project lead at the OECD. There, her work focused on inclusive entrepreneurship, in particular migrant entrepreneurship, as well as the innovation-inclusive development nexus. With a career spanning over a decade in international policy and advocacy, she leverages her expertise to strengthen the impact of diaspora-led initiatives and promote cross-border cooperation. She holds a M.A in Economics and Public Policy from Sciences Po Paris, a M.Sc. in Economics from École Polytechnique.

## Dereje Feyissa Dori

**Dereje Feyissa** holds a PhD in Social Anthropology from Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, Germany. He has held postdoctoral fellowships at Osaka University (Japan), the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology (Germany), and as an Alexander von Humboldt Fellow at the University of Bayreuth (Germany). He is currently an Associate Professor at Addis Ababa University, Guest Professor at the University of Tübingen (Germany), Research & Policy Advisor at the Life & Peace Institute, and Research Associate at the Horn Centre for Democracy. His research focuses on conflict, democracy, religion and politics, and migration. He has authored and co-edited several books, peer-reviewed journal articles and chapters to edited volumes, including *Borders and Borderlands as Resources in the Horn of Africa* (2010), *Playing Different Games: Inter-Ethnic Relations in the Gambella Region* (2011), *Ethiopia in the Wake of Political Reform* (2020), *Migration as a Collective Project: Hadiya Migration to South Africa* (2026), and *Democratization in the Horn of Africa: Structural Constraints, Political Dynamics, and Future Prospects*. In addition to his academic work, Dereje has held key leadership roles, including serving on the Board of the Social Science Research Council and the Governing Board of Addis Ababa University, contributing to institutional strategy and development.



## Ferruccio Pastore

**Ferruccio Pastore** is the Director of FIERI, an independent research institute on migration and society based in Torino (Italy). With a background in law (PhD EUI 1996) and political sociology, Ferruccio has written extensively on migration policies and politics. Among his most recent publications: *The making of migration narratives: understanding processes and gauging impacts*, special issue of the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* co-edited with B. Garcés (2025). He is an international fellow of the Institut Convergences Migration (ICM), a member of the Progressive Migration Group and of the Expert Group on Economic Migration (EGEM) of the European Commission. Besides research, he actively participates in the Italian public debate on migration-related issues.



## Hélène Thiollet

**Hélène Thiollet** is a research fellow at the CNRS. A former student of the École normale supérieure-Ulm (1998), she holds a PhD in political science (Sciences Po), a DEA in geography (Paris 1), and a master's degree in Greek literature (Paris 4). She was a postdoctoral researcher at Oxford and an ATER (temporary teaching and research associate) at the University of Paris Nord. Her work focuses on the international and comparative politics of migration and asylum, particularly in the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Europe. Her research also examines the crises and political transformations linked to migration and asylum. She teaches international relations, comparative politics, and migration studies at Sciences Po and the EHESS. She also serves on several editorial boards and committees of several major disciplinary journals, including the *Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales*, *Migration Politics*, and *PARISS*, and the *Journal of Refugee Studies*.



## Jason Gagnon



**Jason Gagnon** is a development economist and specialist in international migration with over 20 years of experience exploring the links between migration, development, forced displacement, and public policy. Former Head of the Migration and Skills Unit at the OECD Development Centre, he is currently an affiliated researcher at Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne and co-chairs the IRD's CoSav Migrations working group. His research focuses particularly on forced displacement, labor mobility policies, diasporas, South-South migration, and approaches based on the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.

## Jessica Hagen-Zanker

**Jessica Hagen-Zanker** is a Senior Research Fellow and Head Migration and Displacement Hub at ODI Global, and a Global Fellow at the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO). Her research focuses on migration policy-making, migration and development, migration decision-making, the interaction between migration and social protection, and the humanitarian-development nexus. She has designed and delivered numerous household surveys and has extensive data collection experience in South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East. She has advised numerous governments and international organisations, and has contributed to policy dialogue in many countries, (UK, India, Jordan and Nepal). She holds a PhD in Public Policy from Maastricht University.



## Julia Van Dessel



**Julia Van Dessel** is a Wiener-Anspach Postdoctoral Fellow at the Oxford Department of International Development (ODID) and a Research Associate at the Centre for Research and Studies in International Politics (REPI). She holds a PhD in Political and Social Sciences from the Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB), where she also earned two Master's degrees in European Studies and Ethics. Her research examines how border externalisation and digitalisation are reshaping EU migration governance and the regulation of international mobility.

## Lea Müller-Funk

**Lea Müller-Funk** is Assistant Professor at the Department for Migration and Globalisation at Danube University Krems. She holds a joint PhD degree in Comparative Politics and Arabic Studies from Sciences Po Paris and Vienna University. Her work focuses on migration processes and immobility in the context of violent conflict, transnational politics, and forced migration governance. Her projects SYRMAGINE (2017-2019, Marie Curie) and SYREALITY (2022-2027, Austrian Science Fund) have analysed the ways in which Syrian refugees undertake and experience (im)mobility. Her current ERC project "Refugees' Political Participation and State-(Re)Making in Displacement" (RESTATE, 2025-2030) investigates how refugees perceive and interact with the state throughout their displacement journeys, and how these perceptions shape their roles as political actors.



## Matiada Ngalikpima



**Matiada Ngalikpima** is currently the Deputy Head of the Migration, Gender, and Human Rights Department at Expertise France. Previously, she served as Deputy Head of the Global Threats (*Menaces Globales*) Department, where she spent over five years consolidating her expertise in strategy and the management of complex projects in the field of international security. During that tenure, she oversaw the development and execution of initiatives addressing global security challenges, managing a portfolio exceeding €130 million. Her responsibilities included leading multidisciplinary teams of more than 50 professionals and designing innovative solutions against organized crime and terrorism.

## Omolola Olarinde

**Omololá S Olarinde-Olomola** is a Senior Lecturer in Economics and convener of the migration, gender, and inclusive growth (MGIG) research group at Elizade University. Her research focuses on macroeconomic policies and strategies related to migration governance, with particular attention to migration decision-making and gender. She has contributed to a European Commission-funded project that explored aspirations, trajectories and policy effects in migration decision-making (DYNAMIG) and is part of the Economic and Social Research Council-funded research, Migration for Inclusive African Growth (MIAG). She writes for policy audiences and serves as a resource person for international organisations. She is a member of the Network of Migration Research on Africa (NOMRA) and of the Nigerian Economic Society (NES). She is an associate editor for the *International Journal of African Migration*.



## Ruth Achenbach



**Ruth Achenbach** is Senior Researcher at the Interdisciplinary Center for East Asian Studies and Head of Research in Asian Studies at Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany. She earned her PhD in Japanese studies at the University of Hamburg (Return Migration Decisions. A Study on Highly Skilled Chinese in Japan, Springer, 2017) and has since led projects on skilled migration in Asia (QuaMaFA, PI to a project on labor market transitions of Chinese graduates in Tokyo and Singapore) and Japanese migrants in Germany (AspirE, PI of the Germany team focusing on Japanese migrants in Germany).

## Sadio Soukouna

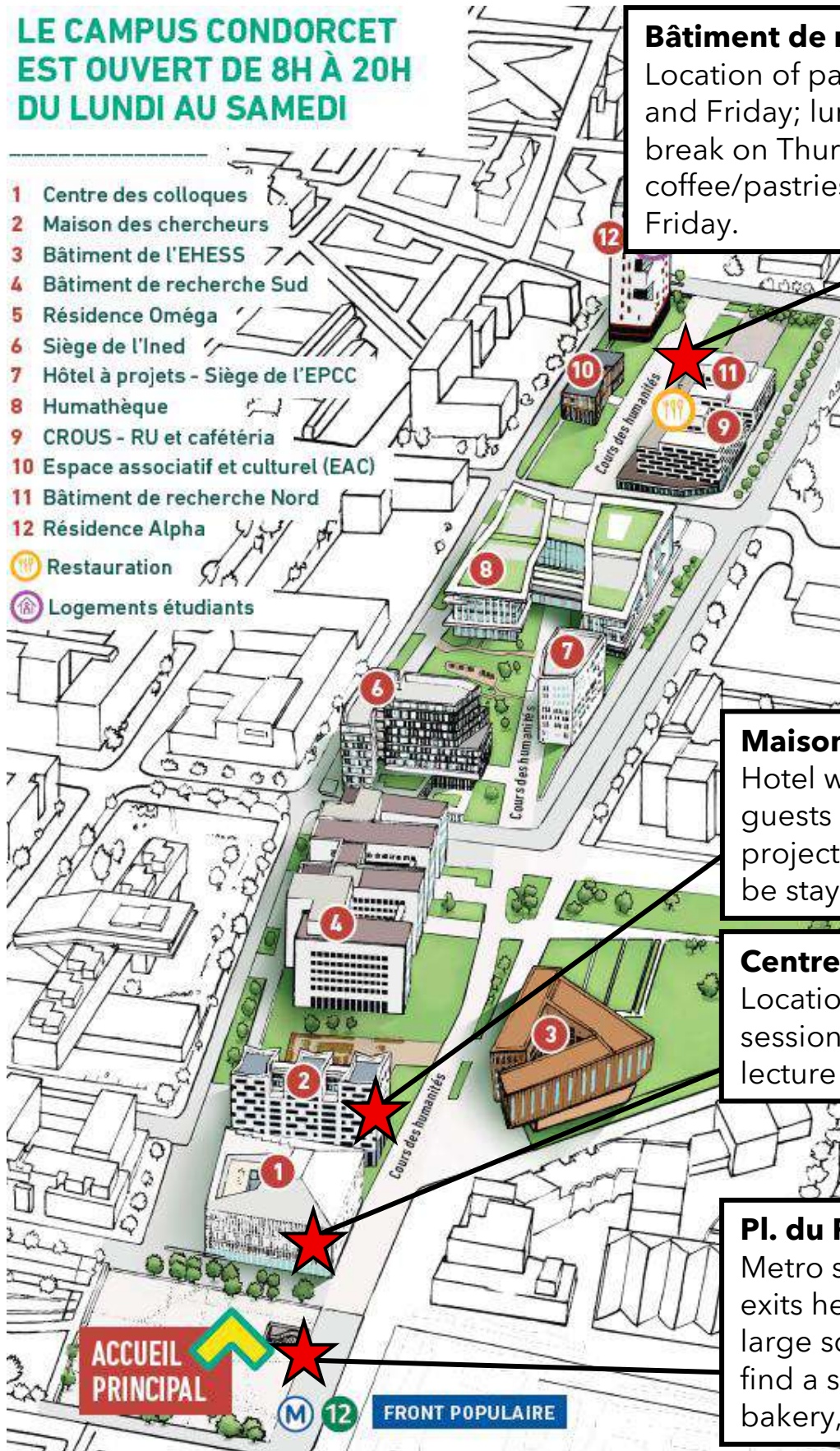
**Sadio Soukouna** is Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science at the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM). She previously taught at the Faculty of Administrative and Political Sciences at the University of Bamako (Mali). She held a postdoctoral fellowship at the French National Research Institute for Sustainable Development (IRD) from 2018 to 2021 and was a 2021-2022 fellow of the Africa Oxford Initiative. Her research examines migration and transnational mobility, with a particular focus on the ways in which migration shapes the formulation of public policies in Africa. She investigates the reconfiguration of the legitimacy of political and humanitarian actors in contexts of forced displacement in the Sahel.



# CAMPUS CONDORCET MAP

**LE CAMPUS CONDORCET EST OUVERT DE 8H À 20H DU LUNDI AU SAMEDI**

- 1 Centre des colloques
- 2 Maison des chercheurs
- 3 Bâtiment de l'EHESS
- 4 Bâtiment de recherche Sud
- 5 Résidence Oméga
- 6 Siège de l'Ined
- 7 Hôtel à projets - Siège de l'EPCC
- 8 Humathèque
- 9 CROUS - RU et cafétéria
- 10 Espace associatif et culturel (EAC)
- 11 Bâtiment de recherche Nord
- 12 Résidence Alpha
-  Restauration
-  Logements étudiants



## Bâtiment de recherche Nord

Location of panels on Thursday and Friday; lunch and coffee break on Thursday; welcome coffee/pastries and lunch on Friday.

## Maison des chercheurs

Hotel where all invited guests and many PACES project researchers will be staying.

## Centre des colloques

Location of opening session and keynote lecture on Thursday.

## Pl. du Front Populaire

Metro stop on line 12 exits here. Around the large square, you will find a supermarket, bakery, and cafés.

## PUBLIC TRANSIT IN PARIS




Paris has one of the most extensive public transit networks in the world, and it is quite easy to use. **We highly recommend that you take the Metro/RER trains for all your journeys to/and from your airport or train stations, as well as any trips into the city center.** To use public transit, you should purchase a NAVIGO EASY card and charge it with rides. Metro and RER (regional train network that functions just like the metro) rides are 2,55€ per journey (regardless of distance/locations traversed). You will probably only use the Metro/RER system, and do not need to charge Bus/Tram tickets onto your card. (Note that Bus and Tram tickets are 2,05€ per journey). You can download the "Bonjour RATP" and/or "Ile-de-France Mobilités" apps (either one works) onto your smartphones for maps, live updates about any issues, and suggestions for optimal routes. Further information is available in English at the following links. Suggested journeys to the Campus Condorcet (where the conference will take place) and to the Le Ferrandaise restaurant (dinner on Thursday) are below.

**Paris Tourism:** <https://parisjetaime.com/eng/article/public-transport-a555>



**Paris Metro:** <https://www.bonjour-ratp.fr/en/>

**Ile de France Regional Public Transit:** <https://www.iledefrance-mobilites.fr/en>



### From Charles de Gaulle Airport to the Campus Condorcet

<p>Take the RER B - <i>direction Paris</i> - and exit at <b>GARE DU NORD</b></p> 	<p>Transfer to Metro line 4 - <i>direction Porte de Clignancourt</i> - and exit at <b>MARCADET POISSONNIERS</b> (3 stops)</p> 	<p>Transfer to Metro line 12 - <i>direction Mairie d'Aubervilliers</i> - and exit at <b>FRONT POPULAIRE</b> (3 stops)</p> 
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### From Gare du Nord to the Campus Condorcet

<p>Take Metro line 4 - <i>direction Porte de Clignancourt</i> - and exit at <b>MARCADET POISSONNIERS</b> (3 stops)</p> 	<p>Transfer to Metro line 12 - <i>direction Mairie d'Aubervilliers</i> - and exit at <b>FRONT POPULAIRE</b> (3 stops)</p> 
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### From Orly Airport to the Campus Condorcet

<p>Take to Metro line 14 - direction Saint-Denis - Pleyel - and exit at <b>MADLINE</b> (14 stops)</p> 	<p>Transfer to Metro line 12 - direction Mairie d'Aubervilliers - and exit at <b>FRONT POPULAIRE</b> (12 stops)</p> 
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### From the Campus Condorcet to La Ferrandaise (Dinner on Thursday)

<p>Take Metro line 12 - direction Mairie d'Issy - and exit at <b>MARCADET</b> <b>POISSONNIERS</b> (3 stops)</p> 	<p>Transfer to Metro line 4 - direction Bagneux - Lucie Aubrac - and exit at <b>ODEON</b> (13 stops)</p> 	<p>Walk 500 meters to:  <i>La Ferrandaise</i>  8 Rue de Vaugirard 75006 Paris</p>
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## EMERGENCY NUMBERS

<p><b>THE NUMBERS TO KNOW IN AN EMERGENCY</b></p> <p><small>USE THESE EMERGENCY NUMBERS TO GET THROUGH TO THE EMERGENCY SERVICES FREE OF CHARGE, 24/7</small></p>	<p><b>112</b></p> <p><b>EUROPEAN EMERGENCY NUMBER</b></p> <p><small>If you are a victim or witness of an accident in a country in the European Union</small></p>	<p><b>15</b></p> <p><b>SAMU</b></p> <p><small>THE FRENCH EMERGENCY MEDICAL</small></p> <p><small>To call out a medical team to a medical emergency as well as to be referred to a round-the-clock health facility</small></p>
<p><b>17</b></p> <p><b>EMERGENCY POLICE NO.</b></p> <p><small>To report a crime requiring an immediate police response</small></p>	<p><b>18</b></p> <p><b>FIRE BRIGADE</b></p> <p><small>To report a dangerous situation or accident concerning people or property and receive a swift response</small></p>	<p><b>114</b></p> <p><b>EMERGENCY NUMBER FOR DEAF AND HARD-OF-HEARING PEOPLE</b></p> <p><small>If you are a victim or witness of an emergency situation and require emergency assistance. Number can be accessed by fax and SMS</small></p>

## Simona Vezzoli Presentation



Making migration and migration policy decisions  
amidst societal transformations

# Decision-making in migration: overview and insights from the PACES project

Simona Vezzoli

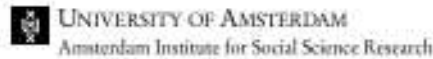
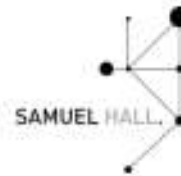
4 June 2026

# The PACES project: a 14-partner consortium

[www.iss.nl/PACES](http://www.iss.nl/PACES)

- Higher education and independent research organizations
- International organizations
- Private sector
- Civil society

## Partner organizations



## Associated partners



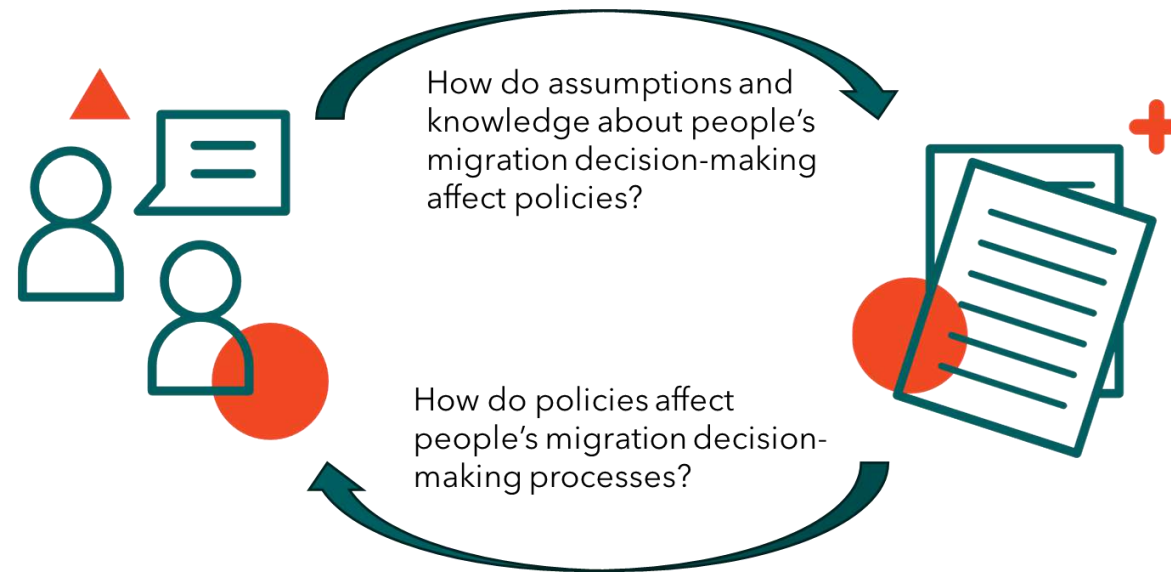
# What is PACES about?

# Research questions

How do changes in society, individual life experiences and migration policy shape decisions to stay or to migrate over time and across countries?

And how can this knowledge inform future migration policies and governance?

## Towards a holistic understanding of decision-making



# What research did we carry out?

# Research components and countries of research

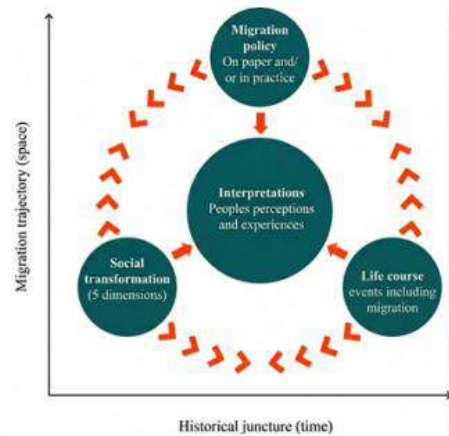
Research component	Sub-component	Countries	Methods
Migration policy decision-making	Mapping and typology of policy instruments	EU level, Austria, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Slovakia and Sweden	Interviews, policy documents
		Austria, Italy, the Netherlands	Interviews, policy documents
	In-depth analysis of implemented policy initiatives	Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire	Interviews, policy documents
	Public opinion on migration policies	Austria, Italy, the Netherlands, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden	Survey
Migration decision-making	Decision-making before migration	Algeria, Ethiopia and Nigeria	Interviews, experiments
	Decision-making of people on the move	Algeria, Ethiopia and Nigeria; Niger and Tunisia; Italy, Slovakia and Spain	Survey, interviews



# Two conceptual frameworks

# How are decisions made by people?

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK ON MIGRATION DECISION-MAKING



**Social transformation**  
Deep changes in demography, politics (migration and non-migration policies), economy, technology, culture (e.g. social norms), environment

Perceptions and expectations in relation to various locations

	Past experience	Present perceptions	Future expectations
Current location	+	-	+
Other location	-	-	+

**Life course**  
Stages of life that are recognized and expected in the community (finishing studies, entry in labour market, finding a partner, marriage or divorce)

Perceptions and expectations in relation to own life

	Past experience	Present perception	Future expectations
Self	+	-	+
Others	-	+	+

**Desire to stay and migrate**  
How do expectations of societal and personal changes relate to each other? And how do they influence the decision to migrate or stay? What is more influential? Do we observe patterns?

For example:

- Do people with positive future expectation of their society and positive self-expectation desire to stay?
- And do people with positive future expectation of society and negative self-expectations desire to migrate?

What do we learn from this comparison about how the context and the life course shape the desire to stay and migrate?

**At origin**  
Archival research (Tasks 4.2)  
Ethnographic research (4.2)  
Interviews across generations and the life course (4.3)  
Labs in the field experiments (4.4)  
Migration policies from below (4.2-4.5)

**On the move in Africa**  
Survey module (migrants in Libya) (5.3)  
Qualitative interviews (migrants in Algeria, Ethiopia, Nigeria) (5.1)

**On the move in the EU**  
Survey module (migrants in Italy) (5.3)  
Qualitative interviews (Nigerian migrants in Italy, Slovakia, Spain) (5.2)

Different persons at different points in space and time over their migration trajectory

Longitudinal - Survey (Libya) and two follow up interviews over the following 24 months (5.5)

Same person along migration trajectory

# How are decisions made by policymakers?

Fig.1. The policymaking process

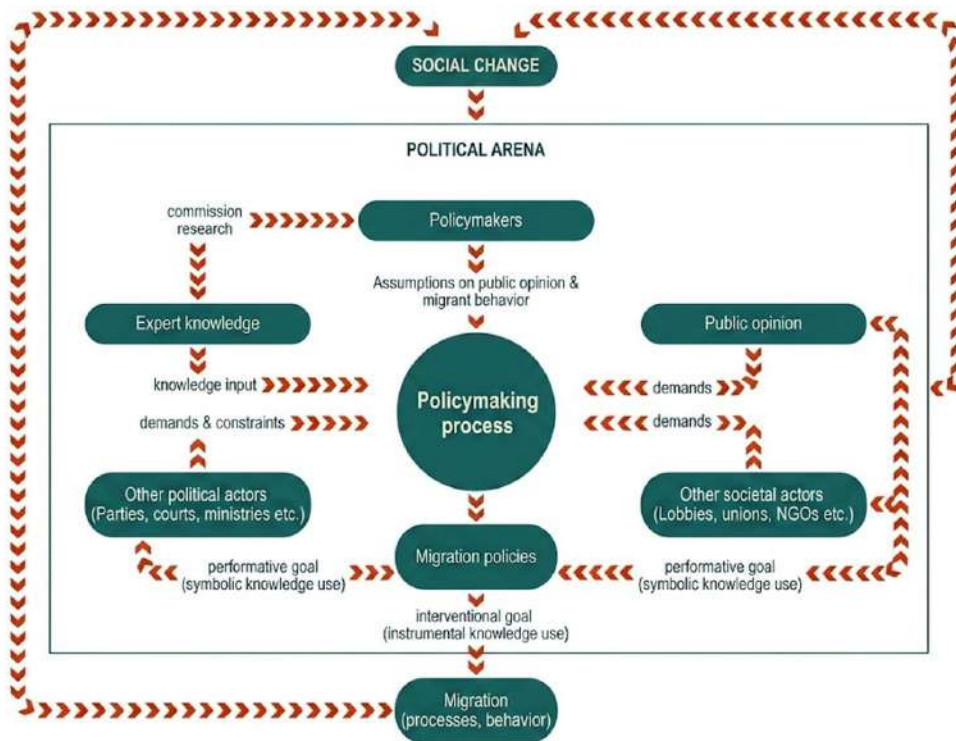
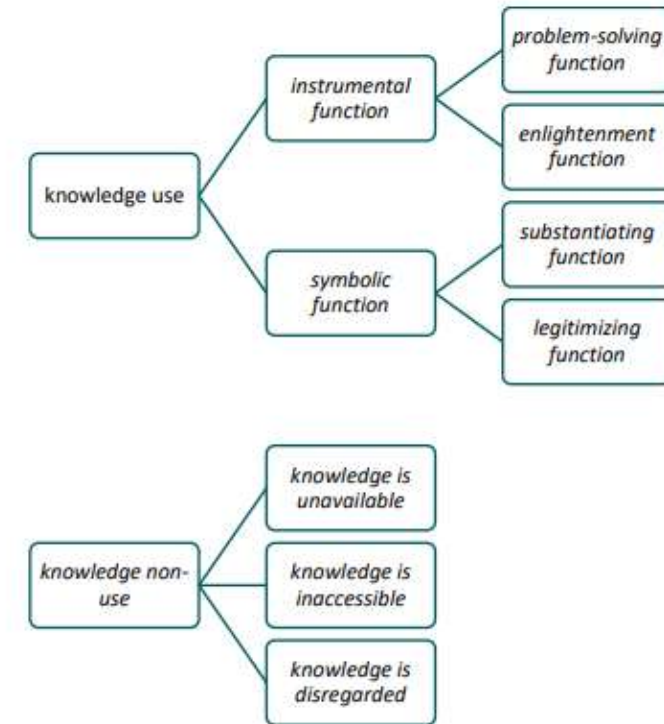


Fig.2: Types of knowledge (non-)use



# Insights on people's decision-making

# What is the role of social transformation in decisions to stay and migrate?

Capitalist modernization destabilises people's lives and creates uncertainties and hope. **Migration or staying aspirations** reflect expressions of **how and where people imagine their future vis-à-vis the past and present** and **people's perception of and engagement with the Ethiopian state's visions of development.**

Jung, Vezzoli and Woldemichael Yemisrach (forthcoming) *The Promises of Development: Spatial-Temporal Dynamics and Migration Decision-making between Hope and Uncertainty*. IMI/Working Paper

Based on 40 interviews in Adama, Ethiopia

There is **an indirect process through which social transformation plays a role in migration decision-making.**

**Aspirations to migrate** are strongest when local conditions are far from what people have come to value, while **aspirations to stay** tend to dominate when people's values are met locally or when people are uncertain about the future impact of social change on their lives.

Based on 120 interviews in Algeria, Ethiopia and Nigeria

Jolivet et al. (forthcoming) Social transformation, social protection and spatial aspirations (work in progress)

# How do social norms and gender influence aspirations?

**Migration behaviour in Ethiopia and Nigeria is strongly shaped by gender norms**, but individuals often hold personal views that differ from prevailing social expectations and may act on them when conditions allow.

Dimova, R.; Fromell H. (2025). *Social Norms and Migration. Evidence from Ethiopia and Nigeria*. IMI Working Paper No.190 /PACES Working Paper No.9. Manchester: University of Manchester.

Based on survey-based experiments in Ethiopia (1232 respondents) and Nigeria (1206 respondents)

**Localized institutional frameworks shape not only the destinations and composition of migrant flows but also social norms surrounding women's work and the ir/regularity of migration**

Based on 100 interviews in Adama and Kebribeyah (Ethiopia)

Schewel and Vezzoli (forthcoming). *Subnational variation in Ethiopia's mobility transition: institutions, norms and migration systems*. IMI/PACE Working Paper.

## What matters along the journey in Africa?

**Economic reasons and the prevalence of violence** are main drivers of migration, **affecting individuals across all social classes**. However, **social class influences migrants' capability to mobilise capitals to migrate through regular and safer routes or irregular routes**, often lengthy and insecure due to exposure to violence while travelling through Africa.

**Upon arrival in these places, migrants from various socioeconomic backgrounds face similar barriers to inclusion**, such as language difficulties, limited access to resources, and challenges related to cultural exchange.

Based on 1546 survey respondents in Niger, Tunisia and Italy and 38 interviews with Nigerian migrants in Italy, Slovakia and Spain

Cabezón Fernández et al. (forthcoming) Decision-making along the journey (work in progress)

# What matters in the decision-making along the journey in Africa?

Once on the move, decisions about destination and onward movement are shaped by **a consistent mix of safety, livelihood prospects, and social influences from family or peers**, but are often made lacking adequate knowledge of destination rules and conditions. As a result, **initial plans tend to persist as stated intentions but evolve in practice.**

Because of **the structural constraints** of the context in which migrants find themselves, many migrants endure **prolonged involuntary immobility and exposure to abuse and protection risks.**

Based on survey Niger, Tunisia and Italy, 1546 initial respondents, 216 respondents in first longitudinal follow up and 114 in second longitudinal follow up

Infographics on Niger, Tunisia and Italy, [PACES - Making migration and migration policy decisions amidst societal transformations](#) | [Mixed Migration Centre](#)

# What matters in the decision-making along the journey once in Europe?

Once in Europe, **migration and integration (non-migration) policies are jointly influential** and must be studied together. A broader integration ecosystem, including not only **access to the labour market but also inclusiveness to basic social programmes** such as healthcare, housing and education, are important factors that **play a role in migrant's settlement, at individual and family level.**

Based on 98 interviews of African migrants in Italy, Slovakia and Spain

Mytna Kureková et al. (forthcoming), comparative paper on migrant decision-making in Europe

# Do non-migration policies influence migration decisions?

**Non-migration policies play an important role in shaping migration outcomes**, but there are no easy fixes. Trying to use them as a lever to shift migration patterns **may generate some of the intended consequences**, but likely **as many unintended consequences** along different phases of migration journeys and for different groups of potential migrants.

Based on literature review

Bakewell, O., Mýtna Kureková, L., & Kováčová, L. (2024). *Non-Migration Policies and Mobility Decisions*. IMI Working Paper No. 182/PACES Project Working Paper No. 4. Manchester: University of Manchester

# How reliable are aspirations to stay and migrate?

**Even when** participants indicate **strong and very strong aspirations, aspirations to stay and migrate are volatile.**

We identify four types of volatility and three mechanisms that explain the non-linearity of aspirations to stay and migrate.

## **Four types of volatility:**

- Conditional
- Pragmatic ambivalence
- Existential ambivalence
- Hidden

## **Three mechanisms:**

- Maturation
- Reconfiguration
- Tipping point

Based on 25 interviews across Algeria, Ethiopia and Nigeria

Vezzoli & Jolivet (2026) *Spatial aspirations: exploring the underlying mechanisms that explain volatility*. PACES Working Paper.

# Insights on migration policy making

## What is the role of migration policies that facilitate migration?

The historical and contemporary **importance of recruitment** as an initiator of migration systems cannot be overstated. **Institutions structure and sustain mobility systems, but these systems are not immutable.** The political, security and economic context may change rapidly, and **entrenched migration systems can be drastically and unpredictably reshaped by new political realities.**

Based on 100 interviews  
in Ethiopia

Schewel and Vezzoli (forthcoming). *Subnational variation in Ethiopia's mobility transition: institutions, norms and migration systems*. IMI/PACE Working Paper.

## How do migration policies impact individuals?

**Policy interventions** appear to have more effect on **(groups of) individuals whose personal norms already diverge from social norms.**

**Interventions promoting regular migration and discouraging irregular migration reduce the acceptability of remaining in the country of origin, but they do not alter the strong preference for regular over irregular migration.** Policies aimed at reducing irregular migration should therefore address its root causes since **deterrence alone is unlikely to be effective.**

Based on survey-based experiments in Ethiopia (1232 respondents) and Nigeria (1206 respondents)

Dimova, R.; Fromell H. (2025). *Social Norms and Migration. Evidence from Ethiopia and Nigeria*. IMI Working Paper No.190 /PACES Working Paper No.9. Manchester: University of Manchester.

# How do information campaigns affect migration aspirations?

**Policies and information about risks do not shape aspirations to migrate but rather reinforce aspirations to stay** for those who did not plan to migrate. At most they impact those who are uncertain about migration, leading them to discount irregular migration even if they still consider migration in general.

**People are not aware of, nor think about, foreign migration policies** (including deterrent policies that may impact irregular migration routes or deportation back to origin), but **rather think of national migration and non-migration/socio-economic policies when they consider migration and whether or not to move.**

**People believe it is the responsibility of national governments to discourage (irregular) migration by providing more opportunities.**

Based on 240 interviews in Algeria, Ethiopia and Nigeria

Pécoud, A., & F. Savatic. (2026). *Preaching to the Choir: The Impact of Restrictive Migration Policies and Information Campaigns on Aspirations to Migrate*. IMI Working Paper No. 191/PACES Working Paper No.10. Paris: Université Sorbonne Paris Nord

## What do current migration policies fail to understand?

**Migration policy at origin** should move **from deterrence to credible choice**: many prospective migrants already understand the risks of irregular migration, but what they often lack are realistic, trusted, and accessible alternatives.

**Effective policy is less about correcting presumed ignorance than about supporting informed agency** through practical pathway navigation, counselling, referral, and attention to the social, gendered, and time-sensitive nature of migration decisions.

Based on 240 interviews work in Algeria, Ethiopia and Nigeria

Samuel Hall East Africa (2026), *From Deterrence to Credible Choice: Rethinking Migration Policy at Origin*. PACES Policy Brief No. 3, D4.7.

# What is the effect of reintegration policies for returnees?

**Migration intentions to migrate after return are common, even among migrants having received reintegration support.** Half of the migrants interviewed expressed a desire to leave again.

Most also expressed **a clear preference for regular migration pathways** while recognising that access to **such opportunities remained largely out of reach to them.**

Based on 20 interviews with returned migrants and 16 interviews with government officials, IOs, development actors and reintegration partners in Cote d'Ivoire and Senegal

B. Steiner & R. Sohst, *Migration Intentions After Return: Lessons from EU programming in Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire*. PACES project comparative report. Brussels: Migration Policy Institute Europe.

## How is knowledge used in migration policy making?

**Migration policies** across various EU countries continue to **rely on outdated assumptions about migrant decision making**, despite decades of research challenging these narratives. **Evidence is often engaged with merely symbolically**, regardless of the countries' different levels of formal commitment to evidence-based policymaking.

Policies targeting **highly visible “unwanted” groups**, like irregular migrants and refugees, **often disregard scientific evidence**.

**Scientific evidence is mostly used for policies that have low politicization and higher economic gains**, for instance targeting essential workers.

Based on three types of migration policies in Austria, the Netherlands and Italy

Natter, K.; Biggi, R.; Ike, N.; van Assem, M. (2025) *Between knowledge and assumptions: the migrant in the eyes of the policymaker, A comparative analysis of dominant assumptions and knowledge use dynamics in Austrian, Dutch and Italian migration policy*. IMI Working Paper No. 185/PACES Working Paper No.7. Leiden: University of Leiden.

# What is the public opinion about migration policies?

If migration policies provide **clear legal bases for admission, establish conditional pathways to regularization, and tie rights to recognized status are more likely to obtain majority support.** Conversely, policies perceived as disproportionate or detached from formal legal criteria may reduce support within this group.

According to our study, the ambivalent majority in these six European countries appears **willing to endorse rule changes that incorporate unauthorized migrants, but primarily under conditions of compliance and non-criminality.**

Based on survey-based experiment to elicit public preferences for migration policies (6 European countries, 1,500 respondents per country)

Jeannet, Anne-Marie and Rubio, Marcela (2026). *Understanding Public Ambivalence about Immigration: The Role of Legal Heuristics*. IMI Working Paper No. 193/PACES Working Paper No. 12. Milan: University of Milan.

# General observations

# People's worries across countries

## Education

- Access versus quality, government and private education
- Realization that education may not be the way to social mobility

## Important generational changes

- Increasing individualism and the gradual disintegration of community support (amidst capitalist development)
- Entitlement among young people who have different expectations

## Rising living costs

- Increasingly difficult finding housing
- Higher cost of living results in people unable to provide social support (helping someone in need) or avoiding engagements (weddings and funerals)

## Government provision of social protection

- It generates perceptions about one's place of residence
- Widespread vulnerability due to lack of protection, but people are making it work
- For migrants in Europe support is found among other migrants

## Life involves **increasing competition** and feelings of **relative deprivation**

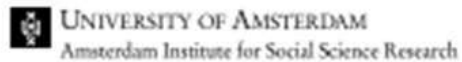
- People outside the EU notice positive and negative changes in the EU
- Migration as a way of dealing with perceived gaps between here and there



# PACES

Making migration and migration policy decisions amidst societal transformations

## Partner organizations



## Associated partners



Thank you!



[edu.nl/696k4](https://edu.nl/696k4)

## Ash Amin Presentation

# Foreclosure and its Foreshadows: Inside the 'Black Hole' of Naples

**Ash Amin**

*The living reduce the dead to those who have lived; yet the dead already include the living in their own great collective. ... Until the dehumanization of society by capitalism, all the living awaited the experience of the dead. It was their ultimate future. Thus living and dead were interdependent. Always. Only a uniquely modern form of egoism has broken this interdependence. With disastrous results for the living, who now think of the dead as the eliminated. (John Berger, Harper's, 2008).*

# Contemporariness

*Does not simply take place in chronological time [but] is something that, working within chronological time, urges, presses, and transforms it. And this urgency is the untimeliness, the anachronism that permits us to grasp our time in the form of a “too soon” that is also “too late”; of an “already” that is also a “not yet”. Moreover, it allows us to recognize in the obscurity of the present the light that, without ever being able to reach us, is perpetually voyaging towards us (Agamben, 2009).*

# Urban Chronicity

Palimpsestic/Brecciated?

Durational?

Urban pasts that show *like the lines of a hand, written in the corners of the street, the gratings of the windows, the banisters of the steps, the antennae of the lightning rods, the poles of the flags, every segment marked with scratches, indentations, scrolls* (Marco Polo to Kublai Khan in Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, 1974)

# Foreclosure's Residues

*Places are marked by enduring traces of prolonged trauma and vitality whose residual reverberations are slow to dissipate ... “The incontinence of memory” (Ewenzor) populates every domain with its menagerie of ghosts, demons, and spirits, all of which provide an invisible yet material backdrop to what disparate peoples might do with each other.*

*There exists an intricate architecture of both ethical and strategic decisions—i.e. how much is to be shown or said; how vulnerable is one to be in face of uncertain prospects; what responsibility does one take for the lives of others ... These are conundrums addressed every day (Simone, 2024).*

## In Popular Neighbourhoods

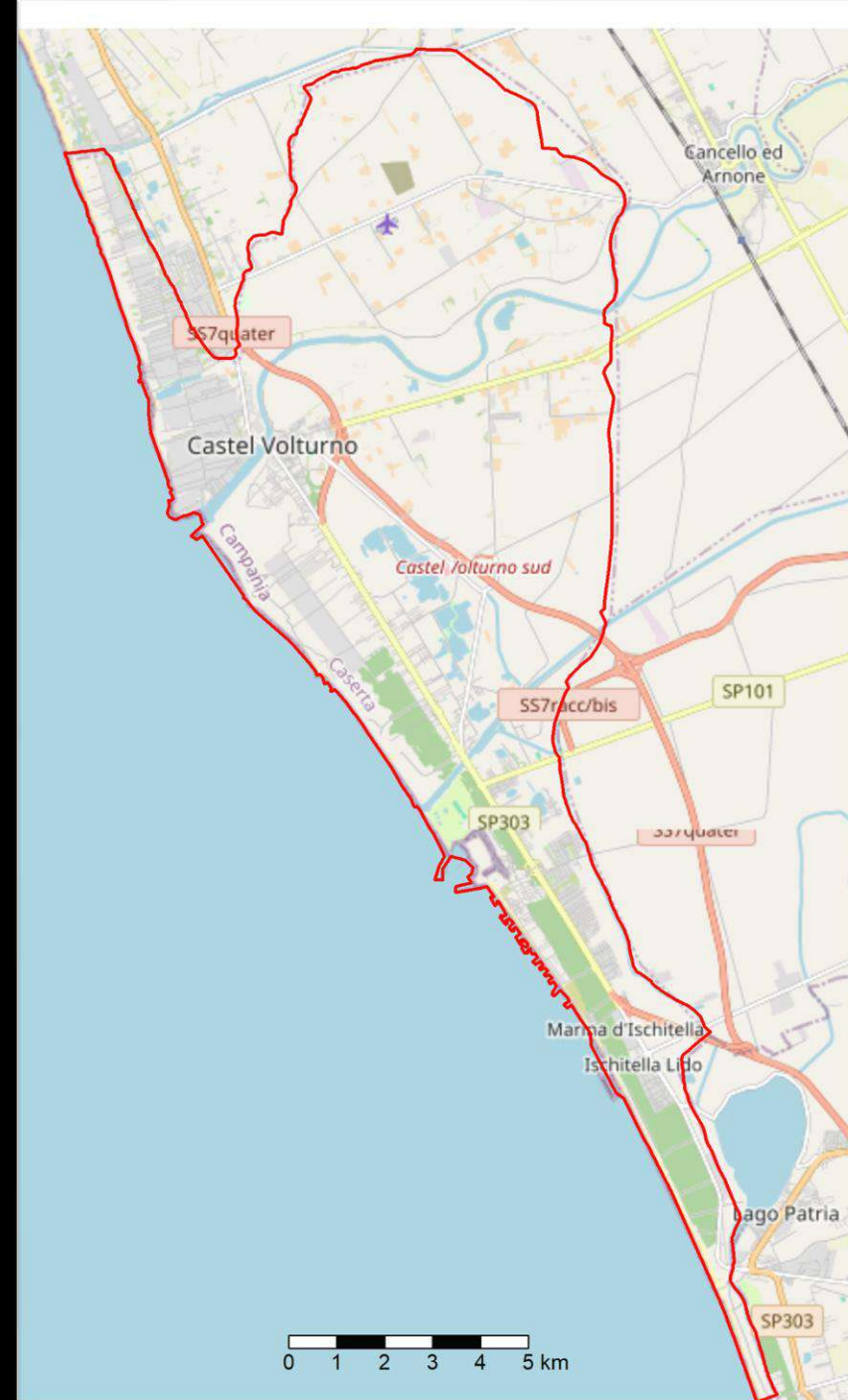
*Intricacies of the surface—its textures, angles, and trajectories—that lead residents into specific scenarios and not others, but which are also the medium through which the specificity of encounters and the domain in which they occur are both constituted. Here, the future performs in people’s knowledge about what is to come: whether it will rain tomorrow, how to modify your itinerary when infrastructure fails, whether water will come out of the tap, whether an earthquake is coming (Simone, 2024).*

## Castel Volturno

Located on the coastline of the 'Terra di Lavoro' north of Naples

Nature and history mingled with urban and environmental decay, unregulated expansion and widespread illegal construction on public land, no urban master plan

Resident population: 28,000. Low regular employment rates, particularly among young people and women, and low levels of education





### VIDEOCLIP

- 1 Liberato - Galala Portafortuna (F. Letteri)
- 5 Margherita Vicario - Abaué (Morte di un Trap Boy) (F. Coppola)
- 3 Tommaso Prima - Hala Madre-Natura (T. Strino/Y. Marra)
- 4 La Maschera - Palomina 'e mare



# Migrant Population

Major settlement area for migrants (around 18% of the total population)

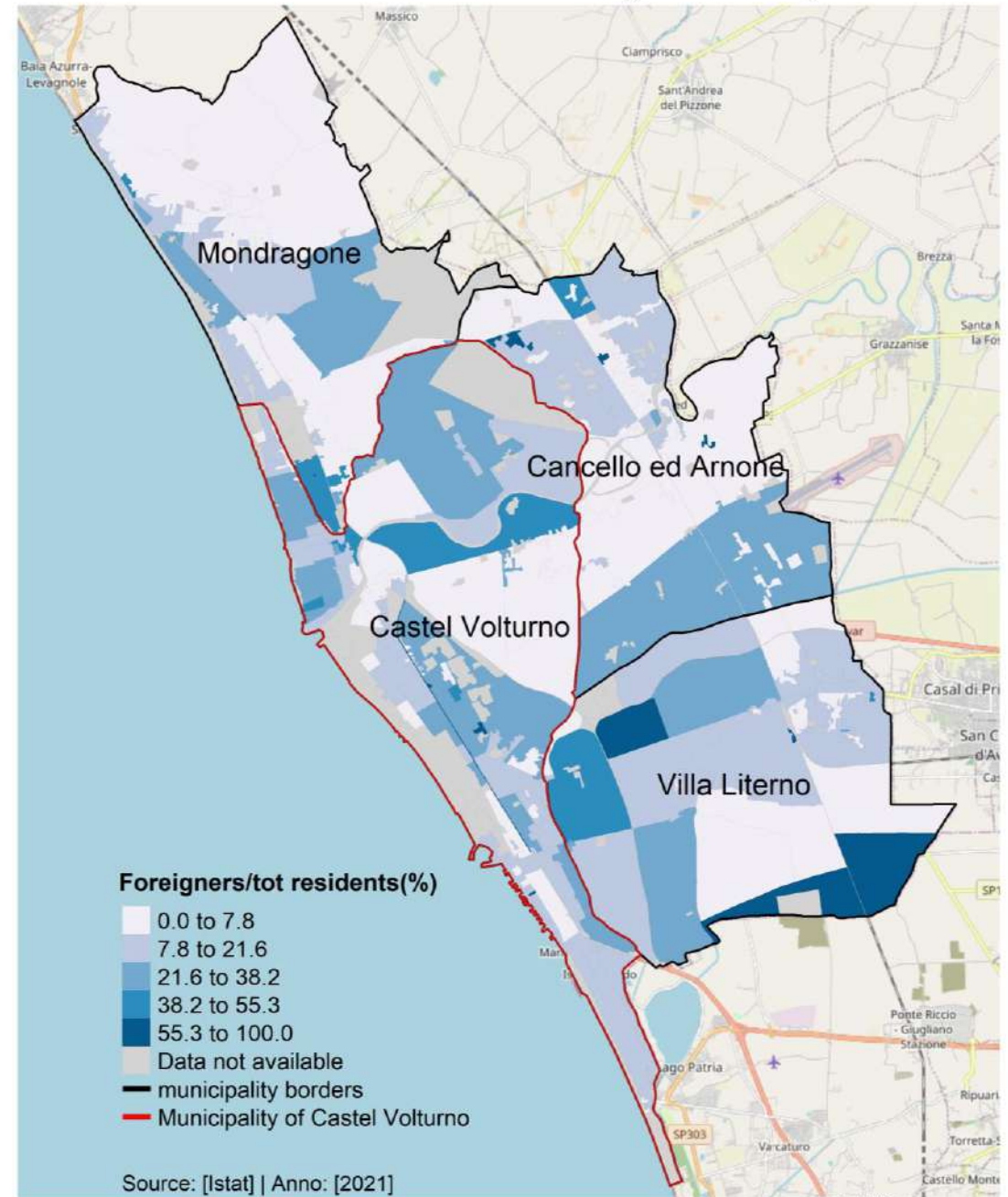
Nigerians are 32.8% of foreign population, followed by Ghanaians (27.3%) and Ukrainians (6.7%)

Main labour force in many sectors, especially construction, tertiary and agro-foods

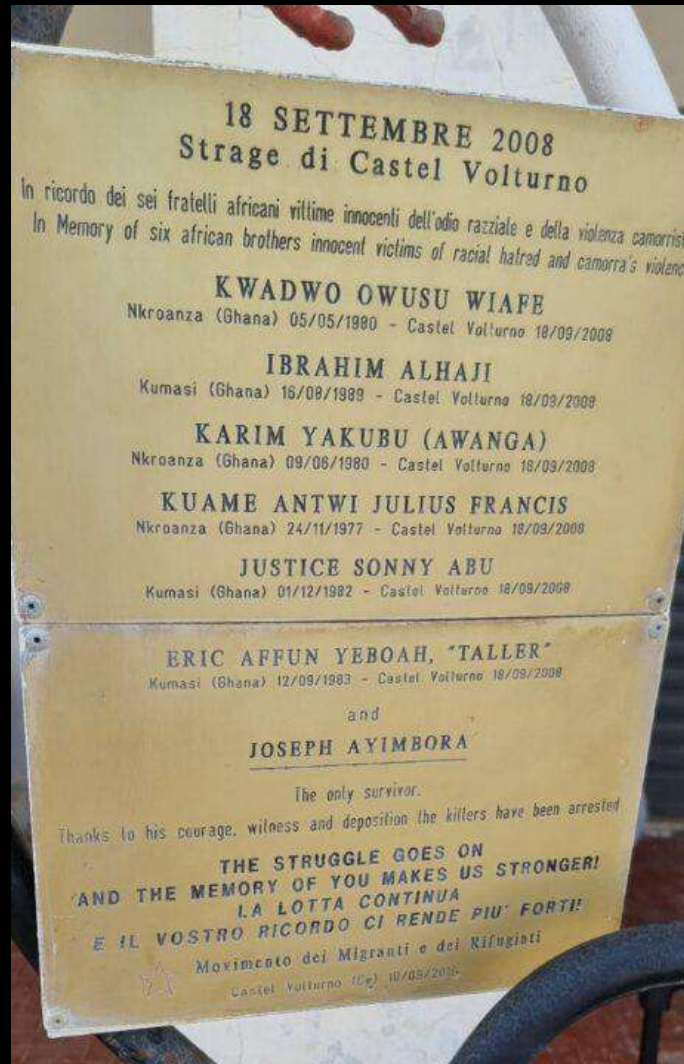
Non-regulated work in arduous jobs without contracts, protections, adequate pay, and escape from gang-masters

Dawn treks to informal hiring sites on highways, crowded buses, long working-days

## Castel Volturno and nearby municipalities



## Illegality and Corruption



Main economic activities are controlled by the Camorra, with Nigerian mafia involved in drug and human trafficking

Abatement in recent years of organized violence against migrants:

- Burning down of migrant camp in Villa Literno in September 1994
- Camorra murder in August 1989 of Jerry Masslo, an anti-Apartheid activist
- Massacre of five migrants a year later in Pescopagano, and of six young Africans in 1998 in Lago Patria.
- "San Gennaro Massacre" in 2008 marked a tragic event when six innocent African workers were killed by the Camorra in a targeted attack



## Phantom Blackness

In suspension, time has become textured. Helped by pastors, imams, and social movements, Africans have learnt to inhabit unrecognition by bearing time, making way with others, finding in adversity quest for another outcome

A local habitus of expanding numbers, friendships and ethnic connections, shadow pleasures and care, comforts of prayer, and the 'little Africa' of shops, mosques and congregations

But still at the edge of desperation. The fortitude of surviving perilous migration, rejected asylum applications, dirty work, poor housing conditions, untreated illnesses, evictions and arrests, and economic slavery goes unnoticed



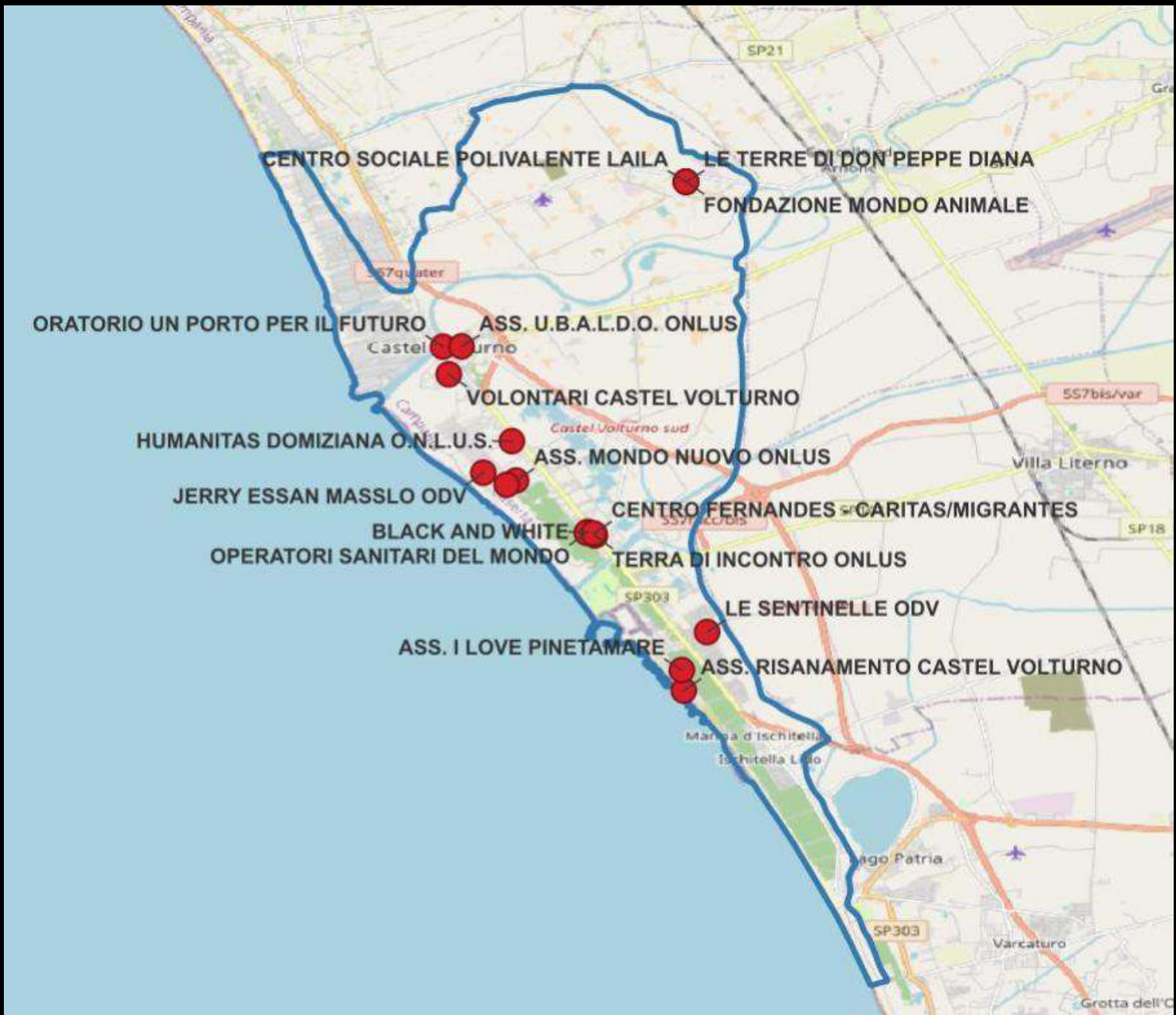
## Ghostly Whiteness

Parco Saraceno, a speculation of the Coppola family, housed American soldiers working at the nearby NATO base. When the base closed after 15 years, Neapolitan families escaping earth tremors or high living costs moved in

A nostalgic squatter community remembering how *all doors were open, and you could barely say who were the parents of the children scattered everywhere* (Ritratti Abusivi); *if a person didn't have money for groceries, to avoid offending them we went to their home and said, 'look I made meatballs, there were some left', but we had made more on purpose* (Claudia in Il mio posto. Un incontro a Parco Saraceno)



After rounds of evictions and departures, Parco Saraceno has become ghostly. The fabric of neighbourliness has been torn by degradation and abandonment, unmasking the fantasies of rogue citizenship



**Jerry Essan Masslo Association:** advocates for the rights of migrant agricultural workers, addressing issues of labor exploitation, addiction, and prostitution

**Black & White Association:** provides assistance to migrants through food and clothing distribution, support for women (especially trafficking victims), and educational programmes for children

**Centro Laila:** provides temporary shelter and support for children of immigrants, often referred by social services or law enforcement, focusing on children in challenging family situations

# Into the Parainstitutional

*Sustained practices in the register of the micropolitical that build upon and enhance each other without institutionalizing themselves (Massumi, 2024)*

*Anarchic potentiality of the mute, silent, background operations of technicity bustling with quasi-chaos (op. cit.)*

# Blackness

*Being nothing, of always being available, of being the sucker in the farce ... is already to be participating in sharing. ... Being together ... comes with a practical perimeter of sense that is the ability to sit down together, in order words, to be capable of cultivating sociality (Seck, 2023)*

*A way to transform everyday tools and forms of knowledge into legitimate and equitable political resources that express social ties and that are largely held by everyone (op. cit.)*

## Dereje Feyissa Presentation

# Migration as Prophecy Fulfilled

## **Spirituality in the Ethiopia – South Africa Corridor**

Dereje Feyissa, Addis Ababa University

# Part of the MIDEQ South-South Migration Research Project (2019-2024)



# Major arguments & theoretical framework

- Explores how religion shapes migration across different stages: aspirations, decision-making, mobility capabilities, and belonging in destination societies.
- Uses the case of Hadiya migration from southern Ethiopia to South Africa, focusing on the role of evangelical Christianity in migration choices, risk perceptions, and settlement processes.
- Shows how migration is understood as a divine calling or gift, providing spiritual resources to cope with hardship and create a sense of place in South Africa.
- Argues that religion not only inspires migration aspirations but also enhances migrants' agency and capacity to act.

- Situates migration within broader social and historical inequalities in Ethiopia, highlighting how faith-based agency helps migrants respond to structural constraints through migration as a future-making strategy.
- Moves beyond materialist explanations by emphasizing the importance of intangible factors - beliefs, emotions, imaginations, and norms - alongside economic opportunities in shaping migration decisions.

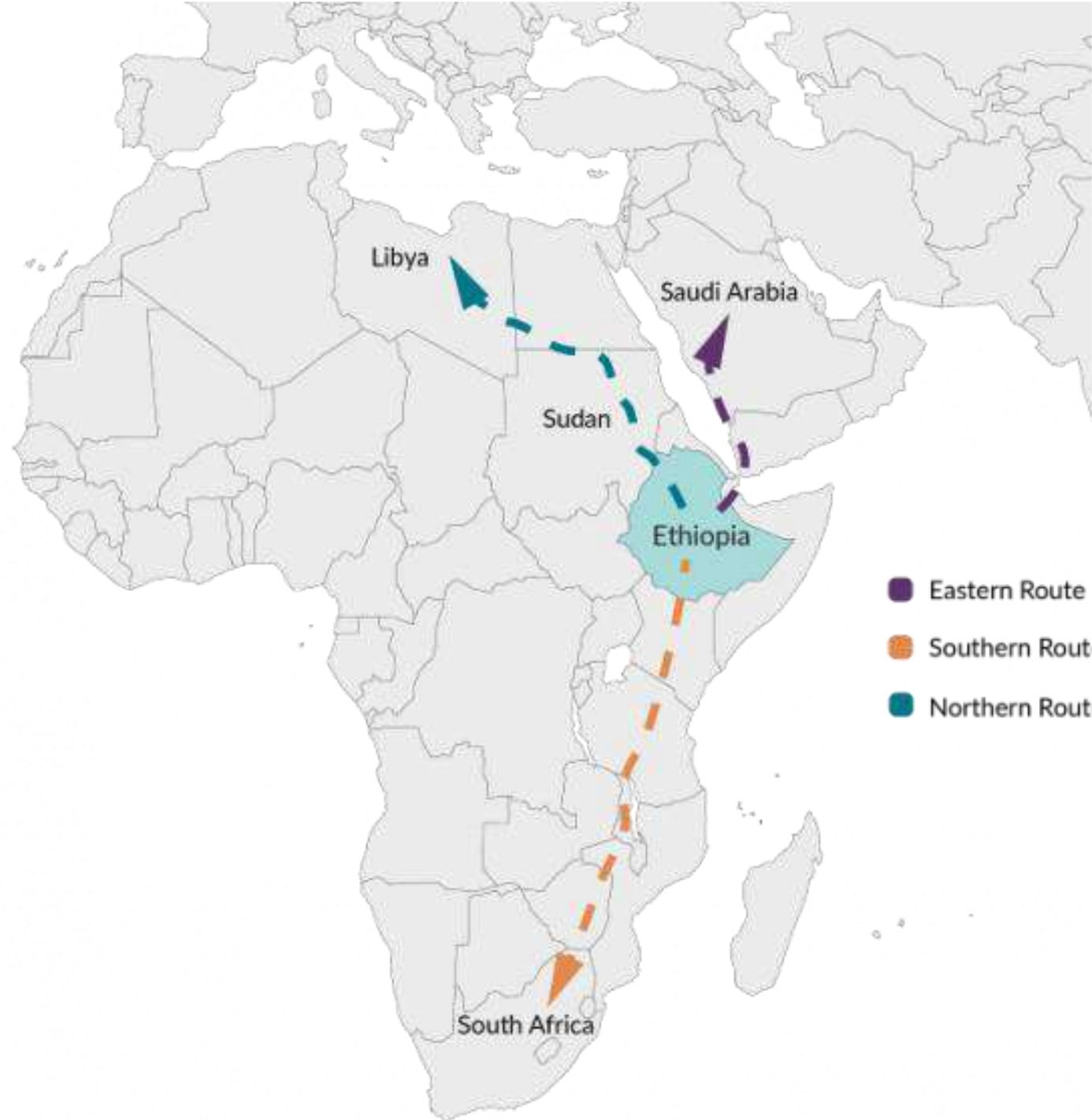
## Context – Ethiopia as a major source of migration

- Driven by political instability, conflict, economic hardship, and long-standing mobility patterns.
- Both internal and international migration have increased, with destinations including the Gulf, Europe, North America, and southern Africa.
- Migrants include refugees, labor migrants, and young people seeking safety, opportunity, and better futures.
- Migration is shaped by structural inequalities, regional disparities, and governance challenges, making Ethiopia a key source country in regional and global migration systems.

# Ethiopia's Migration Corridors

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- The Eastern Corridor (Saudi Arabia, UAE, Lebanon etc.)
- The Northern Corridor (Europe via Sudan and Libya)
- The Southern Corridor (From East to South Africa)
- the longest involving the crossing of six state borders by car, on foot and water
- The youngest (Post-Apartheid)
- Around 300,000 Ethiopian migrants



# Who are the Ethiopian Migrants in South Africa?

- Mixed origins, but geographically concentrated in southern Ethiopia, particularly the Hadiya region.
- Hadiya (pop. 1.2 million) is part of Ethiopia's southern periphery, historically marked by political marginalization and economic exclusion.
- Strong historical identity rooted in the 13th-century Hadiya Sultanate and the wider Islamic traditions of the Horn.
- Puzzle: Ethiopian migrants in South Africa disproportionately originate from Hadiya, with the southern migration corridor being especially prominent.

# Tangible factors in Hadiya Migration to South Africa

- Economic hardship and limited local opportunities.
- Regional inequalities and structural marginalization.
- Search for employment, income, and improved livelihoods. Migration networks and access to migration resources.
- Political persecution (consequential opposition politics in Hadiya Zone)
- Aspirations for social mobility and a better future (“emulative jealousy”; transnational flow of goods and finance/the migrants’ wedding videos).
- The role of political networks (government officials from migrant sending areas as defacto migration intermediaries)

# The Role of Religion in Hadiya Migration

- Hadiya: an Islamic past, a Christian present
- Contemporary Hadiya society as vanguards of Protestant Christianity in southern Ethiopia (American missionaries arrived in Hadiya region in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and brought with them 'modernity' to the Hadiya: Hadiyyisa became a written language; the first school and clinics were established by the missionaries)
- Traditional roots of prophetic practices of Charismatic Christianity (blessing, cursing and religious authorities who divine the future)



## Migration as Enacting a Divine Script

- Pastor Peter Youngrin (a Canadian pastor and founder of World Impact Ministries)
- Youngrin's foundational prophecy, Hosanna 2001

## The Youngrin Prophecy: God has opened a “southern door” for the Hadiya through which prosperity will come

“I have a message from God to deliver to you. I saw God opening a new southern door for Hosanna [meant to refer to Hadiya]. From now onwards you will see a constant flow of people; that people will migrate; they work hard, and they prosper; that they will bring blessing to Hosanna and to Ethiopia more broadly. Hosanna town will be transformed beyond recognition. The time will come when three-wheeler cars [the Indian made Bajaj] will fill the streets of Hosanna and a country where people go to without a visa. There will also be rain and abundant crops. God will allow movement of people; one which will bring prosperity. You will soon see signs of the prophecy working”.

# Youngrin prophecy cont'd

- Although the prophecy did not explicitly mention South Africa, the Hadiya interpreted the “southern door” as referring to South Africa, linking spiritual meaning with perceived economic opportunity.
- Hadiya view migration as a divine blessing delivered through Youngren and as a result of collective efforts, prayers, and struggles to overcome social and economic hardship.
- South Africa was not entirely unknown, as some Hadiya had already migrated there via Kenya in the late 1990s, reinforcing its appeal as a destination.

# The Prophecy, Aspiration and Decision-making

South Africa as an imagined sacred destination (spatial imaginary of a ‘Promised Land’)

“Youngren’s prophecy made the journey a lot easier than one would have expected. I migrated to South Africa in 2004, three years after Peter came to Hosanna. I was a student at that time. I talked to my friends about the idea of going to South Africa. They all readily agreed. When we decided to travel, it felt as if we were already in South Africa. I remember the enthusiasm and confidence we had while deciding to migrate. We never thought of the risks we might encounter during the journey and the language difficulties we might encounter. It felt like we were moving from one house to another within Hadiya.”

- Echoes what Cangia and Zittoun (2020: 5) call “mental journey” and “imagined mobilities”: “Imagination, as a form of symbolic mobility, represents the mental journey people can embark upon to escape the here-and-now of the present, independently from real opportunities and capacity to move.”

- ‘Cosmologies of destinations’ - the hierarchical representations of geographic imaginaries grounded on several elements such as moral righteousness/decay, according to which some locations are imagined as “good destinations” while others are not (Belloni, 2000)
- Imagination is important in migration decision-making, as a condition for aspiration as well as belief, instilling confidence without caution. Religious people find moral strength and perseverance in their beliefs, which makes them arguably better placed to cope with adversities experienced during migration

## Prophecy goes local

- Ethiopian Protestantism has seen a charismatic shift, with greater emphasis on faith, prayer, and prophetic guidance amid life uncertainties.
- Among the Hadiya, prophets, pastors, and church prayer programs act as informal migration counselors, helping people assess migration prospects and opportunities in South Africa.
- Prophecies and collective prayers provide hope, confidence, and encouragement for migrants to undertake risky journeys.

- “My brother, who had already migrated, suggested I join him in South Africa and even sent money. But my decision wasn't based on his offer—it came after a moment in church. A pastor placed his hands on my head, prayed, and declared that God wanted me to go to South Africa, promising I'd face no harm. I had hesitated due to my age and fears about the risks. But after the pastor said, ‘Your journey has already been made,’ my doubts vanished. Unlike many others who were jailed in Tanzania or Malawi, my journey was smooth and quick. Even in South Africa, though I was robbed several times, I was never physically harmed during my ten years there—something rare among Ethiopian migrants.”

— *Returnee migrant, July 5, 2021*

- In this story, although the information and financial help offered by the brother were essential, it ultimately was the spiritual authority of the pastor that triggered and legitimized the decision to migrate

# Spirituality and immobility

- Spirituality not only plays an important role in mobility, but also in immobility. Immobility is involuntary for some but desirable for many others (Schewel, 2019).
- In some instances, Hadiya prophets and pastors who de facto act as migration counselors advise prospective migrants to drop their plans to migrate.

“Aba Gole, a renowned religious leader from Anlemmo, once visited my parents before I was born. He prayed and told my mother she would have a son who would carry on his legacy of preaching. I believe I was born of that prayer, destined to serve God. Later, my mother's Gurage family, who had little connection to South African migration, offered to fund my travel there to improve our family's future. I declined. In 2009, after finishing high school, I hoped to join university. But my mother reminded me that government service would limit my ability to serve God fully. She said, ‘Aba Gole's sweat is on your shoulders.’ I prayed through the night and received clarity: I would study theology. Ironically, I missed the university cut-off by one point. That's how I ended up studying theology and becoming a pastor—just as Aba Gole had prophesied.”  
— *Pastor Samuel, 2021*

In this story, the preference to stay relates to a life project already shaped by belief, even before birth.

## Spirituality during the Journey – risk negotiation

- The spirituality of riskscapes: prayers feature as a badge of confidence that downplays the risks of migration, a belief that simultaneously shapes aspiration and builds migratory agency
- Prospective migrants often respond *atseliyebetalehu* when asked what preparations they have made for the journey, meaning “I got my plan prayed upon.” In some prayers, pastors even include specific information about the risky spots in the migration journey (e.g., the Tete bridge over the Zambezi River at the border between Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi)
- A prayer with migration content is couched in the saying *amen yale teteqeme yalale temelese* (those who said “amen” benefited [made it to South Africa] but those who did not came back [died] or were deported)

## Spirituality during the journey cont'd

- Beside prophecy and prayers, gospel songs are important aspects of belief that are important in risk negotiation during the journey.
- The *Chaltoto* Hadiya Gospel song (“overcoming the challenges of the journey.”) The song originally referred to the spiritual sense of the term “journey to heaven” : “We will go, pass the hurdle, and inherit the kingdom regardless of the storm of the sea.” It is now repurposed with migration content to mean ‘success during the journey’. The meaning decoded is “you will make it to South Africa despite all the challenges.”
- Others use specific gospel songs to build their resilience during their repatriation from detention centers in transit countries. The message of their chosen song was loud and clear: it is not if but when they go back because there is nothing impossible for the omnipotent God that they counted on.

# Spirituality at Destination

- Hadiya migrants continue their religious practices in South Africa
- They continue to refer to the Youngren prophecy while reflecting on and sense-making their experience. They invited him so he would bless South Africa to open its bounty to Hadiya migrants (spiritual boosting)
- They initiated a spiritually imbued de facto vigilante group to overcome the rising violence and criminality among migrants and to 'impress' the South African crime prevention units.
- They invite high-profile pastors and prophets from Ethiopia (Prosperity Gospel preachers) to bless their finances

“What you should seek is *moges*, the spirit of favor. No matter how deep [remote] location or township your businesses might be, the spirit of favor helps you attract customers like a metal is attracted by a magnet. I now call upon you to summon the spirit of favor. If you get the spirit of favor, getting a South African permit becomes a lot easier. Next year we meet, your business will be ten times bigger than it is now. Mark my word! A case which they [South African immigration authorities] have closed in council, I will not only unlock but dismantle it with the power of God. The prosperity spirit is hovering on you! You might feel that you are in another country, but I say the whole universe belongs to God. You will walk in and out with the spirit of favor. As Aster is favored by God as a wife of the king Hage despite her disadvantages among prospective wives, so will you be the Asters of South Africa!”

- Key messages to migrants: “belonging” and “agency.”



## Signs of the prophecy working:

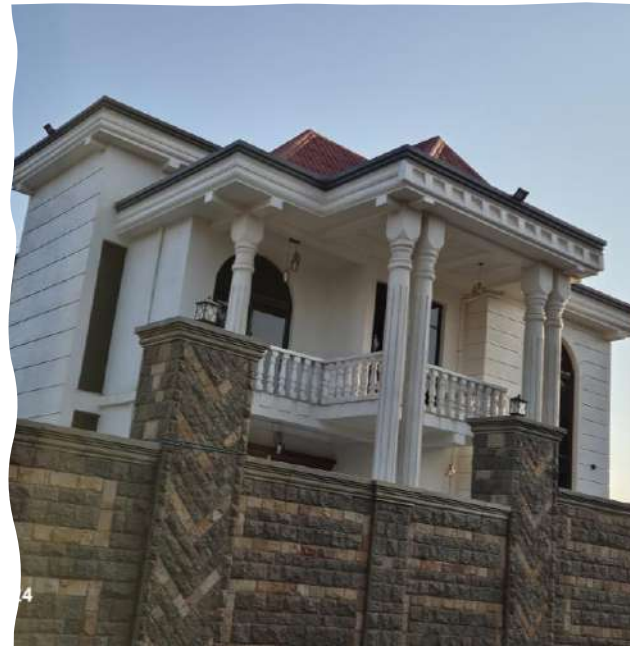
- The Hadiya retrospectively view the large number of their community migrating to South Africa as an evidence that the prophecy has been fulfilled.
- Additional signs that the prophecy is working include the relative business success of Hadiya migrants in South Africa (informal trade), despite entry barriers (language, skills, lack of documentation etc.)



## Evidence of the prophecy cont'd

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- The economic transformation of places of origin in Hadiya, especially Hosanna, through remittances, new entrepreneurial skills and investments



- The prophecy was indeed *a message of hope* that was well received by the Hadiya due to the political and economic context of the time
- Collective awakening: “It’s is the system, stupid’ (structural violence has undermined Hadiya’s capacity to aspire)
- Migration to South Africa is seen by the Hadiya as a way of renegotiating the inequality between Ethiopia’s “core North” and the “peripheral South.” (differential access to migration corridors – Hadiya are fewer in Europe and North America) – migration as God’s balancing act

## **Recasting Hadiya Migration to South Africa from a “Blessing” to a “Curse”**

- The risk of the journey has increased, especially in transit countries
- The rise of xenophobic violence
- Business turf competition and the rise of migrants-on- migrants violence
- Prosperity Gospel promising shortcuts to material prosperity (functional to greed and competition).
- The growing individualization of Hadiya migration project – the first generation of Hadiya migrants was self-made, though their aspiration and the migration project had been “God-sanctioned”. They used religion as a space for agency and migration as a collective project.

- Redefinition of migration from an asset to a liability – Hadiya’s reflexive turn. As God can’t be wrong, two responses:
  - (1) Spiritual revitalization and crusade against the moral decay (crime and criminals)
  - (2) Internal debate: This situation urged a Hadiya migrant to write a book entitled **Metshafe Hosanna: Eгна ena Debub Africa** (The Book of Hosanna: Us and South Africa - the process of spiritual and moral decay generated by the acquisitive drive and greed)
  - (3) Return migration (self-blaming for the ‘mismanagement’ of the blessing)
  - (4) Generational tension (cautious parents Vs their impatient children and sense of urgency to migrate)

# Concluding remarks

Three major takeaways

- **Beyond tangible factors** in migration processes – religion and belief as an important intangible factors (but the intangible interacts with the tangible – the need to simultaneously engage with the materiality and ideational dimensions of migration)
  - Religion could shape and even generate **aspiration** and helps build **migratory agency**, as well as a sense **of belonging** at destinations, as the Hadiya case study demonstrates
  - Religion as an overarching scheme of interpretation and sense making mechanism of the migration habitus
- **Temporality in migration studies** - changing signification of a migration project: from a collective project towards increasing individualization; from a blessing to a curse

## Jessica Hangen-Zanker Presentation



**MIGNEX**

# The multi-level determinants of international migration aspirations

PACES Final Conference

4 June 2026

**Jessica Hagen-Zanker, ODI Global and PRIO**

- 
- Horizon Europe Research project (2018–2024)
  - Generated new evidence on migration and development
  - Covers all aspects of migration and development
    - *Mobility, immobility*
    - *Better (or worse) services, security, infrastructure etc.*
  - Mixed methods data collection
    - **Survey**, *qualitative, policy review*



— 10 countries  
— 26 research areas

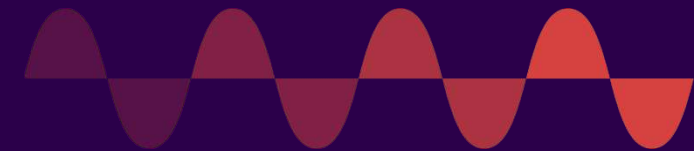


# Geographical scope





- One of the largest migration surveys
- Sample size of 13,000 young adults
- Representative at research area level
- 228 questions covering topics of migration and development
- Is now Open Access



**Who migrates, why and  
under what  
circumstances?**

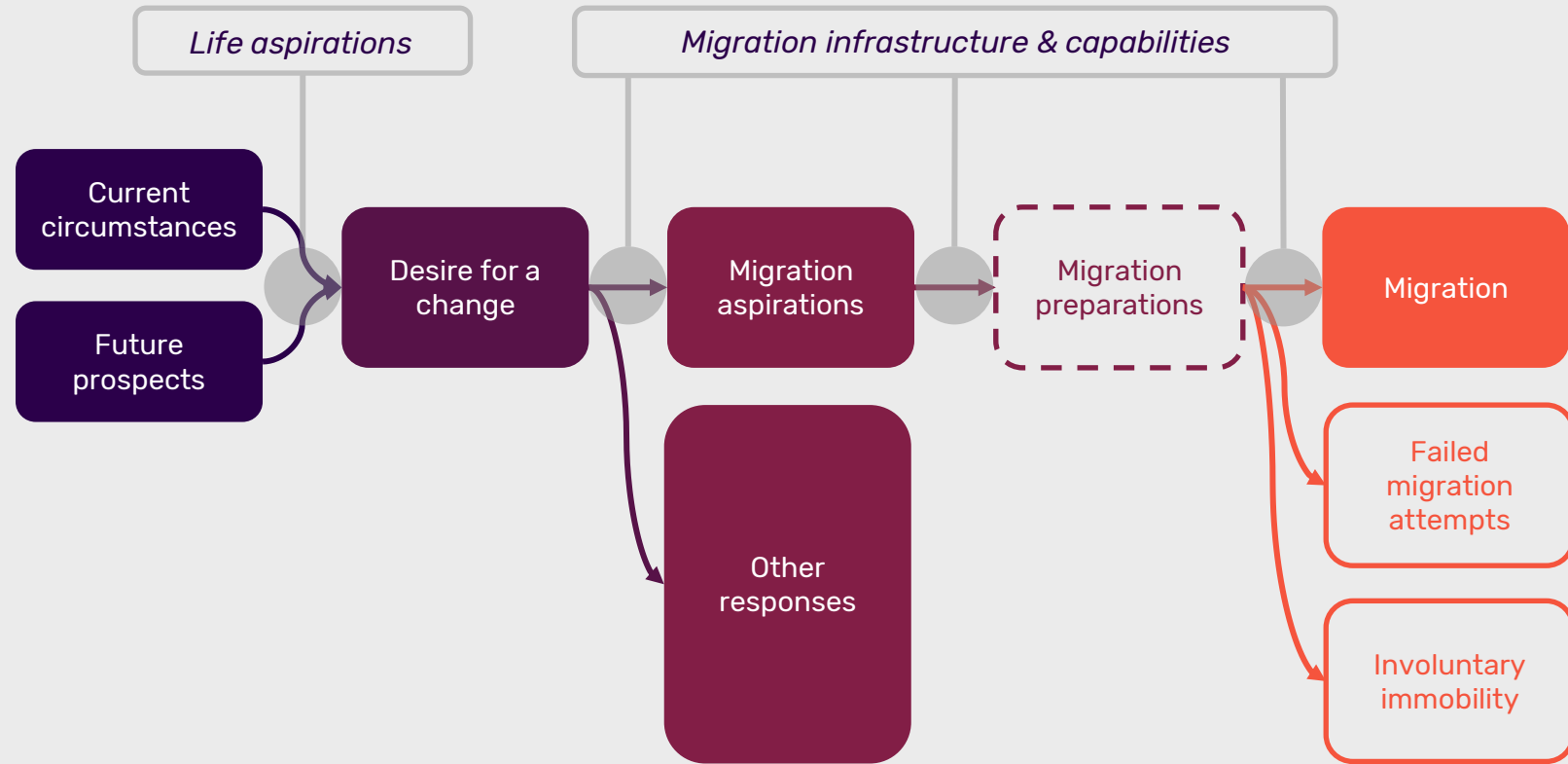


**#1**

***Migration is a multifaceted  
stepwise process***



- The causes of migration can be spread out along a stepwise process
- Planning and preparation play a part, but not necessarily the decisive one



**Migration is a multifaceted stepwise process**

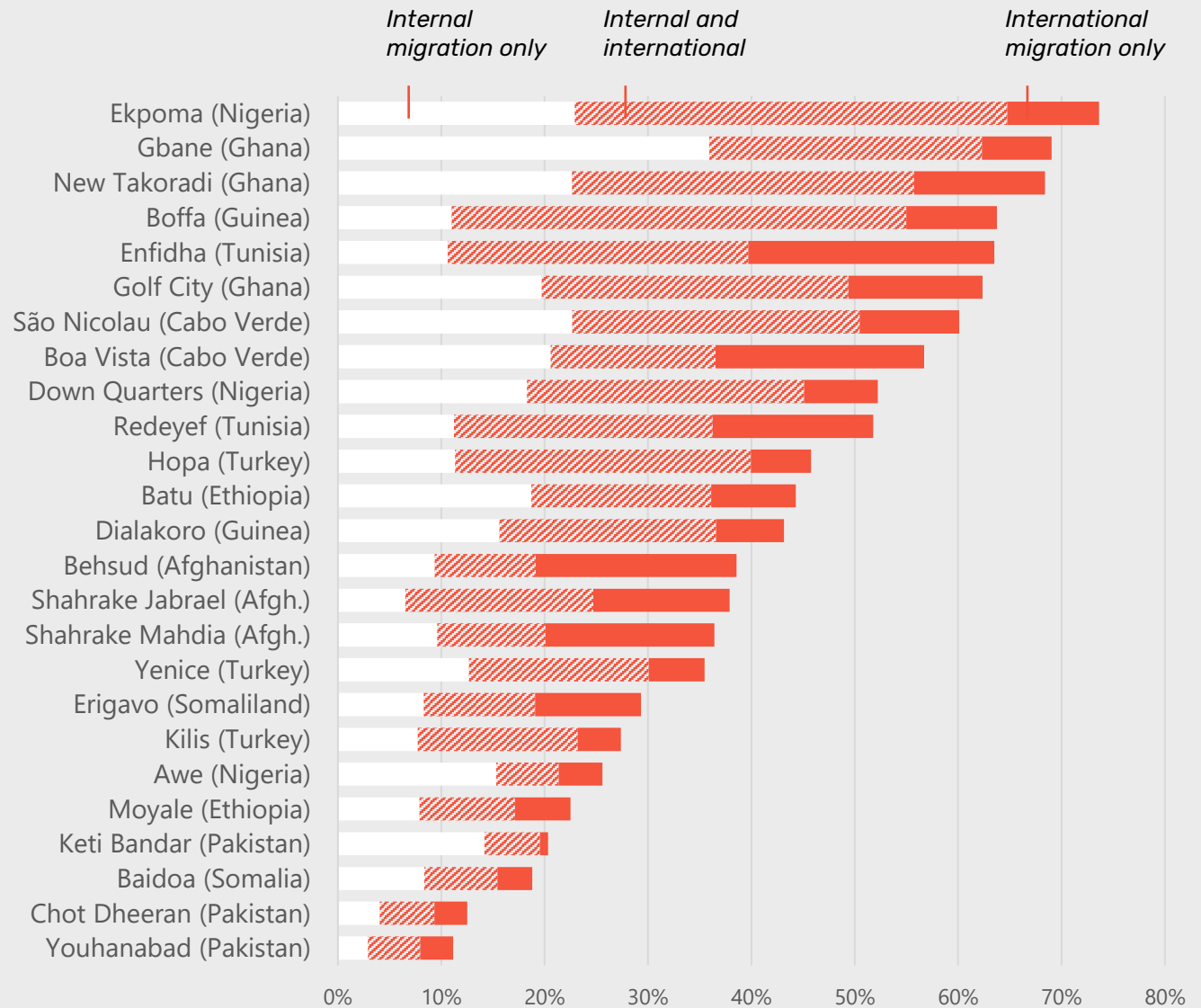


**#2**

***However, not everyone wants to  
leave***



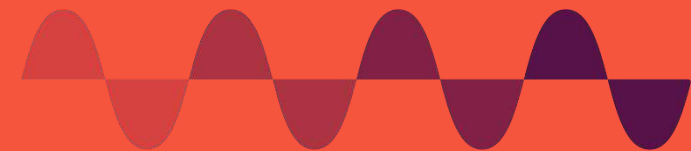
- Migration aspirations vary greatly between communities
- Many people are not set on either international or internal migration



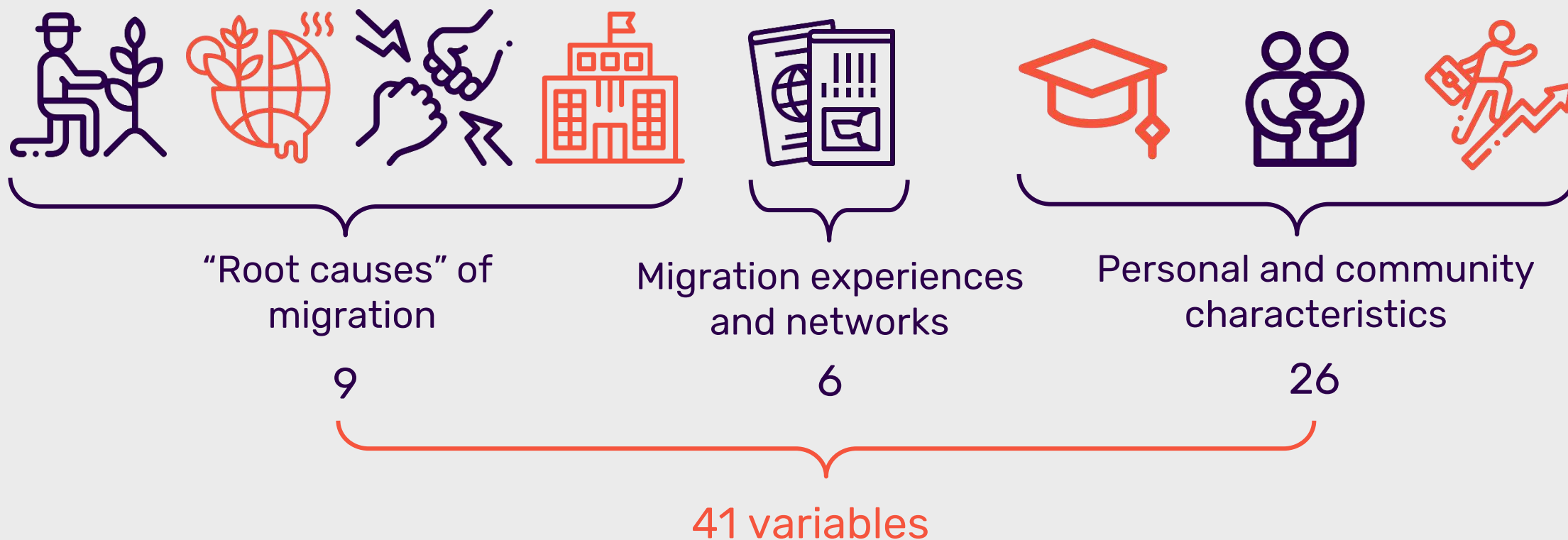
Not everyone wants to leave



**...for those who would prefer to  
leave, what drives these  
aspirations?**



# What determines migration aspirations?

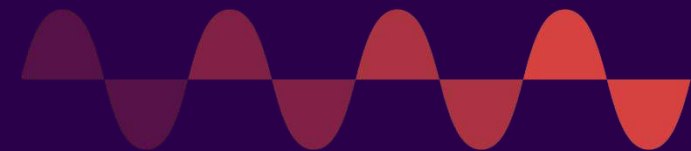


Statistical analyses of 13,000+ people

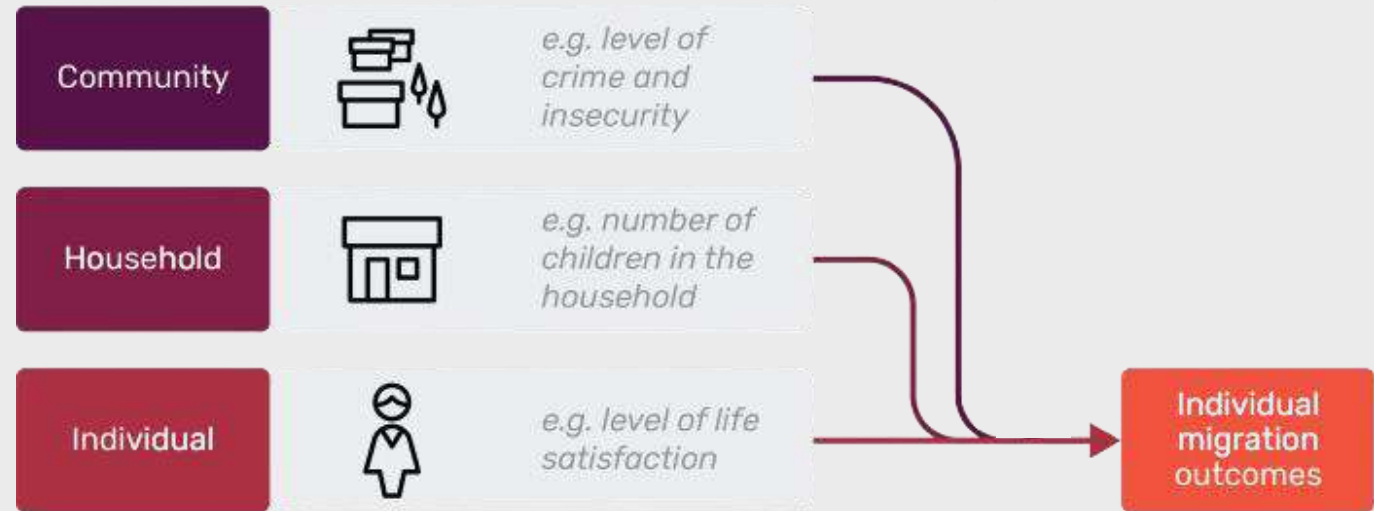


**#3**

***Migration aspirations are shaped  
by many factors, all at once***



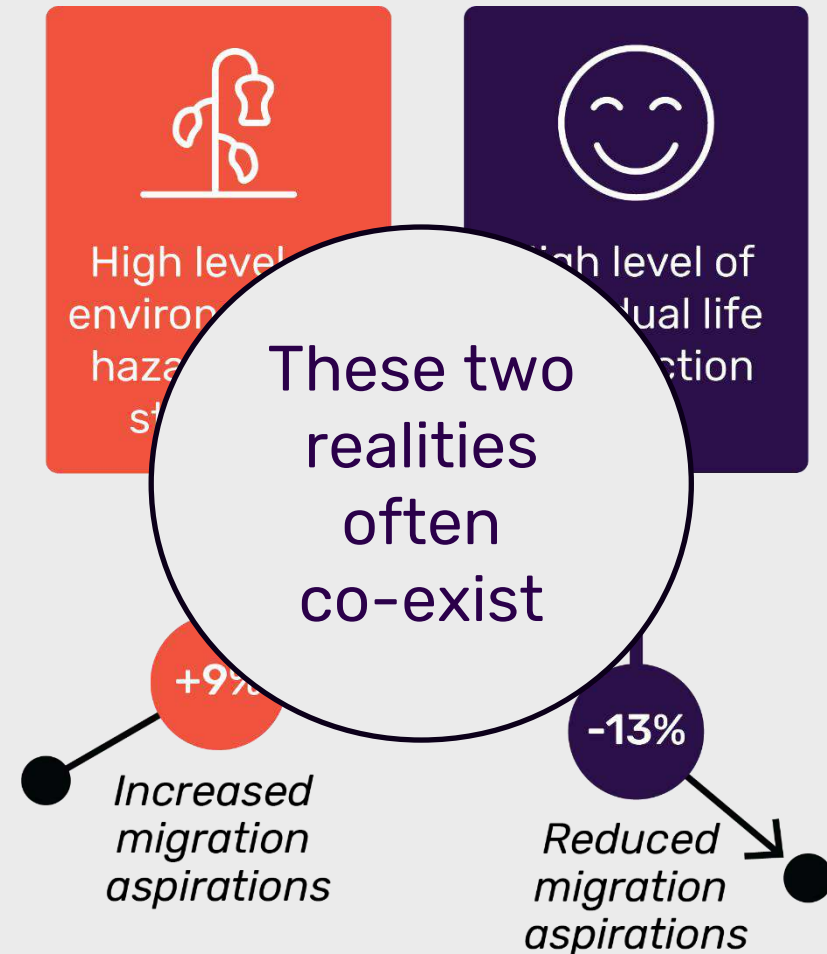
- Individual, household and community level factors affect migration aspirations
- Looking at one level would mean having an incomplete picture!
- Different levels effects can even cancel each other out



**The determinants sit at different levels**



- 
- Individual, household and community level factors affect migration aspirations
  - Looking at one level would mean having an incomplete picture!
  - Different levels effects can even cancel each other out



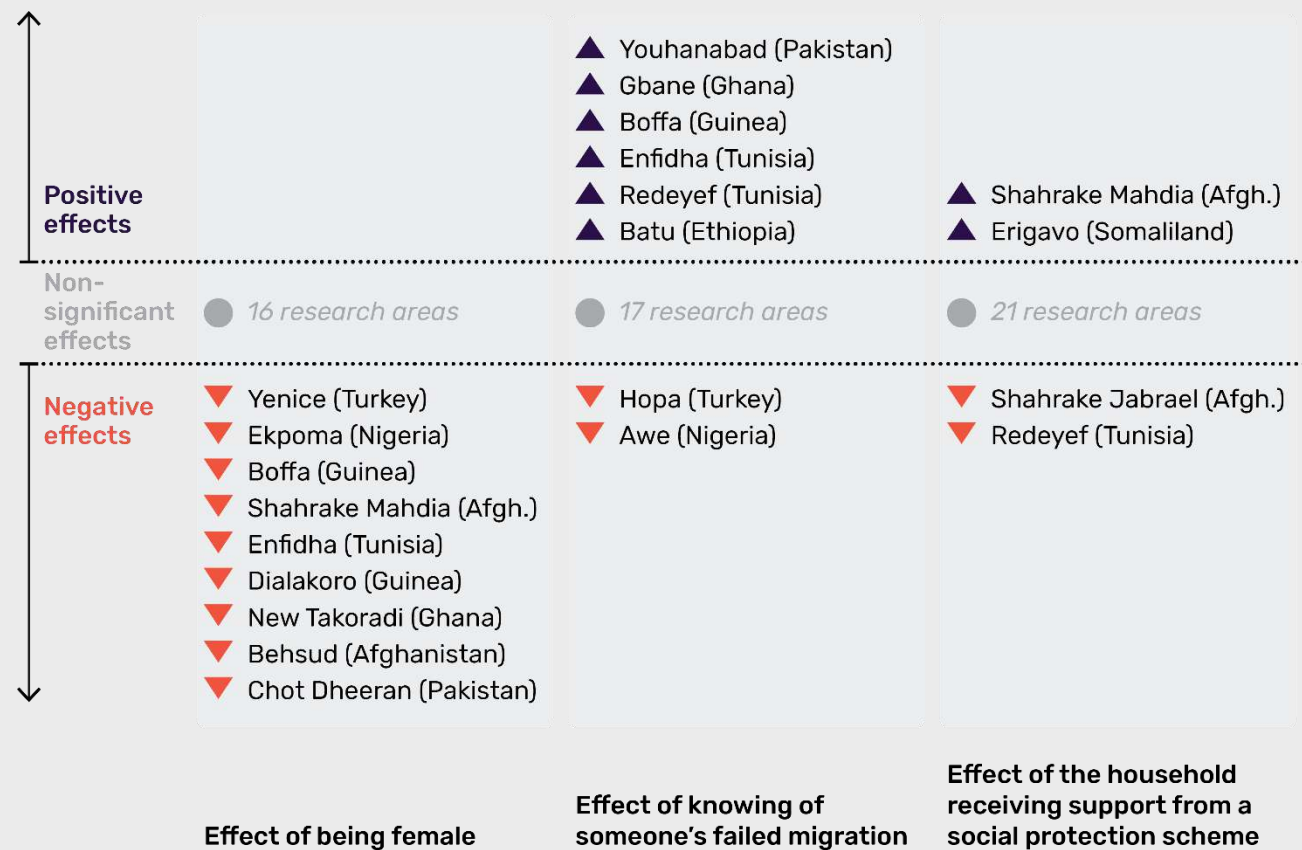
The determinants sit at different levels - example

**#4**

***The same migration determinants  
can work in contrary ways***



- Most of the determinants (35 out of 41) have divergent effects
- Some determinants are highly consistent (e.g. being female)
- Some "mainly" increase or decrease aspirations (e.g. failed migration awareness)
- Some are very divergent (e.g. social protection schemes)



Drivers can work in contrary ways



...however, there are some  
general patterns

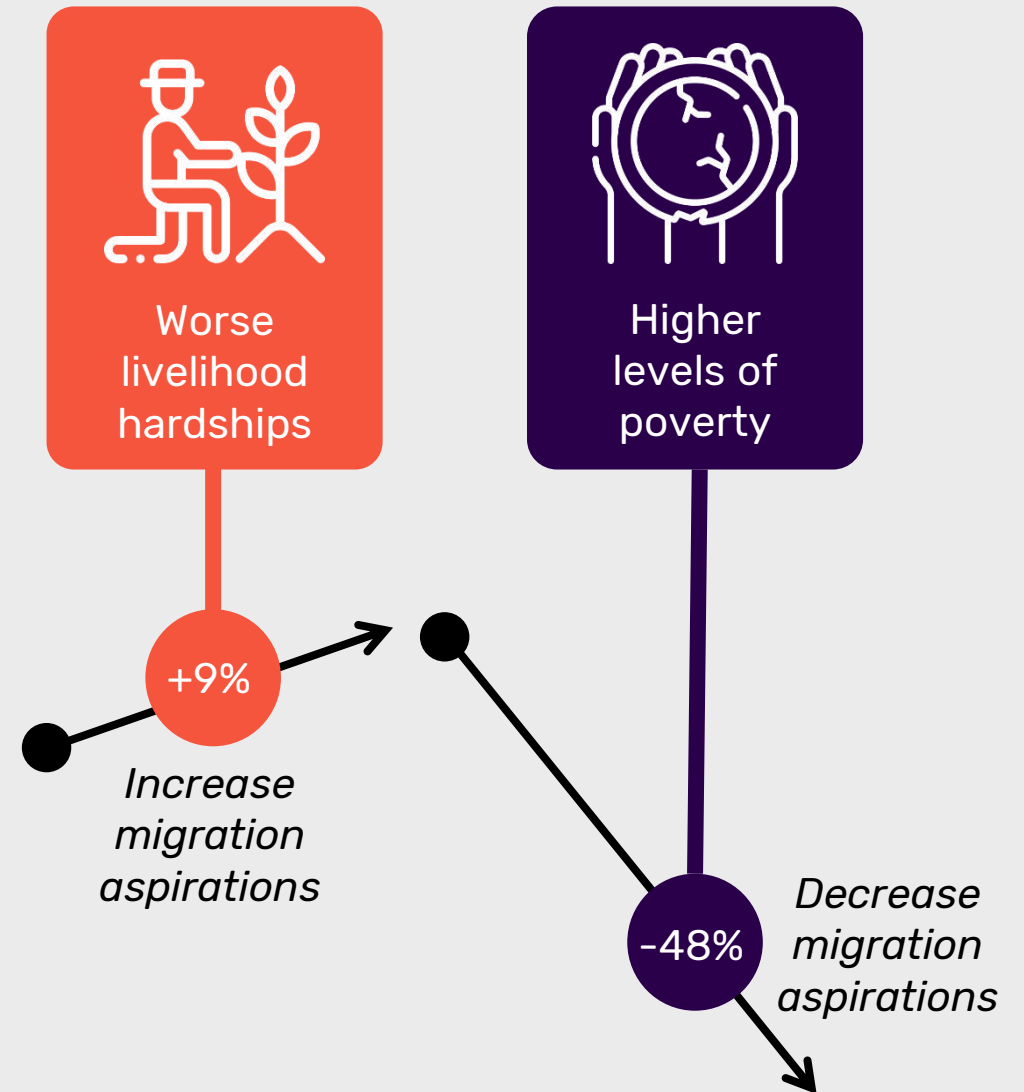


**#5**

***Poverty and livelihoods matter but  
have opposing effects***



- People struggling to find a good job and make ends meet are more likely to look for alternatives abroad
- Poorer people might feel more constrained in their aspirations and might also be less able to migrate



**Poverty and livelihoods have opposing effects**

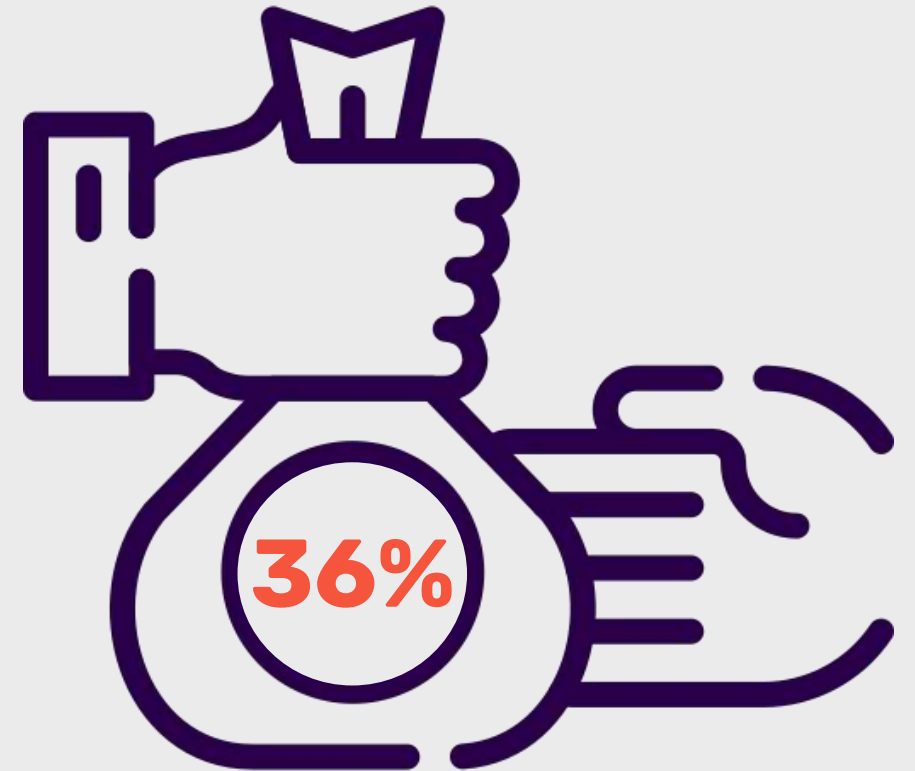


**#6**

***Corruption is a major root cause  
of migration***



- 
- People who live in communities with widespread corruption are much more likely to want to leave
  - Respondents living in communities where being asked to pay a bribe is a common practice are **36% more likely** to have resolute migration aspirations

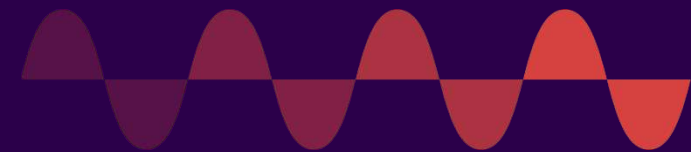


**Corruption is a key driver**

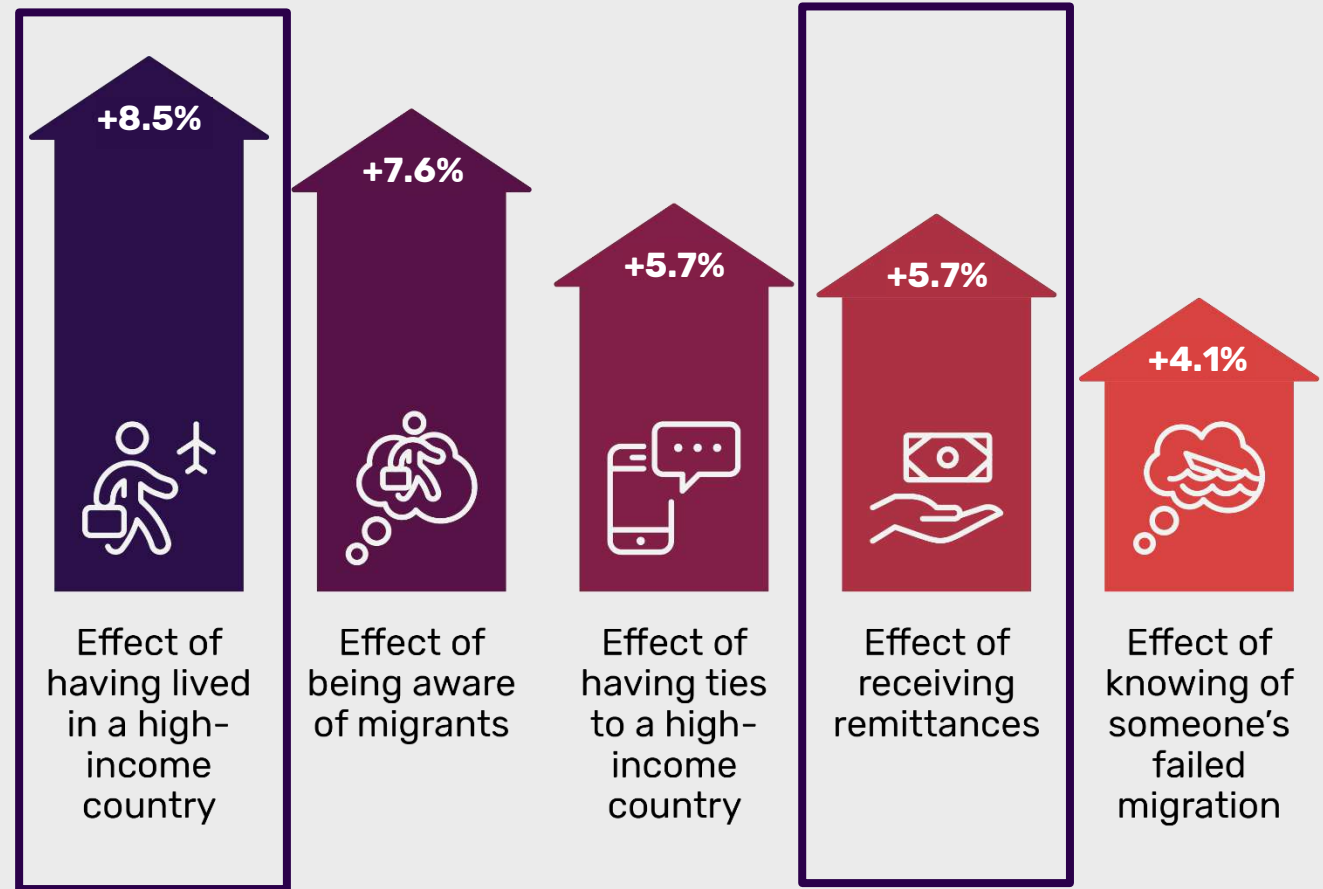


**#7**

***Migration fosters migration***



- Migration experiences and networks play key roles in all aspects of migration
- In addition to individual experiences, some places have developed a “culture of migration” that reinforces leaving as a favorable option.



**Migration fosters migration at the individual level**

To wrap it up...



- 
1. *Migration is a multifaceted stepwise process*
  2. *Not everyone wants to leave*
  3. *Migration is shaped by many factors all at once*
  4. *Migration drivers can work in contrary ways*
  5. *Poverty and livelihoods matter but have opposing effects*
  6. *Corruption is a major root cause of migration*
  7. *Migration fosters migration*

**7 insights on migration determinants**



- 
1. *The drivers of migration are remarkably inconsistent*
  2. *Addressing the “root causes” will only partially work*
  3. *Many determinants are difficult to address through policy*
  4. *Some drivers can be addressed, but it takes time*
  5. *Development policies are important in their own right, not in terms of their effect on migration (e.g. reducing poverty)*
  6. *We need tailored policy responses:*
    - *to address the causes of migration and*
    - *to support communities in their origin*

## Implications for policy





**Report:** New insights on the causes of migration



**Policy brief:** What are the 'root causes' of migration?



**Journal article:** The multi-level determinants of international migration aspirations in 25 communities in Africa, Asia and the Middle East



**MIGNEX**

**Thank you**

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[mignex.org](http://mignex.org) [#MIGNEX](https://twitter.com/MIGNEX)

Icons used in the presentation were taken from [www.flaticon.com](http://www.flaticon.com)

MIGNEX has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 770453.



## Omolola Olarinde Presentation



**DYNAMIG**

DYNAMIG



# **“Men Respect Women Who Have Money”: Migration Decision-Making in Kenya, Morocco, and Nigeria amid Shifting Household Economic Responsibility**

Presented by Omololá Olárindé-Olomola (Elizade University, Ilara-Mokin)  
PACES Project Conference, Aubervilliers, 4 June 2026

# DYNAMIG

## In this session

- Background and relevance
- Our research:
  - Theoretical framing
  - Methodology
  - Migration Decision-Making
  - Stories from the field
- Conclusion
- Question and answer session



Photo by Eva Blue via Unsplash

# Background and relevance

# Overview and Problem Statement

- Women's migration is increasing.
- Women's labour force participation is increasing.
- Household structures are changing across Africa.

Yet, women continue to face lower rates of migration planning and migration realization.

### Objectives

To move beyond an increase in women migration, feminisation of migration reflects a discursive shift (Vause and Toma, 2015).

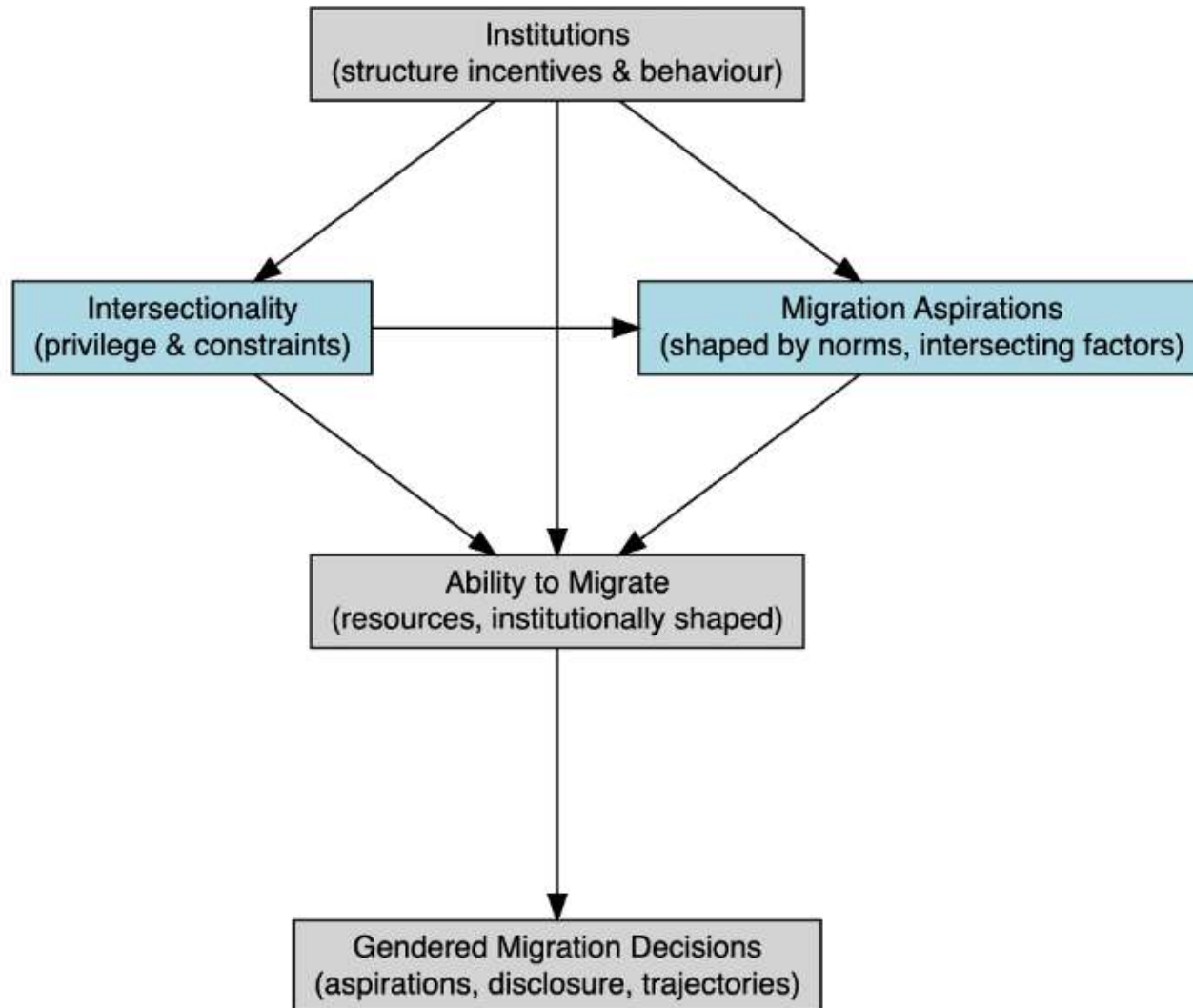
This paper posits that socially constructed categories and gender norms mediate migration aspirations, decisions, and trajectories.

#### **Overall Objective**

To examine how changing economic roles interact with gender norms to shape migration aspirations and decisions.

## DYNAMIG

## Framing



Beyond Aspirations  
Carling & Collins (2018)  
ability to migrate is  
shaped by institutions  
and norms, and  
overlapping identity  
markers condition  
migration choices Aslany  
et al (2021).

DYNAMIG

# Our research

## DYNAMIG

### What we did

	<b>Description</b>
Countries	Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria
Respondents	152
Survey	Migration aspirations and characteristics
Interviews	Semi-structured, six thematic blocks

**Study locations:** Nairobi, Mombasa, Kilifi; Rabat, Casablanca; Ekiti, Ondo, Lagos.

### Overlapping Identity Markers with Gender: Marital Status

Women, especially when single, are more likely than men to remain at the aspiration stage.

- Women: 62% aspiration, 38% planning/action
- Men: 17% aspiration, 83% planning/action

Family obligations and care responsibilities continue to affect women's ability to translate aspirations into migration plans (Carling et al., 2013; Flahaux & de Haas, 2016). At the same time married women negotiate their migration as a contribution to the household (Paul, 2015).

## DYNAMIG

### Economic Roles are Changing for Women

“Men respect women who have money... The day he does not have money to put down, I cover up the house.”

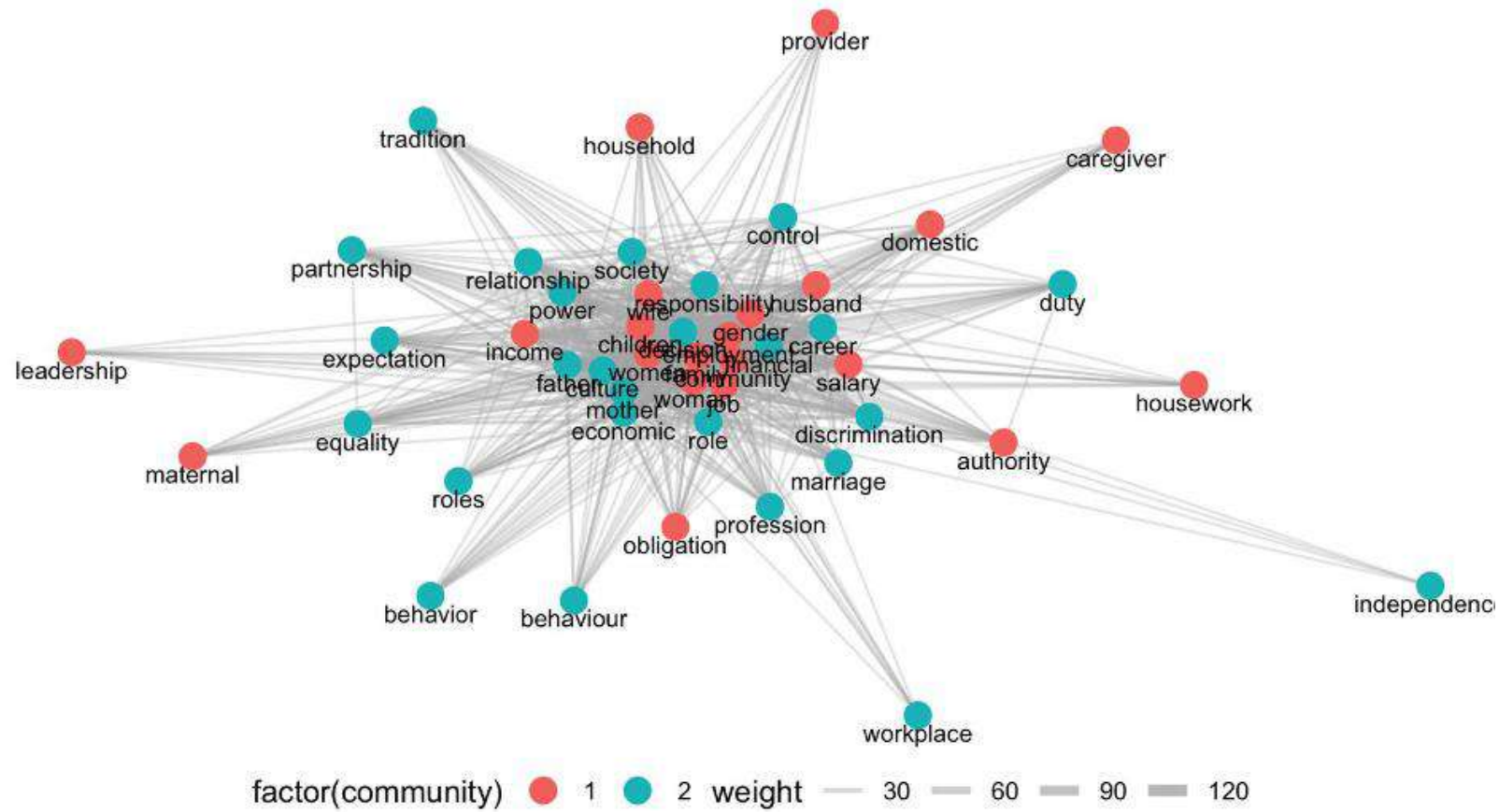
(NG\_Miwodere\_W\_34)

- Women increasingly contribute financially.
- Economic provision is no longer exclusively male.
- Still, caregiving responsibilities are strongly feminized.

# DYNAMIG

## Gender Terms Co-occurrence Network with Community Detection

Modularity: 0.028



## DYNAMIG

### Economic Empowerment Co-occurs With Care Burdens

Social norms can simultaneously elevate and constrain women, positioning them in ways that influence how they imagine, pursue, or limit mobility (Webster, 2022).

“...as young ladies are preferred in indoor chores while young men are preferred for outside chores ...” KEN\_M\_26\_NM01\_KEN\_Mosi

“Since I am the older daughter, I have a lot of responsibility.”

MAR\_F\_20\_MA-RA-39\_MAR\_Aziza

DYNAMIG

# Conclusions

## DYNAMIG



## Conclusions

- Migration decisions are shaped by norms, not simply economic incentives.
- Women's economic roles are changing faster than care norms.
- Marital status and caregiving responsibilities remain key mechanisms through which migration opportunities are differentiated.

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**Women's growing economic responsibility is reshaping migration aspirations, but gendered care regimes continue to shape migration opportunities.**

# DYNAMIG

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## DYNAMIG

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# Question and answer session

**DYNAMIG**



*ecdpm*



**Website**

[dynamig.org](https://dynamig.org)

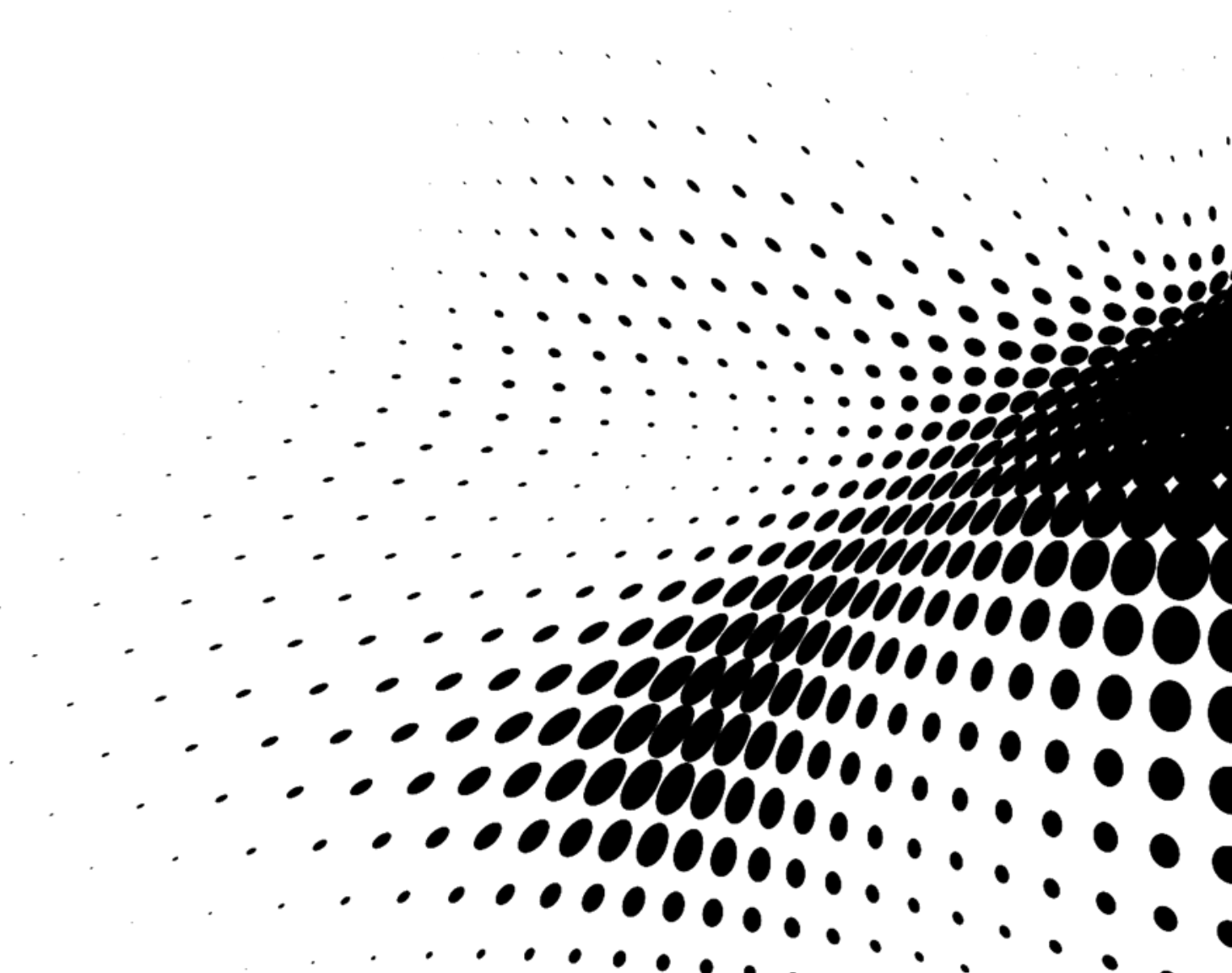
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## Ruth Achenbach Presentation

# On the role of longing and belonging in privileged migrants' (im)mobility decision making: A spotlight on Japanese migrants in Germany

**Dr. Ruth Achenbach**  
**Senior Researcher at Goethe University Frankfurt**

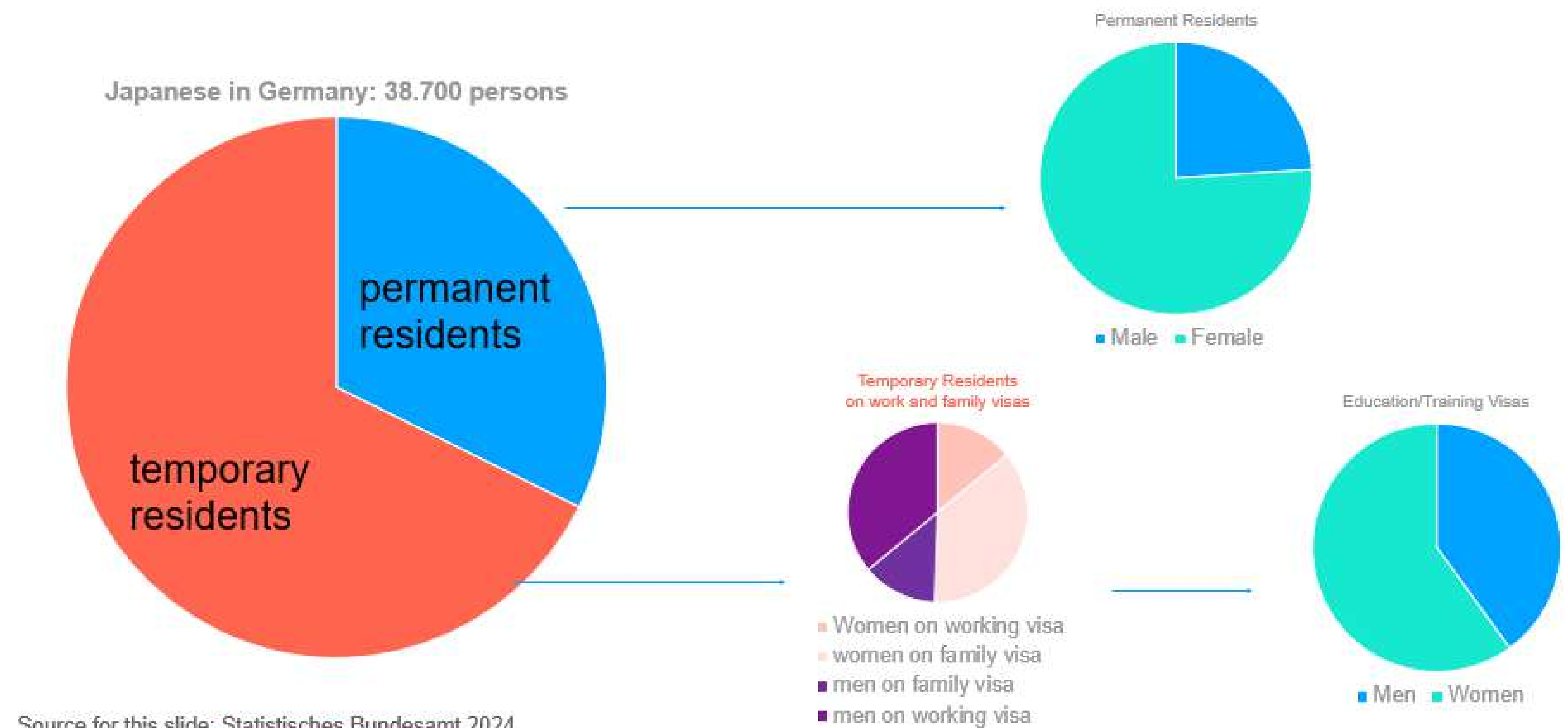
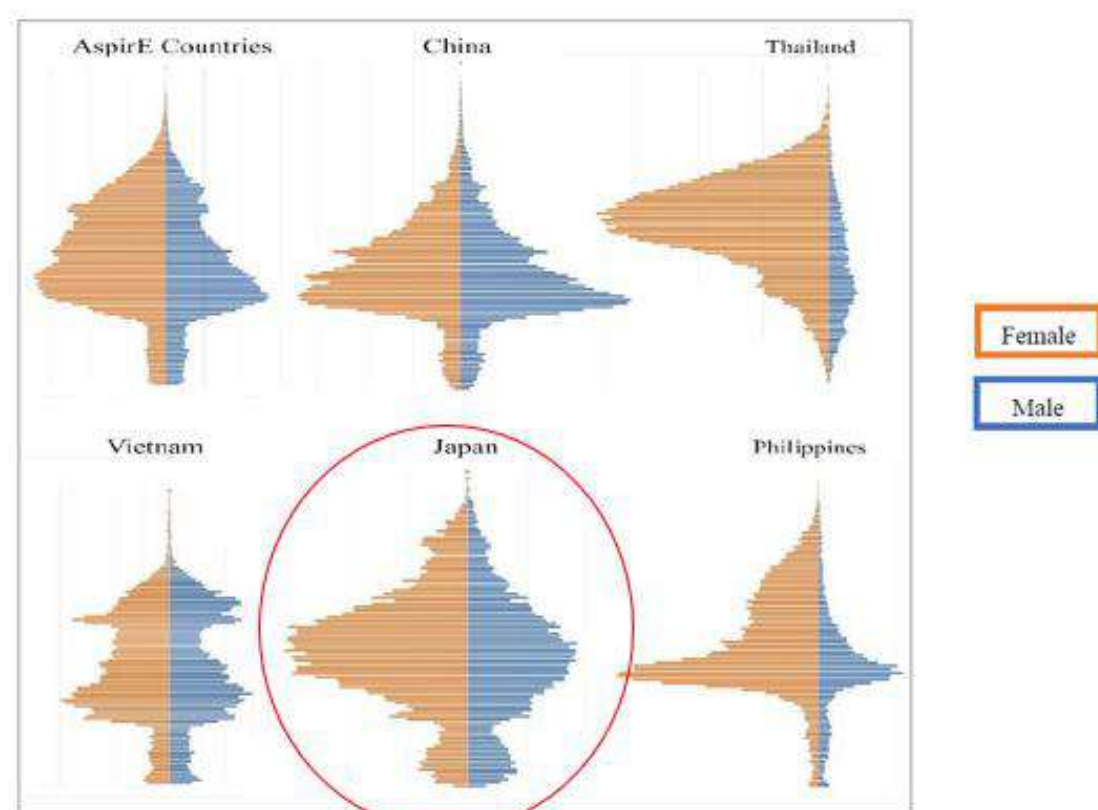
**PACES Final Conference**  
**04 June 2026**



# 1. How do German migration regimes consider aspiring (Japanese) remigrants' behaviour in their migration policies?

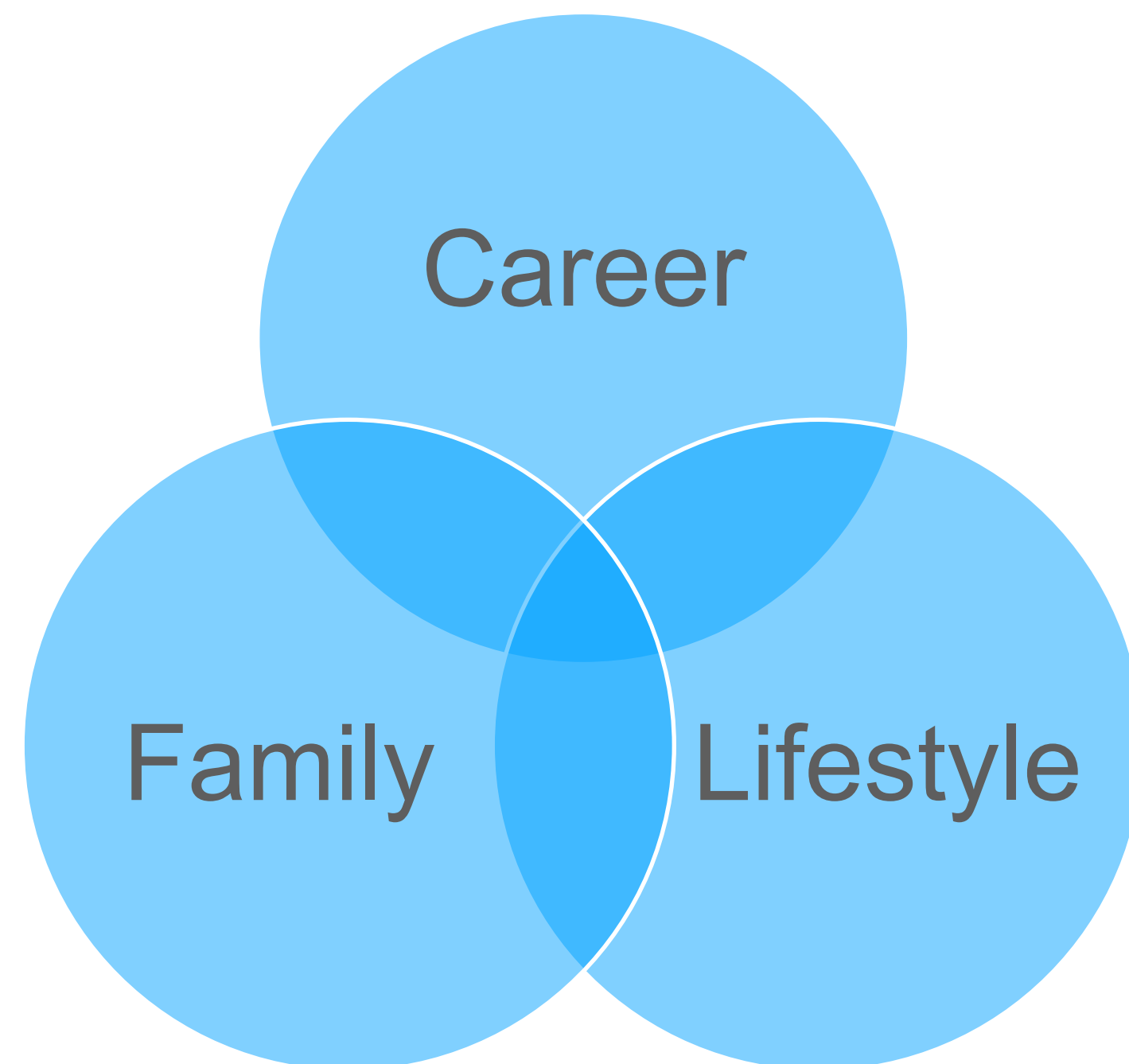
Central law: Act on the Residence, Economic Activity and Integration of Foreigners in the Federal Territory

Japanese population in Germany is heterogeneous:  
labour and marriage migrants,  
students, working holiday makers,  
expatriates



Source for this slide: [Statistisches Bundesamt 2024](#)

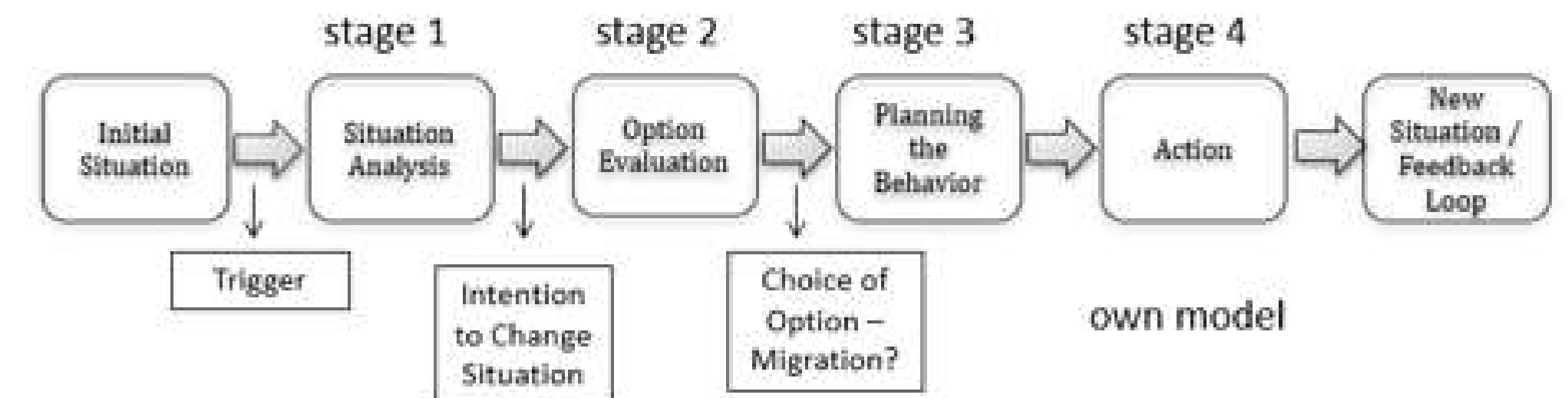
## Priorities affecting (return) migration decisions



Importance shifts over the life course  
and differs by household size and gender

## Processual decision-making model (simplified)

- Decision-making model:



- What triggers migration decision-making processes?

Family	Career	Set period of time	Others
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disease, death</li> <li>Marriage, divorce</li> <li>Birth of children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Job change</li> <li>Job loss</li> <li>Missed promotions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visa</li> <li>Savings</li> <li>End of set time frame</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Change of laws</li> <li>Crises: COVID-19, War, 3/11</li> <li>General dissatisfaction + trigger</li> </ul>

- End of expatriate assignments
- End of studies

## What are our participants' aspirations: stay, return, or migrate onward?

Aspiration	Definition	Number and Gender of Participants (m/f)
<b>Stayer</b>	Person who aspires to stay in Germany	17 (2/15)
<b>Open</b>	Person who is open to every option (staying, returning, moving onward)	8 (4/4)
<b>Japan/ Germany</b>	Person who aspires to stay in Germany or return to Japan, ruling out a 3 <sup>rd</sup> country	8 (2/7)
<b>Japan/ 3<sup>rd</sup> country</b>	Person who aspires to return to Japan or move onward to a 3 <sup>rd</sup> country, ruling out staying Germany	1 (1/0)
<b>Germany/ 3<sup>rd</sup> country</b>	Person who aspires to move onward or stay in Germany, ruling out returning to Japan	3 (1/2)
<b>Onward migration</b>	Person who aspires to move to a third country, ruling out Germany and Japan	2 (0/2)
<b>Returnee</b>	Person who aspires to return to Japan	1 (1/0)

## Unable to “fit” in Japan – not belonging (anymore)

„When I went back to Japan, I had a culture shock. We had an alumni event for my old university. There were so many people there! I was panicking and sweating, I hadn’t felt that way in a long time. [...] In a way, I was German-ized or European-ized. [...] I felt restricted in Japan. I needed to restrain myself. [...] Everything is so cramped. [...] No, I don’t see myself living in Japan again. I cannot make myself fit anymore. To anything. I mean, it is ok for a vacation. But I have become too big for Japan. Or Japan has become too small.“

(m, cultural sector, 30s, student, worker, now PR, husband/father)

Germany

Japan

lifestyle

freedom

work-family  
balance

gendered  
pressures

parents

Differences by  
gender and  
life stage

## For women: career only possible in Germany (professional belonging)

“I realized that maybe it's not because of my company, but because of Japan itself that I'm feeling this depressed.[...] Japan is still a man-dominated society. It's not [...] like that here.”

(f, chemical industry, 30s, expat turned local, single)

“First of all, having a Japanese working contract, that is really a no-go. And as a Japanese, never ever. [...] and as a woman! If you add being a woman to that [a contract in Japan]! Ne-ver! I really respect all Japanese women that live there, raise their children, and have to work. It is amazing what they accomplish.”

(f, financial sector, early 40s, summer school, exchange year, master in Germany, wife/mother)

Germany

Japan

lifestyle

freedom

career (f)

work-family  
balance

gendered  
pressures

parents

Differences by  
gender and  
life stage

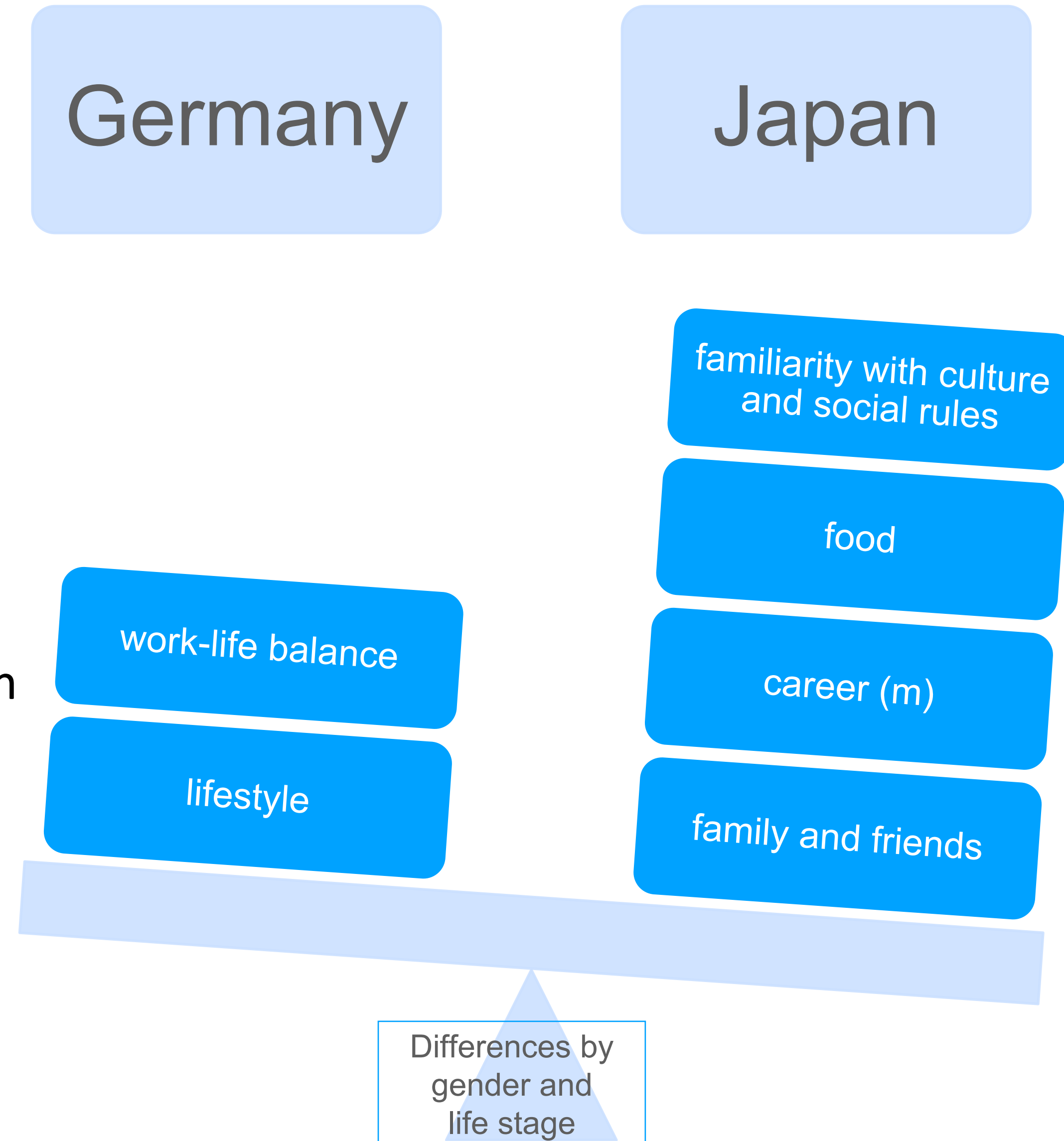
## Longing for social and cultural belonging in Japan

“Because I have friends in Japan. Here not really (laughs). (...) They are not that close, and I feel a lot more comfortable when I am with my Japanese friends because of the language, because of the cultural commonalities. Yes. And how long they know me. It is totally different. They have known me since our childhood, we grew up together. And that’s why I feel even more comfortable. (...) “

(m, financial sector, moved to Germany for partner, 30s, intention to stay)

„For me, the work contract is awesome. (...) many days of paid leave [...]. Adding to that, I do the same job in Germany as I did in Japan, but the workload is different, and the salary is probably better. (...) But as you know, my family and friends are in Japan. These human relations are for me the most difficult aspect. Furthermore, no matter what you do, there will always be a distance between Germany & Japan.”

(f, financial sector, relationship with German partner, intention to live 50/50 in Japan/Germany)



## Migration temporalities: changes in family structures

“This [my family member’s passing] made me deeply reflect on what it means to pass away in a country that is not one’s birthplace, and my desire to return to Japan as soon as possible has grown stronger. [...] I have a goal, and after my uncle’s passing, I strongly am thinking to return to Japan [to pursue it]”  
(f, children’s education, 30s, in a relationship with a German partner, seeking to start business in Japan)

Husband: “If possible, I don’t want to migrate. I hate moving. [...] I just want to live comfortably and be happy with my family. But sometimes Germany also seems scary to me” (m, carpentry, 30s, local contract, married to Japanese partner, father).

Wife: “If possible, I would like to remigrate to another European country. I have the feeling that this is not realistic because I have a family and living with my family has top priority” (f, design, 30s, local contract, married to Japanese partner, mother).



## Conclusion

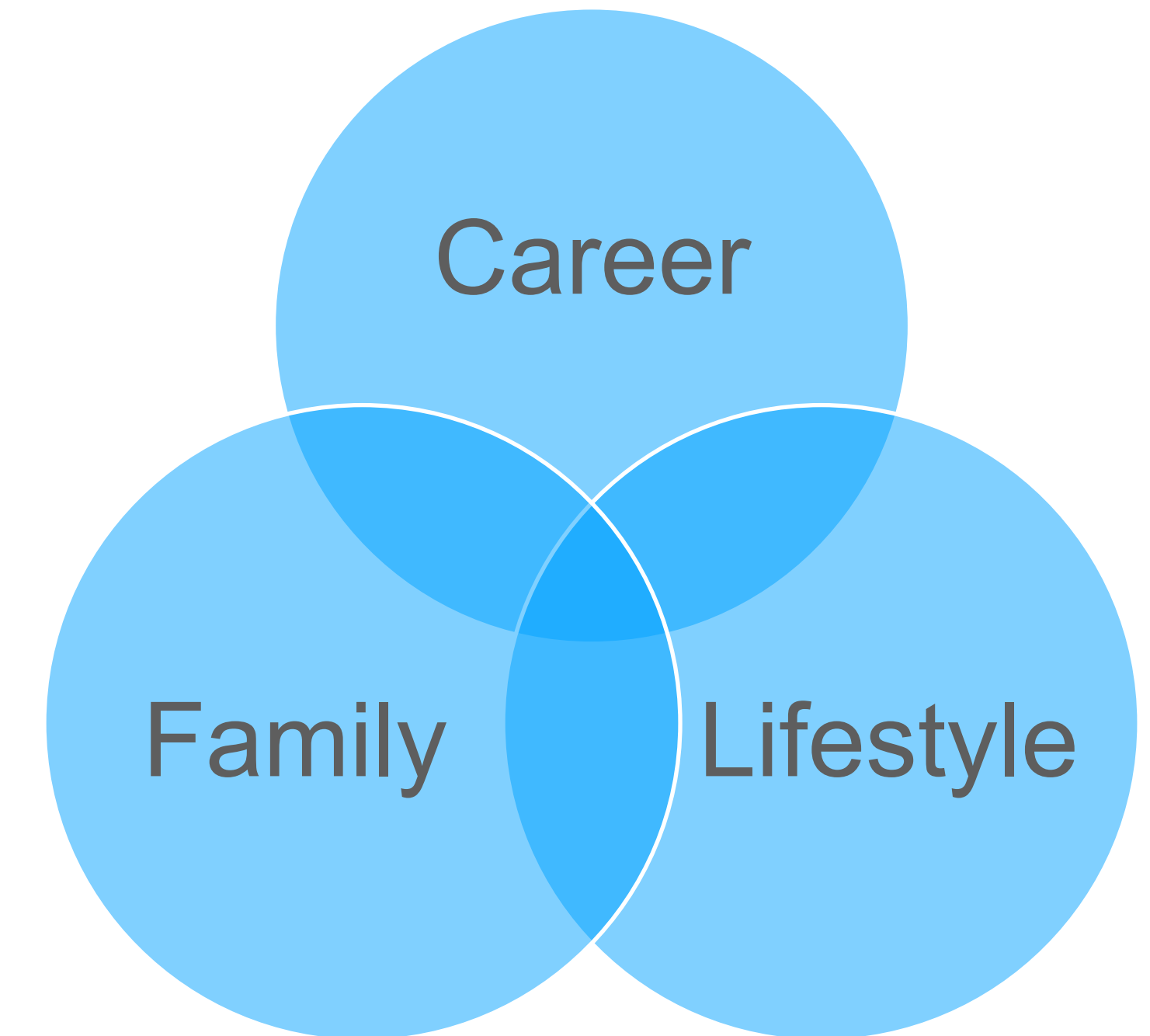
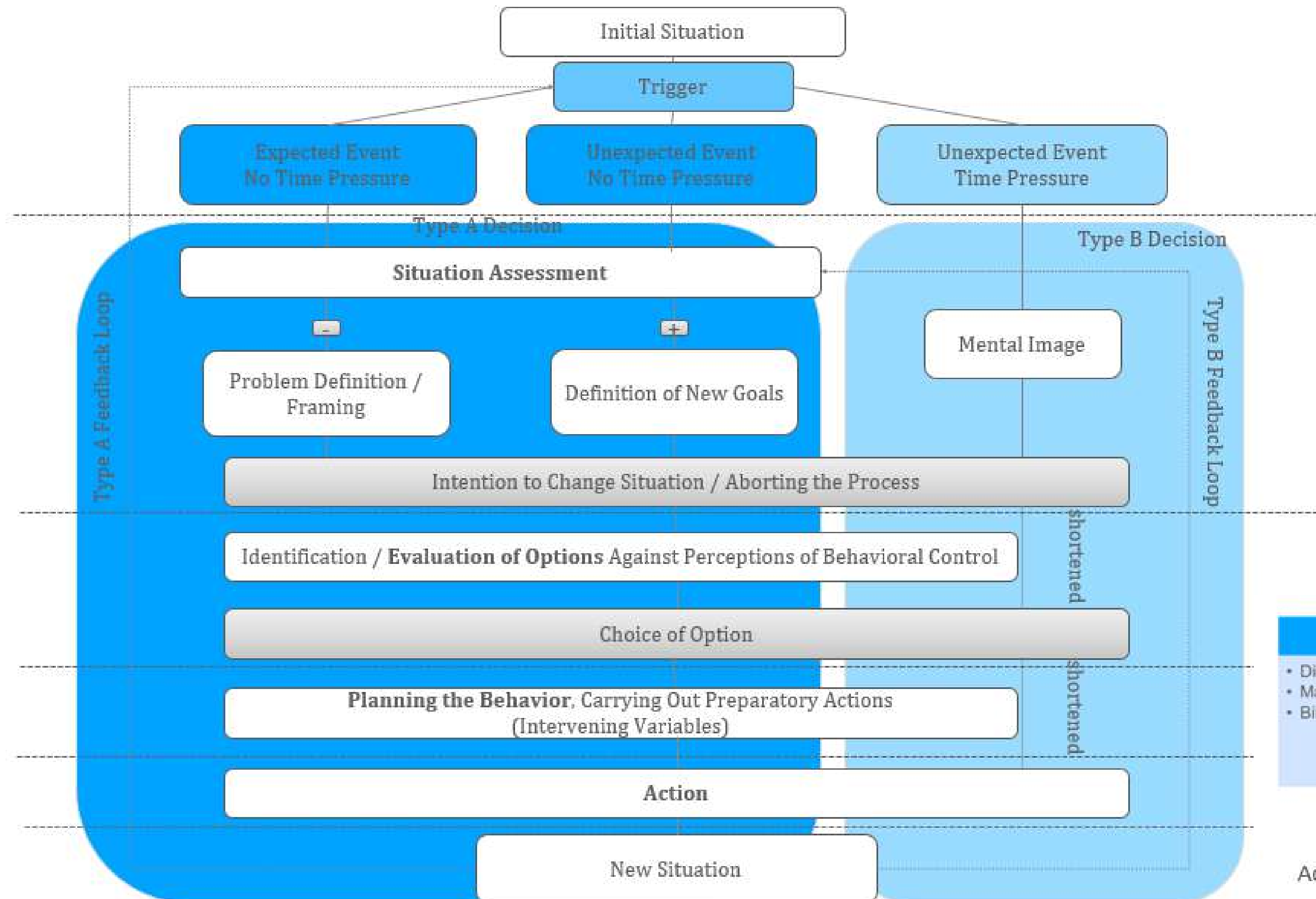
- Why stay, why leave?
  - work opportunities + professional fulfillment and/or family satisfaction + lifestyle
  - Main themes:
    - Gender-based differences
    - cultural preferences (social and especially in work life), being able to “fit”
    - Emotional connection and sense of belonging to Japan (or lack thereof)
- Trigger for migration decision-making: family (!), professional, time, or other factors

## Sources

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Data for this study were jointly collected by Ruth Achenbach (PI) and Vanessa Ludwigs Tkotzyk (post-doctoral researcher in AspirE). The answers to RQ 1 was provided by Dr. Ludwigs Tkotzyk, while the two researchers worked jointly on the two remaining RQs. Some of the visualizations were taken from a joint presentation on the results of the AspirE project (slide 5 and parts of slide 6), the first quote on slide 8 was collected by Dr. Ludwigs Tkotzyk, while the analysis and focus on longing and belonging of this presentation was solely the work of Dr. Achenbach.



Family	Career	Set period of time	Others
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disease, death</li> <li>• Marriage, divorce</li> <li>• Birth of children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job change</li> <li>• Job loss</li> <li>• Missed promotions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visa</li> <li>• Savings</li> <li>• End of set time frame</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change of laws</li> <li>• Crises: COVID-19, War, 3/11</li> <li>• General dissatisfaction + trigger</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• End of expatriate assignments</li> <li>• End of studies</li> </ul>			

## Lea Müller-Funk Presentation



**SYREALITY**

سيريا البيت

**FWF**  
Der Wissenschaftsfonds.

**MOBILITY STRUGGLES  
IN CONTEXTS OF  
VIOLENT CONFLICT  
AND INVOLUNTARY  
IMMOBILITY**

**Dr Lea Müller-Funk**  
*Danube University Krems*

PACES Final Conference  
4 June 2026

# Multi-Sited Case Study

- (Im)mobilities in contexts of violent conflict in origin state
- **SYREALITY** (FWF project, 2022-2027)
- Builds on **qualitative data from inside Syria** collected in 2020 (GIGA funding)
- Builds on **SYRMAGINE** (Marie Curie project, 2017-2019)

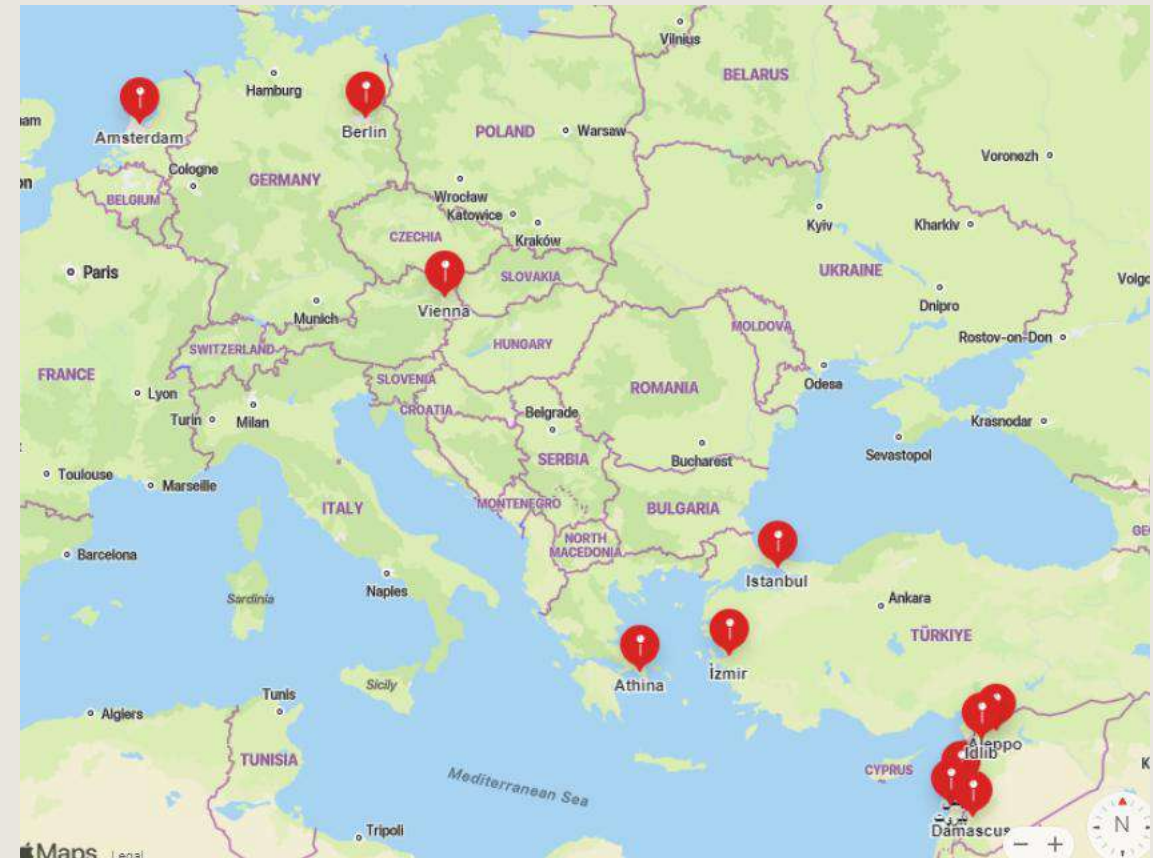



Photo 1: Data collection locations: SYREALITY and beyond

# Reflections on PACES WPs



## Non-Migration Policies and Mobility Decisions

**Oliver Bakewell**  
University of Manchester

**Lucia Mýtna Kureková**  
Slovak Academy of Sciences


**Lucia Kováčová**  
Slovak Academy of Sciences

PACES project Working paper No.4 - July 2024



## The implications of welfare generosity and welfare access for migration strategies

**Martin Guzi** **Lucia Mýtna Kureková**




4Mi INFOGRAPHIC – APRIL 2026

## Niger at the crossroads

What happens after reaching Niger? Understanding onward movements, immobility, and risks

This infographic is part of a two-publication series examining primary and secondary movements to, within and onward from Niger. The research draws on a longitudinal design,<sup>1</sup> administering surveys to the same individuals at different points in time. It included two rounds of follow-up interviews conducted six and twelve months after an initial baseline. Therefore, the data presented in this infographic offer insights into how migration decisions evolve over time alongside changing aspirations and exposure to danger.



# Papers (in the making)



The screenshot shows the top portion of a journal article page. At the top left is the 'INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION' logo in white text on a blue background. To its right is the 'IOM UN MIGRATION' logo, featuring a globe icon and the text 'IOM UN MIGRATION'. Below the logos, there is a line of text: 'ORIGINAL ARTICLE | Open Access | CC BY'. The main title of the article is 'Violence, life aspirations and displacement trajectories in civil war'. Below the title is the author's name, 'Lea Müller-Funk', followed by an email icon. Underneath that is the publication information: 'First published: 28 June 2023 | <https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.13161>'. A navigation bar contains icons for 'SECTIONS', 'PDF', 'TOOLS', and 'SHARE'. The 'Abstract' section is visible, starting with the text: 'Drawing on qualitative data from the civil wars in Syria and Libya since 2011, this paper seeks to build a better understanding of immobility and of displacement trajectories within conflict countries and towards neighbouring countries. The paper shows that different types of violent experiences—personal threats, generalized violence, an increasing hopelessness relating to the absence of violence in the future—trigger different exit movements across internal and external borders. Second, the analysis demonstrates that migration decisions in civil war contexts are complex processes with people balancing between strategies of how to avoid violence with strategies of how to realize broader life aspirations related to family, love, work and political change. Life aspirations often play a more important role once people move out of a situation of immediate danger and in later phases of trajectories and influence (im)mobility patterns in three different directions: stay, move (on) or return. Life aspirations, especially related to political change, outweigh perceptions of violence in some cases. Financial vulnerability can force people to stay in or return to violent contexts.'

## Ambivalence and decision-making in displacement: Insights from middle-class trajectories in civil society

Lea Müller-Funk and Lina Omran

### Abstract

Ambivalence has recently emerged as a key analytical concept for understanding decision-making and strategies of resistance in situations of high uncertainty and shifting structures. Drawing on 20 life histories and bridging migration studies with psychology literature, this paper explores how displaced Syrians negotiate changing professional trajectories through engagement in civil society as a dominant middle-class pathway in displacement. For some of our participants, civil society involvement was a continuation of activism initiated during the 2011 uprising, while for others, it became a professional pathway, allowing them to redefine futures shattered by conflict and displacement. While working for civil society organisations provides refugees with opportunities to contribute, develop skills, and maintain connections to Syria, it also generates ambivalence

## Mobility Struggles: Aspirational and Behavioural Pathways amidst Involuntary Immobility

Josef Neubauer, Naiara Rodriguez-Peña, Lea Müller-Funk, Sorana Toma, Mathias Czaika

### Abstract

A substantial share of the global population aspires to migrate but remains unable to do so—a condition described as involuntary immobility. Existing research has primarily focused on identifying the drivers of this phenomenon, leaving underexplored how people live through and adapt to experiences of immobility, and how their migration aspirations evolve over time. This paper advances a longitudinal perspective on involuntary immobility and introduces the concept of the *mobility struggle* to theorise how aspirations and efforts to migrate are transformed under mobility constraints. Drawing on existing scholarship and original interviews with individuals from El Salvador, Nepal, Senegal, and Syria, we distinguish three ideal-typical pathways that may follow experiences of involuntary immobility: persistence, reconsideration, and disengagement from migration. We argue that these pathways are rarely linear or mutually exclusive. Rather, the mobility struggle is often a recursive process in which individuals repeatedly experience involuntary immobility and reconfigure their aspirations, strategies, and commitments over time. Integrating insights from migration studies, psychology, and our own empirical material, we examine four sets of mechanisms that shape how individuals make sense of and respond to involuntary immobility: motivational configurations and capabilities; attributional style and social norms; close relational ties; and life-course dynamics and critical events. By highlighting the

# Non-policies and changing life aspirations

- **Non-policies** particularly **relevant** when:
  - Connected to realisation of core life aspirations
  - Connected to people's perceived control of how and where to realise them
  - Different importance at origin, transit, and destination
- **Non-migration policies often absent or failing in conflict states**
  - Strategic withholding of services | tool of oppression – hospitals targeted
  - Collapse of governance – failing educational system
  - Multi-level and multi-actor efforts to fill policy gaps in “areas of limited statehood” (Risse 2013)
    - importance of civil society, IOs, INGOs
    - motive to stay, especially for those with political aspirations

## Example: Syrian Refugee-Led Humanitarian Aid



# Non-policies and changing life aspirations

- **Agricultural policy**
  - Does not feature prominently in my case study but land and property laws do
- **Transport policy**
  - Does not feature prominently in my case study; maybe because opportunity to visiting family back home constrained?
- **Educational policy**
  - **At origin:** extremely important in my case study → linked to core life aspirations
  - Not only young people but also parents with children who could not attend school in Syria
  - **In first host countries:** mismatch of attained education or skills and job opportunities → important driver for onward migration from first host country (Lebanon & Turkey)
  - **At destination:** educational mobility via student visas important alternative pathway to Europe

# Non-policies and changing life aspirations

- **Welfare policy**

- **At origin:** Social rights crucial demand of the uprising in Syria, higher expectations from the state
- **In first host countries:** non-access to vital medical services crucial for onward migration aspirations (vulnerability)
  - Often no capabilities to move
  - Some forced return movements as alternative – “survival return”; limited resettlement
- **At destination:** social assistance in aspired destination countries sometimes seen as a way to build up a more dignified life long-term.



*“Civil disobedience: I will not obey the law of an illegitimate authority.” – Alshaab Alsori Aref Tarekh (The Syrian people know their way, 2011)*

# Mobility struggles, active waiting and perceived control

- “**Mobility struggle**”: how aspirations and efforts to migrate are transformed under mobility constraints over time.
- Experiences of **involuntary immobility** prevalent in **transit spaces**.
- Bridging scholarship from **psychology** and **migration studies** with our own empirical research.
- Identification of eight **typical pathways** amidst involuntary immobility.
- **Four sets of mechanisms:**
  - motivational configurations and capabilities;
  - attributional style and social norms;
  - close relational ties;
  - life-course dynamics and critical events.

# Mobility struggles, active waiting and perceived control

- “**Hanging on or active waiting**”: pathway of sustaining migration aspirations while suspending concrete efforts to migrate.
- Prevalent in transit, not passive resignation but strategy grounded in anticipation.
- **Attributional style**: to which causes people attribute their failures (Ledrich and Gana 2013; Bernard Weiner 2018; Brun et al. 2021; Foll et al. 2006; Johnson et al. 2017)
  - More persistence when failure attributed to changeable, controllable causes  
→ failure is seen as temporary and within one’s power to change.
- Example of **Abdullah**:
  - Structural barriers to social mobility at origin perceived as insurmountable, failure of Syrian state to address social inequality.
  - Structural barriers to mobility not perceived as fixed or insurmountable – importance of luck, God’s will, personal insistence.

# Mobility struggles, parallel investment and ambivalence

- **“Parallel investment”**
- Building broader capabilities— education, skills, experience, capital, or networks— that enhance their lives locally while also improving migration prospects.
- **Finding an “acceptable” life** in place | transit partly stops being “transit”.
- Dominant pathway among young middle-class Syrians in Greece (also Lebanon & Turkey) involved in **civil society** work.
- **Civil society work** amidst highly restricted work opportunities.
- “Acceptable” life but highly ambivalent feelings about it.

# Mobility struggles, parallel investment and ambivalence

- Ambivalence as “**being torn between two sides of an attitudinal issue or behavioral action**” (Van Harreveld, Van Der Pligt, and De Liver 2009, 46):
  - Ambivalent about radically changed life aspirations
  - Ambivalent about nature of civil society work
- Ambivalence as important **emotional condition** and a **productive cognitive mechanism** to understand decision-making and coping in displacement:
  - Reframing, distancing oneself from the tension, aspirational deferral.
- Ambivalence **transforms ideas about what is important in life** and **notions of a dignified life**, and subsequently, attitudes towards migration and staying.

# Conclusion

- **Non-migration policies matter in contexts of violent conflict**
  - When linked to perceived control to realise core life aspirations
  - Both, driver to stay and migrate
- **Education, access to health care and social assistance** seem to be especially important
- **Migration-decision making in transit over time**
  - Highlighted importance of pathways of active waiting and parallel investment.
  - Attributional style important category to understand how people think about and act upon overcoming barriers
  - Ambivalence as emotional condition but also cognitive mechanism in decision-making and coping in displacement.

Thank you for your attention!

## Ferruccio Pastore Presentation



# Thinking like M

## Everyday migration populism, between magical thinking and policy opportunism

Ferruccio Pastore (FIERI)

PACES Final Conference

Panel on “Knowledge of Migration Processes and Migration Policy-Making”

5 June 2026

# Thinking like M

- I would like to propose a little thought experiment
- Not “seeing like a state” (Scott 1998) but **seeing like a leader**, a populist leader who has been actively playing the migration card for years
- Seeing (and thinking) like Meloni
- Limitations of the Complex Policymaking Systems (CPS) approach (agent heterogeneity) to understand **charismatic populism**
- Two fundamental constraints/goals: **migraphobia** and **migration dependence** (loathe and need), none of which can be suppressed
- On the contrary, the tension increases (**radicalisation+ageing**)
- How to manage this growing **cognitive dissonance**?
- Key **political and narrative conundrum** for the right, especially when in power. Crucial problem for M
- Mix of **magical thinking** and **policy opportunism**

# Magical thinking

- Malinowski 1954: Believing that words and sounds have the ability to **directly affect the world**
- Migration-specific examples:
  - +Sanctions = +deterrence
  - Migration campaigns work
  - Root causes approach works
  - Contracting abroad works
- What when the trick patently fails?
- **Raise the stakes** (e.g. more sanctions) or **policy opportunism**



# Policy opportunism

News

## Italy agrees to take Bangladeshi skilled workers



Migranti, Meloni "Dalla criminalità truffa sul decreto flussi"

«The vast majority of foreigners who entered Italy in the last years come from Bangladesh, and Bangladeshi authorities themselves speak of visa frauds» (G. Meloni, 4 June 2024)



# Due to collapse?

- *Le beurre et l'argent du beurre*: How can such a precarious balance last so long?
- 2 key factors:
- **Mass irregularity as sub-optimal equilibrium** (satisfying, to some extent, both migraphobia and migration dependence)
- But also: **lack of effective opposition** (political and journalistic)
- **Will the cognitive (political, economic) bubble ever explode? How? What then?**

## Sadio Soukouna Presentation

**PACES Final Conference.** Making migration and migration policy decisions amidst societal transformation,  
Condorcet, June 2026

# Knowledge Production on Migration Governance in Crisis Contexts in the Sahel

Sadio Soukouna  
Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM)  
[Soukouna.sadio@uqam.ca](mailto:Soukouna.sadio@uqam.ca)

# Introduction

Much of what we know about migration governance in the Sahel or Africa is produced through the perspectives of states, international organizations, and humanitarian agencies.

- Statistics, reports, policy frameworks, and classifications influence public debates and academic research on migration.
- How does shifting our analytical focus towards **non-state actors** change both our understanding of **migration governance** and the way **knowledge about migration processes** is produced ?

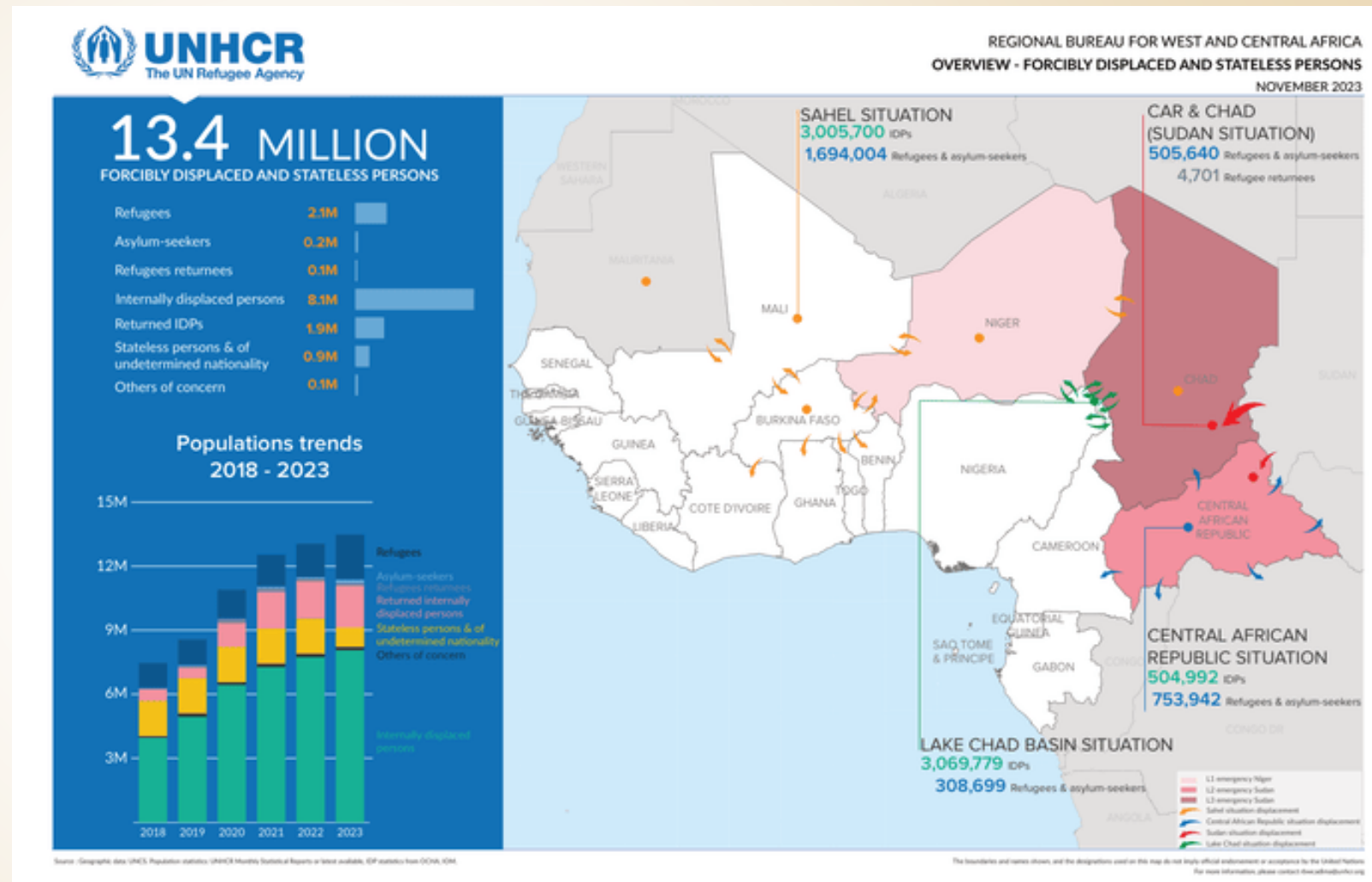
1. Non-State Actors and Knowledge Production

2. The Co-Production of Migration Policies

3. Methodological Challenges in Contexts of Crisis

# Non-State Actors and the Production of Knowledge on Forced Migration Governance

- Who Produces Knowledge on Migration Governance ?
- Shifting the Focus: From Institutions to Local Actors
- Interactions Between State and Non-State Actors
- Local Networks in the Governance of Forced Displacement



# The Co-Production of Migration Policies

- **Migration policies** are not implemented exclusively by states. Rather, they emerge through interactions among a wide range of actors operating at different levels.
- **Knowledge about migration governance** is itself co-produced through these interactions.
- **Local networks of public action** (state actors, international organizations, NGOs, local associations, community leaders, and citizens) .
- **Studying non-state actors** not only changes our understanding of migration governance. It also changes the knowledge we produce about migration processes.

# Producing Knowledge in Contexts of Crisis and Authoritarianism

- ❑ How can we study migration policies in contexts where fear, surveillance, and political repression shape social relations?
- ❑ What methodological approaches are most appropriate for studying migration governance in contexts of conflict and insecurity?
- ❑ What are the responsibilities of researchers when some field sites become inaccessible because they are considered too dangerous?
- ❑ What happens when research increasingly concentrates on safer locations while other spaces remain under-studied?



Thank you!

## Audrey Lenoël Presentation

# Migration decision-making and policy-making in West Africa: Insights from the MIGCHOICE project

Audrey LENOËL, IC-Migrations, Collège de France

PACES Final Conference, Panel « Knowledge of Migration  
Processes and Migration Policy-Making”

5<sup>th</sup> June 2026, Campus Condorcet, Aubervilliers



**ACCOMPAGNER  
LES JEUNES  
ENTREPRENEURS  
RURAUX**

Oumar, maraîcher

Enabel 



#PAREERBA  
#Tekki\_fii



# Introduction

## Data

- MIGCHOICE project (2019-2021) (SSSII programme – DFID & IOM) – GN, GM, SN
- Interviews and documentary analyses

## Questions

- What are the policy assumptions about migration choice behind these development interventions? And how ethnographic evidence challenges these assumptions?
- How did a particular policy model linking entrepreneurship, employment and reduced migration become institutionalised within European migration governance?



Black, R., Bellagamba, A., Botta, E., Ceesay, E., Cissokho, D., Engeler, M., Lenoël, A., Oelgemöller, C., Riccio, B., Sakho, P., Wotem Somparé, A., Vitturini, E. et Zingari, G.N. (2022), "Migration drivers and migration choice: interrogating responses to migration and development interventions in West Africa", *Comparative Migration Studies*, 10, 10 (2022) DOI : 10.1186/s40878-022-00283-3



Lenoël A., Oelgemöller, C. (2024) « Development Aid and Migration Control through Entrepreneurship: Anatomy of a Public Action Model in the Gambia and Senegal », *Revue européenne des migrations internationales*, 40 (4) | 2024, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/15ara>



# Policy assumptions about migration choice and fieldwork evidence

Migration and development interventions based on **assumptions**:

- Migration is a problem to be corrected
- Migration is an individual decision that can be influenced
- Migration is primarily driven by a lack of economic opportunities (migrants as *homo economicus*) → creating jobs, skills and entrepreneurial opportunities will encourage people to stay.

More opportunities → less migration

A more nuanced understanding of migration choice in the field

- Migration decision influenced by economic factors but also shaped by family expectations, social pressure, status, emotional aspirations, uncertainty, obligations toward relatives, hopes for adulthood and dignity.
- Development interventions not as alternatives but as side activities or even facilitators of migration (e.g. agriculture).
- Migration is often not a single “decision” but part of an ongoing life trajectory.

# Migration and choice in West Africa

- Life is uncertain and futures are open-ended
- Migration is woven into broader projects of becoming an adult, supporting family, gaining dignity, or escaping “stuckedness.”

For many, in an inversion of the common Western notion of the future, it is the present that feels uncertain and risky, while the future — including migration — offers more certainty and hope.

So migration is not simply a “choice” that development aid can switch on or off. It is part of how people navigate uncertain lives and imagine possible futures.



If field evidence challenges these assumptions, why do they remain so influential in policy-making?

# Training and entrepreneurship as alternatives to migration – Emergence of a travelling policy model

- Rise of a policy model linking entrepreneurship, vocational training, and employment creation to (irregular) migration reduction.
- **A travelling model** (Behrends et al. 2014, Olivier de Sardan 2021) imposed on aid professionals
  - “[a] model can be understood essentially as an analytical representation of particular aspects of reality created as an apparatus or protocol for interventions in order to shape this reality for certain purposes” (Behrends et al., 2014: 1-2)
  - Standardised representation of a problem and its solution that circulates across institutions, countries and programmes.
- **Emergence at the intersection of two policy trajectories.**
  - Growing importance of entrepreneurship as a solution to poverty, unemployment and social exclusion within development policy since the 1980s
  - Incorporation of development aid into migration governance from the 2000s, and even more after 2015 (EUTF)

# Training and entrepreneurship as alternatives to migration – EUTF projects & their theories of change

*“In Senegal, we have [...] cohorts of around 300,000 young people entering the job market every year and a job market that cannot absorb all these human resources [...]. So what we’re trying to do [...] is to develop vocational training, which can include support for entrepreneurship in sectors, trades or niches that seem promising for the Senegalese economy. And the link with migration is quite simply that, by creating alternatives and prospects in the regions of Senegal, we can get people who would otherwise only have the prospect of migrating irregularly to do the maths, and tell themselves that by training and having support to develop their activities, perhaps the future can be better in Senegal and there are opportunities to be seized in Senegal.”*

EU officer, Dakar, Sept. 2020

## Action Document for EU Trust Fund

Title	Reference: T05-EUTF-SAH-GM-03 Title: <b>Building a future - Make it in The Gambia</b>
Zone benefiting from the action / localisation	The Gambia: The action will take place in: countrywide – 5 Regions and Greater Banjul Area
Total costs	Total estimated amount: <b>Action Document for EU Trust Fund to be used for the decisions of the Operational Board</b>

### 1. IDENTIFICATION

Country	The Gambia
Title/Number	Ref. T05-EUTF-SAH-GM01 The Gambia Youth Empowerment Scheme
Total cost	Total estimated cost: 11,000,000 EUR Total amount drawn from the Trust Fund : 11,000,000 EUR
Aid method / Method of	Indirect management: PAGODA with International Trade Centre

## Action Document for the EU Trust Fund

Title	Reference: T05-EUTF-SAH-SN-09 PASPED – Programme de contraste à la migration illégale à travers l'appui au Secteur Privé et à la création d'emplois au Sénégal.
Zone benefiting from the action / localisation	Senegal The action will take place in Dakar, Diourbel, Thies, Kaolack, Louga, and Saint Louis

### Avenant 1 au document d'action du Fonds fiduciaire de l'UE: visant à la modification de l'objectif spécifique OS3

### 1. IDENTIFICATION

Pays	Sénégal
Intitulé du projet	Référence: T05-EUTF-SAH-SN-04 Développer l'emploi au Sénégal: renforcement de la compétitivité des entreprises et de l'employabilité dans les zones de départ
Coût total	Coût total estimé: 40 M€ Montant total provenant du Fonds fiduciaire: 40 M€

# Training and entrepreneurship as alternatives to migration – mechanisms and schemes

- Target groups:
  - regions of origin for ‘irregular’ migration flows
  - ‘potential migrants’ and returning migrants – young people (aged 18–35)
- Vocational training, capacity building, facilitating access to finance for self-employed entrepreneurs, developing agricultural farms, constructing hydro-agricultural infrastructure and facilities – a combination of these measures
  - Addressing supply and demand
  - Innovative sectors
  - Returning to the land (« *as a source of pride* »)
  - Less funding but support and training in soft skills and ‘entrepreneurial spirit’
  - Theme of empowerment through work and fostering a sense of responsibility
- In addition to awareness-raising campaigns

# Training and entrepreneurship as alternatives to migration – seeking the legitimacy of the model

## Interventions based more on assumptions than on evidence

- The programme «[...] has contributed to the effort of decreasing the number of irregular migrants passing from Africa to Europe, but this contribution cannot be measured precisely», European Court of Auditors, *Special report no 32/2018: European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa: Flexible but lacking focus*, p.37
- EUTF's pseudo-causal «root causes » narrative (Zaun et Nanternoz, 2021)
- In contrast to scientific evidence

NEWS ARTICLE | 31 March 2020

C'est avec son hôtel en Casamance, que Pascal Ehemba a pu réaliser son rêve



« Tekki fii », une série sénégalaise engagée

NEWS ARTICLE | 22 November 2019

Absa Jallow recounts her migrant returnee experience and expresses hope for better future



## A process of legitimisation

- Storytelling
  - Ex. edifying stories, [websérie](#)
- Research and evaluation
  - Ex. Tjaden et Dunsch 2021, Bah et al. 2023

# Training and entrepreneurship as alternatives to migration – Aid professionals pointing out the contradictions in the model

- Reversed causality

*“When you train people in a trade, they go and do it where it’s lucrative. But if you don’t train them in any trade, they have nothing to sell, so they don’t move around as much.”* National aid agency worker in charge of EUTF programme, Dakar, Sept. 2020

- Migration and the entrepreneurial spirit

*“Any business owner in the world, if asked to choose a young associate between someone who crossed the Sahara on foot to catch a hypothetical boat in Libya, someone who worked in clandestine fields in Italy before eventually making their way to Stuttgart to become a dockworker, or I don’t know what up there, or [...] his brother who stayed in the village cultivating his father’s fields—the captain of industry, I know who he will choose as an associate, there is no mystery.”* *ibid.*

- A comparative advantage in being a returned migrant
- A preference for self-employment that is not clearly established

# Conclusion

- Tension between policy and field-based knowledge.
- Ongoing reliance on simplified causal models that connect development interventions to decreased migration.
- Understanding migration policy requires examining not only migration itself, but also how particular forms of knowledge, evidence and narratives gain the authority to shape public action.
- Key question is perhaps not whether these policies are effective, but why specific explanations of migration become politically persuasive despite having limited empirical support.

## Abigail Goldfarb Presentation

# PACES

Making migration and migration policy decisions  
amidst societal transformations

## From research to policy: key findings and reflections from the PACES project

Abigail Goldfarb, Migration Policy Institute Europe

PACES Final Conference  
5 June 2026



# Returning to the core questions of PACES...

## Making migration and migration policy decisions amidst societal transformations (PACES)

- How do changes in society, individual life experiences and migration policy shape decisions to stay or to migrate over time and across countries?
- How can this knowledge inform future migration policies and governance?

# Engagement with policymakers under the PACES project

## Policy Innovation Lab

Roundtables,  
workshops, and  
webinars

## Focus Group with Policymakers

Exploring theories  
of change in  
migration  
policymaking

## Policy Dialogues and Stakeholder Engagement

e.g. Bratislava  
Policy Event

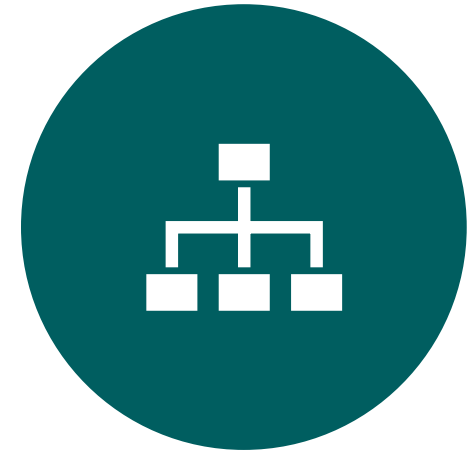
# Beyond calls for 'more evidence': unpacking structural barriers to evidence-based policymaking



Research and policy operate on different **timelines** and respond to different **incentives**



Knowledge that does not align with **dominant political narratives** can be intentionally sidelined



**Institutional silos and fragmentation** can limit uptake and use of evidence

# Key Policy-Relevant Findings from PACES Research

- 1** Decisions on migration policy are based on **different assumptions across migration pathways** and the use of evidence in policymaking also varies across policy issues.
- 2** Migration policies have relatively limited influence on migration aspirations compared to stronger personal drivers and structural conditions, with **facilitative policies generally more effective than deterrence measures.**
- 3** There is a **shared preference for regular migration channels** among migrants and European publics.

# Key Policy-Relevant Findings from PACES Research

**4** Knowledge of migration policies—and the impact they have on migration decision-making—**increases as the migration journey progresses.**

**5** Migrants often lack reliable information about migration policies and their rights—both during the journey and in destination contexts—while **policy communication efforts remain misaligned** with their information needs.

**6** Public attitudes toward migration and migration policies are **more nuanced and moderate** than commonly assumed.

# Key Policy-Relevant Findings from PACES Research

**7** **Persistent inequality and relative deprivation** will continue to fuel migration aspirations, especially as people's exposure to information—and to others' living standards—expands.

**8** Concerns about **physical safety** often outweigh economic considerations as key drivers of both departure and decisions along the route.

**9** **Access to welfare benefits** influences migration flows, but the relationship is far from straightforward.

**10** Return migration decisions are **not a mirror image** of initial migration aspirations.

# Key reflections: what have we learned?



**Simplistic assumptions** often fail to capture how people make migration decisions in reality



The result is **ineffective policies**, increasing frustration among the public and reinforcing polarisation

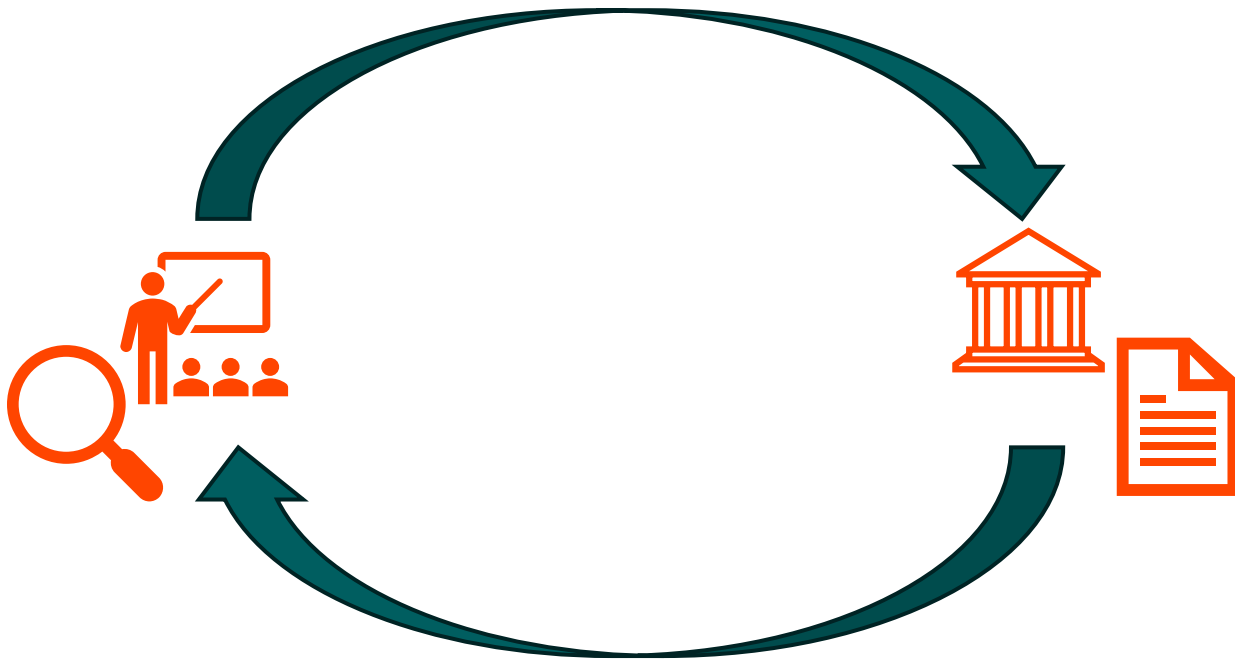


Evidence matters—but its influence depends on **trust, timing, and engagement**



Effective policy requires **ongoing dialogue** between researchers, policymakers, practitioners, and those with lived experience

# Looking ahead: lessons for future evidence-policy engagement



Evidence-based policymaking  
is a two-way street

**Co-design research questions early**

**Use trusted intermediaries**

**Produce layered outputs**

**Build in explicit reflection moments**

**Sustain relationships over time**