

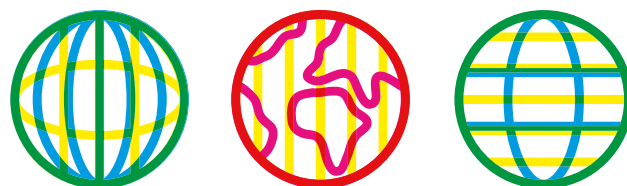
Cross Talks in African countries. Adapting the Cross Talk methodology. Revised edition.

Michel Debruyne, Jonathan Stebig, Elida Kocani, Aly Tandian,
Joseph Teye, Mary Boatemaa Setrana, Leander Kandilige.



opportunities

for a fair narrative on migration



opportunities

for a fair narrative on migration

Please quote this report as: Cross Talks in African countries. Adapting the Cross Talks. Revised edition.2024. Michel Debruyne, Jonathan Stebig, Elida Kocani, Aly Tandian, Joseph Teye, Mary Boatemaa Setrana, Leander Kandilige. OPPORTUNITIES-project.



Horizon 2020
European Union Funding
for Research & Innovation

DISCLAIMER This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research & Innovation program under Grant Agreement no. 101004945. The information in this deliverable reflects only the authors' views and the European Union is not liable for any use that may be made of the information contained therein.

DISSEMINATION LEVEL: Public

Project: OPPORTUNITIES- Crises as OPPORTUNITIES: towards a Level Telling Field on Migration and a New Narrative of Successful Integration

GA: 101004945

Call: H2020-SC6-MIGRATION-2020

Type of action: RIA

Cross Talks in African countries. Adapting the Cross Talk Methodology Revised edition.

Work Package 6

Due date: December 2024

Submission date: December 2024

Lead Beneficiary: Beweging.net

Authors: Michel Debruyne, Jonathan Stebig, Elida Kocani, Aly Tandian, Joseph Kofi Teye, Mary Boatemaa Setrana, Leander Kandilige



opportunities
for a fair narrative on migration

Table of contents

Abstract.....	5
1. Introduction.....	6
2. The need to adapt the core of the Cross Talks	7
2.1 <i>Introduction</i>	7
2.2 <i>The core elements of the Cross Talks</i>	7
2.3 <i>Questioning the Cross Talks</i>	9
3. The adaptation of the Cross Talks to the African situation.....	11
3.1 <i>Introduction</i>	11
3.2 <i>A typology of migration</i>	11
3.3 <i>The interpretation of the aspirations</i>	16
3.4 <i>A typology of stakeholders</i>	17
3.5 <i>An adaption of the Cross Talk method</i>	18
3.6 <i>The dialogue sessions and the recommendations</i>	21
3.7 <i>The artistic translation</i>	22
4. Enriching the Cross Talk method	24

Abstract

The Cross Talk methodology aims at creating a Level Telling Field and establishing the conditions for a “fair dialogue” between migrants and persons or institutions who can have an impact on the lives of the migrants. It seeks to answer the question of how a society can be inclusive. The key question of the Cross Talks is developed from a European perspective.

In an African context this key question is only one out of many questions. Moreover, there are other questions that are more urgent. These manifold questions come from a wide and diverse group of migrants: internal migrants, emigrants, transmigrants, regular and irregular migrants, returning (forced or voluntary) migrants. The various groups have their own aspirations and try to live a life that they have reasons to appreciate.

In an African context super-diversity is the main characteristic. The Cross Talk methodology must therefore be adjusted to answer this super-diversity. This includes a broadening and a multiplication of the dialogue sessions, the use of more and more different methods, and the involvement of the wider community.

In the African context the Cross Talks want to mobilise the entire society to realise real change for the African people and all the persons with aspirations to migrate.



1. Introduction

The Cross Talks are defined in OPPORTUNITIES as an innovative methodology to create a Level Telling Field and to establish the conditions for a “fair dialogue” between migrants and persons or institutions who can have an impact on the lives of the migrants (called stakeholders). They have to answer the question of how a society can be inclusive. The key question of the Cross Talks is developed from a European perspective.

But OPPORTUNITIES is also an African project. Three African countries, Ghana, Mauritania and Senegal, are partners in the project and will organise Cross Talks like the other 6 European countries¹. As the Cross Talks methodology is an answer to the European question, what does this mean for the African Cross Talks?

In this paper we discuss with the three African research teams the core elements of the Cross Talk methodology. In a first part you find a description of the core elements of the method. Special attention is given to the key question and their consequences. We end the first part with a questioning of the method. This questioning is used as a frame for the African researchers.

The second part contains the answers of the three African teams. They have answered questions about the typology of migration, the different aspirations, how to answer the complexity of the typology, and how to find ways to adjust the Cross Talk methodology.

This second part shows how the key question is not only different but also super-diverse.

The last part summarises and draws some conclusions from the Cross Talk methodology. The main conclusion is that the African researchers have enriched the methodology of the Cross Talks by adapting it to the complexity of migration in their countries. The core of the Cross Talks remains the same: creating a fair dialogue by re-enacting the stories. To create a real Cross Talk, they had to make the dialogue sessions more complex, use more and more different methods, and involve a wider community.

These adjusted Cross Talks want to and will mobilise a broad community and result in a real change for the African people. European countries can only learn from this.

This edition revises the document written in 2022 at the time Cross Talks started in the different countries. Today, autumn 2024, we can integrate the experiences and methodology into the text. above all, we can include the experiences of the cultural translation of the Cross Talks. This makes this overview of the Cross Talks in African countries not only more current, but above all richer.

¹ The European participating countries are Austria, Belgium, France, Italy, Portugal and Romania. Germany participates as well, but don't organise a Cross Talk.

2. The need to adapt the core of the Cross Talks

2.1 Introduction

The Cross Talks are defined in OPPORTUNITIES as an innovative methodology to create a Level Telling Field and to establish the conditions for a “fair dialogue” between migrants and persons or institutions who can have an impact on the lives of the migrants (called stakeholders).

This methodology has been developed from a European perspective. It aims to answer the question of how a society can be inclusive. Successful inclusion, in the European context, presupposes that migrants are given the full opportunity to become full members of society, which implies the possibility of creating a common world together. In an African context, the core question is different. This different question calls for a reconsideration of the methodology.

In the first part we describe the core elements and in the second part we question these core elements in this new context.

2.2 The core elements of the Cross Talks

The Cross Talks method is characterized by four core elements: 1. It is an “open” methodology with several steps leading to a fair dialogue; 2. It is based on the creation of stories and the re-enactment of these stories; 3. It is based on the establishment of a Level Telling Field; and 4. It enables the expression of aspirations.

These several core concepts need to be elaborated.

First, Cross Talks are an “open” methodology. It consists of several steps to bring different people together and to create a “fair dialogue”. The methodology is “open”: it defines the steps and describes the content and the goals of the steps, but at the same time it gives the practitioner the “openness” to adapt the steps to the needs of its own action. The duration of the steps is not predetermined either. A practitioner can give a step more or less weight in the process. Only the steps on re-enactment and dialogue are of vital importance.

Second, the core of the method is the creation of stories and the re-enactment of these stories. The participants are asked to create a story. These stories are then used during the re-enactment, the reading aloud in public. The method thus results in creating a true listening attitude by reading the other person's stories out loud. By reading aloud, the actor is confronted with the story and he or she has to put her/himself in the shoes of the other person. The actor has to listen to her/his own voice, and to listen to the other person's story. The actor is confronted with the other person's voice through her/his own voice.



The re-enactment prepares a common ground for a “fair dialogue”. Through the re-enactment, the participants become aware of other people's lives, the conditions in which they lived in the past, their present living conditions and their aspirations. This awareness is the beginning of a common ground among all participants. This understanding is the basis for a “fair dialogue”.

Third, the Cross Talks are based on creating a Level telling Field. The Level Telling Field (LTF) is the key metaphor of OPPORTUNITIES, defining the way we seek to conceptualize and improve narrative dynamics in the public sphere. Level Telling Fields are scripts and mechanisms for an open, constructive, and productive debate – the cornerstone of a democratic, pluralist, and secular society. They are best viewed as commitments by all participants in a debate to adopt a shared set of premises, to agree on principles and rules, and to define processes and procedures for conducting debates and documenting results.

The LTF is thus a metaphor for a “fair dialogue”. A “fair dialogue” is a conversation or discourse in which the perspectives of all participants affected by the subject matter are equally respected and valued. In John Dewey's (1988) sense, a fair dialogue exists within communities if all members jointly explore social and democratic conditions of coexistence and develop from there a shared vision of what political aims and objectives deserve to be desired and pursued. To achieve this, participants have to agree, either explicitly (if controversies are to be expected) or implicitly (if all participants share the same basic assumptions) on a set of premises, principles, and procedures to establish common ground, or, in a wider context, a Level Telling Field.² The “fair dialogue” must result in recommendations, policy recommendations on the local and the national level about how to live together.

Fourth, the stories are a tool to help the participants to express aspirations. A dictionary definition of the word aspiration is “a desire or ambition to achieve something.” The word thus signifies some aim or target and a preference or wish to attain it. In OPPORTUNITIES we use the aspirations of the migrants and the stakeholders to create a common ground. Aspirations have two characteristics. First, aspirations are future oriented; that is, they are goals that can only be satisfied at some future time. Aspirations are not about immediate gratification. For example, a hungry person may aim to get some food to satisfy his/her immediate hunger and exert some effort to achieve that aim. This does not count as an aspiration. In contrast, the goal to be food secure in the future represents an aspiration. Second, aspirations are motivators; that is, they are goals in which individuals are willing, in principle, to invest time, effort, or money to attain (in contrast to idle daydreams and wishes). Nevertheless, the willingness to invest is potential or conditional.

In OPPORTUNITIES, we ask migrants to express their aspirations about “living together” in the country of arrival. OPPORTUNITIES focuses on the reasoned kind of life people choose. What kind of life do migrants have reasons to choose? How do they see their well-being in their new country? How do they see the living together, and building together a common kind of life? These are the aspirations we want to hear, to bring in the Cross Talks.

We ask stakeholders (stakeholders are individuals, groups of people, institutions, or organizations that have a significant interest in the success or failure of a project, either as implementers, facilitators, beneficiaries or adversaries) to do the same: creating stories about their aspirations about “living together”.

² The several concepts are defined in the Glossary of OPPORTUNITIES: www.OPPORTUNITIESproject.eu

During the re-enactment these stories with different aspirations are exchanged and read aloud.

These four elements form the core of the Cross Talk methodology.

The OPPORTUNITIES project also translates the methodology by using artistic formats. The artistic translation of the results of the Cross Talks is a separate method to create a low-threshold communication with a broad public.

Cross Talks are small group sessions with a selected group of migrants and stakeholders. Their results and the used methodology have to be broadly communicated. The goal of the artistic translation is to open a “fair dialogue” in different settings and with a broad public.

2.3 Questioning the Cross Talks

The Cross Talks start from the fact that migrants are coming to Europe and try to build a life there. This basic starting point determines the methodology.

Even in a European context, this starting point is doubtful. Migrants have several reasons to come to Europe: war, civil war, climate change, starvation, an absolute lack of opportunities, or a search for work. Migrants can have a “blue card” or being with (-out) papers. Migrants can stay temporarily or long-term. Migrants can be transit migrants, hoping to live in another country. And so on. The main characteristic is that migrants stay in Europe for a while and could become a citizen at a certain moment.

9 This starting point cannot be transposed to an African context. Basically, people migrate from an African country to a European country. This is a totally different starting point. As the Cross Talks are written from another starting point, we need to discuss the methodology and adapt it to the African context.

The first adaption is about the target group. Here we need to know better the kind of migration in the three African countries within the OPPORTUNITIES project, or the typology of migration. A description of the typologies can give an indication on how to adapt the Cross Talks.

OPPORTUNITIES has chosen this starting point from the assumption that every migrant irrespective of his/her status or reason, stays a while in a new country. At that moment, they become an “inhabitant”, someone who works, lives, travels, makes friends (and enemies), goes walking, etc. They become an ordinary “wo/man”. To become an “inhabitant” supposes to have an idea of how to live, work, learn in that community. In the European context we ask the migrants to express their aspirations: the kind of life they want to live and have reasons to choose. These aspirations form the core of the stories that will be used during the Cross Talks.

People who want to migrate have another aspiration. These are not based on a perspective as an “inhabitant”. These are based on different kinds of assumptions, stories, needs, and so on. The question is then: what is the core of the story that will be used during the Cross Talks?

There are several ways to handle this question. The typology of migrants can give an indication. Are they migrants that go for a long-term stay? Are they rather looking for a short stay (to learn or to have a certain income)? What are the aspirations of transmigrants who stay a certain time in Mauritania, Senegal or Ghana?

The factual situation of the migrant can determine the core of the Cross Talks in Africa.



The situation of the migrant will determine the aspirations. The kind of aspirations also determine the type of stakeholders. In the European context, the stakeholders are easy to define: they are the institutions and persons who influence the life of the migrants. In the African context, depending on the type of migration, the stakeholders are not predetermined. This has a consequence for the type of Cross Talks.

Depending on the specific country context and types of migration, different Cross Talks will be required in the same country. This raises the question that, if there are several Cross Talks with different types of migrants and different types of stakeholders, how can these several Cross Talks be merged?

The Cross Talks must end up into a moment of dialogue. Who are the persons that will take the lead in this dialogue? In the European context, this is simple: the dialogue sessions follow the Cross Talks session. In the African session, it is more complicated. If there are more Cross Talks, several and different Cross Talks, how is the dialogue session organized? We also need to take the cultural and societal characteristics on board.

The dialogue sessions must result in policy recommendations. Is it possible to realize one global recommendation for the project, or are more and different recommendations needed?

In the European context, the migration policy is more or less shared under a European umbrella. This is not the same for the African Union. How can the recommendations from the three countries be translated into recommendations for the global African Union?

The last topic is the artistic translation of the results of the Cross Talks. In the European context there is one form of artistic translation and one at each national level. In the three African countries, if there are more Cross Talks, more types of migrants and more stakeholders, will there be various forms of artistic translation?

Most of the European countries are constructed around one main language and culture. The three African countries have more than one language and have different cultures. Can the artistic translation be adapted to these different cultural settings? And what will be the main target group of the audiences?

These are the first questions we have to raise about the adaption of the Cross Talks to the African context. During the implementation of the Cross Talks, other adaptations may be needed. These will be incorporated in a new version of this paper at a later stage.

3. The adaptation of the Cross Talks to the African situation

3.1 Introduction

From the start of the project, the African and European teams discussed the CT methodology together. As the CT methodology is new for everyone, the need for support was great. Together we learned from the uncertainties, the questions, the obstacles and the hurdles. Together we developed pathways to overcome all these questions. From the beginning, it was clear that the African context needed different paths.

The African teams were asked to rethink the CT methodology, based on an analysis of the typology of migration in their countries. It was clear from the outset that the adaptation of the CT methodology had to respond to different types of migration. Different types of migration mean different policies. Different policies mean different types of stakeholders. How do you bring all these different groups together? And what about the most vulnerable migrants? How do you take into account the cultural differences, the traditional hierarchies, the different languages?

In this chapter, the African teams give their first answers.

3.2 A typology of migration

- Ghana

The Ghana team has decided that the Ghana-based Cross Talk will focus on aspirations to migrate and live in another country, especially within Europe; experiences of return migrants; and aspirations of immigrants to remain in Ghana. As a result, the Ghana team's target group is made up of aspiring migrants, return migrants, and immigrants.

As people migrate for different reasons, the aspiring migrants' group is made up of people who want to migrate for further studies, persons who intend to migrate permanently, and those planning to undertake short-term work-related migration. On the basis of the planned destination, one can distinguish between those planning to migrate intra-regionally and those intending to migrate to destinations outside the West African region. Ghana's team will rely on recruitment agencies and snowball techniques to identify aspiring migrants.

The return migrants can be categorized into several groups based on different criteria. First, on the basis of why some people migrated from Ghana in the first place, one can identify migrants who have migrated as a result of political factors (e.g. conflicts, insecurity, persecution), environmental factors (e.g. climate change, soil degradation), economic factors (e.g. lack of economic opportunities, low incomes, and desire to look for work), demographic factors (high population growth, disease prevalence), and social factors (education, marriage, family unification). With reference to place where returnees are coming



from, we can distinguish between those who have returned from Europe and those returning from other regions of the world. We can also use the type of return (whether forced or voluntary) to classify returnees into voluntary return migrants and involuntary/forced return category. On the basis of duration of stay, we can identify those returnees who have stayed at the destination for several years before returning, those returnees who stayed for a short duration (1-2 years) before returning, and transnational migrants. The University of Ghana aims to select research participants from all these categories and then bring all these categories together as their stories may be different.

There are also different types of immigrants in Ghana. The first group entails immigrants from ECOWAS countries. These are migrants whose migration to and residence in Ghana are guided by the ECOWAS free movement protocols. Their experiences may be different from those who are from other countries. The other categories of immigrants include other Africans, Asian migrants and European migrants. We assume that immigrants may have different aspirations. Some may want to stay in Ghana more permanently, some may want to use Ghana as a transit to migrate to Europe, while some may want to go back to their countries.

The Ghana team is aware that access to the various types of migrants may be challenging. However, through their previous work on the migration industry research which was funded by DFID, they have some contacts that will enable them effectively reach out to different migrants. For instance, they will rely on contacts with recruitment agencies, especially in Accra, Brong Ahafo, and Ashanti regions to identify aspiring migrants and some return migrants in migrant communities. They have approached some aspiring migrants and they plan to rely on such contacts to reach more potential or aspiring migrants. They have also approached some of the migrants who have returned to Ghana and informed them about the project. They will also rely on their existing working relationships with migrant communities to select respondents from these communities.

- Mauritania

The Mauritania team chooses migrant profiles that are similar in Mauritania as in France. They make sure that the profiles are representative of the reality experienced in the two countries.

In Mauritania, the Cross Talks will take place in the Nouakchott region and will go for 4 profiles:

- young people in transit, coming from other countries of the sub-region (Congo, Cameroon, Chad, Soudan, Guinea, Mali, Senegal, etc...)
- young potential Mauritanian migrants
- young graduates who travel back and forth between France and Mauritania and are committed to the development of their country of birth
- older people who have spent their lives in France and have returned to Mauritania or are travelling back and forth.

Young migrant in transit

Mauritania, and Nouakchott in particular, has the dual characteristic of being a place of emigration (candidates for departure) and immigration (migrants in transit). In fact, there are employment opportunities and economic activities that have contributed to structuring emigration channels from neighbouring

countries and the sub-region to Nouakchott around 2 main categories and migratory projects: 1) immigration from coastal countries that arrived in Mauritania for economic opportunities, around business development (Cameroonian, Beninese and Togolese communities). This category is often qualified, has networks and resources that allow for stable economic integration in the territory, but still has aspirations to emigrate to Europe, in particular to extend these economic opportunities. These are migrants in transit who implement upstream mobility strategies and are also part of transnational networks that consolidate and facilitate this strategy; 2) immigration from border countries (Senegal, Mali, Guinea) who are less qualified, who are looking for work, who have greater difficulties integrating in Nouakchott, who are subject to discrimination in recruitment and who have difficulties in having their rights recognised. These individuals rely on support committees that have been set up precisely in order to meet this integration challenge. The main aspiration is still to leave for Europe, but this requires a prior saving stage in order to have sufficient economic means to leave.

Young potential Mauritanian migrants

In Nouakchott, there is a large number of young people who wish to emigrate to Europe. It is important to note two characteristics of this category of public: 1) immigration to Europe does not concern the least well-off Mauritanian social classes. Indeed, it is necessary to have substantial financial means to be able to bear the prohibitive cost of migration, whether through legal or informal channels. It is therefore not the most popular classes, but also young people from the middle classes; 2) it is important to mention the extent to which Mauritanian candidates for departure, when they have the necessary financial means, remain firmly convinced that they have a future with more prospects by risking their lives in informal boats rather than building their future on the territory. Taking into account the fact that a certain standard of living is required to be able to leave the territory, we note that despite this stability and stabilised economic integration, leaving for Europe remains the only horizon. We are thus faced with a challenge that involves the deconstruction of the European dream, with the elements of financial and economic stability not being enough to overcome the desire to leave.

Young graduate migrants

This category of migrants has a capacity to move, their roots in their country of origin and in Europe offer them prospects for economic and social integration in both territories. They are able to identify from Europe the economic opportunities for their country of origin. Their level of qualification enables them to set up economic activities in line with public policy guidelines. They are able to mobilise funding mechanisms and take advantage of this dual membership. This is not a majority category, but it plays an important role in the economic development and structuring of the fabric of the systems in Nouakchott.

Older migrant returning

Elderly immigrants who have spent their careers in France and who return to their country of origin when they retire have a stable situation. They have some perspectives on the opportunities that immigration to Europe represents. They have contributed to the emergence of this narrative around the "dream of Europe" but have a viewpoint and experience that must be taken into account in order to have a more accurate analysis of the challenges of immigration. Often also involved in associations of nationals based



in France during their careers, they have never ceased to be concerned about the situation in their countries of origin. Their stories, their words, their reading of immigration will shed light on the contemporary situation.

- Senegal

In Senegal, all of the analyses devoted to migration highlight the major difficulty linked to the lack of collection and production of migration data that would allow for a correct understanding of migration reality. The available data are fragmented and do not offer the possibility of a complete, detailed and accurate analysis. Given these shortcomings, it is difficult to observe the evolution of the migration phenomenon over time and space. This is all the more likely given the growing complexity of migration, which makes Senegal a country of departure, transit and destination. Consequently, there is a typology of migration that regulates the entry and exit of populations in Senegal: international immigration, international emigration, irregular migration, return migration and internal migration.

International immigration

Senegal is a traditional host country for populations of various origins. This immigration is still dominated by neighbouring countries, notably Guinea, Mali, Gambia and Guinea-Bissau. Mauritania, another neighbouring country, stands out for the importance of its nationals among the refugees in Senegal.

The distribution of these international immigrants in relation to their regions of settlement in Senegal shows a high concentration in Dakar (57%). Regardless of nationality, the Dakar region hosts the bulk of immigrants settled in Senegal; the other most important host regions are Ziguinchor (6.7%) and Kolda (6.1%). Overall, the resident foreign population appears to be old and at least stable, if not slightly declining since the mid-1970s. The country's political and economic stability contributes to making it a preferred destination in West Africa (Senegal. Agence Nationale de la Statistique et de la Démographie. Final report RGPHAE 2013).

International emigration

International emigration is mainly characterised by south-south flows, essentially directed towards the countries of the West African sub-region, and south-north flows directed towards the industrialised countries of Europe and North America. The first migratory field has widened towards certain countries in Central Africa and South Africa, characterising extra-regional migratory currents essentially captured by Gabon, Congo and the Republic of South Africa. Similarly, in the other direction, long-distance population movements were monopolised by France. Today, new countries of destination have appeared, reflecting a reorientation of flows, and even a re-composition within the northern emigration field.

If we consider the data from the last population census of 2013, we can see that the top 10 countries of destination for Senegalese are divided between Western Europe (France, Italy, Spain), West Africa (Mauritania, Gambia, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali), Central Africa (Gabon, Congo) and North Africa (Morocco).

These emigrants come mainly from the Dakar region (30%), Matam (14%), Saint-Louis (10%), Diourbel (9%) and Thiès (9%). To a lesser extent, the regions of Tambacounda (7%), Kolda (5%), Louga (5%) and Kaolack (3.5%) are emitters, as are the regions of Ziguinchor (3%), Sédhiou (2.5%) and Fatick (2.4%). Nationals of Kaffrine and Kédougou are the least represented among recent emigrants, with

1.2% and 0.5% respectively. This generalisation of regions of departure reflects a diffusion of migratory behaviour within Senegalese society (Senegal. Agence Nationale de la Statistique et de la Démographie. Final report RGPHAE 2013).

We are also witnessing a diversification of migration profiles and categories of migrants. The migration phenomenon particularly concerns young people from popular peri-urban neighbourhoods and rural areas. Nationals from traditional artisanal fishing areas are also increasingly involved. The informal sector seems to constitute a large "reservoir" of potential candidates for international emigration. This means that in Senegal, the phenomenon of international emigration has become very widespread and affects all sectors of the active population, particularly young people, in both rural and urban areas.

Irregular migration

The phenomenon of irregular emigration is also growing in importance, although it is almost impossible to provide exact figures on its extent. Data on the phenomenon is both patchy and irregularly provided. This form of migration is a major concern, firstly because of the tragedies it causes along dangerous migration routes and journeys, but also from the perspective of the problem of integrating young Senegalese into the national labour market.

Return migration

Return migration is a poorly known variable, due to the lack of adequate data. Overall, there is no centralised registration system for return migrants that would allow for the determination of their exact number and their socio-demographic and economic profile, which could serve as a database for monitoring, accompanying and creating reintegration projects. In this respect, the factors that determine return, as well as the modalities of return and the way in which it is experienced by the migrant, are all avenues to be explored for a better understanding of voluntary and involuntary return migration flows.

Internal migration

Internal migrants are essentially polarised by the Dakar region (43.2% of the total), which corresponds to nearly 820,000 migrants, or a quarter of the population of Dakar. The importance of internal migratory flows towards Dakar raises the fundamental problem of the unequal distribution of the population on the national territory, with a considerable demographic imbalance between the interior regions and the capital. With a surface area of only 0.3% of that of the country, the Dakar region concentrates almost a quarter of the Senegalese population (23.2%) according to the 2013 RGPHAE data.

This polarisation of Dakar has led to strong land pressure in the capital, inducing at the same time uncontrolled urbanisation, which has resulted in the occupation of flood-prone areas and the proliferation of spontaneous housing.

Basically, internal migration dynamics are manifested in the form of rural exodus. The strong trend refers to a concentration of the population in the western part of the country, where urbanisation is increasing rapidly. The imbalance in the territorial distribution of economic activities has led to the macrocephaly of the Dakar region to the detriment of the interior regions.



3.3 The interpretation of the aspirations

- Ghana

Following the framing outlined already in the introduction to this paper, the Ghana team will ask the different categories of migrants to express their aspirations. These will be the kind of life they want to live and their reasons for making such choices. As outlined already, the aspirations form the core of the stories that will be used during the Cross Talks.

The different migrant categories will have different aspirations and for that matter different stories. Following earlier conceptual framing, we assume that the typology of migrants can give an indication of aspirations. Long-term migrants may have different aspirations from short-term migrants. Aspirations of transmigrants will also differ from aspirations of other categories of migrants. Aspiring migrants' aspirations may be based on future lives they imagine for themselves and their families.

Based on behavioural science approaches, we assume that aspirations to migrate will be part of the broader aspirations in life or achievement motives. Aspirations of people living in the same community may differ based on household contexts, individual characteristics (age, gender, level of education, current employment, and ethnic group), needs, and previous migration among others. In view of this, the University of Ghana will initially organize separate Cross Talks for different groups of migrants. The different typologies of migrants will be brought together during mixed Cross Talks that will be organized later.

- Mauritania

Given the heterogeneity of the profiles of the migrants who form the target group (students, candidates for departure, subregional migrants in transit, seniors on outward and return journeys, seniors who have returned to their country, etc.), the Mauritania team will build a group that is heterogeneous in terms of age. This will allow them to put the analysis of aspirations in a historical and intergenerational perspective. Their migration story is likely to be different from decade to decade, from age to age.

The team will propose two phases: before the migrants meet in a group process, they are interviewed separately, in order to ensure the authenticity of their stories and the diversity of their aspirations. Then, these individual aspiration stories will be brought together, confronted with each other, in order to find common denominators and common ground. Ultimately, GRDR Mauritania wants to arrive at aspirations that resonate with each other.

- Senegal

UGB's previous research tells that in Senegal, the aspirations of people who want to migrate are based on different types of assumptions, histories, needs, etc. These aspirations may be specific according to gender, age, level of education, geographical origin, professional skills, links with migrant people, etc.

These aspirations can tell us about the length of stay or desired length of stay (long or short term) of migrants or candidates for migration, but also about a desire or ambition to achieve something, about a goal, about a preference, etc.

Aspirations can also relate to the migrants' desired destinations; achievements to be made; etc. for the benefit of either the migrants or their relatives and communities. To this end, from the information collected, it will be possible to better understand the triggers for the potential migrant's actual move to migration; etc.

3.4 A typology of stakeholders

- Ghana

Given the multiplicity of migrants and different migration issues to be discussed (i.e. immigration, return migration and emigration), different stakeholders are targeted in Ghana. Depending on the type of migration, different Cross Talks will be held for different types of migrants and different types of stakeholders.

The stakeholders that will be involved in the aspiring and return migrants Cross Talks will generally include: State ministries, departments and agencies (e.g. Ministry of Gender and Social Protection, Ministry of Interior; Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Ghana Immigration Service, Ghana Police service, NADMO, Labour Department, and Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations); recruitment agencies; District Assemblies; Religious Organizations; Civil Society Groups, return migrants associations (Sahara Hustlers Association, Scholars in Transit, Media Network on Migration), International organizations working on migration-related issues (e.g. IOM, UNHCR, GIZ).

The stakeholders for immigrants' Cross Talks will include: Ghana Police service; host communities; embassies; migrants associations; Ministry of Interior; Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Ghana immigration services; Ghana Refugees Board; and International organizations (e.g. IOM, UNHCR, GIZ), Ghana Union of Traders Association (GUTA). As mentioned already, for the mixed bigger Cross Talks, we will bring together immigrants, aspiring migrants, return migrants and stakeholders.

- Mauritania

GRDR Mauritania seeks to mobilise different types of stakeholders, including the following

- institutional actors (ministry/government, decentralised departments, international institutions)
- NGOs and local actors
- Community associations (support committees for Mauritanian communities, associations for Mauritanian nationals in France)
- the media (dominant and alternative media)
- municipalities (local authorities, municipal councils, local public actors)
- cultural and artistic sectors
- labour movement

At the national level, the team has targeted members of Mauritania's Constitutional Council, who will play a role in disseminating the project within the national government, thus increasing its impact.

At the international and institutional level, GRDR targeted representatives of the National Agency for Development (AFD) and 4 representatives of the Nouakchott desk of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). They are important partners in migration and development issues.



In the artistic field, they will focus on the "Espace culturel Diadié Camara", the painter Amy Sow. This center will be involved in the last step of the Cross Talks "Art based dialogue".

At the local level, the addressed 3 mayors of municipalities near Nouakchott (Ri-yadh, Dar Naïm, and Sebkha). These municipalities are confronted with the consequences of different types of migrations. They will play an important role in the Cross Talk process.

- Senegal

Actors with different profiles will be mobilised as stakeholders:

- Active migrants;
- Candidates for migration;
- Repatriated migrants (Associations of repatriates from Spain in Saint-Louis, Associations of young repatriates from Spain in Kayar, Associations of young repatriates in Thiaroye-sur-Mer, Association of young repatriates in Yarakh, Association of Returnees in the region of Thiès, National Association of Repatriates, Survivors and Affected Families, etc.);
- Direction Générale d'Appui des Sénégalais de l'Extérieur;
- Secretariat of State for Senegalese Abroad;
- NGOs (Réseau Migration Développement (Remidev), Conseil des organisations non gouvernementales d'appui au développement (CONGAD), etc.).

3.5 An adaption of the Cross Talk method

- Ghana

As mentioned already, given that the migrant groups come from different backgrounds, the Ghana team has planned to first organize separate Cross Talks with each key group. The first Cross Talks will be organized among immigrants and the Ghana team plan to host it in Accra (Ghana's Capital). As the capital city of Ghana, Accra hosts a variety of immigrants mostly from the ECOWAS region such as Nigerians, Ivorians, Togolese, Nigeriens, Burkinabe etc. The majority of these immigrants work in the informal sector while a smaller proportion works in the formal sector as bankers, managers of oil and gas companies and business executives. The team has identified fifteen (15) immigrants from Nigeria, Togo, Cote d'Ivoire, Niger and Burkina Faso. Some interviews with them are scheduled on their experiences of migration, especially focusing on the causes and consequences of migration as well as integration into the Ghanaian society. The output of the interviews will be used to create stories representing the key findings of their experiences. The creation of stories will be done by the 15 migrants themselves. This will then form the basis for a re-enactment of the stories. We will then jointly decide with the immigrants which stories to use for the Cross Talks.

The second Cross Talks will be for aspiring migrants and return migrants in dominant irregular migrants communities in Ghana. The Greater Accra region, Ashanti region and Brong Ahafo region have been identified for this exercise. Discussions will center on migration aspirations and return experiences. Already some return and aspiring migrants and the Ghana team hopes to depend on them to recruit more

participants. We will recruit about 20 aspiring and return migrants and guide them to create stories on their experiences. This will then form the basis for a re-enactment of the stories. Once adequate rapport is created and the groups trust each other, they will be brought together in a bigger mixed Cross Talk event with various stakeholders.

- Mauritania

The Cross Talk methodology leads to encounters and confrontations between migrants with their own stories and actors with dominant stories. In Mauritania, the extremely vulnerable situation of certain groups of migrants who will be involved in the project must be taken into account, especially Mauritanian candidates for departure and migrants transiting through Mauritania. Those concerned usually use informal channels of departure, via smugglers, via high-risk routes. We will take this situation into account in the approach of the dialogue sessions, by reinforcing the migrants' stories and by supporting their story through the documentary film. The approach is described in detail in the next paragraph.

The situation of extreme vulnerability will essentially concern Mauritanian migrants who are candidates for departure, and migrants in transit from border countries (Mali, Senegal, Guinea in particular). During Cross Talks, this category of target group is likely to be confronted with a feeling of threat to reveal illegal administrative situations, and thus run risks vis-à-vis the authorities. In order to create the conditions for an equitable dialogue with political and institutional actors, and to neutralise this threat, we will propose that community leaders, intermediary associations supporting and fighting for the rights of sub-regional immigrants, be able to play the role of spokespersons. This proposal will provide mediation and ensure a fair dialogue between the various stakeholders.

The Cross Talk discussions brought public authorities, migrants, and Mauritanian citizens together around the table. However, the topic of migration remains sensitive, with challenges in finding interlocutors within public authorities due to a lack of data on the number of migrants in Mauritania and Mauritanian emigrants abroad. The phenomenon of the "Nicaragua route," where thousands of young Mauritanians took this path to reach the United States, saw the authorities remaining more as spectators, if not facilitators. The passport issuance fee, initially set at 3,000 MRU (67 euros), rose to 10,000 MRU (224 euros), citing a shortage of passport booklets. Following a strong campaign on social media, the authorities eventually reversed this increase. Additionally, a partnership between Mauritania and the European Union, aimed at mobilizing Frontex, the European border and coast guard agency, to monitor Mauritania's coasts and repatriate intercepted migrants, sparked significant controversy within the country.

- Senegal

Traditionally, studies and research on migration are based on gathering information through interviews and questionnaires, either individual or collective, often with limitations because the players are questioned without really establishing the conditions for an equitable dialogue between the migrants and the people or institutions that may have an impact on the migrants' lives.



Faced with this observation, the OPPORTUNITIES project, in an African context, envisages an 'open' methodology with several stages leading to an equitable dialogue.

In the preparatory phase of the Cross Talks, we paid particular attention to establishing an equitable dialogue between the different parties, whatever their activities, gender, age or migratory experience. The same attention was paid to the choice of themes, which were discussed with the stakeholders. Among the themes chosen were the desire to migrate, the reasons, the length of the journey, the age of the migrants, the destination countries, the relationship with the country of origin, knowledge of migrants' rights, the difficulties of the journey, opportunities, etc.

During the Cross Talks, we opted for a methodology based on an ethos of listening to be able to establish areas of homogeneity between all the stakeholders (migrants, civil society and NGO players, government officials).

We established close collaboration between NGOs, migrants, citizens - in short, all the stakeholders involved in the focus groups - while facilitating their self-representation in an environment that encouraged participatory engagement and allowed different actors to tell their own stories and listen to those of others. A variety of creative techniques were developed to give a voice to the stakeholders involved in the discussion groups.

It should be noted that our Cross Talks also focused on prospective or potential migrants, as well as returning migrants in the three cities of Saint-Louis, Louga and Dakar.

The success of the Cross Talks can also be explained by our ability to conduct narrative interviews with the stakeholders concerned. We paid particular attention to the following points to ensure the success of the Cross Talks:

- Encourage stakeholders to tell migrants' stories and vice versa to evaluate and document events and outcomes for others,
- Develop a field manual to propose solutions, monitor recruitment procedures to ensure that those mobilised will engage in exchanges,
- Coach the members of the GERM team responsible for facilitating exchanges and leading Cross Talks,
- Develop a confidentiality policy for the exchanges undertaken.

The first adaptation concerned the players who took part in the Cross Talks. Unlike in European countries, where the Cross Talks focused on migrants who had arrived in Europe and were trying to build a life there, we mobilised to give a voice to Senegalese people who wanted to migrate or re-emigrate for a variety of reasons: the effects of climate change, an absolute lack of opportunities, the search for employment, the need to join a diaspora, and so on.

Reasons for migration:

Root causes of migration and socio-cultural determinants of migration plans.

Migration aspirations and return experiences.

Historical, cultural, economic, social and political factors and practices that contribute to migration from Senegal.

Recent trends in Senegalese migration.

Seeking a better life in Europe (this point will be fundamental in our discussions, as we are seeking to ascertain whether the journey is really motivated either by the desire for social advancement through the

acquisition of economic capital for a better life in the country of origin or by the need to access material and immaterial resources in the country of settlement); etc.

Migration governance:

Improving border governance and responding to irregular migration.

Question the new categories of migrants produced by migration policies while preventing the stigmatization of migrants.

Create synergies with other stakeholders - civil society, private sector, local authorities, parliaments, universities - in defining and implementing public policies in the field of migration.

Work towards the harmonization of migration policies.

Improve dialogue between States at regional and continental level and include other stakeholders in the dialogue on migration.

Produce information to ensure that the international community is aware of Africa's voice and the expectations of the African people about migration.

Improve data collection on migration to ensure that migration policies are evidence-based and meet the needs of migrants, countries of origin and destination.

Human trafficking:

Reduce the vulnerability of migrants along migration routes.

Generate knowledge on migrant smuggling networks.

3.6 The dialogue sessions and the recommendations

- Ghana

The Ghana Cross Talks culminated in a moment of dialogue. Because there were several Cross Talks with different migrants and stakeholders, we brought the different migrant groups and stakeholders together for a larger dialogue. The multi-stakeholder dialogue sessions were held in Accra as a national event. The sessions were facilitated by the Centre for Migration Studies Researchers who have been involved in organizing such policy dialogues for the purpose of drafting national migration-related policies.

Given that the Cross Talks in Ghana will focus on three key policy areas (emigration, immigration and return migration), there will be different recommendations for the different policy areas. The Centre for Migration team are involved in migration policy formulation in Ghana, having facilitated the drafting of the National Labour Migration and Diaspora Engagement policies. Members of the team also developed a manual for incorporating migration into development planning in Ghana. The team plays a pivotal role in training of state officials on development of annual work plans on migration and development. Consequently, the Centre will rely on its existing networks to ensure that recommendations from the Cross Talk are incorporated into migration related policies.



- Mauritania

The idea of confronting the dominant narratives, which are already constructed, argued and controlled by the organisations that support them (municipalities, institutions, media, the artistic world), with the individual narratives of people in vulnerable situations, who are often isolated, leads to a situation that is inherently unequal. The proposed approach will therefore be built around two dimensions: 1) after collecting the individual stories, we will collectively consolidate these stories by identifying common denominators, and by strengthening them through meetings with external people to argue and then support the proposal; 2) we will aggregate these stories of the individual trajectories and aspirations through the making of a documentary. This film will be presented to media, institutions, municipalities, NGOs, the world of culture, etc. All are jointly responsible for the survival and development of dominant narratives.

The main challenge of the dialogue phase is to find the necessary levers to enable the proposals and reflections resulting from these meetings to be heard, taken into account and, as far as possible, translated into public policy guidelines.

In order to contribute to the translation of these recommendations into public policies at the local and national levels, GRDR will rely on the multi-stakeholder consultation spaces that it has helped to create. In Mauritania, GRDR is in charge of a mechanism called the Multi-stakeholder Concerted Programme (PCPA) alongside the NGO Ecodev et Alianza. These PCPA mechanisms, piloted by the Agence Française de Développement (AFD), aim to bring together public authorities and civil society and will be one of the main levers for ensuring that the recommendations resulting from the dialogue phases are heard and given a place.

The PCPA, named *Seeds of Citizenship*, operates in six regions of Mauritania, with the ambition of eventually covering all regions in the country. This program relies on a territorial approach, with a consultation framework established in each area, known as the *federating core*. This federating core brings together civil society organizations (CSOs), institutions, and elected officials. One of its main objectives is to strengthen dialogue between CSOs and authorities. This framework can serve as an advocacy space, and the program also provides a technical and financial support mechanism to enhance the skills development of civil society organizations. In terms of funding, migration is an eligible theme, enabling associations to propose awareness-raising activities or discussions among migrants, young Mauritians, and authorities.

- Senegal

In each of the Senegalese cities, Saint-Louis (20-25 April), Louga (3-6 May) and Dakar (6-9 June), we invited people with different profiles to take part in the Cross Talks, first to present the working methodology and then to take part in the dialogues in the form of discussion sessions. This was an opportunity to make it clear that the aim of the Cross Talks was not to turn participants into ‘heroes’, but rather to mobilize stakeholders with different profiles by inviting them to give their opinions based on interviews with people likely to take part in the Cross Talks.

We also made it clear to the various stakeholders that Cross Talks are not moments for ‘arguments’, and even less for ‘criticism/judgement’ of a person for a choice made. We also made it clear to the stakeholders that their participation in the dialogues was voluntary and unpaid.

Before starting the exchanges, we reminded the stakeholders of the importance of creating a real attitude of listening by reading out loud the stories previously produced by active migrants, candidates for migration, returning migrants, civil society players or government officials working on migration or with migrants. A brief presentation of the stakeholders was made, reminding each participant to mention his or her link with migration issues. GERM members introduced themselves individually, mentioning their role as facilitators and moderators in ensuring the success of the Cross Talks.

In all, we organized 15 sessions: 4 sessions with 22 people in Saint-Louis; 5 sessions with 18 people in Louga and 6 sessions with 18 people in Dakar. At the start of each dialogue session, stories were read out by GERM members, who acted as facilitators of the cross-talks. The aim was to read aloud stories produced by prospective migrants, migrants, civil society actors or government officials. The Cross Talks sessions, while bringing together people with different profiles, made it possible to create an equitable dialogue at every stage.

The dialogue sessions led to the identification of the root causes of migration; an understanding of the socio-cultural determinants of migration projects; a better understanding of the typical profile of the potential migrant; knowledge of recent developments in the migration of Senegalese populations or populations in transit in Senegal; border governance; the current situation of irregular migration in Senegal, etc.

The dialogue sessions also led to policy recommendations to make Senegal's migration governance framework more effective. The dialogue sessions resulted in recommendations:

- Strengthening synergies for the implementation of national migration policy.
- Strengthening local authorities by setting up specific services to deal with migration issues.
- Drawing up a practical manual for collecting data on migration from national sources.
- Setting up a standardized national system for collecting and sharing information between structures producing migration data.
- Setting up a consultation framework bringing together all stakeholders.
- Setting up an effective national system for the regular production of migration data for information and decision-making purposes.
- Enhancing the potential contribution of the Senegalese diaspora to national and regional development efforts.
- Promotion of mobility for study purposes.
- Organization of labour migration and promotion of social protection for migrants.
- Promoting the protection of the rights of Senegalese emigrants and immigrants in Senegal.
- Promotion of legal channels for safe, orderly and regular migration.
- Integration of gender issues into migration management policies and strategies.
- Improving health care for migrants and mobile populations.
- Establishment of an appropriate border management system and updating of entry, residence, settlement and exit conditions.
- Efficient fight against irregular migration, smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons, as well as care for victims of trafficking and vulnerable migrants.



To help translate these recommendations into public policy at both local and national level, GERM has decided to draw on the multi-stakeholder consultation forums it set up in the early days of the OPPORTUNITIES project.

3.7 The artistic translation

- Ghana

The Ghana team collaborated with NOYAM, an experienced artistic group in Ghana to translate the Cross Talks into artistic performances (drama, dance and music). NOYAM, which already has existing relationship with CMS, worked together with some of the migrants, particularly the potential and return migrants to create performances using drama and music. The migrants told their own stories and experiences using drama, music, dance and other traditional artistic materials. CMS contacted the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation which is the Ghana's largest media network to create documentaries on all the categories of migrants the Ghana team collaborated with. The Ghana team will present these migration documentaries and records of the artistic performances on various national, regional and district radio, television station and social media platforms, among others. During CMS policy engagement and public events, these materials will be shared with stakeholders or participants.

- Mauritania

The artistic restitution proposed at the end of the Cross Talks will be in the form of a documentary film based on the stories of individual trajectories and aspirations. The use of documentary film, which will also be the medium used for the fieldwork in France, will make it possible to present an artistic proposal that allows for a dialogue between the two geographical areas. The particularity of the target audiences between France and Mauritania is that they resonate with each other, complement each other, and intersect. Past mobilities (seniors), current mobilities (young people, students), intentions of departure (transit migrants) induce an important proximity of lived space between the 2 territories. The use of a common medium will make it possible to reveal these resonances.

The film will be screened in various locations (Diadié Camara space, the French Institute, the youth center in Dar Naim, and the youth center in Sebkha), places known for their concentration of migrants. These strategic screenings will initiate a discussion between authorities, migrants, and local populations. A minimum of three screenings is planned across three different locations.

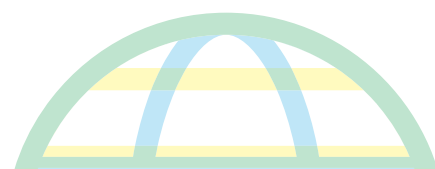
- Senegal

Through the results of the Cross Talks, the OPPORTUNITIES project translates a methodology into artistic formats. This is a distinct method of creating communication with a wide audience based on Cross Talk with small groups of migrants and other stakeholders.

The aim of artistic translation is to open a 'fair dialogue' based on real stories and narratives created following individual interviews.

Thanks to the services of the Civilisations, Religions, Arts and Communication Training and Research Unit at the Gaston Berger University in Saint-Louis, we were able to make films that enabled various stakeholders (active migrants, candidates for migration, returning migrants; civil society actors or state agents working on migration or with migrants) to intervene and share their experiences in relation to migration. They recounted their professional experiences and personal stories, focusing on various points: the root causes of migration and the socio-cultural determinants of migration projects; the desired destinations of migrants; the search for a better life in Senegal and Europe; the situation of irregular migration; migration policies; the need for dialogue between countries of origin, transit countries and destination countries; the treatment of migration in the media and social networks; the vulnerability of migrants on migration routes; the right to mobility, etc.

Some of the professional experiences and personal stories presented by active migrants, candidates for migration, returning migrants, civil society players or government officials working on migration or with migrants placed great emphasis on the role of children's and young people's views and representations of migration from Senegal. This inspired us to involve the Plastic Arts Education Club of the Collège d'Enseignement Moyen André Henry Louis Guillaibert in Saint-Louis in the artistic translation activities. With members of this Club, we organised workshops on artistic expression and migration. We found that drawing offers children another way of communicating their thoughts and feelings without relying solely on words and helps them to develop their communication skills by encouraging them to think about how to convey their ideas effectively. Overall, drawing images related to migration is a powerful tool that enables children in the Plastic Arts Education Club at the Collège d'Enseignement Moyen André Henry Louis Guillaibert in Saint-Louis, Senegal, to express themselves freely by developing a range of emotional, creative and communication skills. The drawings produced dealt with the causes of migration, migratory aspirations, experiences at destination, migratory routes and trajectories, etc.



4. Enriching the Cross Talk method

The Cross Talk methodology has been developed from a European oriented view on migration. The core question and the core part of the methodology refers to the toxic debate in Europe on migration, refers to the racist and discriminatory tendencies in Western European countries. The Cross Talks are therefore an answer to the question: how can we live together and create a welcoming culture and society?

In an African context, this question is just one of many questions that society is asking for. If there are more key questions, how can we then organise a Cross Talk? In the previous chapter, you find the responses of the African teams to this question. In this final, concluding chapter, we summarise and draw some conclusions.

- Super-diversity is the main feature

The African migration context is undoubtedly different from the European context.

The typology of migrants is more diverse:

Firstly, for many inhabitants, migration is necessary in order to survive or to find a decent life. Secondly, there is a migration culture in the three countries: young (male) persons are expected to migrate to become adults. Thirdly, internal migration is an important part of migration flows. Fourth, all three countries receive transmigrants who sometimes stay for many years in the receiving country. Fifth, migration is regular (to study or work) or irregular (undocumented). The first ones go back and forth to their country of birth. The others try to cross in a way that is dangerous and expensive for them. Finally, there are migrants who have returned (forced or voluntary) to their home countries after a few years' stay in Europe, bringing with them European culture and customs.



Figure 1 Fisher boats at Saint-Louis with flags of European and other countries. Picture by Aly Tandian



Figure 2 Senegalese women working at strawberry fields in Spain (Huelva). Picture by Aly Tandian

Migration in this context is simultaneously positive and negative: positive because it is based on hope, on ideas of maturity, on financial support for families and communities; negative because there is transmigration, irregular migration and internal migration that disrupts communities.

The picture (figure 1) of the harbour of Dakar shows the positive attitudes towards migration. Each boat has a flag from a European or other country: these flags symbolise the hopefulness of migration.

The second picture (figure 2) shows Senegalese women working in the strawberry fields of Spain. As many migrants, they work very hard for a small amount of money and with no ways of security. We find the same kind of pictures in the tomato fields of Italy or the Flemish orchards. The Senegalese women are regular (seasonal) migrants, working for a short period in Spain. They support their communities and families, in answer of the economic hard times in their country.



Figure 3 Stop the irregular migration. Picture by Aly Tandian

The third picture (figure 3) shows a totally different view on migration. This picture shows how irregular migration is seen as threat to the migrants themselves. Irregular migration means not only a very dangerous journey but also a very expensive journey. Migration should be regular or not, this is the view of the man on the picture.

These three pictures bring together the complexity of migration in the African context.

The typology of migration in the African context is thus totally different than in European countries. There are thus different narratives and debates that intersect and influence each other.

The external migration is stimulated by the internal migration: after all, there are less and less economic opportunities. Economic and climatic difficulties (e.g. in fishing or agriculture) reinforce this need to migrate internally and externally.

The lives of migrants are even more complex: they live in these countries for several years in order to earn enough to be able to migrate elsewhere and to find a more or less safe way to migrate.

Europe's hardened migration policy translates into borders being set in African countries: visas are almost impossible to get, a deterrent policy supported by local police, ... This reinforces illegal routes. Migrant returnees (voluntary or forced returnees) have a particularly difficult time each time. Their

migration history is one of failure, even if they bring resources with them when they return voluntarily. Reintegration into their communities is almost impossible. Indeed, their migration is compared to success stories (fake or otherwise). Shame and embarrassment is their portion. Many seek a new life far away from their communities.

Above and beyond all these, there are the stories of racism and discrimination, stories of the human toll, stories of successes, ... that shape the narratives and debates on and of migration. Even European policies feed these different debates and narratives and may ultimately lead to a hardening of the many debates.

- The complexity of migration must be captured by the Cross Talk methodology.

To answer this complexity the three teams adjusted the Cross Talk method:

In Ghana the researchers have decided to organise separate Cross Talks, one for the aspiring-to-migrate persons together with the returning migrants, and one for the immigrants (transmigrants) from other African countries. Different Cross Talks mean also different stakeholders. The last phase of their project was a broad dialogue with representatives of the two Cross Talks and (inter)national stakeholders.

In Mauritania the participants will be diverse in age and gender and nationality; what they have in common is their vulnerability: they are all irregular migrants or have a history of irregular migration. Because of their vulnerability, the researchers decided to invite community leaders and NGO representatives who will take the place of the migrants themselves during the Cross Talks. The stories will be captured individually and filmed. A documentary based on these stories will be used during the Cross Talks.

In Senegal, the researchers decided to focus on the reasons for migration. This results in a super-diverse and broad group in which all forms of migration are represented. To ensure a fair debate, representatives of NGOs, community leaders and citizens will be invited. In Senegal, moreover, several dialogue sessions will be organised with different groups with different compositions each time. This will provide an opportunity to involve everyone and to learn to value each other.

The three research teams have developed an own version of the Cross Talks. They capture the complexity and the difficulties of migration by choosing for multiplication of the sessions or by inviting representatives of communities and NGOs.

- A multitude of questions obliges a broad support team

The key question of the Cross Talks should also be adjusted. In the three countries the same key questions pop up: how to value regular migration, how to support aspiring migrants, how to support transmigrants, how to support the local communities, how to avoid irregular migration that stands for extremely high human toll, how to build an inclusive society? All these questions pop up and must be discussed during the dialogue sessions.

This multitude of questions obliges also a broad variety of stakeholders. The African Cross Talks want to and will mobilise the entire society.

These questions demand thus a lot of the participants of the Cross Talks; they need support from experts, policy makers, local communities, citizens and NGOs. A broad support team is needed and foreseen in the three countries.

- A broad variety of methods

The complexity of migration and the complex methodology ask a lot of creativity to find solutions for all possible hindrances. The three research teams emphasise the use of a variety of methods to ensure a genuine Cross Talk.

They need creative methods to invite the different kind of migrants. They use therefore peer researchers (these are migrants who are helping to lead the investigation), recruitment agencies and NGOs. Their knowledge of the local communities is useful.

The interviews and the storytelling will be challenging work. Especially challenging are the interviews of the most vulnerable persons. The Mauritanian solution is to invite them individually and create together the story. These stories are then filmed and forms the bases for a documentary. This solution takes into account the multiple threats that these people face. In the two other countries researchers will be trained. Manuals and other educative material will be developed.

The dialogue sessions and the Cross Talks need a variety of methods to create a fair dialogue, to create long-term commitment of all participants.

For the cultural translation the three research teams make use of the experience of cultural companies.

More than in a European context, African researchers have to rely on different methods, different services, different groups and organisations. It requires a lot of creativity from the researchers.

- An enriched methodology

The African researchers have enriched the methodology of the Cross Talks by adapting it to the complexity of migration in their countries. The core of the Cross Talks remains the same: creating a fair dialogue by re-enacting the stories. To create a genuine Cross Talk, they had to make the dialogue sessions more complex, use more and more different methods, and involve the wider community.

These adjusted Cross Talks want to and will mobilise a broad community and result in a real change for the African people.

