Reunifying versus Living Apart Together Across Borders:

A Comparative Analysis of Sub-Saharan Migration to Europe

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Summary:

This article studies the process of reunification in Europe among "living apart together across borders" (LATAB) couples of African origin (DR Congo, Ghana and Senegal). Couple reunion is conceived as a multi-level process, wherein state selection (through immigration policies in destination countries) interacts with self-selection (at the couple level), under influence of the social context at origin. Based on event-history analyses of the MAFE project, empirical results show that LATAB is a majority and durable living arrangement for Sub-Saharan migrants, that the odds if reunifying depend on gender and inter-generational relationships, and that restrictive contexts at destination do not deter couple reunion.

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Introduction

Over the last two decades, European rules regarding family reunification have become increasingly restrictive. In the 1990s especially, most countries adopted new laws to curb the number of new migrants entering on family grounds and also to select applicants for family reunification more explicitly (Kraler, Kofman et al. 2011). This trend towards restrictiveness is anchored in the common wisdom that family reunion is the universal goal of all migrants: there would be no selection in the reunification process at the level of the migrants and their relatives; and the states would be the only players to determine whether reunion should occur or not. This perception is the result of a double bias. The first bias is of ideological nature. The view that all couples are expected to reunify is based on a western-centric view of the family, in which a "normal" couple is made of two cohabitating partners. This ideal type, already contradicted in Western countries by the existence of "living apart together" (LAT) couples, does neither fit the family norms that apply in migrants origin countries. The second bias is of methodological nature. Many data sources (especially the administrative ones) suffer from their "methodological nationalism" (Bauböck and Faist 2010). They detail the number of reunified families in destination countries and they compare these families with non-migrant families, but lacking information on the relatives who stayed at origin (the so-called "left behinds"), they fail to measure the extent of reunification compared with families who remain separate. They are also ill-suited for studies on the factors of reunification because they cannot be used to compare those who reunified with those who did not.

This article aims at overcoming this doubly biased view of family reunion. We extend the western notion of "living apart together" (LAT) couples to partners who live separately because of international migration, by referring to "living apart together across borders" (LATAB) couples, hence suggesting that these "transnational couples" (wherein partners live in separate countries) may select themselves (or not) into this way of life, as do LAT couples within the borders of the countries where they reside. The objective of this paper is to study how LATAB couples of African origin turn (or not) into reunified couples in Europe. More specifically, we test the hypothesis that reunification is a multi-level process, wherein state selection (through immigration policies in destination countries) interacts with self-selection. In our framework, "self" refers to LATAB couples that are conceived neither as unitary nor as isolated decision units. First, we acknowledge that there might be divergences between partners within LATAB couples regarding the aspiration and decision to reunify or not. Second, couples are conceived as being under the influence of their origin context, especially regarding gender and family norms.

To study the process of couple reunification (timing and factors), we use the multi-sited data of the MAFE project[2] that collected life histories in three African (Democratic Republic of

[2] The MAFE project is coordinated by INED (C. Beauchemin) and its other participants are the Université catholique de Louvain (B. Schoumaker), Maastricht University (V. Mazzucato), the Université Cheikh Anta Diop (P. Sakho), the Université de Kinshasa (J. Mangalu), the University of Ghana (P. Quartey), the Universitat Pompeu Fabra (P. Baizan), the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (A. González-Ferrer), the Forum Internazionale ed Europeo di Ricerche sull'Immigrazione (E. Castagnone), and the University of Sussex (R. Black). The MAFE project received funding from the European Community's Seventh Framework Programme under grant agreement 217206. The MAFE-Senegal survey was conducted with the financial support of INED, the Agence Nationale de la Recherche (France), the Région Ile de France and the FSP programme 'International

Congo (DR-Congo), Ghana, Senegal) and six European (Belgium, France, Italy, Spain, The Netherlands, UK) countries, among migrants, returnees and non-migrants. Of great interest for this paper is the possibility, with the MAFE data, to compare reunified couples with LATAB couples, taking into account their changing situation over time. Using techniques of event-history analysis, we measure the propensity to reunify and analyze, through discrete-time logit models, the factors associated with partners' reunification in Europe. After this introduction, the next section provides a framework for the study of couple reunification. The following part sets out the data and methods. Results are then presented and their significance and limitations discussed in the conclusive section.

A Framework for the Study of Couples' Reunification

Transnational couples: from qualitative evidence to quantitative measures

Since the 1990s, a large number of socio-anthropological studies have shown that migrant families tend to adopt ways of life that transcend borders (Bryceson, Vuorela et al. 2002; Le Gall 2005; Mazzucato and Schans 2011; Razy and Baby-Collin 2011; Carling, Menjivar et al. 2012). "Transnational family" has become the usual term to label this form of family arrangement, where partners, parents and/or children are not (re)unified and live in separate countries, yet maintaining relationships that allow them to "do family" at a distance (see Mazzucato et al. in this issue for a more complete literature review on transnational families).

Migrations, territorial reorganizations and development of the countries of the South'. For more details, see: http://mafeproject.site.ined.fr/en/

Measures of non-reunification remain quite rare because most surveys adopt a mono-sited approach, wherein no data is collected on family members who live in different countries. Some scattered studies –based on multi-sited data– nevertheless show that non-reunification may be a significant phenomenon. In the context of Mexican migration to the U.S., for instance, Kanaiaupuni (2000, 1337) shows that "migration more often means separation than reunification among married couples". In a totally different setting, and already using the MAFE data, Baizan et al. (2013) have demonstrated that living separately is a quite common and long-lasting situation among Senegalese couples in Europe and also that reunification at origin, i.e. in Senegal after the migrant return, is more common than reunification in Europe. How to explain that partners remain separated across borders, even where they are allowed to reunify?

Rationale for Living Apart Together Within and Across Borders

Economic theories provide a first strand of explanations[3]. Even though it was not focused on family migration, the neo-classical theories of migration helps to understand that living apart together may be a rationale choice for migrants and their families. Seen as income maximizers, migrants would have interest in reunification only in the cases where the spouse migration would allow both to maximize gains and to minimize costs of living for the family. In contexts where there are deep gaps in earnings and costs of living between origin and destination places, reunification may not be the preferred option, even though –following the human capital theory of migration– this may depend on the employment prospects at

[3] For a more developed review of economic theories regarding family (non-)reunification, see Gonzalez-Ferrer (2012).

destination of the left behind. The New Economics of Labor Migration (NELM) offer other avenues to explain that some couples may prefer to live apart together, within or across borders (Stark 1991). First, migration is seen in this set of theories as a household strategy to diversify income sources and risks. By bringing family members to the same place, reunification would counter this logic. Second, migrants are seen as target earners who move to overcome various constraints in their place of origin (for instance, the lack of access to credit) with the aim of returning once they have achieved what they could not achieve without migration. Following this rationale, reunification at destination would be a way to delay the time of achievement and return.

The theoretical notion that families have strategies of diversification by spreading their members in various places echoes demographic research that has shown the extent of "living apart together" couples –albeit they were not labeled as such– in some Sub-Saharan regions (Findley 1997; Pilon and Vignikin 2006). According to the MAFE household surveys (Table 1), in the late 2000's, the proportion of people who are in partnership but who do not live with (any of) their partner ranges from 10 percent in Kinshasa (DR-Congo) to 22 percent in Dakar (Senegal) and 41 percent in Accra and Kumasi (Ghana)[4]. This is not a new phenomenon (Findley 1997; Coe 2011). It rather reflects persisting family norms in which the process of couple formation implies low levels of interaction within couples for a number of reasons: spouses often do not choose each other; they have a large age gap; and in some countries, polygamy also adds distance between partners. LAT within borders is especially frequent in contexts where the model of the extended family prevails, i.e., where elders exert a strong

[4] Note that very similar results are obtained with DHS surveys.

power over the younger and where lineage solidarity is expected to be higher than partners' solidarity within the couple (see Mazzucato et al. in this issue for more details).

(Table 1 about here)

Social Forces against Reunification

The social rationale for LAT *within* borders also applies for LAT *across* borders. Social norms, rules and values in origin countries –in other terms the "institutional context" of migration– are of tremendous significance to understand why family reunification is not a systematic option for migrants. Even though some migrants may act by themselves, the general idea that migration is simply the result of an individual decision has been ruled out for long. Similarly, couple reunification is not only determined by the partners: it can be strongly influenced by their social and family context. Where migration is conceived as an implicit contract between the migrant and his/her family or community of origin, the members of the extended family –and especially the elders– have a direct interest in maintaining the migrants' close relatives (spouses and children) at origin. First, they constitute a labor force, which is all the more important when outmigration is significant (Guilmoto 1998). Second, they constitute a form of insurance that the migrant will continue to send remittances (Mazzucato 2009). The elders' opposition towards reunification is explicitly mentioned in several studies on Senegalese migration, where moving abroad is largely a matter of the extended family (and not only the result of an individual or couple decision) and where the left-behind spouses commonly reside with their in-laws (Guilmoto 1998), as it is also observed in Ghana (Coe 2011).

In addition of inter-generational relationships, gender norms also play an important role in couple non-reunification. In some societies, migration is still considered as a male matter and females are not expected to migrate, even under control of their husband. Even in settings as

varied as Mexico or Morocco, migration is still perceived as a threat to social reproduction because it represents a possible mean for women to raise their power and gain some autonomy through their exposure to more egalitarian norms (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1992; De Haas and Fokkema 2010). Barou (1993) reported that some Senegalese male migrants in France opposed reunification because of their fear of divorce in a legal context that is more favorable to women than in their home country. Similar observations apply to reunification with children: bringing children in Europe is a source of stigmatization in Morocco, Tunisia and Senegal because it exposes them to external norms that contradict the cultural and religious values at origin, as well as traditional authorities (Barou 1993; Riccio 2008; De Haas and Fokkema 2010; Mazzella and Boubakri 2011). But this does not apply equally to all origin countries in Africa: comparing migrants from Senegal and Ghana in Italy, Riccio (2008) did not observe such reluctance among the later who origin from a more egalitarian society. In any case, when it exists, the preference for rearing children in the home country is a strong deterrent for mothers' reunification: they have to stay behind to take care of the children.

Societies are obviously diverse within countries and depicting attitudes towards reunification as if there was no internal diversity is obviously an over simplification. Previous studies have for instance shown that reunion with children and spouses is less likely among Senegalese migrants from more patriarchal ethnic groups (González-Ferrer, Baizán et al. 2012; Baizán, Beauchemin et al. 2014). Similarly, attitudes towards reunification vary according to the socio-cultural background of migrants families.

Women Left Behind: Ambivalant Aspirations and Bargaining Power

The literature suggests that left behind wives have ambivalent intentions regarding migration and reunification. On the one hand, gender inequalities in home countries may act as push factors and encourage migration, as a way to gain more autonomy. And it might be especially

true in regions where the wives are left with their in-laws which tend to increase social control over them (Mondain 2009; Coe 2011). On the other hand, various studies also report that left-behind women gain some autonomy as a result of the absence of their husband, even in patriarchal settings such as Mexico: they engage in new economic activities, perform multiple roles, gain new skills, such as budgeting, etc. (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1992). In a Nigerian survey, the greater autonomy of women, thanks to their husband departure, was explicitly cited as a reason for non-migration by a majority of women (Findley 1997). In Senegal as well, especially in Dakar, the additional work load due to the husband absence is said to be compensated by gains in autonomy (Tall and Tandian 2010). In these cases where being left behind is associated to a greater independence, reunification is not necessarily an aspiration.

The literature also suggests a relationship between left behinds' attitudes towards reunification and human capital: in many contexts, the more educated ones are found to be more likely to reunify (Kanaiaupuni 2000; González-Ferrer 2007; Toma and Vause 2013). Educated women would have both a higher interest in family reunification and a greater agency to realize their migratory project. On the one hand, especially in patriarchal contexts, they are the more likely to suffer from discrimination on the labor market, which may enhance their aspiration for international mobility. On the other hand, the more educated wives are also certainly those with the higher bargaining power to convince their husband and/or subvert patriarchal authority in order to negotiate the realization of their migratory project. Even though they often end up being under-employed at destination (Kofman 2000), educated women are those who have the best employment prospects (and thus the highest chances to increase the couples incomes) which may help them in negotiating their departure, in a context where the capacity to start a procedure of reunification is in the hands of the partner at destination. Finally, educated women are those who have the greater benefit in terms of gender relationships: Mexican educated women in the US have consistently higher

levels of control in relationships with males than their less-educated counterparts, who even have lower level of control than non-migrant women in the origin country (Parrado and Flippen 2005).

Migrants' Agency and Policy Constraint

Governments in receiving countries play obviously a major role in the reunification process: they define who is eligible both among the sponsors (the migrants who ask for reunification) and their relatives.. Even though, the European Union established in 2003 the right for family reunion in all its member states, specific rules regarding reunification remain very diverse across the region. The Migration Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) provides a good overview of this diversity (Huddleston 2011). Among other migration policy domains, it analyses how restrictive the countries are regarding family reunification. It takes into account four dimensions: eligibility (who can apply for reunification), conditions for reunification (i.e. selection criteria), security of status (how discretionary is the procedure), and rights associated to reunification (how similar are the rights of the sponsors and reunified relatives compared to Europeans). These four dimensions are averaged together in a global score that classifies countries from critically unfavorable (score=0) to favorable countries (score=80 to 100). Table 2 shows the MIPEX score (2007) of the European countries of interest in this study. Countries fall into two categories: slightly (score=60 to 79, such as Belgium, Spain and Italy) and halfway favorable (score=41 to 59, such as France, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom). In other terms, the right for family reunification is globally respected in these countries, but some of them are more restrictive and, sometimes, beyond the requirements of the European Directive on family reunion (Pascouau and Labeyle 2011). For instance, according to MIPEX, Italy, France and the Netherlands impose disproportionate housing,

and/or income requirements and fees, the latter two also use excessively discretionary and bureaucratic procedures (Huddleston 2011).

Regulations regarding reunification are changing over time, sometimes at a frantic pace, such as in France, where rules became tougher since the mid 1980s. On the contrary, rules grew in openness in Spain and followed an erratic path in Italy (Mezger and Gonzalez-Ferrer 2013). Unfortunately, except from the ImPol database that only covers Spain, Italy and France, there is currently no available database to compare systematically across countries how policies evolved in the last decades[5]. However, the general trend, especially since the 1990s, is rather for governments to adopt more restrictive policies, some of them (such as the Netherlands) even lobbying to tighten up on European norms (Kraler 2010; Huddleston 2011).

(Table 2 about here)

Even though they have the power to set the legal framework for family reunification, governments are not the only players in the process of family reunion. First, as already shown by Bledsoe and Sow (2008), migrants have some agency and adapt their demographic behaviors (e.g. marriage or childbearing) to comply with legal rules. Second, migrants may also opt for "de facto reunification" (Gonzalez Ferrer 2011), i.e. to regroup their partner without using the legal channel of family reunification. De facto reunification can be regular when partners enter through alternative legal channels (as refugees, students or workers). It was, for instance, the case before Northern European countries decided to stop labor migration and adopted restricted immigration policies in the mid-1970s: family reunification -

[5] The MIPEX is updated since 2007 but it does not cover the previous years that are precisely of interest in this paper.

that existed in fact- was virtually non-existent in administrative statistics. De facto reunification can also be irregular, as observed in Spain (Gonzalez Ferrer 2011), where there is a relative "tolerance" towards irregular residence migration (undocumented migrants have access to some social services, and are rarely subject to identity checks once inside the country). Lututala (2009) also suggests with anecdotal evidence that the complexity and length of the legal procedures for family reunification pushes some Congolese migrants to reunify irregularly in Europe.

Hypotheses

Several important ideas emerge from this literature review. The first contradicts the western public common wisdom that reunification is widespread if not systematic among migrants: even though measures are still quite rare, living apart together across borders (LATAB) appears as a rational, common and long-lasting arrangement. To explain that reunion at destination is not a universal option for couples who happen to be separated because of migration, we assume that reunification is a multi-level selection process that combines state-selection (through immigration policies in receiving countries) and self-selection (by the couples). Destination countries are not the only players to decide who reunifies or not, simply because couples have firstly to decide whether they opt or not for reunification. This self-selection process may result from a complex negotiation, as partners may have diverging aspirations and be strongly influenced by the social context at origin, especially in matter of gender relationships norms. This framework is detailed in a set of four hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1. We expect LATAB to be a frequent arrangement among African couples, with a propensity to reunify that varies according to the origin country: more gender egalitarian societies are assumed to be generally more favorable to reunion in Europe. More specifically, in line with previous research (Riccio 2008; Toma and Vause 2013), we expect that couples

from Congo and Ghana will reunify more frequently than those from Senegal, where females have less favorable positions according to various socio-demographic indicators (Table 1).

Hypothesis 2. The propensity to reunify is also assumed to vary across destination countries. A basic policy expectation is that more restrictive measures lead to less migration. Be it true, we should observe that host countries with more severe policies (such as France, the Netherlands or the UK) tend to discourage reunion when compared to more permissive countries (such as Belgium, Italy or Spain). However, numerous studies have shown that restrictive migration policies have often no effect and even sometimes effects in contradiction with policy expectations (Czaika and De Haas, 2013). Since the literature suggests that migrants adapt to circumvent restrictions in legal reunification, we assume that the propensity to reunify may not be significantly associated to the level of restrictiveness in reunion policies.

Hypothesis 3. Even though some migrants' couples may reunify without being entitled to do it, we nevertheless assume that couples who comply with legal restrictions are more likely to regroup than those who do not. More specifically, we expect higher odds of reunification among couples where the sponsor is documented, where the partners are married, or among couples who meet the legal housing and/or income requirements. This will reflect state selection into reunification.

Hypothesis 4. Partners are also expected to select themselves into reunification. We thus assume that women education will be positively correlated with reunification. Moreover, the effect of female education on reunion is expected to vary according to the context at origin. We hypothesize that selection according to human capital will be higher in patriarchal contexts (such as in Senegal), where social and economic frustrations may be higher for educated women, as are higher the gains they can expect from migration. Reversely, in more

egalitarian countries (such as DR-Congo or Ghana), we expect educational selection to be weakly selective.

Methodology

Conceptual options and methodological implications

LATAB couples are the core of this study, whose objective is to analyze how common they are and how they turn into reunified couples. In other words, we analyze how multi-sited couples, in which the male lives in Europe and the female in Africa, become mono-sited couples living in Europe through reunification. Such a study requires the collection of *multi-sited information* on the partners and their respective environments. Of crucial importance is for us the possibility to compare reunified couples with non-reunified couples and thus to use data that relate both to sending and receiving areas. Furthermore, since our aim is to analyze how the origin and destination contexts shape reunification, we need a set of comparable data allowing us to perform a double comparison, both between sending and receiving countries.

Family reunification is usually defined as the legal procedure through which migrants bring close relatives (i.e., spouse and children, and more rarely other relatives) into their immigration country. In this paper, we conceptualize reunification as a broader phenomenon that includes *legal* family reunification (i.e. reunification as a legal path of entry) and *de facto* (regular or irregular) reunification. Focusing on *overall* reunification, rather than narrowly on legal reunification, is a requirement to test the idea that selection into reunification is not only a state matter but also the product of couples' agency. Obviously, this conception of reunification forbids using administrative data; it rather takes a source with information on the location of the migrants and their partners, whatever their path of entry into Europe.

Finally, reunification is conceived as a *process* since, by definition, there is a time lapse between the moment of geographical separation and the time of reunion, lapse during which multiple factors can evolve to encourage or deter reunification. Studying reunification thus requires following LATAB couples over time in order to be able to analyze the timing and the factors affecting their probability to regroup. It thus necessitates longitudinal data.

Data source: the MAFE Project

Thanks to their multi-sited, comparative and longitudinal features, the MAFE data[6] fulfill the above mentioned requirements (Beauchemin 2012). They offer a unique opportunity to analyze how LATAB couples of African origin turn into reunified couples in Europe. The analyses carried out in this paper rely on sub-samples of individuals who were engaged in a transnational couple (being married or not) for a period of at least one year at some point in time (i.e. at the time of the survey and/or in the past). Furthermore, the subsamples are restricted to interviewees who were left-behind women in Africa or male migrants in Europe[7]. Finally, we use three sub-samples of 153 Congolese, 280 Ghanaian and 543 Senegalese couples, for which the data were obtained either from males interviewed in Europe or females surveyed in Africa, a combination made possible because the questionnaire contains information not only on the interviewee but also on his/her present and past partner(s)[8].

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[6] For a broader presentation of the MAFE project, see Beauchemin (2012).

[7] Numbers were too small to carry out analyses on couples where the female is the pionneer migrant. Priority was thus given to the constitution of homogeneous samples in order to facilitate results interpretation.

[8] In the case of Senegalese couples, the sample is made of 350 male migrants in Europe (France, Spain, Italy) and 193 left-behind females in Senegal. Congolese couples: 109 males respondents in Europe (Belgium and

To take into account the changing characteristics of the couples (and of the partners themselves), the data was arranged as a couple-year dataset[9] in which each couple appears when it enters in a LATAB situation for the first time (i.e. when the male migrates out of Senegal, Ghana or Congo, leaving behind his wife, or when the partners start their relationship while living in separate countries) and disappears when the LATAB situation ends. The end may be due to couple reunification in Europe (the event of interest in our analyses), breaking off (separation, divorce, widowhood), migration of one of the partners out of the countries under study (for instance out of Ghana for Ghanaian left behind women or out of the Netherlands or the UK for males migrants in Europe), or time of the survey, in which cases observations are censored. Statistical analyses are thus based on 636 couple-years of Congolese couples, 1,224 couple-years of Ghanaian couples and 4,077 couple-years of Senegalese couples.

Data Analysis

Using the MAFE data, event-history analysis is utilized to test the above mentioned hypotheses. Kaplan-Meier estimates are firstly used to study the timing of couple reunification among LATAB couples, in a double comparative way (across origin countries

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UK), 44 females in DRC. Ghanaian couples: 187 males respondents in Europe (Netherlands and UK) and 93 females in Ghana. Note that the information is (obviously) less detailed for partners than for the respondents themselves. Cases of asymetric information are detailed in .

[9] The year is the time unit level of data collection in the MAFE biographic questionnaire. International migration is thus defined as a stay of at least 12 months outside DR-Congo, Ghana or Senegal. This 12-month threshold also applies to couple's separation and reunification: a separation or a reunion lasting less than 12 month is not considered in our analyses.

and, then, by destination for each Sub-Saharan flow separately). Secondly, for each of the African groups, a discrete-time logit event history model is used to estimate the probability of reunifying in Europe (Allison 1982). The clock of the model is the duration of the LATAB period; it is reset to zero each time an individual starts a new period of transnational partnership. Clustering at the individual level has been introduced in the models to take into account the fact that a same migrant can have multiple spells that are not independent. All results presented are weighted to account for the different sampling probabilities in each of the countries in which the survey took place. Details on the sampling and weighting strategies can be found in Schoumaker and Mezger (2013). Independent variables, most of which are time-varying and observed at (t-1), are classified in three categories (Table 3).

(1) *Partners' socio-economic characteristics*. The male socio-economic status is introduced in the models as a proxy for the official socio-economic selection criteria for reunification (housing and income requirements). It certainly reflects state-selection, but it also reflects some sort of self-selection, since it is admitted that the lesser endowed migrants are more reluctant to reunify (Coe 2011). On the contrary, the education level of left-behind women only pertains to self-selection since it is not related to official criteria of legal reunification in our period of observation (language tests were introduced only in France after the time of the survey). More specifically, this variable is taken as a proxy for the females bargaining power within their couple and extended family.

(2) *Couple situation and history*. The variable "duration since LATAB" refers to the duration since the couples were separated because of migration. In some couples, partners never lived together because they started their relationship while they were already living in different countries. These unions are neither rare (13% of our Congolese sample and about 50% of the Senegalese sample), nor a new phenomenon (Kraler, Kofman et al. 2011). The meaning of this variable depends on the context. Where they reflect the persistent control of the extended

family over the migrants' matrimonial life (as in Senegal), unions that started at a distance are expected to be negatively correlated to reunification. But, where women have more freedom to choose their partner (as in DR-Congo), such distant partnerships can reflect a migration strategy, whereby women marry migrants with the intention to join them in Europe. In this case, unions that started at a distance are be expected to be associated with a quick reunification process, as previously observed by Lututala (2009). Two additional variables refer to the matrimonial status. One indicates whether the couple is married, the other whether the couple is polygamous. Both variables potentially indicate state-selection effects since all countries forbid reunification of polygamous families (or more precisely allow reunification with only one wife) and since marriage is a legal requirement in almost all European countries (where this is not required, as in The Netherlands, Spain or Belgium, –the bureaucratic difficulties to prove that the partnership is stable enough are discouraging). Finally, the number of children is expected to delay reunification because it augments its costs (either economic costs if children are to move with the mother, or psychological costs if the children are to be left behind).

(3) *Conditions of migration and stay in Europe*. Each year, the "visit" variable indicates whether the migrant returned in his home country for less than a year during the three preceding years. Short stays in Congo, Ghana or Senegal are expected to delay reunification, as they are a way of "oiling" the functioning of families living across borders (Grillo and Mazzucato 2008). In a way, this variable is an indicator of a transnational way of life and reflects some sort of self-selection. Also time-varying, the legal status variable is a basic official criterion for reunification: it gives an account of state-selection. The last variable

refers to the context at destination: it crosses the period (before[10] and after 2003) and the destination country (for instance, Belgium vs. the UK for Congolese couples). This variable captures in a rough manner a wide range of economic, social, cultural or policy elements that may influence family reunification, including specific policies in this domain. The cut-off point, 2003, was not only chosen for its symbolic dimension (this is the year of the EU Directive on Family Reunion), but also because it is quite close to 2007, the year for which we dispose of a comparative index to measure the restrictiveness of family reunion policies in the various European countries of interest in our study (MIPEX, see Table 2).

(Table 3 about here)

Results

The first important result is –as expected– that couple reunification in Europe is not a very common outcome. On the contrary, LATAB arrangements are quite long lasting: after 10 years of geographical separation –a quite significant period in a couple's life–, the large majority of couples have still a transnational way of life (Figure 1). At this point, 63 percent of Congolese migrants in Europe have still their partner left behind in their home country, as 75 percent of Ghanaian and 81 percent of the Senegalese ones. Reversely, it means that the probability to reunify after 10 years oscillates between one couple out of three or four, depending on the origin. As expected (hypothesis 1), couples originating from the less gender egalitarian context, i.e. Senegal, are those with the lesser propensity to regroup. Those from DR-Congo are, on the contrary, the more likely to reunify in Europe, as a probable result of a

[10] Observation starts in 1959 for Congolese couples, and 1961 for Ghanaian and Senegalese couples.

higher autonomy of females in this country and also of the political context that prevented migrants to return and prompted them to bring their family under safer skies. In any case, countries where living apart together *within* the borders is frequent, i.e., Senegal and Ghana (Figure 1), are also those with the higher rates of living apart together couples *across* borders.

The propensity to reunify in Europe is not only dependent on the migrants' origin. It also depends on the destination place (hypothesis 2), with sometimes deep gaps such as between Belgium and the UK in the case of Congolese couples (Figure 1). If policy expectations were fulfilled, we should observe that the more restrictive countries in terms of reunion policies are those with lesser levels of reunification. This is not the case: on the contrary: Congolese and Senegalese tend to regroup more quickly and more often in restrictive destinations (respectively the UK and France). Why? This result simply indicates that reunification policies are not the only determinant of couple reunion. For instance, the higher propensity of Congolese migrants to regroup in the UK is associated to their specific profile: refugees are much more frequent than in Belgium (Schoumaker and Flahaux 2013) and they form a population that both tends to have lesser intentions to return and a higher legal capacity to regroup (reunification being easier for refugees than for other migrants). A "categorical substitution effect" (Czaika and De Haas 2013) is at play, whereby migrants regroup de facto using another legal channel of entry.

Another mechanism explains that reunification for Senegalese migrants is more likely in France, precisely where policies are more restrictive than in Spain or Italy. Actually, Senegalese migrants' strategies regarding family reunion differ according to labor migration policies. Where and when the latter are open (usually in concordance with an abundant and flexible job market for migrants), such as in Spain or Italy during our period of observation, migrants tend to come and go and maintain a transnational family life (Riccio 2001). This was the case in France until the mid-1970s, when the French government stopped labor migration,

as a response to the economic crisis. Almost at the same time, to guarantee the right of families to live together, the French government opened the possibility for family reunification. This is how the nature of Senegalese migration changed: it used to be based on circulation and transnational lives and it became a settlement migration implying reunification for a larger number of families (Barou 1993). The Senegalese case is thus exemplary of another "substitution effect", where a type of migration (family migration) replaces another type (labor migration), with implications on the migrants profiles (more women) and on their propensity to settle. In short, more restrictions in labor migration lead to more family reunification.

(Figure 1 about here)

The fact that reunification is less frequent in Spain and Italy could also be explained by the larger amount of irregular migrants in these countries (see Vickstrom's contribution in this issue). However, the same cross-country differences remain when one controls for the migrants' legal status in the models (Table 4). All in all, the models results converge with the descriptive ones and confirm our second hypothesis. Controlling for a large set of individual and couple characteristics, they show – contrary to policy expectations – that couple reunification is not less likely in restrictive contexts. In the post-2003 period, the odds of reunion are higher (albeit non-significant) among Congolese migrants in the restrictive UK than among their counterparts living in the more liberal Belgium (Table 5). Similarly, Senegalese migrants in the severe France have higher odds of reunification than Senegalese migrants in the more open Mediterranean countries (with a significant difference only between France and Italy).

(Table 4 and Table 5 about here)

That more restrictive contexts regarding reunification rules are not associated with lesser reunion in fact does not mean, off course, that there is no state selection in the process of couple reunification. This appears in the models results regarding several individual and couple characteristics. As expected (hypothesis 3), couples who are in principle not eligible for official reunification are indeed less likely to regroup. This is patent for polygamous couples as well as for the unmarried ones who have significantly lower odds of reunification (Table 4). Similarly, migrants who do not hold a residence permit have significant lower odds of reunification than those who are documented (Table 4),

It does not mean however that there is no de facto reunification among those who do not comply with these criteria. Actually, a minority of reunified couples are not married at the time of reunification (from 4% among Senegalese to 13% among Congolese couples, Table 6). And some undocumented migrants reunify on the "fringes of the law" (Gonzalez Ferrer 2011). This form of irregular de facto reunification culminates at 15 percent among Congolese couples, a much higher rate than for Senegalese or Ghanaians (respectively 2% and 4%, Table 6), probably both because a lot of Congolese migrants entered Europe as asylum seekers without obtaining the status of refugee and because left behinds are prompter to leave a country in a severe political and economic crisis. These are cases where state selection fails and where reunification results solely from self-selection.

(Table 6 about here)

Self-selection in the process of reunification is also confirmed by educational selectivity among left-behinds. The higher their education level, the more likely the women are to join their partner in Europe. As expected (hypothesis 4), this selection effect varies according to the social context at origin: it is higher where women enjoy less egalitarian conditions, as it can be observed when comparing Senegal with Ghana or Congo (table 4). The fact that

selection by education is weakly significant in this later country may result not only from a better position of women in the society, but also certainly from the crisis situation (refugees are less selected than other types of migrants). The influence of the social context at origin is also reflected in the effect variations of the “visit” variable. In all groups, chances of reunion are diminished when migrants visit their home country, as short stays at home help to do family at a distance. However, the result is strongly significant only in Senegal, which echoes the fact that the social structures in this country strongly support a transnational way of life, with hometown and religious associations constantly reminding to the migrants their duties toward their home community, in addition of extended family demands (Barou 1993; Riccio 2001).

Conclusions

The objective of this paper was to study how transnational couples of sub-Saharan origin turn into reunified couples in Europe. We assembled pieces of evidence that reunification is the product of both a state and self-selection process, the “self” level referring to the couple, under influence of the social context at origin. Pieces of this framework would need to be further researched to overcome the limitations of the analysis. It was not possible, for instance, with our data to analyze the potential bargain at play within couples regarding reunification.

Even though it does not cover the whole Africa, the diversity of the groups under study allows, to some extent, to generalize the findings. A first important result is that reunification is not as common as usually perceived in the public debate. Actually, living apart together across borders is much more frequent than reunion, even during quite long periods. To what extent is this specific to Sub-Saharan Africa? In Europe, studies on family migration have

shown that African migrants take more time to reunify than other groups (Esteve and Cortina 2009; González-Ferrer, Baizán et al. 2012). However, the high frequency of non-reunification was coined by Kanaiaupuni (2000) in the case of Mexican migration. She insisted on the role of gender relationships to explain this situation. Working on female migration in a set of four Latin American countries, Massey et al. (2006) pointed the correlation between the degree of patriarchy and the level and factors of migration among women. Our results on African migration to Europe confirm this relationship. Where the origin society is less gender egalitarian, reunification is less frequent and more selective. In contexts where women face harsh discrimination and where they undergo a vivid social control, the more educated ones are much more likely to join their partner in Europe. The incentives to migrate and the costs of migration are lesser for the left behind women who live in more egalitarian contexts. Beyond gender relationships, the degree of social control by the elders and through social structures, such as hometown or religious associations, is also a determinant to explain variations in reunification levels. Where they are high (such as in Senegal), women are expected to remain behind in order to ensure that the migrant will keep in mind his obligations towards his community.

Reunification is not only a matter of social control at origin. Immigration policies are also believed – at least by governments – to determine the levels of reunification. Our results starkly contrast with the policy expectation that more restrictiveness would lead to less reunification. In the cases of Senegalese and Congolese migration, we were able to compare destination countries that are “slightly favorable” (Belgium, Spain, Italy) to reunification with “halfway favorable” countries (France, UK), according to the MIPEX classification. We showed an apparent paradox: for both groups, reunification is more likely in more restrictive countries. The basic lesson to learn from this result is that family reunion policies are not sufficient to actually shape reunification behaviors. Many other factors are at play and

migrants and their families detain some agency on their mobility arrangements. Legal reunification is just one channel of entry into Europe and other channels can be used by couples who aspire to reunify, including through irregular paths. Such substitution effects can undermine the effectiveness of restrictive measures in family migration policies (Czaika and De Haas 2013). On the other hand, severe policies in labor migration can lead to more reunification even where reunion procedures are rather restrictive, as observed in the case of Senegalese migration in France vs. Spain and Italy. Even though they set the rules and decide which migrants can officially reunify or not, states at destination are definitely not the only players in the process of selection into reunification in Europe.

Table 1. Contextual Information on Regions of Origin – Gender Relationships Indicators (

	DR Congo	Ghana	Senegal
Family indicators			
Proportion of females (25-49) in consensual union	8.7%	10.1%	0.1%
Proportion of divorced females (25-49)	6.3%	10.7%	5.0%
Proportion of household heads in partnership who are not living with (any of) their partner	9.8%	41.0%	21.7%
Proportion of all married men in polygamous union	5.1%	2.1%	19.6%
Socio-economic indicators			
Proportion of women among students in tertiary education	45.1%	52.8%	39.8%
Proportion of women (25+) who have attained post-secondary education	16.1%	13.7%	13.7%
Proportion of working age women (15+) that are employed	41.1%	55.5%	33.6%
Source: MAFE-Congo (2009-2010), MAFE-Ghana (2009-2010), MAFE-Senegal (2008) – Household surveys. Weighted results.			

Table 2. Family Reunification Policies in Europe: Measurement of Restrictiveness in 2007 (MIPEX).

	Belgium	UK	The Nether-lands	France	Spain	Italy
Global index	70	56	59	53	76	78
Eligibility	65	56	45	35	80	65
Conditions of acquisition of status	67	58	42	39	67	67
Security of status	75	75	50	63	100	88
Rights associated with status	67	42	100	75	58	92
Source: Mipex indexes on family reunification in 2007, MIPEX (Migrant Integration Policy Index), http://www.mipex.eu/ NB: The higher the index, the more permissive the rules regarding family reunification.						

Table 3. Variables used in the models. Sample description (Observations at time of censoring or reunification in Europe, weighted percentages)

Variables	Categories	Senegalese couples	Ghanaian couples	Congolese couples	Variable Description
Socio-demographic characteristics					
Gender	Male	71.9	62.6	43.3	Time constant
	Female	28.1	37.4	56.7	
Migrant's socio-economic status (Male at destination)	No skilled and self employed	57.5	37.6	8.4	Time constant. Asymmetric information: Time of the survey for the interviewee. For spouse, situation considered at the moment of entry in union.
	Skilled and Professionals	31.3	45.7	46.6	
	Not employed (incl. students)	11.2	16.7	45	
Partner's level of education (Female at origin)	None and primary	63.7	4.8	4.4	Time constant. Asymmetric information: Time of the survey for the interviewee. For spouse, education level considered at the moment of entry in union.
	Secondary	32.3	48.6	47.6	
	Tertiary	4.00	46.6	48	
Couple situation					
Years lived in LATAB (Living Apart Together Across Borders)	<=3 years	41.9	72.2	79.9	Time-varying in the models (observed at t-1). Duration since the partners started to live in separate countries.
	>3 years	58.1	27.8	20.1	
Married	no	13.7	38.9	46.4	Time varying (observed at t-1).
	yes	86.3	61.1	53.6	
Union started at a distance	no	81.0	89.2	95.5	Time varying (observed at t-1).
	yes	19.0	10.8	4.4	
Polygamous	no	80.3	61	93.9	Time varying in the models (observed at t-1). Asymmetric information: Among male respondents, polygamy is deduced from the partnerships' history. Among female respondents, the information was collected only in MAFE Senegal: for each union, they were asked whether they have/had co-spouse(s).
	yes	19.7	39	6.1	
Conditions of migration					
Legal status of the migrant in Europe	No	12.3	4.3	6.7	Time varying in the models (observed at t-1). Each year, indicates the migrant's legal status. Asymetric information: legal status was collected only about respondents themselves, i.e. migrants in Europe (including those who returned to Africa). The information is missing when the respondent was the partner left behind in Africa. Missing status is coded as a category in order to keep all observations in the data set.
	yes	71.7	62.6	50.2	
	missing	16	33.1	43.1	
Ever visited partner	no	49.9	75.1	92.6	Time varying (observed at t-1). Each year, indicates whether the migrant returned for at least one short stay (less than a year) in his home country during the 3 preceding years (t-3, t-2 and t-1).
	yes	50.1	24.9	7.4	
Period*Destination	Before 2003	France: 27.5	UK: 62.1	Belgium: 28.6	Time varying in the models (observed at t-1).
	After 2003	France: 6.1	UK: 30.7	Belgium: 34	
	Before 2003	Italy: 26.7	The Netherlands: 5.7	UK: 22.9	
	After 2003	Italy: 18.7	The Netherlands: 1.5	UK: 14.5	
	Before 2003	Spain: 8.5	-	-	
	After 2003	Spain: 12.4	-	-	
Source: MAFE-Congo (2009-2010), MAFE-Ghana (2009-2010), MAFE-Senegal (2008) – Biographic surveys. Weighted results.					

Table 4. Models Results

		Congolese couples		Ghanaian couples		Senegalese couples	
Variables	**Categories**	**Gross effects°**	**Model 1**	**Gross effects°**	**Model 2**	**Gross effects°**	**Model 3**
Partners' socio-economic characteristics							
Female's level of education (Left behind at origin)	Primary and less	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
	Secondary	0.41*	0.78			2.30***	4.45***
	Tertiary education	0.25**	1.16	2.50*	4.06*	4.32***	7.89***
Male's socio-economic status (Migrant at destination)	Not employed/Student	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
	Unskilled or self employed	2.50*	1.19	1.95	1.88+	0.88	1.83
	Skilled and Professionals	2.40+	3.07*	1.15	2.73***	1.75^{+}	2.53*
Couple's characteristics							
Duration since LATAB	<=3 years	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
	>3 years	0.16***	0.12***	0.19***	0.11***	0.15***	0.27***
Union started at a distance (ref: no)		3.16***	4.61**	1.13	1.43	1.02	0.88
Married (ref : no)		3.73*	1.26	7.19***	7.96***	3.11**	4.06***
Polygamous couple (ref: no)		1.34	0.48	1.35	0.16***	0.38***	0.38***
Children (number)		1.14^{+}	0.99	0.85+	0.73***	0.96	0.97
Migration conditions							
Visited partner (ref: no)		0.72	0.21^{+}	1.30	0.85	0.95	0.41***
Stay permit	No	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
	Yes	0.82	2.18+	2.06^{+}	1.69^{+}	15.41***	10.95***
	Missing	0.01***	0.01***	0.01***	0.01***	0.95	0.18*
Destination country * Period		See Table 5					
Constant		-	0.03***	-	0.06***	-	0.01***
Sample sizes		n=153 couples person-years= 636		n=280 couples person-years= 1,224		n=543 couples person-years= 4077	

Source: MAFE-Congo (2009-2010), MAFE-Ghana (2009-2010), MAFE-Senegal (2008) – Biographic surveys. Weighted results.
Significance tests: *** : p<0.01 ; ** : p<0.05 ; * : p<0.10 ; + : p<0.20
° Duration since LATAB is controlled for estimating gross effects.

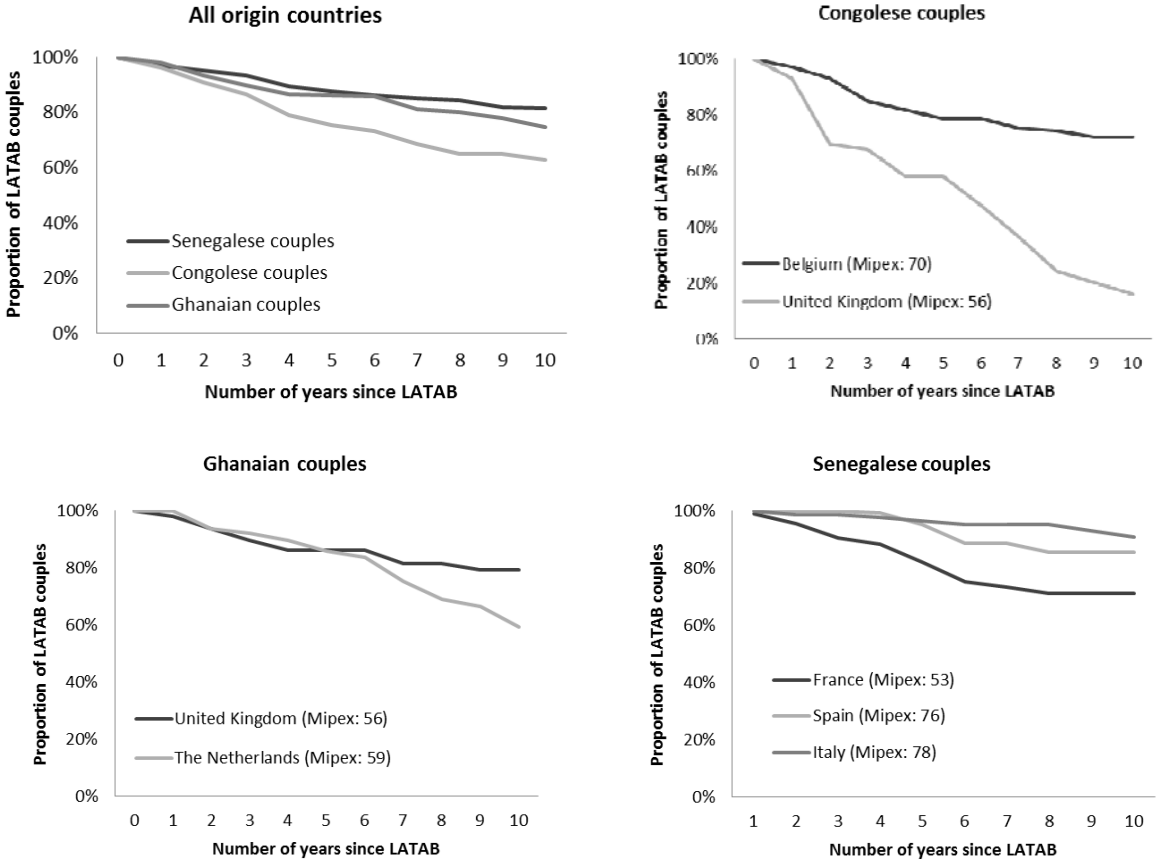
Table 5. Models Results. Interaction Effects of the Period and the Destination countries (results of models 1 to 3)

Congolese couples (Model 1)					
	Belgium	United Kingdom	Significant difference between countries		
Before 2003	1.00	7.76	***		
After 2003	2.02	3.95	ns		
Significant change	ns	ns			
Ghanaian couples (Model 2)					
	United Kingdom	The Netherlands	Significant difference between countries		
Before 2003	1.00	0.87	ns		
After 2003	0.24	0.36	ns		
Significant change	**	ns			
Senegalese Couples (Model 3)					
	France	Italy	Spain	Significant difference	
				Fr/It	Fr/Sp	It/Sp
Before 2003	1.00	0.23	1.65	***	+	***
After 2003	0.62	0.15	0.18	*	ns	ns
Significant change	ns	ns	***			
*** : p<0.01 ; ** : p<0.05 ; * : p<0.10 ; + : p<0.20 Source: MAFE-Congo (2009-2010), MAFE-Ghana (2009-2010), MAFE-Senegal (2008) – Biographic surveys.					

Table 6. Measures of de Facto Reunification (Weighted percentages at the time of Reunification in Europe among reunified couples)

	Congolese couples	**Ghanaian couples**	**Senegalese couples**
Matrimonial Status			
Not married	13	10	4
Married	87	90	96
Migrant's legal status			
No stay permit	15	4	2
Stay permit	84	95	96
Missing	1	1	3
Total	100	100	100
Number of reunified couples in Europe	79	112	139
Source: MAFE-Congo (2009-2010), MAFE-Ghana (2009-2010), MAFE-Senegal (2008) – Biographic surveys.			

Figure 1. Time to reunification in Europe for LATAB couples from DR-Congo, Ghana and Senegal



Source: MAFE-Congo (2009-2010), MAFE-Ghana (2009-2010), MAFE-Senegal (2008) – Biographic surveys ; MIPEX index on family reunification (2007), see details in Table 2.

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