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*Research Article*

### **The effects of integration and transnational ties on international return migration intentions**

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## **The effects of integration and transnational ties on international return migration intentions**

**Hein de Haas<sup>1</sup>**

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### **Abstract**

While return migration is receiving increasing attention, there is still insufficient insight into the factors which determine migrants' intentions and decisions to return. It is often assumed that integration in receiving countries and the concomitant weakening of transnational ties decreases the likelihood of returning. However, according to alternative theoretical interpretations, return migration can also be the outflow of successful integration in receiving countries. Drawing on a dataset of four African immigrant groups in Spain and Italy, this article reviews these conflicting hypotheses by assessing the effects of integration and transnational ties on return migration intentions. The results of the analysis suggest that sociocultural integration has a negative effect on return migration intentions, while economic integration and transnational ties have more ambiguous and sometimes positive effects. The results provide mixed support for the different hypotheses but question theoretical perspectives that unequivocally conceptualize return migration and transnationalism as causes and/or consequences of "integration failure."

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## 1. Introduction

Return migration has recently received renewed attention in research and policy (Cassarino 2004; Hammond 1999; Olesen 2002). This resurgence seems largely to be related to new hopes that politicians and other policy makers have pinned onto temporary migration as an instrument to meet labour market demands while avoiding the permanent settlement of migrants (Barber, Black, and Tenaglia 2005; Castles 2006; Ruhs 2006). In addition, temporary migration has increasingly been conceptualized as beneficial for the development of origin countries, whereby return migrants are often ascribed a key, innovative role in investment and economic development (Agunias 2006; de Haas 2005; Ghosh 2006).

Neither temporary migration nor the assumed link between return migration and origin country development are new phenomena or policy ideas. In the 1960s and 1970s, for instance, “guest workers” were recruited from relatively poor Mediterranean countries such as Turkey, Morocco and Tunisia to work in the industries of the booming economies of North-Western Europe (Castles and Kosack 1973). Governments of both sending and receiving countries initially considered this migration as temporary, and the workers were widely expected to play a positive role in economic development of origin countries through investing their savings after return. After the 1973 Oil Crisis and the subsequent economic downturn, governments of countries such as France, Germany, and the Netherlands attempted to encourage return migration, sometimes by linking return migration to investment and development schemes in origin countries (De Mas 1978; Entzinger 1985; Penninx 1982). However, although significant return did occur, many “guest workers” ended up settling in destination countries, as was testified by large-scale family reunification migration in the 1970s and 1980s.

Most theories on migrant integration or assimilation suggest that the longer migrants stay, the more they become integrated in receiving societies, the more difficult it becomes to return in practice, and the more they are inclined to settle. This has strong parallels with neoclassical migration theory, as formulated by Harris and Todaro, which represents migration as an attempt by individuals to maximize their utility by moving to places where they can be more productive (Harris and Todaro 1970; Massey et al. 1998; Todaro and Maruszko 1987). Such theories tend to interpret migration as an investment in human capital, predicting that migrants move to places where they can expect the highest economic returns on their human resources; according to these theories migration is expected to occur when there is a good chance migrants will recoup their human capital investment once migration and adaptation costs and risks are taken into account (Bauer and Zimmermann 1998; Sjaastad 1962). From this we can derive that if migrants integrate successfully, they can be more productive than in their origin

countries, and there will be no rationale for returning. On the contrary, if individual migrants fail to find employment and to improve their lives through migrating, they are more likely to return. So, within this perspective, return migration is mainly interpreted as a result of structural (educational and economic) integration failure. Put differently, while “winners” settle, “losers” return.

A second, related inference is that the likelihood and desire to return decrease when social and economic ties with origin countries weaken, and migrants increasingly shift their focus towards receiving societies. In particular, family reunification is commonly thought to make migration largely irreversible. If migration is primarily perceived as an individual cost-benefit analysis, it would make little sense for successfully integrated migrants to maintain sociocultural and economic ties with sending countries, because maintaining ties with people in origin countries would raise the financial and psychological costs of staying. The other way around, attachments to destination countries will decrease the costs of staying and increase the costs of returning.

From this set of theoretical considerations, we can hypothesize that (1) economic and sociocultural integration in destination countries and (2) strong social and economic ties with the destination country have a negative effect on the likelihood of return. It is important to acknowledge that this causality is also likely to work the other way around: migrants who already intend to return will feel less compelled to integrate into destination societies and will have stronger motivations to maintain social and economic ties with origin countries to prepare and facilitate their return.

There is some empirical evidence supporting this hypothesis. Using a multinomial logistic regression model of the intention to return, and drawing on survey data (1970–1989) of Greek, Italian, Spanish, Yugoslav, and Turkish “guest workers” in Germany, Waldorf (1995) found that residential and job satisfaction consistently led to declining return intentions, while the influence of personal attributes such as gender or marital status was of little importance. She also observed declining return intentions over time, suggesting that the climate of return becomes less conducive to return as the ethnic communities become more established. Haug (2008) found evidence that the more social ties Italian migrants in Germany accumulated in their destination country, the less they were inclined to return. Analyzing survey data from Denmark, Jensen and Pedersen (2007) observed that various variables measuring labour market involvement had a significant negative effect on return migration. Dustmann (2008) found evidence that educational investments in children, as well as permanent wages, are positively associated with the probability of permanent migration of the father.

The idea that there is a negative correlation between destination country integration and origin country orientation also fits within assimilationist theories on immigrant integration (Castles and Miller 2003; Portes, Parker, and Cobas 1980), which

predict that immigrant communities will gradually assimilate into receiving societies, while transnational ties simultaneously decline. However, in recent years this assumed negative correlation has been challenged by the literature on migrant networks and transnationalism, which has shown that technical advances in transport and communication technologies have enabled immigrants to maintain intensive links with their societies of origin via the (mobile) telephone, fax, (satellite) television, the internet, and remitting money through globalized banking systems or informal channels. This has expanded the scope for migrants to foster multiple belongings and double loyalties, to hold dual citizenship, to travel back and forth, and to work and to do business simultaneously in distant places (de Haas 2005; Glick Schiller, Basch, and Szanton-Blanc 1992; Portes 1999; Vertovec 2004).

This transnationalization of migrants' lives has also increasingly challenged assimilationist models of migrant integration as well as the idea that the maintenance of social and economic ties with origin countries is necessarily a manifestation or cause of migrants' inability or unwillingness to integrate. Some empirical evidence supports the idea that integration and transnational ties are not necessarily substitutes, but can be complements. Portes, Guarnizo, and Landolt (1999) asserted that transnational orientations and activities are generally positively associated with the integration of both parents and children, and can facilitate successful adaptation by providing opportunities for (transnational) entrepreneurship and economic mobility (see also Granovetter 1995; Portes, Haller, and Guarnizo 2002). Guarnizo, Portes, and Haller (2003) found that increased education of immigrants increases political participation in receiving and origin countries. Snel, Engbersen, and Leerkes (2006) countered the idea that immigrant groups (Moroccans, Antilleans) who are often said to be poorly integrated into Dutch society necessarily show more transnational involvement. In a similar vein, the literature on migrant remittances has questioned the hypothesis that remittances automatically decline over time due to progressive integration and weakening ties (Brown 1994; de Haas and Plug 2006; Taylor 1999; van Dalen, Groenewold, and Fokkema 2005).

Such perhaps counterintuitive empirical findings can be explained from a capabilities (cf. Sen 1999) standpoint: even if "integrated" and socially and economically settled migrants have less strong ties with origin countries (which is not necessarily the case), their increased personal, social, and financial capabilities for maintaining ties with origin societies can partly or more than counterbalance the first effect. Successful and "integrated" migrants generally also use increased cognitive and financial capacity for maintaining transnational ties, for example through remitting money, visiting family, setting up enterprises and civic participation in origin countries. The inference is that strong transnational ties can also be positively associated with integration.

While the literature on migrant transnationalism has questioned the idea that transnationalism and integration are necessarily substitutes, the new economics of labor migration (NELM) offers a powerful conceptual link between these two issues and return migration. NELM interprets migration as a livelihood strategy employed by households and families to spread income risks and to overcome sending country (credit, insurance) market constraints. This co-insurance model is a departure from conventional neoclassical models which conceptualize migration as the behaviour of utility-maximizing individuals. The central idea of NELM is that households send out best-suited individuals to gain an income elsewhere. The money migrants remit serves to spread income risks and to increase income and living conditions, and enables them to invest (Stark 1991; Taylor 1999; Taylor, Rozelle, and de Brauw 2003). Although NELM focuses on explaining migration behaviour, we can also derive an alternative interpretation of return migration which challenges conventional hypotheses that postulate a negative association between integration and return migration.

Within the NELM perspective, migrants and their households have an interest in optimizing their integration, because this will increase income and reduce livelihood risks for their households in sending countries, but this will not necessarily result in permanent settlement. However, the projected return is likely to be postponed for sustained or indefinite periods if integration is unsuccessful. If migrants are conceptualized as “target savers,” and the prime motive for migrating is to improve the situation at home, migrants will only return once they have succeeded to amass, save, and remit enough financial or human capital in order to realize their investment plans.

Moreover, the conceptualization of migration as investment in human capital provides an additional explanation for why return migration can be positively correlated to successful economic integration. If the act of migrating itself is also a means to accumulate more human capital through work experience and education, migrants can be expected to return only after enough human capital has been accumulated abroad.<sup>3</sup>

Importantly, this turns conventional interpretations of return migration upside down; that is, from an indication or result of integration failure to a measure of success. Particularly within a NELM perspective, non-achievement of the goal of return migration due to low income, unemployment or high costs will then lead to a prolonged stay. Permanent settlement then becomes the end result of repeated postponement of return because of integration “failure.” At first glance, this pattern seems to reflect the collective experience of “guest workers” in Europe mentioned above, who often ended up staying while experiencing high unemployment and social marginalization. Their prolonged stay and settlement did not, however, lead to a significant decrease in the

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<sup>3</sup> However, we should not assume that human capital can be acquired and transferred at no cost. For instance, degrees obtained in one country are not necessarily recognized in other countries. Skills, such as language skills, acquired in the destination country are not necessarily deployable in origin countries.

transnational ties they maintained with origin societies (de Bree 2007; Reniers 2001; Snel, Engbersen, and Leerkes 2006).

Thus, different migration and integration theories offer rather different interpretations of return migration, and lead to partially opposed hypotheses about the relationship between integration and the maintenance of transnational ties on the one hand, and return migration on the other. While the first set of theories hypothesizes that economic and sociocultural integration will decrease return intentions, the second set of theories hypothesizes the reverse.

Both strands of theories predict a positive effect of transnational social and economic ties on return intentions. However, as Constant and Massey (2002:11) argued, interpretations associated with conventional neoclassical theory assume that although migrants may leave spouses or children at home, their goal is generally to achieve higher lifetime earnings through permanent settlement abroad. Migrants are therefore willing to endure long separations until arrangements can be made for family reunification, which remains the ultimate goal. As a result, the positive effect of transnational social ties with family living in origin countries on return migration can be expected to be stronger under NELM.

There is still a lack of pertinent studies and adequate data to test these conflicting hypotheses. While existing studies focus on the effects of either integration or transnationalism on return migration, to our knowledge no studies have tried to look at these effects simultaneously, with the exception of Constant and Massey's (2002) study. Our study aims to fill part of this empirical gap by analyzing a unique dataset to assess the microlevel determinants of return migration intentions among four recent African migrant groups living in Spain and Italy. By simultaneously assessing the effect of various indicators of integration and transnational ties on international return migration, this article provided a test of the conflicting hypotheses elaborated above.

This study focuses on return migration intentions, not on actual behaviour. The focus on intentions allows the study of migration motivations that may or may not precede actual migration behaviour. Most empirical work focuses on actual return migration behaviour. While this generates valuable post-hoc explanations for observed migration events, it will also be relevant to study return migration intentions. As Waldorf (1995) argued, the conventional focus on actual return is based on the implicit assumption that observed behaviour is preceded by a desire to migrate and that the factors influencing actual behaviour affect migration intentions in a similar fashion. However, there might be discrepancies between intentions and actual migration behaviour. Several social, economic, and political constraints explain why many people often do not migrate or return even if they have the wish to do so, and the other way around.



## **2. Methods**

### **2.1 Data**

This study draws on survey data collected in 1997 as part of the “Push and Pull Factors of International Migration” research project<sup>4</sup> in five predominantly migrant-sending countries in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean region (Egypt, Morocco and Turkey) and in sub-Saharan Africa (Ghana and Senegal), and in two predominantly migrant-receiving countries in the Mediterranean region (Italy and Spain). This survey allowed the simultaneous collection of pre and postmigration data, including data on the migration process itself, integration and transnational ties.

In the present article we will only focus on the two receiving countries: Italy and Spain. In Italy, members of migrant households from Egypt and Ghana participated in the survey; in Spain their peers from Morocco and Senegal. Because of financial and logistic constraints, regionally representative rather than nationally representative sample designs were used. In Italy, a few cities and their provinces in two main geographical areas of the country were selected (Milan, Brescia, Bergamo and Modena in Northern Italy; Rome, Latina, Naples and Caserta in Central-Southern Italy), while in Spain the sample comprised five regions (Catalonia, Levant, Andalusia, Madrid and the Canary Islands). In addition, in every household only one person, the so-called main migration actor (MMA), was selected for a long interview. The MMAs were persons between 18 and 65 years who were born in the country of origin and who were 18 years or older when they left their country of birth within the period of ten years preceding the survey. For further information on the criteria used to select the MMA, sampling methods and representativeness, see Schoorl et al. (2000). In the long individual MMA questionnaire, extensive data was gathered about the situation surrounding the last migration, the current situation in the country of destination, and the intentions for future migration. From this MMA-sample we excluded full-time students ( $n=26$ ) because their degree of economic integration is less than it will be once they have completed their studies and are in the workforce. That is, it is likely that they will be more economically integrated than current data on them will reflect. Our analyses are further restricted to the 1582 male and 301 female MMAs for whom data on all the relevant variables is available.

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<sup>4</sup> The project was funded by the European Commission, executed by Eurostat, and implemented by the Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute (NIDI) in collaboration with research institutes in the countries where the survey was conducted.

## 2.2 Measuring instruments

### *Return migration intentions*

Respondents were asked the following question: “Do you intend to stay in this country, to return to < name country of origin >, to migrate to another country, or don’t you know?” Those who wished to go back to their country of birth were also asked when they intend to return: “within a year,” “between one and two years from now,” “after more than two years,” “not sure yet/don’t know yet.” While a sizeable proportion of the respondents intended to return to origin countries (for details, see below), they often did not have a specific idea on the timing of their return: less than one-third of the potential returnees mentioned a particular time period. In addition, only 5% of the respondents expressed the intention to move to a country other than their country of birth. Hence, our analyses are restricted to the potential stayers, potential returnees, and those who were not sure yet about returning to their country of birth.

### *Independent variables*

The first set of predictors captures background characteristics. Country of birth is represented by three country dummy variables with Morocco as the reference category. Respondents’ age ranged from 19 to 65.<sup>5</sup> Gender was coded as 0 = male, and 1 = female. We included four different indicators of prior migration experience: whether respondents (1) lived in the receiving country for at least one year prior to last migration, (2) ever returned to the origin country for at least one year, (3) ever lived in another foreign country for at least one year, and (4) lived and/or travelled abroad for a period of less than one year prior to their first migration. The scores were 0 = no and 1 = yes. The length of stay indicates the number of years the respondents lived in the country of destination (range: 0–10 years).<sup>6</sup> Four levels of educational attainment were assessed: 1 = incomplete education (reference category), 2 = primary, 3 = secondary, and 4 = above secondary. Since the overwhelming majority (98%) of the respondents completed their education in their country of birth, educational attainment can be considered as a proxy indicating human capital gathered before they left their country of birth.<sup>7</sup> Five groups of main migration motive were distinguished: 1 = financial needs

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<sup>5</sup> Examination of age squared yielded no significant effects and was therefore excluded from the final analysis.

<sup>6</sup> Including its square did not improve the model and hence was excluded from the final analysis.

<sup>7</sup> The percentages of those who attended their highest level of education in the country of origin range from 95.5% among the Egyptian migrants to 99.4% among the Senegalese migrants; whether these migrants also required education in the country of destination, either at a lower level or without completing a diploma or certificate, is unknown.

(e.g., “income insufficient,” “needed money to get married or because of family expansion,” and “to finance children’s education”), 2 = improvement of working conditions (e.g., “had no job/could not find job,” “to seek job and/or income,” and “nature of work was unsatisfactory”), 3 = improvement of other living conditions (e.g., “improve living standard,” “no opportunities to save money,” and “to get education”), 4 = relational motives (e.g., “to get married/just married,” “to accompany/follow spouse,” and “to accompany/follow parent(s)”), and 5 = other, more “existential” motives (e.g., “dislike of living in the country of birth,” “the lure of adventure,” “the desire to go abroad,” and “fear of war, civil conflict or prosecution”).

Our analysis distinguishes between structural and sociocultural integration. Structural integration pertains to the acquisition of rights and status within the core institutions of the receiving society, such as employment, housing, education, political, and citizenship rights (Heckmann 2005). Sociocultural integration refers to the cognitive, behavioural, and attitudinal changes in conformity to the dominant norms of receiving societies (cultural integration or acculturation); social intercourse, friendship, marriage, and membership of various organizations (interactive integration); and feelings of belonging, expressed in terms of allegiance to ethnic, regional, local, and national identity (identificational integration) (King and Skeldon 2010). We acknowledge that integration is a highly contested concept in wide-ranging debates in the US and Europe and, although it is often contrasted to “assimilation,” integration and assimilation are terms of shifting and often overlapping meaning (King and Christou 2007). Operational definitions of integration often focus on adaptation to majority society and culture. This makes them often virtually indistinguishable from assimilation and does not question the hegemonic role of receiving societies as well as the false notion that there is one, monolithic “mainstream.” It is not the aim of this article to indulge in this complex debate, but it is important to be aware of the contested, normative, and politicized nature of the integration concept.

The survey data comprise six different indicators of respondents’ sociocultural integration. The first two indicators – ethnic nature of migrants’ social network (running from 0 = mainly keep company with compatriots or people from other countries/do not meet socially, to 2 = mainly keep company with native citizens) and close friends among native citizens (0 = no, 1 = yes) – represent the degree of informal contact with the native population (objective, social dimension). The third, fourth, and fifth indicators – background of organizations (running from 0 = participating in one or more organizations where the destination country language is usually not spoken, to 2 = exclusively active in one or more organizations where the destination country language is the official language), language fluency (running from 0 = unable to speak, read, and write the language of country of destination, to 3 = able to speak, read, and write the language of country of destination) and degree of modern values (range: 0–9, the higher

the score, the more modern the view regarding nine statements on gender roles and (parent–child) relationships) – give insight into the extent to which migrants distinguish themselves from the native population with regard to language, habit, standards, and values (objective, cultural dimension). The last indicator – ethnic identification (running from 0 = feeling that they most belong to their country of birth, to 2 = feeling that they most belong to their country of destination) – represents the degree of identification with their own immigrant group (subjective). Instead of studying these dimensions and indicators separately, we constructed one index of sociocultural integration: the six indicators were summed after the range of each indicator has been revalued with a minimum of 0 and a maximum of 1 (Cronbach’s alpha for the index was 0.60). As a result, the score on the index variable is at least 0 and at most 6. The higher the score, the more the migrant was integrated socioculturally.

Respondents’ structural integration was measured by labour force participation and occupational status of the current job. With regard to labour force participation, two dummy variables were created, viz. “full-time job” and “part-time job” (< 32 hours per week). Respondents who had no paid job at the time of the interview form the reference group. Occupational status was classified according to the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) and subsequently recoded into the International Socio-Economic Index of Occupational Status (ISEI (Ganzeboom and Treiman 1996)), running from 16 (e.g., domestic workers, cleaners and launderers, agricultural, and fishery laborers) to 88 (medical doctors). The mean ISEI-score for the surveyed immigrant groups was attributed to those who did not currently work.

The fourth and fifth set of predictors pertained to economic ties with receiving and origin countries. For economic ties with the country of destination, we included the dummy variables (0 = no, 1 = yes) owner of a house and owning a household business. Insight into the economic ties with the country of birth was gathered by the dummy variable (0 = no, 1 = yes) investment, indicating whether or not the respondent owned any property such as a house, a business, or land in his or her country of birth, and respondents’ household behaviour regarding remittances. With regard to the latter, respondents were asked whether they or anyone else in the household sent or brought during the past twelve months (1) money on a regular basis, (2) money on an irregular basis, or (3) goods for free, other than tourist souvenirs or small presents, to people living in the country of birth to be used for their own benefit or (4) sent or brought money to the country of birth for community purposes (e.g., to build/renovate a hospital, school or mosque/church, to give alms/Ramadan). The scores were 0 = no, and 1 = yes.

The final two sets of predictors pertained to social ties with receiving country and origin country, respectively: having (1) one or both parents, (2) at least one partner, (3) one or more children under the age of 18, (4) one or more children aged 18 years or

older, (5) one or more siblings living in the country of destination and birth, respectively. The scores were 0 = no, and 1 = yes.

### **2.3 Analytical strategy**

We will begin by presenting some statistics on return migration intentions and motives and background characteristics for the four immigrant groups to convey a sense of the importance of the phenomenon of return migration and differences across immigrant groups. Next, multinomial logistic regression analysis is employed to simultaneously test hypotheses on the effects of sociocultural and structural integration in receiving countries and socioeconomic ties with origin and receiving countries on migrants' intention to return. Multinomial logistic regression is an extension of binary logistic regression used when the dependent variable (i.e., "intention to stay in receiving country," "intention to return to origin country," "not sure whether or not to return") has three or more categories. The model breaks the regression up into a series of binary regressions comparing each of the possible outcomes to the baseline outcome. We choose the baseline for the dependent variable to be "does intend to stay."

## **3. Results**

### **3.1 Return intentions and return reasons**

#### *Wish to return and background characteristics*

Descriptive information on the variables included in the analysis is presented in Table 1. While 28% of all surveyed migrants wished to return, 40% wished to stay in the host country and 33% were unsure. Yet there are differences between the four immigrant groups. While Ghanaian and Egyptian migrants scored around average, Moroccans were least inclined to return, with over half declaring that they preferred to stay and only 16% declaring that they wished to return. Intentions to return were highest among the Senegalese, with 38% wishing to return and 31% wishing to stay.

**Table 1: Descriptive statistics of the variables**

	Morocco (N=471; 25.0%)		Egypt (N=422; 22.4%)		Ghana (N=562; 29.8%)		Senegal (N=428; 22.7%)		Total (N=1883)	
	%	M	%	M	%	M	%	M	%	M
<b>Migration intention to origin country</b>										
Yes, return to origin country	16.1		28.2		29.2		37.6		27.6	
Do not know	30.4		36.7		33.5		31.3		32.9	
No, stay in receiving country	53.5		35.1		37.4		31.1		39.5	
<b>Background characteristics</b>										
Age (19-65)		34.6		33.4		33.3		34.7		34.0
Female	28.0		5.5		19.8		8.2		16.0	
Prior migration experience:										
Long stay in receiving country	0.8		0.7		0.7		1.9		1.0	
Long stay in origin country	5.5		5.2		6.9		11.4		7.2	
Long stay in another country	7.9		11.4		12.8		25.0		14.0	
Short stay abroad	17.4		19.2		18.7		24.5		19.8	
Length of stay (in years: 0-10)		5.6		6.3		5.8		5.4		5.8
Level of education:										
Incomplete education	39.9		7.1		3.6		53.3		24.7	
Primary	37.8		9.0		30.6		39.3		29.5	
Secondary	17.6		53.8		58.9		6.5		35.5	
Above secondary	4.7		30.1		6.9		0.9		10.2	
Main motive of migration:										
Financial needs	24.4		22.7		25.3		25.2		24.5	
Improvement of working conditions	36.7		36.7		50.4		56.8		45.4	
Improvement of other living conditions	20.4		21.6		15.1		8.4		16.4	
Relational motives	8.1		7.1		5.3		6.8		6.7	
Other motives	10.0		11.1		2.8		2.3		6.4	
<b>Sociocultural integration (0-6)</b>										
<b>Structural integration</b>										
Working status:										
Full-time job	73.0		80.8		68.9		79.7		75.0	
Part-time job	10.6		8.8		12.8		8.2		10.3	
No job	16.4		10.4		18.3		12.1		14.7	
Occupational status current job (16-88)		27.1		29.9		28.7		26.7		28.1
<b>Economic ties receiving country</b>										
Household business in receiving country	17.2		8.3		1.8		56.8		19.6	
Owner of a house	8.1		7.8		2.7		5.6		5.8	
<b>Social ties receiving country</b>										
Parent(s) living in receiving country	4.2		1.7		0.5		0.0		1.6	
Partner living in receiving country	37.2		42.9		31.1		13.8		31.3	
Children 18- living in receiving country	28.9		28.9		16.7		6.8		20.2	
Children 18+ living in receiving country	8.5		0.7		0.7		0.5		2.6	
Siblings living in receiving country	22.3		17.1		16.9		8.4		16.4	
<b>Economic ties origin country</b>										
Investment in origin country	21.0		42.7		34.7		43.5		35.1	
Remittances:										
Money: regular	18.0		7.8		11.2		25.7		15.5	
Money: irregular	50.5		36.3		53.7		66.8		52.0	
Goods	44.4		35.5		42.9		47.0		42.5	
Remittances for community use	1.5		7.6		3.9		48.4		14.2	
<b>Social ties origin country</b>										
Parent(s) living in origin country	83.4		85.8		84.9		79.7		83.5	
Partner living in origin country	19.3		18.2		32.2		66.8		33.7	
Children 18- living in origin country	18.0		16.4		40.7		55.1		32.9	
Children 18+ living in origin country	7.4		1.2		5.7		6.8		5.4	
Siblings living in origin country	90.0		87.2		88.4		95.6		90.2	

These differences are striking since the average length of stay (5.8 years) and age (34) were similar among all four groups. However, looking at other background characteristics, we find some differences. The proportion of female migrants was relatively high among Moroccans (28%) and Ghanaians (20%) and low among Senegalese (8%) and Egyptians (6%). This can be largely ascribed to different migration patterns. While most of the migration of women from Egypt and Senegal is still linked to that of their husbands, Moroccan and Ghanaian women increasingly migrate on their own to work in the domestic and other service sectors in southern Europe (Arango et al. 1999). Migration experiences and motives also differed among the four migrant groups. A relatively high proportion of Senegalese had migration experience abroad prior to the current migration, including both long-lasting international migrations (staying abroad for one year or longer) and shorter moves abroad. While 87% of the respondents mentioned economic circumstances as their main migration motive, Ghanaian and, particularly, Senegalese migrants mentioned improvement of working conditions (e.g., finding a job) more often, while Moroccans and Egyptians mentioned improvement of living conditions comparatively more often. Relational and “other” motives were less important generally. Perhaps the most salient differences are found in educational levels. Senegalese had the lowest educational levels while Egyptians and Ghanaians were the best educated groups within this sample.

Whereas Moroccans, Egyptians, and Ghanaians scored similarly high on the index of sociocultural integration, Senegalese scored much lower. With regard to structural integration (i.e., labour market participation and occupational status of current job), the proportion of unemployed migrants was higher among Moroccans and Ghanaians. This cannot be related to the higher number of women in these two groups, since unemployment rates were much higher among Egyptian and Senegalese than among Moroccan and, particularly, Ghanaian women (results not shown). In addition, the occupational status of employed Ghanaians and Moroccans was on average higher than the occupational status of Senegalese workers.

The proportion of migrants owning a household business in the receiving country was 57% among Senegalese (of whom no less than 81% were engaged in petty trading), 17% among Moroccans and even lower among Egyptians (8%) and Ghanaians (2%). This might reflect the relatively more entrepreneurial and trading culture among Senegalese migrants. Only 6% of all migrants owned a house in the destination countries. Relatively many Moroccan and Egyptian migrants had direct family members (parents, spouses, children, siblings) living with them in the destination country. Senegalese migrants scored lowest on all these variables, with Ghanaian migrants scoring at average levels. The higher degree of family reunification among Moroccan and Egyptian migrants reflects the more settled nature of North African

migration in Italy and Spain compared to sub-Saharan migrant groups. Senegalese migrants in particular (still) seem to stand in a much more temporary migration tradition and also have significantly lower levels of sociocultural integration.

We also find striking differences looking at the social and economic ties migrants maintain with origin countries. Whereas one-third of all migrants had invested in origin countries, this proportion was much higher among Senegalese and Egyptians and particularly low among Moroccans. Although the majority among all immigrant groups remitted money, this accounted for no less than 93% of Senegalese migrants. While 48% of Senegalese also remitted money for community purposes, this proportion was almost negligible among other immigrant groups. The more settled nature of North African migration is evident from the fact that over 80% of Moroccan and Egyptian migrants lived in the destination country with his or her partner, whereas this applied to only one-third and two-thirds of Senegalese and Ghanaian migrants, respectively. A similar pattern applied for the proportion of migrants with minor children living in origin countries. This reflects much lower family reunification among the Senegalese in particular. All in all, Senegalese were more oriented towards origin countries than Egyptians and Moroccans were, with Ghanaian migrants occupying a middle position.

#### *Reason to return*

Table 2 shows the first stated reason for return among those migrants with a return intention. Obviously, reasons for return are almost always complex and multi-layered, and tend to imply a confluence of structural conditions and personal circumstances. However, the stated replies of migrants to the questions why they would return will give at least some direction which can also be useful for the interpretation of the results of the regression analysis.



**Table 2: First reason to return to origin country among those who have a migration intention (%)**

	<b>Morocco (N=76)</b>	<b>Egypt (N=119)</b>	<b>Ghana (N=164)</b>	<b>Senegal (N=161)</b>	<b>Total (N=520)</b>
<b>Job-related</b>	<b>28.9</b>	<b>20.2</b>	<b>28.0</b>	<b>33.3</b>	<b>28.1</b>
Cannot find job	0.0	4.2	3.7	1.9	2.7
Does not like job	0.0	3.4	2.4	1.9	2.1
Retirement	1.3	0.0	1.2	0.6	0.8
Start business	21.1	10.9	18.3	25.5	19.2
Need in family business	6.6	1.7	2.4	3.7	3.3
<b>Income-related</b>	<b>11.8</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>5.8</b>
Low income	2.6	2.5	1.8	1.2	1.9
Saved enough money	9.2	1.7	3.7	1.2	3.3
Inheritances	0.0	0.0	0.6	1.2	0.6
<b>Family-related</b>	<b>30.3</b>	<b>30.3</b>	<b>40.2</b>	<b>43.5</b>	<b>37.5</b>
Parents and/or spouse want it	6.6	0.8	1.2	0.0	1.5
Marriage in origin country	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.2	0.4
Problems child raising in receiving	5.3	8.4	1.8	0.0	3.3
Accompany spouse/parents	1.3	1.7	0.6	1.2	1.2
Join the family	15.8	18.5	29.9	39.8	28.3
Other family reasons	1.3	0.8	6.7	1.2	2.9
<b>Unfavourable situation in receiving country</b>	<b>15.8</b>	<b>37.0</b>	<b>24.4</b>	<b>8.1</b>	<b>21.0</b>
Dislike way of life in receiving country	7.9	5.0	1.8	0.6	3.1
Permit expired	0.0	0.0	1.2	0.0	0.4
Homesickness	2.6	15.1	11.6	2.5	8.3
Belong in origin country	2.6	16.0	9.8	3.7	8.3
No future in receiving country	2.6	0.8	0.0	1.2	1.0
<b>Other</b>	<b>15.8</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>11.8</b>	<b>6.9</b>
Bad health	1.3	0.0	0.6	0.0	0.4
Completed education	3.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.6
Last days of life in country of origin	2.6	0.0	0.0	4.3	1.7
Other reasons	5.3	2.4	0.0	6.2	3.3

Overall, family-related reasons were most important, in particular the wish to join the family, followed by work-related reasons, in particular the wish to start a new business in the country of origin. A distinct category was formed by Moroccans who migrated to Spain with the intention to return after completion of their education. These motives fit within the new economics of labour migration (NELM) and human capital theory.

Family-related reasons were particularly important among Senegalese and Ghanaian migrants, and much less so among Egyptians and Moroccans. This mirrors the high proportion of sub-Saharan migrants who migrated without spouses and children. Business-related reasons were relatively more important among Senegalese migrants than among the other immigrant groups. A relatively high proportion (37%) of Egyptian migrants stated that factors like homesickness and feelings of not belonging drew them back to their origin countries.

### **3.2 Determinants of return intentions**

Table 3 shows the relative risk ratios from the multinomial logistic regression model with their statistical significance. The reference group for the dependent variable contains those who intended to stay. The country dummies indicate that, after controlling for other factors, Egyptian migrants were less likely to express an intention to return than their Moroccan counterparts. Senegalese migrants, on the other hand, were significantly more uncertain about the likelihood of their staying and were more likely to intend to return than the other three immigrant groups. This might indicate that the Senegalese stand in a particular tradition of circular migration, and other cultural factors were at stake which could not be fully captured by the mainly social and economic variables in this analysis. However, this result fits with other evidence that Senegalese migrants do tend to form a distinct migrant group, in which ethnic and religious community bonds tend to remain strong and migration is often strongly tied in with transnational entrepreneurship and trade networks (Babou 2002; Pian 2005; Riccio 2001).

**Table 3: Relative risk ratios from multinomial logistic regression of migration intention to origin country (baseline of dependent variable is ‘intention to stay in receiving country’)**

	Not sure whether to stay or return	Intention to return to origin country
<b>Background characteristics</b>		
Country of birth (ref. Morocco):		
Egypt	0.92	0.63*
Ghana	1.09	0.98
Senegal	2.56***	1.98**
Age	0.99	1.01
Female	0.83	0.91
Prior migration experience (no prior experience):		
Long stay in receiving country	1.29	1.44
Long stay in origin country	1.86	0.94
Long stay in another country	0.58*	0.97
Short stay abroad	0.54***	0.93
Length of stay	1.07**	1.06
Level of education (ref. incomplete education):		
Primary	1.69**	1.55*
Secondary	1.73**	1.98**
Above secondary	2.06**	3.49***
Main motive of migration (ref. financial needs):		
Improvement working conditions	1.01	1.21
Improvement other living conditions	1.28	1.83**
Relational motives	1.61	2.00*
Other motives	0.69	0.96
<b>Sociocultural integration</b>	0.64***	0.64***
<b>Structural integration</b>		
Working status (ref. no job):		
Full-time job	1.01	1.10
Part-time job	0.90	1.28
Occupational status current job	1.01	1.00
<b>Economic ties receiving country</b>		
Household business in receiving country	0.48***	0.82
Owner of a house	0.84	0.91

**Table 3: (Continued)**

	Not sure whether to stay or return	Intention to return to origin country
<b>Social ties receiving country</b>		
Parent(s) living in receiving country	1.07	0.42
Partner living in receiving country	0.84	0.99
Children 18- living in receiving country	0.67*	0.87
Children 18+ living in receiving country	2.08	0.57
Siblings living in receiving country	0.90	1.20
<b>Economic ties origin country</b>		
Investment in origin country	1.41*	2.30***
Remittances:		
Money: regular	0.48**	1.31
Money: irregular	0.71*	1.33
Goods	0.83	0.87
Remittances for community use	0.61*	0.62*
<b>Social ties origin country</b>		
Parent(s) living in origin country	1.32	1.18
Partner living in origin country	0.76	1.01
Children 18- living in origin country	0.76	1.18
Children 18+ living in origin country	1.14	0.79
Siblings living in origin country	0.69	0.35

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*  $p < .05$

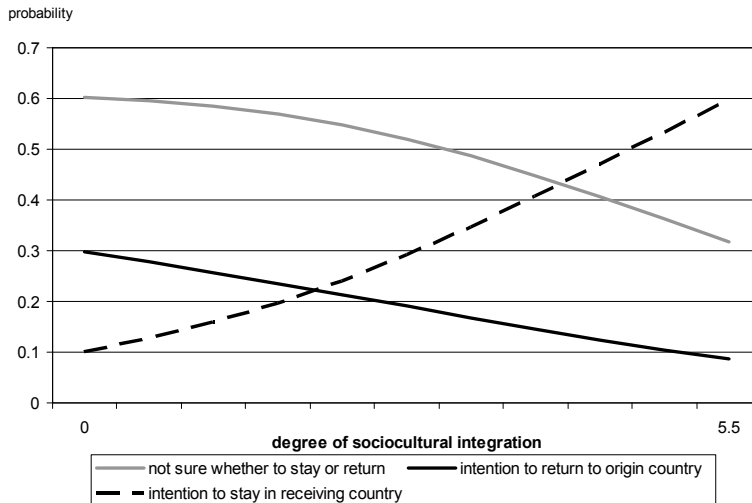
Generally, prior migration experiences in the form of long stays in origin and/or destination countries did not significantly influence intentions to stay or return. Prior long stay in another country and previous short stay abroad clearly decreased the likelihood of being uncertain about whether to return or not. This seems to reflect the more “mature” status of experienced migrants, who have moved several times, and might have developed more definite ideas about their future lives. Overall, the original main motives for migration did not have a significant impact on return intention; only those who migrated to improve their living conditions or for relational motives more often expressed the intention to return. This exemplifies the limited value of conventional migrant categorizations to predict eventual migration and settlement trajectories.

Return intentions did not seem to be affected by respondents’ age and length of stay. While age did not have any significant effects, length of stay was only positively associated with an increased uncertainty about whether to stay or not. These results are somehow surprising and run against the idea that living abroad for longer tends to decrease return intentions and actual return migration. It may be significant that the

average stay of migrants in the sample was relatively short, which makes it impossible to capture long-term effects. Because the inclusion of various integration and transnationalism variables in the model, which are all a function of time to a certain extent, might also partly explain these results, we ran the regression with only background characteristics. However, even then the results showed neither a significant effect of age nor of length of stay on the likelihood of returning. Including squared values produced similar results as well.

There is an unequivocally negative correlation between sociocultural integration and return intentions: the higher their level of sociocultural integration, the less likely the migrants were to express a return intention, or they were uncertain whether to stay or not. To facilitate interpretation of the impact of sociocultural integration, we calculated predicted probabilities of being in each of the three response categories of the dependent variable according to the degree of sociocultural integration. The remaining independent variables were set at the average level. Figure 1 shows that migrants highly integrated in sociocultural terms had the lowest likelihood of either being uncertain about staying or intending to return, while the reverse applied for the least socioculturally integrated migrants. Because causality is likely to be bidirectional, it is not clear where the primacy lies. After all, migrants who intend to return might also feel less compelled to integrate.

**Figure 1: Predicted migration intention to origin country according to degree of sociocultural integration**



While the above results seem entirely consistent with neoclassical migration and classical integration theory, the indicators measuring structural integration yielded a more uncertain and mixed picture. Owning a household business in receiving countries seemed to decrease uncertainty and the likelihood of intending to return. Although its coefficient was not significant in case of return intention, the direction of the effect seems to be in line with the hypothesis that economic integration will increase settlement tendencies. However, owning a house in the receiving country as well as work and occupational status did not have any significant effect on the intention of returning home.<sup>8</sup> An even more striking result is the positive effect of education on return migration intentions.<sup>9</sup> Figure 2 displays the predicted probabilities according to the level of education (with all the other variables set at their average values). While only 13% and 15% of those migrants with incomplete and primary education reported that they think they will return, this is the case for 21% and 22% of migrants with secondary and higher qualifications, respectively. At first sight, this seems counterintuitive because better educated migrants are expected to have better opportunities to find attractive jobs and face fewer integration problems overall, and are therefore less likely to have return intentions. However, it makes much more sense from NELM and related theoretical perspectives.

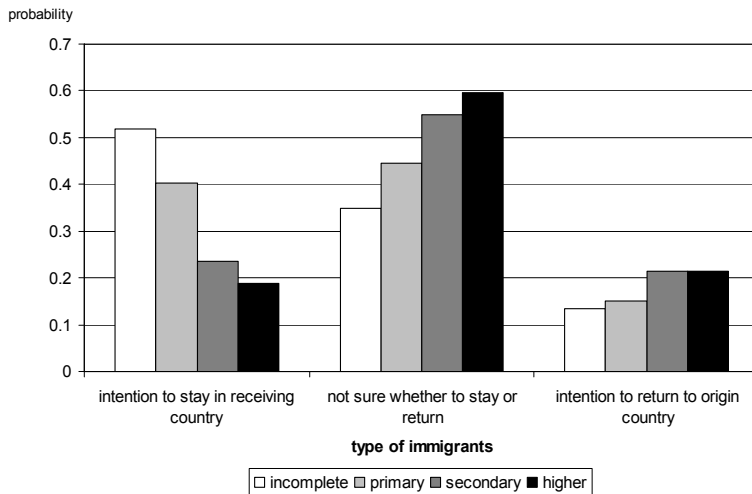
Generally, social ties in receiving countries had negative effects on return intentions while social ties with sending countries had positive effects, but most of these effects did not attain statistical significance. The presence of minor children in the country of destination was the only variable that significantly decreased the likelihood of being uncertain about whether to return or not. Extreme caution is warranted when interpreting the causality of these relationships, since the decision to reunify families – as reflected in the presence of children – are likely to mirror such intentions to a certain extent.

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<sup>8</sup> To examine whether the non-significance of the effect of occupational status is partly the result of assigning the mean score for those not having a paid job (see Measuring instruments section), we re-ran the analysis for the employed migrants only. Also in this case we found no significant effect of occupational status on the intention to return.

<sup>9</sup> Since education systems vary between countries, the level of education may not be fully comparable across the migrant groups under study. Hence, we re-ran the model for each migrant group separately and the effect of education pointed in the same direction: the higher the level of education, the higher the likelihood of expressing a return intention.

**Figure 2: Predicted migration intention to origin country according to level of education**



Economic ties with origin countries had mixed effects on return intentions. Consistent with NELM, investments in origin countries had a positive and significant effect on return intentions. It goes without saying that this variable could also be partly endogenous, because it may also reflect initial intentions to migrate. This certainly applies to a return-prone group like the Senegalese, for whom business motives often play an important role in the (return) migration decision. The relationship between remittances and return intentions was more ambiguous. Migrants who sent regular and irregular remittances for individual and community use were less likely to have return intentions. A possible explanation for these findings can be derived from the remittance literature (Lucas and Stark 1985:901) and later empirical work (for reviews, see Agunias 2006; de Haas 2007; Rapoport and Docquier 2005; van Dalen, Groenewold, and Fokkema 2005) indicating that remittances should not only be seen as in migrants' self-interest to set up businesses, but that migrants remit money because of a mixture of different individual and familial motives. Remittances often serve to secure inheritance, to repay migration debts incurred from family or community members, to finance education or to facilitate migration of other household members. If motivations to remit comprise a mix of altruism, co-insurance, and investment motives, there is also no obvious link between migration and return migration intentions.

## 4. Conclusion

This study has generated mixed support for opposing theoretical perspectives, but questions the idea that there is an automatic link between integration, the weakening of transnational ties, and decreasing return intentions. Socio-cultural integration in receiving societies had a strongly negative effect on return migration intentions. This finding is in line with neoclassical migration theory associating integration with settlement, but goes against the new economics of labour migration (NELM), assuming that return migration is the outflow of successful integration. In addition, the effects of social ties in sending (negative) and receiving (positive) countries go more or less in the expected direction. However, the near-absence of a significant effect of age and length of stay on return intentions casts doubt on the assumption that integration, the weakening of ties to origin countries and declining return intentions occur “naturally” or are simply an “automatic” function of time.

This is exemplified by the ambiguous and sometimes counterintuitive effects of structural integration indicators on return intentions. Owning a household business in receiving countries did not affect the likelihood of intending to return. Moreover, neither working status nor occupational status had any significant effect on return intentions. Yet the most striking result is the positive effect of education on return migration intentions. This seems counterintuitive because, reasoning from neoclassical and assimilationist perspectives, more highly educated migrants are expected to have better opportunities to find attractive jobs, and face fewer integration problems overall. However, from NELM and human capital perspectives, the positive relationship between education and return intentions does make much more sense. People living in developing countries often lack the financial resources to bear the costs and risks of setting up and running businesses. This is often related to the malfunctioning of credit (capital) and risk (insurance) markets. Assuming that migration is a household strategy to overcome such market constraints, as NELM does, it becomes rational for households to send out the best-equipped household members to gain a higher income which can be remitted and used to invest. In addition, migrants are likely to accumulate valuable work and business experience (for instance in commercial agriculture or construction), acquire language skills, and build social networks while abroad. Once they have accumulated sufficient financial resources and/or human capital to start up a business, however, their human capital can be more productive in the origin countries.

The positive effect of education on return migration intentions counters the hypothesis that settlement is the outflow of economic success, and return migration an indication of integration failure. This is also corroborated by the positive effect of investments in origin countries on return intentions. Yet it is important to avoid a deterministic application of theory given the non-significant effects of other structural



integration indicators and the strong negative effect of sociocultural integration on return intentions. Hence, there is no unequivocal support for either the NELM or the neoclassical hypotheses.

At first glance, the most obvious explanation for the mixed evidence is that motivations for migration are also fundamentally mixed and that different mechanisms apply to different groups of migrants. Constant and Massey (2002), who also found support for both neoclassical and NELM theories in the case of former “guest workers” in Germany, tried to disentangle these mixed findings by splitting up their sample into remitting and non-remitting migrants. As hypothesized, remitting migrants behaved more consistently with the target earning strategy of NELM whose economic motivations are linked to the overcoming of market failures, while the non-remitting migrants conformed more closely to neoclassical income-maximizing strategies while seeking to make a new life for themselves in Germany.

As noted before, deciding to remit often comprises a mix of underlying motives which are differently related to return migrations. This study also illustrated the limited power of initial reasons and causes of migration to predict eventual migration and settlement trajectories. Inclusion of initial migration motives and different types of remitting behaviour in our study did not substantially improve the prediction of return intention. It is possible that migration motives and intentions typically change over time. For instance, under uncertain economic and political conditions in origin countries and restrictive immigration policies in receiving countries, migrants who intend to return may also opt to settle at the destination while maintaining intensive transnational ties.

This also brings us to a more fundamental critique of the long-standing migration theories. There is a problematic deterministic circularity in the way in which both neoclassical and NELM link initial migration motives to eventual outcomes of migration. The direct link that NELM draws between the main motives for migration (risk diversification and access to investment capital to overcome market constraints) and the act of remitting and returning is just as problematic as the way in which neoclassical theories view migration as a utility-maximizing strategy by individuals, which, if successful, will tend to lead to their permanent settlement. Examination of the extent to which initial motives and strategy are changing over the lifetime span as well as the main determinants of these changes, is therefore an important challenge for future research.

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