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1 Introduction

This paper presents analyses of primary data concerning determinants of migration aspirations. It addresses how development – and more specifically dimensions of standard of living – affects the formation of migration aspirations. The empirical analysis presented reflects three choices. First, we have sought to analyse survey data that was amplified by qualitative data and thereby allowed for more in-depth considerations of the mechanisms at work. Second, we have wanted to analyse multi-country data that reflected contextual variations in the determination of migration aspirations. Third, we have thematically focused the analysis on variables related to economic development. The ways in which economic development influences the formation of migration aspirations remain disputed and poorly understood. An empirical deep dive into comparative survey data, complemented by contextual qualitative data, thus represents a potential contribution to the existing literature.

Earlier work on the influences of development on migration, which is only one element within the large body of literature on the migration-development nexus (Nyberg-Sørensen et al., 2002), has addressed the effects of development aid on emigrant flows (Clemens & Postel, 2017; Gamso & Yuldashev, 2018). Overall effects on emigration rates of differences and increases in GDP per capita (Clemens, 2020) and differentials and rises in income (Clemens & Mendola, 2020) have also been key concerns. A dominant strand within this research relies on comparisons of macro-economic data. Insights from this research indicate that, in lower income countries, economic development triggers rather than curbs migration and does not lead to reduced emigration rates until countries reach middle income levels (M. Clemens, 2014). This has been referred to as the “inverted U relationship” between migration and development. Clemens elaborates on this pattern in the context of per capita income and out-migration at country level (2014, p. 4). Simply put, the inverted U-shape of the relationship conveys that the richest and the poorest countries have marked lower emigration rates than middle-income countries. An interpretation of this pattern is that improvements from poverty may trigger rather than curb migration.

Based on household and individual level data, some studies show that the “inverted U” pattern is replicated in the relation between poverty and migration, summarised as a general agreement that “it is not usually the poorest who migrate” (Czaika & Reinprecht, 2020, p. 14). In this context, poverty is defined on the basis of, for instance, income and expenditure and household assets (Du et al., 2005, p. 690).

Assessments of emigrant stocks and migration behaviour convey (economic and other) abilities to migrate, but do not address the question of why some people wish to migrate, while others do not. However, de Haas echoes findings on migration behaviour, when he argues that “increasing income, education and access to information not only *enable* but also *motivate* more people to go abroad” (de Haas, 2007, p. 883). Empirical research on the effects of development processes on migration aspirations remain scattered, however, and variations in migration aspirations cannot be accredited to economic growth rates alone. Economic development is accompanied by other factors that also affect the ways in which aspirations are formed and decisions to migrate are made (for a brief summary, see Angenendt et al., 2017). The influence of economic development, standard of living and poverty levels on migration aspirations are context specific and rarely unidirectional (Czaika & Godin, 2021). In a recent systematic literature review, we show that findings on different dimensions of standard of living – such as socio-economic status, income, employment status and type – on migration aspirations, are highly diverse (Aslany et al., 2021, pp. 26-31).

In this paper, we move from a focus on migration behaviour and flows – to migration aspirations. The study relies on an approach that sees migration as a two-step process, differentiating between migration aspirations and migration behaviour, originally formulated as the aspiration/ability model of migration (Carling, 2002). The concept of “migration aspirations” is an umbrella term that encompasses a range of thoughts and feeling about future migration, including desires, wishes, intentions, and hopes to migrate (Carling, 2019). Rather than macro-economic data and absolute measurements of living standard and wealth, we explore influences on migration aspirations by zooming in on the effects of measured and subjective dimensions of standard of living. Our agenda is twofold. Firstly, based on empirical material produced a decade ago, in 16 different research areas across four countries, we wish to explore how interviewees in semi-structured, qualitative interviews, articulate different dimensions of standard of living. Secondly, we analyse survey data from these same localities, to investigate the impact of different measurements of standard of living on migration aspirations, and which measures turn out to be the most salient. Integral to this agenda is to address the temporal dimensions of standard of living, for instance expressed in experiences and expectations of improving or deteriorating conditions, and how such experiences and expectations connect with the formation of migration aspirations. Some of the aspects we investigate have been summarised in other terms than standard of living in other studies, for instance as “intangible” factors behind migration (Hagen-Zanker & Hennessey, 2021).

Our analysis digs further into data collected in 2011-2012 for the quantitative and qualitative components of the FP7 project *Imagining Europe from the outside (EUMAGINE)*.¹ EUMAGINE aimed to understand how people in the vicinity of Europe – in four research areas in each of four countries: Morocco, Senegal, Turkey and Ukraine – perceived various aspects of life in Europe and in their own countries, and how these perceptions were translated into migration aspirations. Perceptions of the human rights and democracy situation were given particular attention in the project. The focus of this paper, however, is to explore EUMAGINE’s untapped potential, and the project’s rich comparative data of relevance to standard of living in conjunction with migration aspirations.

This paper complements the two other deliverables on migration aspirations: D2.1, which extensively reviewed survey data and survey instruments (Carling & Mjelva, 2021), and D2.2, which presented a systematic review of determinants of migration aspirations (Aslany et al., 2021). Furthermore, it complements the other empirical investigations of migration influences in the QuantMig project. These investigate the impact of political uncertainty on migration in a case study of UK migration (D 3.2) and the impact of attitudes to migration in destination countries on migration flows (D 3.3).²

2 Dimensions of standard of living

A range of development indicators have been included in studies of migration drivers. Czaika & Reinprecht’s literature review (2020) summarises findings on employment and the labour market and how migration flows respond to unemployment rates at the macro level. Their review also assembles some of the individual socio-economic measurements that have been

¹ The project was coordinated by the University of Antwerp (Belgium), under the leadership of Professor Christiane Timmerman. The other partners were the University of Oxford (UK), PRIO Peace Research Institute Oslo (Norway), Koç University (Turkey), Université Mohamed V – Agdal (Morocco), Centre of Sociological Research (Ukraine) and Université Cheikh Anta Diop (Senegal). See www.eumagine.org.

² See http://www.quantmig.eu/project_outputs/project_reports/.

studied as drivers of migration. These include individual employment status, employment satisfaction, and predicted job opportunities. Living standards and cost of living in both the country of origin and the destination country, appear as other socio-economic drivers of different forms of migration (Czaika & Reinprecht, 2020, p. 13). Importantly for the discussion in this paper, Czaika and Reinprecht's summary of macro level factors reveals that "short- to medium-term" economic fluctuations in both country of origin and the destination, declining economic conditions, recessions and rise in unemployment rates are all important drivers of migration (2020, p. 12). At the micro level, other empirical studies included in their paper focus on the relation between migration and individuals' perception of inequality, and the "subjective feelings of being poor in comparison to others in one's reference group" (Czaika & Reinprecht, 2020, p. 14). Their review describes this relation as "ambiguous": while some studies show a positive relation (Stark et al., 2009), some show the exact opposite (Czaika & de Haas, 2012), while yet other studies (such as Peridy, 2006) illustrate an inverted U.

The variation in aspirations to stay or go has been studied with reference to a range of economic and development-related factors. Our recent systematic review of determinants of migration aspirations included current standard of living as reflected in assets ownership, perceived personal or household financial situation and levels of satisfaction, property ownership – mainly home ownership – individual and household income, employment status and other aspects of livelihood such as job security. With a few exceptions, the review indicated that "as socio-economic status rises, migration aspirations decline" (Aslany et al., 2021, p. 27).

With reference to debates on the migration-development nexus, de Haas draws on Amartya Sen's "capabilities approach" to development (1999), and emphasises the

importance of applying a broad concept of development in conceptualizing the causes of migration, which goes beyond a narrow focus on income indicators and integrates the reciprocally related economic and social dimensions of development (de Haas, 2007, p. 883)

This paper continues these debates – not by summarising studies that adopt different developmental concepts and measures, but rather – by empirically investigating the different indicators of standard of living on migration aspirations, in the same dataset. Our focus on standard of living speaks to questions relating to how perceptions of disadvantage, improvement, and prospects for the future influence migration aspirations. Our questions are partly motivated by recent qualitative, psychological and ethnographic research that zooms in on the ways in which people compare their material circumstances with those of others in the present, with circumstances in the past and with their hopes and anticipations for the future. Elements of frustrations linked to persons' observations of wealth inequalities or differences in consumption levels and capacity are striking, for instance, in descriptions of local encounters with migrant prosperity in emigrant communities (see e.g. Awedoba & Hahn, 2014; Kalir, 2005; Reeves, 2012; Sandoval-Cervantes, 2017; Thorsen, 2010); of experiences of socio-economic stagnation among minorities that consequently contemplate emigration (Alloul, 2020; Mandin, 2020), and of hopes of securing economic and other betterment for self or family by a future elsewhere (Fleischer, 2007; Pettit & Ruijtenberg, 2019; Vigh, 2009). Hagen-Zanker and Hennessey (2021, pp. 23-24, 28) summarise such vernacular comparisons as emotional factors in migrant decision-making – "how people feel about vertical inequality and income differences can shape their decisions about mobility" (Hagen-Zanker & Hennessey, 2021, p. 23). More specifically, feelings of disempowerment, inferiority, marginalisation, exclusion, and deprivation are discussed as factors influencing individuals' wish to leave their current locality (for literature references, see Hagen-Zanker & Hennessey, 2021, p. 23).

This paper also brings along long-standing questions on the importance of relative deprivation and frustrated expectations both from research on migration behaviour (Stark &

Taylor, 1989) and although more implicitly, from studies of social unrest. For instance, Davies' thesis on political revolutions incorporated a time perspective. Davies argued that revolutions do not necessarily occur when economic conditions are at their worst, but when expectations of improvement – after a process of growth – are suddenly reversed (Davies, 1962). Emotional aspects of the realm of the economic, and more specifically, sensitivity to economic expectations, hopes and uncertainties, provide intakes to the formation of migration aspirations. Moreover, our agenda incorporates perspectives from migration studies that emphasise temporal and futural aspects of migration (Black et al., 2022).

Our starting point relies on three key distinctions in studies of how standard of living varies between individuals: (1) measured versus perceived standard of living; (2) relative versus absolute standard of living, and (3) current level of standard of living versus change. The first is methodological and distinguishes between measures based on non-subjective criteria as opposed to self-assessment. The second is a matter of perspective and conveys a distinction between assessment based on comparisons of standard of living (between individuals, groups, etc, in a given area), as opposed to absolute criteria. We do not address absolute aspects in this paper, as the EUMAGINE data does not include them. The third distinction is thematic, and extends questions relating to measured, perceived, absolute and relative standards of living, to people's comparisons with the past and expectations for the future. We combine these aspects and investigate five dimensions in the survey material (see 6.2) and explore additional dimensions that arise from the qualitative material (in section 5).

3 Context: EUMAGINE's sixteen research areas

The EUMAGINE project was originally designed to ensure a diversity of local contexts. Sixteen research areas (Figure 1), four within each country, were selected based on pre-existing knowledge about emigration and immigration rates, socio-economic conditions, and human rights situations (Timmerman et al., 2010, p. 18).



Figure 1 Location of the research areas

Previous analyses of EUMAGINE data elaborate both on the similarities and the immense variations in the sixteen areas' characteristics. With respect to migration history and transnational networks, Carling et al. (2012) point to a generally high prevalence of transnational networks. Having someone abroad is rare in only two areas: Van Merkez (T4) and Tounfite (M4). The durability of transnational networks is also remarkable. Despite the similarities, however, it is worth noting that variations within each country are considerable too. For more than half the research areas, the area that is most similar with respect to the prevalence and maturity of transnational networks, for instance, is located in another country (Carling et al., 2012). Below, we briefly describe the research settings, and include background information relevant to both country and research area at the time of data collection.

In Ukraine, the EUMAGINE country report (Vollmer et al., 2010) describes a probable shift from political motivations for migration during the first years after independence (1991) to economic ones, including for the purpose of family reunification. The EUMAGINE research was carried out in four regions of Ukraine (U1-U4). Zbarazh Rayon in Ternopil Oblast (**U1**) is, or was, a high-emigration area in Western Ukraine with two-thirds of its population residing in rural areas. It had the lowest average income among all oblasts in Ukraine, high (and rising) unemployment and poverty levels, and economically driven emigration towards the west. Znamyanska Rayon in Kirovograd Oblast (**U2**), a low-emigration area, with eighty per cent urban population, is located in central Ukraine (Vollmer et al., 2010, p. 125). Solomyansky Rayon (**U3**) is an urban multi-ethnic region located to the southwest of Ukraine's largest city, Kyiv, which saw high immigration for its labour and educational opportunities. It had low unemployment and the highest wealth level in the country. Novovodolaz'ka Rayon (**U4**) in Kharkivska Oblast, is in the northeast, bordering Russia. Its economy is closely linked to from industrial agriculture. It witnessed a steady population decrease at the time of the fieldwork, high levels of unemployment, comparatively low standards of living, and labour migration to Russia. A little more than half of its inhabitants were urban residents at the time of data collection.

Turkey saw considerable labour migration to Western Europe between 1961 and 1974. Migration, some of it illegal, continued thereafter. According to the EUMAGINE country report, (Korfali et al., 2010), labour opportunities continued to be the most significant motive for migration, along with family reunification and asylum. Turkey's labour market has been characterised by a deteriorating agricultural sector, and a developing informal sector interwoven with the formal (Korfali et al., 2010, p. 19). The EUMAGINE research was carried out in the following four areas (T1-T4): Emirdağ (sub-province) in Afyon province (**T1**); a high-emigration area located in the central west with a population split roughly equally between urban and rural areas. Dinar (sub-province) in Afyon (**T2**) was selected as an area with a lower emigration rate, with an equal urban and rural population. The economy of Afyon province was mainly based on agriculture and livestock. In Fatih (**T3**), an old quarter of Istanbul city, the economy was devoted to tourism and the area saw much in-migration from other parts of the country and abroad (mainly from Eastern Europe and Africa). It also had a considerable rate of out-migration. Van Merkez in Van (**T4**) is a Kurdish area in the far south-eastern corner of Turkey. Its economy is described as mainly based on industry, agriculture, and livestock. The population in Van Merez was mainly urban, and out-migration to other parts of Turkey and abroad was partly related to the conflict with the Turkish state.

In 2009, Senegal was ranked 166th out of 182 countries on the human development index, had a population of a bit more than 12 million, with a population growth rate of 2.5% per year. The population is young, and 58 percent live in rural areas (in 2008). Senegal experienced economic growth till 2005, but the oil and food price crisis from 2006 and the global financial

crisis (2008) created a downturn. The Senegal country report recounts UNDP estimates of about one third of the population living under the national poverty line; that “nearly two-thirds live under \$2 a day (UNDP 2009:178)”. Three quarters of all workers were engaged in the informal sector, and 30 percent of the population work in full time agriculture. A former male trend of international migration had become more multifaceted, and at the time of the EUMAGINE study, “the migration of single women in search of better economic and social status is an observable reality across the country” (Fall et al., 2010, p. 20). Still, men predominated, and they were mainly poorly educated or lacking education. The EUMAGINE research was carried out in four areas (S1-S4). Darou Mousty in Louga (**S1**) was chosen as an area experiencing high emigration. Of its largely rural population, 50 percent were below 20 years, with agriculture and trade as the most important sectors of employment, though remittances from abroad, here as elsewhere in Senegal, contribute to household incomes. Lambaye in Diourbel (**S2**) has also experienced large-scale international emigration and mobility towards urban centres (a “rural exodus”), though the region has seen some population growth as a result of people moving to the near-by pilgrimage site of Touba. Agriculture dominated the economy. Educational levels were low. Golf Sud (Guédiawaye) in the capital Dakar (**S3**) has seen influx of rural migrants and has the highest population density in the country. The research area is characterised by sprawling street trade, large enterprises – both high-end and others – and some fishing. Orkadiéré in Matam (**S4**) is described as a peripheral, rural area, located in the Fouta area, by the Senegal river that borders Mauretania. As opposed to S1 and S2, it had a far more favourable ecological environment. Orkadiéré has experienced high levels of emigration.

Like Senegal, Morocco felt the effect of the 2008 global financial crisis. The economy mainly depends on agriculture and industry, while remittances from abroad accounted for 8.9 percent of the GDP in 2007 (Berriane et al., 2010, p. 27). The four research areas (M1-M4), in Morocco as in the other three countries, are highly diverse. The research area in Todra valley (**M1**) – which included the town of Tinghir and surrounding villages – was chosen as a high emigration area. Approximately a third of its inhabitants lived in the town. The survey sites are described as arid and population densities vary extremely. The oasis area sees intense agriculture, whereas semi nomadic Berber and Arabic-speaking peoples are settled around these agricultural centres – though nomadism has mostly been abandoned. 24 percent of the total population worked in agriculture, relating to olive and date production (and other trees), with some cereals in irrigated land. Commerce, construction, administration and tourism also make part of the economy. It was the one of the four Moroccan areas with highest poverty levels. The Central Plateau Region, with the administrative centre of Oulmès and the additional localities Aguelmouse and Moulay Bouazza (**M2**), have had lower emigration rates. Located in central Morocco, it is an earlier pastoral area with agricultural production of cedar and cork. The area is described as marginalised, and the labour market as undiversified: almost 88 percent of workers are employed in commerce, services, building and public sectors; industry and mining (Berriane et al., 2010, p. 38). The growing city of Tangier (**M3**) is experiencing in-migration. It is an industrial centre, with workers engaged in industry (33 percent), commerce (17 percent), services (13 percent), public administration (12 percent) and public and building works (11 percent) at the time of data collection (Berriane et al., 2010, p. 42). Tangier is known as an exit point to Spain for migrants from other regions and countries. Tounfite region (**M4**) is located in the high central Atlas and is a region of agropastoral and forestry activities. It is rich in natural resources but has remained economically marginalised. Wage labour has been tied to services and trade in urban Tounfit, which is an administrative hub, where about 61 percent of workers were self-employed. In the urban centre, formal employment includes service activities related to trade and services, wood industry and crafts, and the construction industry. Agriculture

(including livestock) was the dominant source of employment in rural areas (83 percent). Despite high poverty levels, the area has seen less emigration than in the Rif Mountains or the Anti Atlas (Berriane et al., 2010, p. 46).

In-country economic and other variations, and similarities between contexts irrespectively of national borders, is an argument against making the country-level the main methodological focus, as we will elaborate in the methodology section.

4 Methodology and data

This study draws on both the quantitative and the qualitative data components of the *EUMAGINE* project. Our exploration of the qualitative data aims to better understand which aspects of standard of living interviewees themselves articulate as relevant. We avoid using qualitative material as illustrations of statistical findings. Methodologically, we have explored the qualitative interview transcripts to develop and reflect on the conceptual framework of studies of standard of living in relation to the formation of migration aspirations. This has, in turn, shaped our agenda for the quantitative analysis, and inspired us to include respondents' perceptions of changing living standards, rather than limiting attention to current economic conditions. Our quantitative analysis aims to understand how different indicators of standard of living influence aspirations to migrate. We refer to the research participants in *EUMAGINE*'s qualitative data collection as *interviewees*, and survey-participants as *respondents*.

Two methodological considerations should be mentioned before we provide details on data, methods and methodology. A main concern in *EUMAGINE* was perceptions of, and migration to, Europe. This has inevitably shaped mindsets among both respondents and interviewees. In the quantitative survey, questions relating to respondents' thoughts and feelings about working and living abroad were posed prior to questions about their perceptions of Europe. Even so, the Europe-related questions preceded sections on life satisfaction and socio-economic conditions. This potentially introduced an implicit comparative element between socio-economic conditions in the place of interview and in Europe. In the qualitative interview transcripts, the comparative element is made explicit by interviewers, as they encourage interviewees to reflect on their own living conditions in relation to European conditions or to those of emigrants they know or know of. In effect, interviewees' articulations of living conditions and general life satisfaction compare their here-and-now conditions with those of their perceptions of Europe and migrants to Europe.³ In the analysis of the qualitative material, we have kept this in mind and focused on statements that to a lesser extent seem to be solicited by such comparisons.

Secondly, both qualitative and quantitative tools involve question formulations that set out to determine whether people *have* or *do not have* migration aspirations. However, attitudes and feelings about migration usually form a continuum rather than a binary. People's thoughts about staying or migrating are usually also tied to particular conditions, for instance employment opportunities in the country of destination. In the *EUMAGINE* survey instrument, answering alternatives to the main question on migration aspirations were "stay in this country" or "go abroad", and there were no answering categories for "don't know" or "refuse to answer". This may have played out in enumerator encouragements to respondents to articulate

³ *EUMAGINE* data involving respondents' and interviewees' explicit comparisons of social policies in Europe and Ukraine, has been explored with a view to migration aspirations by Lapshyna, I., & Düvell, F. (2018). "We Can Only Dream About Europe": Perceptions of Social Policy as a Driver of Migration Aspirations. The Case of Ukraine. *Journal of Social Policy Studies*, 16(4), 661-676. <https://doi.org/10.17323/727-0634-2018-16-4-661-676> .

attitudes to future migration in terms of either-or answers, or enumerators may have adjusted responses to fit into this binary. This characteristic of the EUMAGINE survey instrument reflects common challenges in research designs, as survey methodologies attempt to capture complex thoughts and feelings about an often vague future prospect of migration, by using simple questions (Carling & Schewel, 2018, p. 949).⁴ Similarly, in transcripts from the qualitative interviews, interviewees regularly express conditionality with respect to migration aspirations, but these complexities have not affected interviewers' attribution of a value on "migration aspirations" (for later coding in Nvivo) to any important extent.⁵ Consequently, in our use of EUMAGINE qualitative data, we have not relied blindly on the coding of qualitative material. Moreover, we emphasise that the valuable re-use of rich comparative, qualitative material, requires thorough immersion rather than a too heavy reliance on previous coding.

4.1 Using qualitative data to explore conceptualisations of living standard

In-depth interviews and observations for the qualitative data component took place during fieldworks lasting from September 2011 to February 2012 (De Clerck, 2012, p. 3). EUMAGINE's qualitative research guide suggested four overarching topics relating to (1) perceptions of life in the locality, (2) imaginations of Europe, (3) personal migration aspirations and (4) perceptions of migration. In each of the 16 research areas, 20 interviewees participated in semi-structured interviews, thus providing a total of 320 interviews. In addition, the qualitative team made observations in the communities, focusing on outward signs of the role of migration in the development of the locality and daily life; signs of the presence of human rights and/or democracy issues in the locality and outward signs indicative of the level of poverty of the local community, as visible, for instance, in infrastructure, maintenance of public buildings, construction activities and mean of transportation (De Clerck et al., 2011, pp. 8-9).⁶

The EUMAGINE design, as most large-scale, comparative qualitative research designs are highly structured, and differ from inductive ideals in other forms of qualitative methods, like ethnographic participant observation. Qualitative designs in comparative studies usually outline questions for discussion with participants or include semi-structured or structured interviews. This is a conscious choice to encourage open discussions, yet simultaneously avoid an excessively disparate empirical material. A trade-off related to semi-structured and structured interviewing is that predefined questions shape interviewees' connotations and ideas. In EUMAGINE, the qualitative guide suggested opening questions for each of the four overarching topics (perceptions of life in the locality, imaginations of Europe, personal migration aspirations and perceptions of migration). The following opening question was employed to elicit information on personal migration aspirations: *Ideally, if you had the opportunity, would you like to go abroad to live or work sometime during the next five years, or would you prefer staying in [this country]?* This formulation is identical to the question used in the EUMAGINE survey questionnaire, and echoes a commonly used question in migration surveys (Carling & Mjelva,

⁴ In their recommendations for migration survey designs in another QuantMig deliverable, Carling & Mjelva (2021) therefore suggest measuring migration aspirations by means of several complementary questions.

⁵ Thus, of 80 interviewees in Morocco, only six respondents were listed as "undecided" about their migration aspirations, despite many of the 74 remaining respondents articulating clear conditions for future migration. Out of the 80 respondents in Turkey, five interviewees were registered as undecided; in Senegal only one interviewee and in Ukraine, none of the 80 were registered as undecided, in spite of a far more elaborate articulation of attitudes in the interview transcripts De Clerck, H. M.-L. (2012). *First qualitative data analysis* [EUMAGINE Project Paper](8). <http://eumagine.org/outputs/Project%20Paper%208%20-%20First%20qualitative%20data%20analysis.pdf>.

⁶ These observations are a main source of the within country analyses that we reference in this paper. See http://www.eumagine.org/pages/eumagine_output_list.aspx?type=true.

2021). Across contexts, responses to questions about personal migration aspirations revolve around (1) the duration or permanence of wished-for migration, in contemplations over the element of “living abroad”, and (2) access to work and employment, in reflections on “working abroad”. In effect, work and employment appear as key elements in migration aspirations, but the centrality is in part a result of solicitation. A similar solicited emphasis on “work” appears in reflections in response to interviewers’ introductory questions on economic aspects of life in interviewees’ location.

In EUMAGINE data, the instances in which interviewees raise and articulate aspects relating to living standard without the explicit encouragement by interviewers, appear in generalised discussions of life satisfaction and living conditions in interviewees’ respective localities. Given that one of the main aims of the exploration of EUMAGINE qualitative data is to capture people’s own articulations of standard of living and economic conditions, these generalised discussions have been a particularly valuable source in our study.

4.2 Quantitative data and analysis: Accommodating diversity

Survey data collection was carried out in the first half of 2011 (Ersanilli, 2012, p. 3).⁷ The quantitative component included a survey conducted through personal interviews. Questions covered household and individuals’ socio-economic characteristics, satisfaction with financial situations, education and marital status, household sources of income, household assets, migration histories, individual migration aspirations and migration preparations, transnational practices, perceptions about Europe, perceptions about one’s own country, life satisfaction and other individual background variables. Households were selected randomly within each research area, based on procedures that reflected local characteristics and data availability. In the EUMAGINE project, a household is defined as all “persons who live under the same roof, normally eat together and have communal arrangements concerning subsistence and other necessities of life” (Ersanilli et al., 2011, p. 40). After all household members were enlisted with the help of the first respondent, a household member aged 18–39 was randomly selected for an individual interview. The survey was collected from 500 individuals in each research area, adding to the population of 2000 in each country and 8000 in total. The data collection procedures are described in detail by Ersanilli et al. (2011).

The multi-sited nature of the project creates an overarching analytical challenge: how do we properly accommodate the diversity between research areas? With sixteen research areas spread across four countries, three strategies are immediately apparent: first, to pool the data into one model (N=8000), which includes a 16-value categorical control variable for research area. Second, to run sixteen parallel models, one for each research area (N=500), and third to pool the data into four country-specific models (N=2000) that include a four-value categorical control variable for research area (Carling et al., 2012).

The first option raises questions of an ontological nature: do we believe in the existence of general “laws of migration” across socio-cultural contexts, or universal “migration drivers” that work irrespectively of the societal dynamics in which they operate? If so, we could see local variation as noise that can be eliminated by control variables to isolate the universal effect of key determinants. If this approach is chosen, it should be with caution. The large sample yields a seductive array of significant effects, even if the coefficients are relatively small. It may be

⁷ Minor corrections have been applied incrementally after general data cleaning was completed. All the data and analysis presented in this paper makes use of the dataset as of 24 October 2012.

necessary to examine how widespread the observed effects are—which could take us in the direction of the second and third analytical strategy.

Another challenge with a pooled analysis is how to conceptualise the generalisations that are made. The EUMAGINE data covers four countries that have been referred to as Europe’s “labour frontier” (Skeldon, 1997), all are located in the vicinity of Europe, and all have experienced substantial migration to Europe, partly motivated by livelihood opportunities. If a pooled analysis is adopted, the European labour frontier may be an appropriate level of generalisation.

The second option represents the other extreme: keeping the data separate for each research area and running sixteen parallel models. This approach is true to the nature of the sample: respondents were selected randomly within each research area, and the research areas do not add up to any meaningful larger populations. With samples of 500 per research area, separate analyses are feasible, but will suffer from large confidence intervals.

The third option is an in-between solution based on the assumption that the largest differences are found between the four countries. A possible golden mean, then, is to run four country-specific models with the four research areas as controls. The risk of this approach is to fall victim to methodological nationalism: an unfounded belief in the nation-state as a natural unit of analysis (Wimmer & Schiller, 2003). There is also a pedagogical challenge inherent in this approach: the effects observed in, say, the four Turkish research areas must not be interpreted as “the effect in Turkey”. While the four research areas were selected with a view to diversity, their national representativity as a set was not a criterion (Carling et al., 2012).

In the analysis that follows we adopt the second approach and run sixteen parallel models, one for each research area. This analysis shows substantial differences between the result of the pooled data and the research areas, as well as between the research areas within the same country.

5 Local articulations of living standards

How do people articulate living standards, and which aspects of economic conditions and material and financial circumstances do they make relevant in considerations of moving or staying, when taking part in more open-ended research situations than survey sessions? Below, we elaborate on the issues interviewees’ raise and reflect on in generalised discussions of life satisfaction and living conditions in their respective localities. We do not aim to account for all research areas evenly, but instead, address specific areas and country-contexts interchangeably to foreground framings of living standards of particular interest. The country-contexts are particularly relevant to describe differences in labour markets and social services, and is kept as a dimension in the presentation below.

5.1 Employment, income, and cost of living

Across all sixteen research areas, work and income are central concerns, also in open-ended conversations about living conditions in interviewees’ places of residence. We address three closely interrelated issues here, concerning (1) access to employment / income, (2) salary levels, and (3) cost of living.

Reflections on access to work and income (1) are differently articulated and convey labour market differences across geographical and social contexts. Unemployment is central to interviewees in Ukraine, which has had a large industrial sector and formal employment

arrangements. Concerns across the Ukrainian research areas are formulated in terms of employment and unemployment with reference to the public sector, industry or service sector. Salary levels (2) are also an important subject in positive as well as negative evaluations of current living standard. Cost of living (3) comes across as an important element and is often articulated in terms of price levels and purchasing power. All these concerns are closely interconnected, as negative evaluations of employment not only revolve around unemployment, but also, lack of access to *well-paid* employment, given rising and unpredictable prices. Fluctuating prices on “utility” (gas and electricity), housing and rent, and cost of food are key throughout Ukraine (see 5.3). Interviews carried out in Ukraine invoke both community level aspects of wealth, and the individual level. With respect to the latter, perceived or subjectively assessed standard of living is articulated as a balance between price levels and salaries.⁸

In Morocco too, the three themes of (1) employment, (2) salary levels, and (3) cost of living were central. In the Central Plateau (M2), the commercial sector dominates alongside agropastoral activities, as well as industries related to mining and mineral water resources. Especially in the rural areas and urban centres in the Central Plateau, interviewees implicitly invoked a distinction between community level and individual level when discussing (un)employment. Thus, they largely connected grievances of unemployment to the community level – in a way that generalised and politicised issues of unemployment: “Employment is nearly inexistant, permanent jobs are inexistant,” said one interviewee.⁹ He connected this to employers in the area reacting to earlier strikes in factories by only employing new workers from outside the region. This reverberates in other interviewees’ statements too, and they connect this to a felt presence of security forces in the community, employed to hinder public protests. Moreover, unemployment is described in connection with simultaneous assessments of *marginalisation* of the community, and it is presented as a political concern very specifically tied to the area and community, rather than to specific individuals.

Similar views on community marginalisation come across in statements from interviewees whose families traditionally live from agriculture. One man expresses this clearly, when first praising the qualities of life in the location, all the while explaining that he has lost the taste for agricultural work along with getting an education:

We live with our family, with our children, we see friends, we take advantage of the riches of our region, the forest (...), we can cultivate the land, take care of the cattle, even though it’s only my father who takes care of all that. And for me, as soon as I went to school, I lost the taste for that. In any case, the nature is beautiful, and you can’t find better (...). The negative thing here is that we can’t find work. That is to say that we are here in a marginalised society and lack everything. There is no factory or anything. When you have a diploma, you are not hired.¹⁰

Another young man, living in the administrative centre of the Central Plateau, describes how the unemployment situation influences living standards, and a general lack of social and economic activity in the community:

We have no means of leisure and recreation. There is just the internet. Now, a person’s preoccupation, on Saturday and Sunday, the weekend, if he does not leave here to go for a walk in Meknes for example, or to go for a walk in the forest ... he only has the internet. There is nowhere to go for a walk or to spend the time or to learn new things, there are no possibilities to do sports, except against payment in private gyms. (...). And that's where I spend my time when I'm not going

⁸ Lapshyna has discussed the effects of labour market corruption on migration aspirations in Ukraine, based on EUMAGINE data, see Lapshyna, I. (2014). Corruption as a Driver of Migration Aspirations: the Case of Ukraine. *Economics & sociology*, 7(4), 113-127. <https://doi.org/10.14254/2071-789X.2014/7-4/8>. This topic is outside of the scope of the present paper.

⁹ 11D12101.

¹⁰ 11D12217, our translation from French.

to high school. Life is so simple here; this is the daily routine. From the moment people do not have a job, their standard of living is low.¹¹

With respect to salaries, interviewees in the area, as well as in urban Tangier (M3), refer to salary levels in comparison to minimum wages (interviewees even refer explicitly to the “SMIG”). Cost of living, and inability to cover needs, is further specified in terms of interviewees lacking means to pay for food, clothes, education, electricity and drinking water. Inability to pay for accommodation, or to be able to own a house, is also a central concern.¹²

Overall, the labour market in Turkey has been characterised by a large but declining agricultural sector and “a growing informal sector intertwined with the formal sector” (Korfali et al., 2010, p. 19). In Turkey, interviewees raise the issue of unemployment with reference to the formal labour market. Many interviewees additionally emphasise (lack of) economic investments in local communities, which they connect to how the labour market is affected by out-migration. In high emigration communities in Turkey, out-migration is thus described as *causing* unemployment due to low population most of the year, and, in effect, lack of economic activity. This does not appear as striking in the research areas in Ukraine, Senegal and Morocco, where interviewees mostly address migration in comparative reflections on job opportunities in Europe and their home country.

Asked about how she believes her home community – the urban centre of Pancar in Dinar (T2) – will develop in the future, a young woman stated:

I think Dinar will be a small town in the future. There is no job here. Everyone leaves Dinar. There is constant migration to Denizli, Afyon, Izmir, Antalya... I think in the last 10 years, maybe 20000 people left Dinar. No one makes any investments in here. The people here damage the investments, they do not understand. This is why I think this place is going to be like a village.¹³

A man in Emirdağ (T1), who challenges overall descriptions of lack of job opportunities, describes migration as causing a mentality problem relating to employment:

Interviewee: Young people of Emirdağ don't like working much.

Interviewer: You are young, but you work?

Interviewee: We work, [but] they usually want to go to Europe.¹⁴

Yet other interviewees accuse fellow residents in their communities of laziness due to the vision of Europe, also because of welfare schemes and unemployment benefits (*somaj*) in Europe.

Narratives on migration in Turkey have been explored by other researchers in terms of “a culture of migration”. Based on EUMAGINE data, Timmerman et al. (2014) have explored whether a “culture of migration” does or does not affect migration aspirations in Turkey. In our view, rather than viewing “culture” as a constant or a matter of agreement – or a “culture of migration” as a constant entity – the Turkish empirical material shows that migration is a widely shared element in discourses on work and economy, over which people agree and disagree. More specifically, interviewees debate the effects of migration on local economies and unemployment, but they do not share opinions on economic realities causing emigration.

On a different note, interviewees in Turkey make assessments of relative wealth explicit. In several interviews people thus talk about economic inequalities in terms of assets held or owned. This is conveyed clearly in the statements of a male interviewee in rural Davulga in Emirdağ (T1):

¹¹ 1ID12120, our translation from French.

¹² 1ID13304.

¹³ 2ID22109.

¹⁴ 2ID21144.

Interviewer: *“How about the financial conditions of Dinar, how does it go, better or worse?”*

Interviewee: There are good and bad sides. I know a lot of people who went bankrupt. There are those who don't have cars and those who got their third or fifth. I don't know the reason. Everything changed a lot since the earthquake or since ten or fifteen years.¹⁵

In Senegal too, relative wealth and inequalities are made explicit in interviewees' statements. A woman in her thirties in rural Lambaye (S2) invoked a comparison between households when she describes access to water and electricity. She said,

There are some who have electricity here in the village, and others who do not. There are houses that have taps, and others that don't. Like that, it is simply a question of means. Some have it and some don't. Yes, we have electricity, but there are some in the village who have neither water nor electricity, because they cannot afford it.¹⁶

the lack of means to invest in commercial activities – especially among interviewees who lack formal education – is an additional key element across locations in Senegal, where the informal economic sector predominates. At the time of the EUMAGINE data collection, agriculture employed about 30 percent of the working-age population in full time-employment (Fall et al., 2010, p. 9). Lack of means and resources for agriculture and start-up of economic activity, comes across as central themes in the interviews. Unemployment, rising prices, and low salary levels are also mentioned. Young interviewees with higher education also express worries about whether they can continue rural living, without commuting to areas that have additional job opportunities. Housing is also among the key elements, as is educational expenses and access.

In different ways, many concerns in qualitative interviews across the research areas echo – though with formulations specific to local economies and circumstances – the general formulation in the survey tool of “satisfaction with own financial situation”. The qualitative interviews contain ample examples of interviewees' comparing their economic situation with others in the community, both with reference to assets, and access to basic resources. In some areas, when articulating or referring to economic conditions, some interviewees went beyond their personal economic conditions, and that of their household, and accredited marginalisation to the community they lived in, as a whole (as in Morocco), or refer to mentalities affected by migration (Turkey). Moreover, interviewees invoke relative concepts of standard of living, but concepts vary, involving comparisons at individual, household, and community levels. The bases of comparisons are assets and basic needs, job opportunities and cost of living.

In a much-cited article on the role of relative deprivation in migration, Stark and Taylor (1989) provide statistical documentation from two villages in the state of Michoacan in Mexico, on Mexico-to-U.S. migration decisions. They show that households with lower incomes compared to other households in the village, are more likely to send migrants to foreign labour markets. In their study, the village locality was the reference group for household comparison, and in a later article they reflect on reference groups in assessments of relative deprivation (Stark & Taylor, 1991). Hyll and Schneider (2014) have later argued that individuals' aversion to relative deprivation shapes migration preferences in Germany. They rely on self-reported measures of reference group, thus allowing economic comparisons that individuals themselves find important to influence the analysis. Our own exploration of qualitative interviews from EUMAGINE complements these insights. Interviewees not only compare themselves and their households with other individuals and households within a reference group like the community:

¹⁵ 2ID21242. The interviewee refers to the 1995 earthquake in Dinar.

¹⁶ 3ID32105.

they compare the entirety of their community with other communities in reflections of collective community marginalisation. This brings attention to a need to extend reflections on the relative deprivation of individuals and households to larger social entities.

5.2 Social protection and infrastructures

Other elements that are given a prominent place in interviews, relate to what can perhaps best be generalised in terms of social protection and infrastructures. Articulations differ radically according to context.

In Ukraine, interviewees repeatedly return to pensions, and levels of pensions. Some complain about low pensions, but another framing is that low pensions is understood as causing unemployment among youth and the middle-aged. A woman in her thirties, in the Znamyanska Rayon (U2), echoes a widely held view when she says that,

It is possible to find some everyday work like day-to-day job at the construction, I think so. But it is practically unreal to find even the work of the librarian or get a job at school because all people hold on to their working places to the bitter end because pension is minimal (...) Retirees hold on to their working places and do not want to retire. I understand pensioners, but I do understand the youth and I feel pity for young people who having obtained education cannot find work because it is occupied by the retirees.¹⁷

Social protection in the form of pension schemes thus constitute a dimension of living standard closely entangled with job opportunities, across the Ukrainian research areas.

In Ukraine, complaints about low pensions express expectations of government benefits. In Senegal, expectations of assistance in old age, and to cover expenses for health services, are directed towards kin. A young male student in Darou Mousty (S1), in a contemplation over health services and access to specialised medical care, remarked that:

It is said that there is a specialised doctor practicing in the hospital, but the only problem ... he gives extensive prescriptions, it is expensive. In addition, there is a certain category of the population who receives assistance. [They receive] assistance from their emigrated son if they want access to health care.¹⁸

In a Senegalese context of poor health infrastructures, expectations of coverage of costs related to services are thus directed towards kin, and in this case, emigrant kin. As demonstrated in the quote, explicit comparisons between households – as we saw expressed in Emirdağ (T1) with reference to assets and in Lambaye (S2) with respect to basic needs like water and electricity – thus also apply to health services in local communities. In this case, the young male student in Darou Mousty conceptualised relative financial situation in a comparison of families that have and do not have relatives abroad, and between migrants and non-migrants. In other instances, parents living in the local community finance health services as well as higher education, as a woman in Darou Mousty complains:

When you study here there is no problem but when you get the Bac, you will have a problem of orientation, if the parents cannot pay for the training, the studies stop there.¹⁹

These informal, yet de-facto family-based social arrangements are also entangled with costs of living. Thus, interviewees who point to insufficient incomes and high costs of living state that the need to help parents and other family members are part of obligations they must meet and need to cover. Conversely, some interviewees lament that people fail their social obligations,

¹⁷ 4ID42101.

¹⁸ 3ID31113, our translation.

¹⁹ 3ID31104, our translation.

even to kin, and have become afraid of asking others for help. This is expressed in a statement from a young man in his thirties in Lambaye (S2):

Now it is the reality in this village, in the whole country. Nobody goes to see anybody, nobody helps anybody (...) which makes no one ask anyone for help.²⁰

Moreover, expectations of social assistance have varying social reach, beyond the individual and the state.

In Morocco, interviewees articulate a more general concern with social services at community level, and the distance to – or inexistence of – administrative services. In the latter case, this indirectly relates to concerns with cost of living as distance to public offices require residents' time and extra cost for transportation. Particularly in the Central Plateau (M2), community level references appear in complaints over infrastructures (like sewer system), which according to interviewees are not provided properly by the local administration. Other elements of infrastructures that figure in economic concerns in Morocco are bad road standard. Interviewees in Ukraine too raise road quality – both in terms of their recognition of improvements in road standards, and disappointment over lack of improvements. Other central issues of infrastructure and community services in Ukraine are street lighting, as well as sports opportunities for children and youth. In Senegal, lack of infrastructure in communities is associated with corrupt officials, which make part of widespread descriptions of life as “hard” (*dur*).²¹

In sum, standard of living is also articulated in terms of social protection and various infrastructural dimensions, and interviewees' framings differ from community, to state, and social networks and kin. Social protection and infrastructural elements also make part of “relative” assessments, as when interviewees compare differences between communities, local governance units, (kin) groups and individuals.

5.3 Past, present and future of living standards: Tempo of change, uncertainty and unpredictability

Strikingly, concerns with employment, salaries and costs of living do not only relate to the here and now, but to instability and unpredictability, particularly with reference to the ability to cover cost of living both now and in the future. In Ukraine, this is articulated in statements on the tempo of rising prices, for instance. A woman in the district of Kyiv deemed the standard of living better five years prior to the interview, than in 2011, and explained this as follows:

The standard of living was definitely higher. We had stability. Prices of food stuffs, accommodation or clothes did not change that often, unlike now. You come to the shop and see that things have gone up in price. It happens every single day. Take alone accommodation expenses. Every month you have to pay more and more. You do understand that service hasn't changed. Nevertheless, prices go up.²²

Another woman, in Znamyanska Rayon, stated that:

In my opinion, it has changed in a negative way, because earlier when Kuchma was the president, there was stability, let we say, that life level was not higher, salary was not higher too, there were

²⁰ 3ID32102, our translation.

²¹ Interviewees from Senegal make regular references to public demonstrations, which refer to the *J'en est marre movement* and that started in early 2011 to hinder the then President from extending his presidential period unconstitutionally, and in protest of power cuts and general inefficacy of government. See Honwana, A. (2012). *The Time of Youth. Work, Social Change and Politics in Africa*. Kumarian Press. .

²² 4ID43102.

no new welfares. But everything went smoothly; people were sure in tomorrow's day. Today practically every day there appears new news either on TV or somewhere else about increase of prices for services or something else. We do experience only negative things. It seems to me that the salary has been increased by 40 UAH from October, a huge amount of money! [Sarcastic]. But the costs for utility services have also been increased from October, and they will also increase the costs for water and gas.²³

Price increases are described as constant and rapid. Unpredictability of prices on necessary items, and failure of salaries to follow suit, also connects to worries about the stability of future employment. Interviewees focus on the lack of *certainty* of jobs or continued employment and compare this with friends who have migrated to Europe and whose job situations are so secure that they can take up loans to finance houses and flats.²⁴ In contrast to themselves, these European migrants do not need to worry about the future, many say.

Examples of worries about the economic future, both long-term and short-term, are plentiful across all research areas. Recent scholarly attention to futural orientations has focused on experiences of temporariness and uncertainty, as well as anticipation and hope (see for instance Kleist, 2016). Hopes of economic and other betterment for oneself or for family through migration is a prevalent theme in recent migration literature (Fleischer, 2007; Pettit & Ruijtenberg, 2019; Vigh, 2009). Similarly, experiences of socio-economic stagnation have also been described as stimulating migration aspirations (Alloul, 2020; Mandin, 2020).

The way that EUMAGINE interviewees' foreground instability also harmonises with findings on the significance of macroeconomic fluctuations and change, both short- and long-term instability found to be drivers of migration (Czaika, 2015). With a literature reference to Massey (1988), Czaika and Reinprecht summarise that

Historically, economic downturns in rural areas have led to internal migration to urban areas while national economic downturns have resulted in international migration from Europe to the United States (Czaika & Reinprecht, 2020, p. 14).

Uncertainty related to sudden or unexpected change may thus contribute to the formation of migration aspirations. Uncertainty is also an inherent aspect of human decision-making, including migrant decision-making, more generally. As Bijak and Czaika (2020) point out, the rationality of potential migrants' decisions is limited or bounded, "constrained by the situation", and information on which decisions are made is necessarily incomplete. Preferences and risk attitudes too change throughout a decision-making process and depend on context (Bijak & Czaika, 2020, pp. 15-16).

Moreover, the dimensions of living standard that are raised in the qualitative interviews can be seen as connecting with the topics available in EUMAGINE survey data on household assets and utilities, satisfaction with current financial level, and perceived relative level of financial situation of households. They have partly motivated our focus on these indicators in the quantitative analysis. Even so, we register that these dimensions are differently articulated, and associated differently with individual variation, household and community level differences. Additional dimensions relating to social protection and various infrastructures are also locally understood as varying with reference to individual, social group, local community and state levels.

In addition to these dimensions of living standard, that capture variations in the present, the focus of many interviewees on economic improvement, or deterioration, motivates a particular

²³ 4ID42101.

²⁴ 4ID43129, 4ID44101, 4ID43102, 4ID42101.

exploration in the quantitative survey material on perceived change in living standards, both as experienced in the present, and in the perspective of perceived inter-generational change.

6 Statistical effects of dimensions of living standard on migration aspirations

The empirical analysis that follows aims to explore how different concepts and measures of economic factors play out in relation to migration aspirations.

6.1 The dependent variable

We measure our **dependent variable, migration aspirations**, by means of answers to the following survey question: *Ideally, if you had the opportunity, would you like to go abroad to live or work sometime during the next five years, or would you prefer staying in [this country]?* The wording deliberately avoids terms like “migration” or “emigration” which would have different connotations in the different areas. The time frame of five years is intended to be long enough to make migration aspirations independent of immediate constraints, such as pregnancy, and short enough to make the question specific. The dependant variable is binary. It is equal to one if the individual indicated a willingness to migrate, otherwise zero. The answering alternatives were “Stay in this country” or “go abroad”. As noted, “Don’t know” and “Refuse to answer” were not among the answer categories in the survey.

6.2 Independent variables

Migration aspirations are informed by a range of factors associated with standard of living. In this paper, we have set out to explore the association between different levels of standard of living and individuals’ aspirations to leave, and to identify which dimensions of standard of living are the most salient in shaping migration aspirations. In macro-economic perspectives, per capita income is a common proxy for wealth (M. Clemens, 2014). In this paper, however, inspired by the existing literature and based on available information in the EUMAGINE data set, we distinguish between five dimensions of standard of living. These variables are listed in Table 1. The relevant survey items refer variously to “financial situation” and “standard of living”. For the purposes of this paper, we treat the two as equivalent. Moreover, we regard the index of household assets and utilities as an estimate of one dimension of ‘standard of living’ and focus the analysis on how it can be assessed along alternative dimensions that differ both conceptually and methodologically and may have different effects on migration aspirations. We start from the three key distinctions mentioned above, related to how standard of living varies between individuals: (1) *measured* versus *perceived* standard of living, which is a methodological point; (2) *absolute* versus *relative* standard of living, which is a perspectival distinction; and (3) *current level* of standard of living versus *change*. These distinctions can be combined to produce five dimensions in the available EUMAGINE survey data.²⁵ Table 1 presents the dimensions we use in the following analysis.

²⁵ As noted, the EUMAGINE data does not allow for assessments of absolute dimensions of standard of living.

Table 1 Dimensions of standard of living included in the analysis

Dimension	Survey data foundation	Measurement
Measured relative level	Index of household assets and utilities	Means of an asset index
Satisfaction with current level	“How satisfied are you with your current financial situation: very unsatisfied, ... [intermediate options] ..., or very satisfied?”	5-point scale (treated as interval variable)
Perceived relative level	If you compared the financial situation of your household with that of other households in this area, would you say your household’s financial situation is ... much worse, ... [intermediate options] ..., or much better?	5-point scale (treated as interval variable)
Perceived current change	Do you feel your standard of living is getting much worse, ... [intermediate options] ..., or getting much better?	5-point scale (treated as interval variable)
Perceived intergenerational change	When your parents were the same age as you are now, do you think that their standard of living was much worse than yours is now, ... [intermediate options] ..., or much better than yours is now?	5-point scale (treated as interval variable)

Measured relative level of standard of living is measured by means of an asset index, as is common in household surveys in low- and middle-income countries. The underlying data is a series of dummy variables recording availability of the following household assets and utilities: electricity, flush toilet, running hot water, shower, radio, television, satellite dish and receiver, video or DVD player, telephone (landline or mobile), computer, internet connection, refrigerator, gas or electric stove, dishwasher, washing machine, bicycle, moped or motorcycle, and car, truck or van. Principal components analysis was used to construct a single wealth index from these variables (de Haas & Dominique, 2012, p. 17 f.). The underlying assumption of this method is that there is a latent (unobservable) household wealth variable that manifests itself through ownership of the different assets. The values of the household wealth index were subsequently recoded to deciles *within* each research area. This recoding produces a measure of relative household wealth with a scale that has the same length in all research areas. In the regression models, we measure the effect of increasing household wealth to the next decile. This approach yields a comparable scale. In our analysis, it is used as a proxy for measured relative level of living standard of individuals.

Satisfaction with current level of standard of living derives from the survey question: *how satisfied are you with your current financial situation?* (values ranging from “very unsatisfied” to “very satisfied”). This question seeks to capture individuals’ perceived living standard, without making a comparison with other persons or households explicit. In contrast, **perceived relative level** develops from the survey question: *If you compared the financial situation of your household with that of other households in this area, would you say your household’s financial situation is ...* (values ranging from “much worse” to “much better”). This invites an explicit inquiry into a comparison with others, hence the “relative” aspect of the perception. **Perceived current change** originates from the survey question: *Do you feel your standard of living is...* (with values from “getting much worse” to “getting much better”). **Perceived intergenerational change** comes from: *When your parents were the same age as you are now, do you think that their standard of living was?...* (five values ranging from “much worse than yours” to “much better than yours”). All these variables are ordinal in nature. They will be treated as continuous in the analyses that follow. The reason for this will be explained below. It should be noted that the standard of living of individuals is not entirely distinct from the standard of living of the household to which they belong. Therefore, based on the EUMAGINE survey items, we have incorporated some household factors in our standard of

living assessments – such as index of household assets and utilities and household financial situation.

For the control or background variables, we use household size, gender, age, marital status, educational level, primary source of household income, and transnational network (family members abroad – above the age of 16). Descriptive statistics for all the independent variables are presented in Table 2 and

Table 3.

Table 2 Descriptive statistics, per cent, by research area in Morocco and Turkey

	M1	M2	M3	M4	T1	T2	T3	T4
	Todgha Valley	Central Plateau	Tanger	Tounfit e	Emirdağ	Dinar	Fatih	Van Merkez
Has migration aspirations	68	66	47	52	40	41	39	39
Measured relative level (mean)	0.66	-1.39	1.12	-1.15	1.7	1.85	2.26	0.07
Satisfaction with current level								
very unsatisfied	6.3	17.3	6.5	8.1	15.3	12.7	12.2	34.9
rather unsatisfied	11.8	20.7	10.6	30	15.9	16	17.41	21.8
neither unsatisfied nor satisfied	21	26.5	20.8	27.4	18.8	20.2	24.9	15.5
rather satisfied	52.2	28.5	57.7	32.5	41.3	44.5	40.7	23.1
very satisfied	8.7	7	4.4	2	8.9	6.6	4.7	4.7
Perceived relative level								
Much worse	0.5	1.5	0.3	1.4	1.2	1.8	1.1	4.9
worse	5.7	8.4	4.7	9.7	7.2	10.1	11.4	23
the same	85.7	82.8	90	86.2	63.3	57.2	59.4	51.5
better	7.7	7	4.5	2.7	24.1	26.9	26.8	19.8
much better	0.4	0.4	0.5	0	4.2	4	1.3	0.7
Perceived current change								
Getting much worse	1.1	2.8	4.1	1.2	3.1	6.9	2.2	2.4
getting worse	5.3	12.9	6.5	13.6	23.2	20.3	30.3	23.2
staying the same	28.2	49.9	27.9	46.7	19.1	20.7	16.1	36.1
getting better	64.2	31.6	59.4	38.1	52.8	50.4	50.4	36.7
getting much better	1.2	2.9	2.1	0.4	1.8	1.7	0.9	1.6
Perceived intergenerational change								
Much worse than yours is now	22.4	13	7.6	22.3	22.7	34	11.8	40.8
worse than yours is now	35.6	32.9	31.2	43.1	45.7	39.3	53.4	36.6
about the same as yours is now	26.1	32	41.3	30.8	16.3	14.3	13.9	9.9
better than yours is now	14.2	18.2	17.6	3.6	13.4	10.8	16.7	10.4
much better than yours is now	1.8	4	2.3	0.3	1.9	1.7	4.2	2.4
Female	45.4	46.9	28.1	45.4	45.6	38.7	59.2	60.8
Age (mean)	27.5	27.5	26.6	26.7	28	29	28.4	27.1
Household size (mean)	7	6	6	6	5	4	4	7
Years of education (mean)	8.4	6.1	8.0	3.8	9.6	10.1	11.2	7.4
Marital status								
Never married	69.6	57.5	73.8	57.3	40.8	30.5	47.8	41.5
Married or in partnership	28.1	39.1	25.7	40.5	55.6	68.4	50	58
Widowed or separated	2.3	3.4	0.5	2.2	3.6	1.1	2.2	0.5
Primary source of income								
Salaries	74.1	44.2	61.8	48.3	47.8	51.1	74.9	64.3
Income from agriculture	7.2	39.9	0.9	46.4	29.2	30.2	0.3	7
Income from rent	0.1	2.7	0.7	0.8	0.7	0.7	1.5	1
Non-agricultural business	15.7	10.5	33.7	3.7	16.2	14.8	18.1	15
From people living elsewhere	1.1	1.1	0.5	0.9	1.6	1.6	3.8	1.1
From people living abroad	1.8	1.2	2.2	0	0.5	0.7	0	0.2
Aid	0	0.4	0.2	0	4	0.9	1.4	11.4
Family members abroad	48.7	27.1	50.8	6.6	53.6	22.2	32	3.9

Source: EUMAGINE survey data.

Table 3 Descriptive statistics, per cent, by research area in Senegal and Ukraine

	S1	S2	S3	S4	U1	U2	U3	U4
	Darou Mousty	Lambaye	Golf Sud	Orka-diére	Zbarazh	Znamy-anska	Solomy-ansky	Novovo-dolaz'ka
Has migration aspirations	64	76	74	82	53	39	47	46
Measured relative level (mean)	-3.06	-3.40	-0.46	-3.45	1.68	1.02	2.18	0.87
Satisfaction with current level								
very unsatisfied	7.4	4.6	2.6	6.3	9.8	10.1	9.7	21.4
rather unsatisfied	26.7	20.2	16.7	14.8	33.4	36.6	29.3	32.3
neither unsatisfied nor satisfied	36.7	46.4	54.4	42.2	39	34.2	39	26.9
rather satisfied	25.9	28.1	25.1	32.7	16.9	17.9	20.3	18.7
very satisfied	3.3	0.7	1.1	4	1.1	1.2	1.7	0.7
Perceived relative level								
Much worse	2.2	0	0.5	1.9	0.9	0.4	0.5	0.1
worse	7.8	5.8	3.3	6.3	7.8	9.5	12.3	4.4
the same	77	72.8	74	71.4	75.4	66.7	76.5	76.7
better	12	21.2	20.9	16.8	15.7	21.7	10.7	18.5
much better	0.9	0.2	1.3	3.6	0.1	1.7	0	0.3
Perceived current change								
Getting much worse	2.3	3.1	1.5	0.5	1.9	4.8	5.6	11.4
getting worse	8.4	4.7	12.1	6.1	27.1	31.4	49.1	45.8
staying the same	38.4	34.6	37.6	25.3	47.9	40.4	36.5	32.2
getting better	46	55.6	46.7	64.7	22.4	24.7	8.8	10.6
getting much better	4.9	1.9	2.2	3.3	0.7	0.8	0	0
Perceived intergenerational change								
Much worse than yours is now	8.7	7.5	3.8	18.7	2.6	1	1.3	2
worse than yours is now	25	15.7	13.3	35.6	38.3	19.6	22.6	12.6
about the same as yours is now	12.4	13.2	11.5	20.5	22.5	27.8	34.3	27.7
better than yours is now	45.6	57.8	58.5	22.8	32.2	41.5	36.8	40
much better than yours is now	8.3	5.7	12.9	2.4	4.4	10.1	5	17.7
Female	56.1	71.6	57	53.5	60.1	59.7	59.9	60
Age (mean)	26.5	27.5	27.4	27.7	27.6	29.8	29.4	29
Household size (mean)	15	17	8	19	5	3	3	4
Years of education (mean)	1.5	1.6	9.8	1.5	13.3	12.5	13.8	12.6
Marital status								
Never married	31.1	37.9	63.8	32.4	34.7	21	31.4	28.8
Married or in partnership	67.1	61.6	32.6	63.3	61.5	68.5	59.9	64.9
Widowed or separated	1.8	0.5	3.6	4.3	3.8	10.5	8.7	6.3
Primary source of income								
Salaries	6.8	2.6	61.1	13.3	66.9	80.1	92.5	81.1
Income from agriculture	52.6	50.1	0.3	48.9	16.3	3.6	0.1	11.2
Income from rent	1.3	0.2	0.9	0.8	0	0	0.3	0
Non-agricultural business	29.1	25.2	24.4	14.3	1.8	1.5	2.9	2.3
From people living elsewhere	2.7	12	1.9	2	0.5	1.1	2	0.9
From people living abroad	5.8	5.5	10.6	19.2	7.1	0.2	0.5	0.5
Aid	1.6	4.4	0.9	1.5	7.4	13.5	1.7	4
Family members abroad	34.9	35.8	49.3	44.9	33.3	13.9	11.5	16.7

Source: EUMAGINE survey data.

6.3 Statistical analysis of determinants of migration aspirations

This section presents the estimated results of logistic regression models, which use migration aspirations as the dependent variable. The regression tables report the odd ratios from the logistic models (the robust standard errors are reported in brackets). To select the most suitable model, several steps were taken.

First, we examined the relationship between different dimensions of standard of living. Given that we are using five measures, there is a possibility that these different measures are correlated, in which case they risk cancelling each other out in a way that produces few significant results in the analyses. To establish how large the correlations were, we created a Spearman's rank of correlations matrix (see Table 4). All the correlations, except for two, were small (generally below 0.25). A similar procedure was undertaken for the non-pooled sample (not shown in the paper) which confirmed negligible correlations between the various dimensions of standard of living.

Table 4 Spearman rank of correlations between dimensions of standard of living

Dimensions of standard of living N = 7956	Measured relative level	Satisfaction with current level	Perceived relative level	Perceived current change	Perceived intergenerational change
Measured relative level	1.000				
Satisfaction with current level	0.1509	1.000			
Perceived relative level	0.1957	0.2766	1.000		
Perceived current change	-0.0476	0.4309	0.2085	1.000	
Perceived intergenerational change	-0.0617	-0.1501	-0.0120	-0.2223	1.000

Source: EUMAGINE survey data.

To reinforce the above findings, we decided to build the regression model incrementally: that is, before running the regression model with all five dimensions of standard of living, we included only one at a time (see models 1 to 5 in Table 5 and Table 6). This approach revealed that every one of these five dimensions to have a significant effect on migration aspirations. Therefore, all five were decided to be included in the final model.

Second, all the variables, except for the measured relative level of standard of living, are based on a five-point scale, which could be treated either as categorical or continuous in the analysis. Given the small sample size in some of the categories, treating them as categorical might encumber conclusive analysis. To confirm that they could be treated as linear interval variables, we first ran the analyses with these variables as categorical. The results of this analyses are shown in Table 5. They confirm our assumption of linearity: migration aspirations continually decrease as standard of living improves, in all the dimensions of standard of living.

Table 5 Determinants of migration aspirations, pooled sample (odds ratios) – categorical scales

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Dimensions of standard of living						
Measured relative level		0.876*** (0.019)				0.903*** (0.021)
Satisfaction with current level						
<i>Very unsatisfied</i>			1.760*** (0.178)			1.559*** (0.167)
<i>Rather unsatisfied</i>			1.296** (0.103)			1.203* (0.097)
<i>Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (ref)</i>			1.000			1.000
<i>Rather satisfied</i>			0.737*** (0.053)			0.744*** (0.056)

<i>Very satisfied</i>	0.479 ^{***} (0.074)				0.511 ^{***} (0.082)	
Perceived relative level						
<i>Much worse</i>	1.344 (0.347)				0.881 (0.243)	
<i>Worse</i>	1.153 (0.113)				0.895 (0.092)	
<i>Same (ref)</i>	1.000				1.000	
<i>Better</i>	0.827 [*] (0.065)				0.975 (0.080)	
<i>Much better</i>	0.836 (0.189)				1.210 (0.296)	
Perceived current change						
<i>Getting much worse</i>	2.059 ^{***} (0.324)				1.523 [*] (0.248)	
<i>Getting worse</i>	1.571 ^{***} (0.124)				1.362 ^{***} (0.113)	
<i>Staying the same (ref)</i>	1.000				1.000	
<i>Getting better</i>	1.049 (0.071)				1.196 [*] (0.087)	
<i>Getting much better</i>	0.453 ^{**} (0.104)				0.602 [*] (0.147)	
Perceived intergenerational change						
<i>Much worse than yours is now</i>					1.211 ⁺ (0.121)	
<i>Worse than yours is now</i>					1.162 [*] (0.088)	
<i>about the same as yours is now (ref)</i>					1.000	
<i>Better than yours is now</i>					1.322 ^{**} (0.108)	
<i>Much better than yours is now</i>					1.657 ^{***} (0.214)	
Control variables						
Sex (female)	0.636 ^{***} (0.037)	0.640 ^{***} (0.038)	0.628 ^{***} (0.037)	0.630 ^{***} (0.037)	0.631 ^{***} (0.037)	0.653 ^{***} (0.039)
Age	0.978 ^{***} (0.005)	0.972 ^{***} (0.006)	0.976 ^{***} (0.005)	0.975 ^{***} (0.006)	0.976 ^{***} (0.006)	0.974 ^{***} (0.006)
Age squared	1.000 (0.001)	1.001 (0.001)	1.000 (0.001)	1.000 (0.001)	1.000 (0.001)	1.000 (0.001)
Household size	1.006 (0.011)	1.001 (0.011)	1.003 (0.011)	1.001 (0.011)	1.002 (0.011)	1.003 (0.011)
Educational attainment (years)	1.013 (0.008)	1.006 (0.008)	1.000 (0.008)	1.000 (0.008)	0.996 (0.008)	1.016 ⁺ (0.008)
Educational attainment squared	0.998 (0.001)	0.998 (0.001)	0.998 (0.001)	0.998 (0.001)	0.998 (0.001)	0.998 ⁺ (0.001)

Marital status						
<i>Never married (reference)</i>	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
<i>Married or in partnership</i>	0.560*** (0.042)	0.576*** (0.043)	0.570*** (0.042)	0.564*** (0.042)	0.564*** (0.042)	0.566*** (0.042)
<i>Widowed or separated</i>	0.897 (0.130)	0.871 (0.128)	0.916 (0.133)	0.884 (0.128)	0.897 (0.130)	0.831 (0.123)
Primary source of income						
<i>Salaries (reference)</i>	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
<i>Agriculture</i>	0.737*** (0.063)	0.779** (0.067)	0.786** (0.066)	0.779** (0.066)	0.791** (0.067)	0.748** (0.065)
<i>Income from rent</i>	0.733 (0.222)	0.712 (0.219)	0.712 (0.213)	0.674 (0.206)	0.682 (0.206)	0.712 (0.222)
<i>Other non-agricultural business</i>	0.877 (0.076)	0.894 (0.078)	0.864+ (0.075)	0.869 (0.075)	0.852+ (0.074)	0.914 (0.081)
<i>Money from people in [country]</i>	1.007 (0.192)	0.988 (0.202)	0.982 (0.193)	1.025 (0.202)	1.045 (0.206)	1.027 (0.208)
<i>Money from people abroad</i>	1.332 (0.270)	1.238 (0.252)	1.262 (0.257)	1.234 (0.249)	1.243 (0.253)	1.345 (0.274)
<i>Aid from other sources</i>	1.006 (0.146)	1.023 (0.147)	1.084 (0.154)	1.084 (0.155)	1.089 (0.157)	0.957 (0.141)
Family members abroad	1.343*** (0.091)	1.305*** (0.088)	1.268*** (0.085)	1.271*** (0.085)	1.238** (0.083)	1.347*** (0.093)
Research area dummies (not shown)						
R2	0.1041	0.1136	0.1005	0.1071	0.1019	0.1203
Observations	7,973	7,976	7,954	7,973	7,961	7,937

Odds ratios from logistic regressions are reported. + $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$. Reference categories are: Male; Never married; Salaries. We measure educational attainment as years of completed education. Source: EUMAGINE survey data. Complex survey weighting applied. Robust standard errors are reported in brackets.

Table 5 shows that the relationship between migration aspirations and standard of living is linear in the case of every dimension of standard of living. Migration aspirations thus continually decrease as standard of living improves. This contradicts the idea of an “inverted U”-shape of the relation between economic development and migration aspirations, which would posit that migration aspirations are the least prevalent among the poorest and the richest (de Haas, 2020).

The results of the regression model with a continuous scale for the pooled sample are shown in Table 6.

In both the models we tested – one that considers the parameters as categorical (Table 5) and one as continuous (Table 6) – the likelihood are quite close: the log pseudolikelihoods were -4814.414 and -4836.8282 respectively. Indeed, neither the effects of each independent variable, nor the explanatory power of the models as a whole, were very sensitive to the differences in specification. Furthermore, given that the variables in question have interval-level measurement with linear effects, we have treated them as continuous in running the sixteen parallel models, one for each research area (for a discussion on how to treat ordinal independent variable, see Williams (2020)).

Table 6 Determinants of migration aspirations, pooled sample (odds ratios) – continuous scales

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Dimensions of standard of living						
Measured relative level	0.876*** (0.019)					0.907*** (0.021)
Satisfaction with current level		0.743*** (0.021)				0.773*** (0.024)
Perceived relative level			0.855** (0.041)			1.043 (0.054)
Perceived current change				0.805*** (0.028)		0.924* (0.035)
Perceived intergenerational change					1.052+ (0.029)	1.010 (0.028)
Control variables						
Sex (female)	0.636*** (0.037)	0.639*** (0.038)	0.627*** (0.037)	0.632*** (0.037)	0.626*** (0.037)	0.650*** (0.039)
Age	0.978*** (0.005)	0.972*** (0.005)	0.976*** (0.005)	0.975*** (0.006)	0.977*** (0.006)	0.974*** (0.006)
Age squared	1.000 (0.001)	1.001 (0.001)	1.000 (0.001)	1.000 (0.001)	1.000 (0.001)	1.000 (0.001)
Household size	1.006 (0.011)	1.001 (0.011)	1.003 (0.011)	1.002 (0.011)	1.002 (0.011)	1.004 (0.011)
Educational attainment (years)	1.013 (0.008)	1.006 (0.008)	1.000 (0.008)	1.001 (0.008)	0.997 (0.008)	1.017* (0.008)
Educational attainment squared	0.998 (0.001)	0.998 (0.001)	0.998 (0.001)	0.998 (0.001)	0.998 (0.001)	0.998+ (0.001)
Marital status						
<i>Never married (reference)</i>	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
<i>Married or in partnership</i>	0.560*** (0.042)	0.576*** (0.043)	0.570*** (0.042)	0.568*** (0.042)	0.564*** (0.042)	0.570*** (0.043)
<i>Widowed or separated</i>	0.897 (0.130)	0.869 (0.128)	0.917 (0.133)	0.886 (0.128)	0.909 (0.131)	0.837 (0.123)
Primary source of income						
<i>Salaries (reference)</i>	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
<i>Agriculture</i>	0.737*** (0.063)	0.779** (0.067)	0.786** (0.067)	0.775** (0.067)	0.789** (0.067)	0.745** (0.065)
<i>Income from rent</i>	0.733 (0.222)	0.718 (0.221)	0.712 (0.213)	0.676 (0.204)	0.694 (0.210)	0.734 (0.227)
<i>Other non-agricultural business</i>	0.877 (0.076)	0.892 (0.078)	0.863 (0.076)	0.870 (0.075)	0.856 (0.074)	0.914 (0.080)
<i>Money from people in [country]</i>	1.007 (0.192)	0.986 (0.201)	0.984 (0.193)	1.010 (0.200)	1.042 (0.204)	1.007 (0.202)
<i>Money from people abroad</i>	1.332 (0.270)	1.237 (0.251)	1.259 (0.251)	1.265 (0.257)	1.248 (0.255)	1.369 (0.281)

<i>Aid from other sources</i>	1.006 (0.146)	1.020 (0.146)	1.082 (0.154)	1.076 (0.153)	1.093 (0.157)	0.944 (0.138)
Family members abroad	1.343*** (0.091)	1.303*** (0.088)	1.267*** (0.088)	1.278*** (0.085)	1.245** (0.083)	1.354*** (0.093)
Research area dummies (not shown)						
R2	0.1041	0.1134	0.1005	0.1043	0.1001	0.1162
Observations	7,973	7,976	7,954	7,973	7,961	7,937

Odds ratios from logistic regressions are reported. + $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$. Reference categories are: *Male; Never married; Salaries*. We measure educational attainment as years of completed education. Source: EUMAGINE survey data. Complex survey weighting applied. Robust standard errors are reported in brackets.

The pattern we find in the EUMAGINE pooled data echoes the findings of our systematic literature review of research into the determinants of migration aspirations (Aslany et al., 2021, p. 27). The effect of socio-economic status on migration aspirations, measured either at the individual or household level, were examined in 35 separate analyses. Measures of socio-economic status in the analyses included asset indexes, different factual questions, as well as perceived financial situation and contentment with personal living conditions. The results mostly indicated that as socio-economic status rises, migration aspirations decline.

6.3.1 Effects on migration aspirations by research area

The estimated effects of various dimensions of standard of living on migration aspirations for each research area are presented in the following four tables. To properly accommodate for the diversity between research areas spread across four countries, we ran sixteen parallel models, one for each research area (N=500).

Table 7 Determinants of migration aspirations, Morocco (odds ratios)

Research areas	M1 Todgha Valley		M2 Central Plateau		M3 Tanger		M4 Tounfite	
	Odd Ratio	Std. Error	Odd Ratio	Std. Error	Odd Ratio	Std. Error	Odd Ratio	Std. Error
Dimensions of standard of living								
Measured relative level	0.957	0.110	0.782**	0.063	0.833 ⁺	0.088	0.813 ⁺	0.075
Satisfaction with current level	0.652**	0.099	0.703**	0.075	0.61**	0.094	0.690**	0.093
Perceived relative level	1.000	0.328	0.963	0.254	1.843 ⁺	0.578	1.645	0.527
Perceived current change	0.784	0.184	0.881	0.142	0.75	0.135	0.809	0.151
Perceived intergenerational change	0.943	0.119	0.961	0.112	0.800	0.118	1.193	0.162
Control variables								
Sex (female)	0.599 ⁺	0.158	1.077	0.277	0.455**	0.121	0.600 ⁺	0.146
Age	0.985	0.024	0.973	0.025	0.964	0.024	0.988	0.024
Age squared	1.004	0.003	1.000	0.003	1.005	0.003	0.998	0.003
Household size	1.004	0.043	1.05	0.059	0.819***	0.045	1.162**	0.054
Educational attainment (years)	0.941	0.035	0.989	0.040	0.977	0.032	0.949	0.041
Educational attainment squared	0.986	0.006	0.992	0.006	1.005	0.006	0.983	0.006
Marital status								
<i>Never married (reference)</i>	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
<i>Married or in partnership</i>	0.305***	0.090	0.609	0.226	0.286**	0.115	0.348**	0.114
<i>Widowed or separated</i>	2.456	2.548	1.835	1.361	0.265	0.479	0.632	0.429
Primary source of income								
<i>Salaries (reference)</i>	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
<i>Agriculture</i>	0.496	0.243	1.113	0.313	4.473 ⁺	3.712	0.43***	0.102
<i>Income from rent</i>	--	--	0.712	0.473	2.366	3.625	1.232	1.192
<i>Other non-agricultural business</i>	0.824	0.279	0.8	0.307	0.817	0.200	0.242 ⁺	0.162
<i>Money from people in [country]</i>	0.469	0.478	0.944	0.699	2.671	2.820	0.207 ⁺	0.186
<i>Money from people abroad</i>	1.372	0.942	0.809	1.129	0.955	0.759	--	--
<i>Aid from other sources</i>	--	--	1.423	2.022	0.415	1.583	--	--
Family members abroad	1.292	0.323	1.401	0.396	1.904 ⁺	0.489	0.207 ⁺	1.272
R2	0.1215	--	0.1098	--	0.1748	--	0.1733	--
Observations	499	--	500	--	500	--	499	--

Odds ratios and robust standard errors from logistic regressions are reported. + $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$. Reference categories are: Male; Never married; Salaries. We measure educational attainment as years of completed education. Source: EUMAGINE survey data. Complex survey weighting applied.

Table 8 Determinants of migration aspirations, Turkey (odds ratios)

Research areas	T1 Emirdağ		T2 Dinar		T3 Fatih		T4 Van Merkez	
	Odd Ratio	Std. Error	Odd Ratio	Std. Error	Odd Ratio	Std. Error	Odd Ratio	Std. Error
Dimensions of standard of living								
Measured relative level	0.771**	0.064	0.815*	0.072	1.111	0.126	0.912	0.086
Satisfaction with current level	0.843 ⁺	0.087	0.792*	0.087	0.545***	0.068	1.03	0.118
Perceived relative level	1.263	0.215	0.915	0.150	0.956	0.191	0.694	0.122
Perceived current change	0.959	0.119	0.967	0.119	1.123	0.148	1.126	0.174
Perceived intergenerational change	1.012	0.103	0.76*	0.098	1.098	0.123	0.867	0.101
Control variables								
Sex (female)	0.76	0.182	0.646 ⁺	0.156	0.637 ⁺	0.156	0.264***	0.065
Age	0.964	0.025	0.975	0.023	0.952 ⁺	0.024	1.010	0.024
Age squared	1.002	0.003	0.999	0.003	1.004	0.003	1.000	0.003
Household size	0.865	0.063	0.990	0.066	0.937	0.066	0.983	0.044
Educational attainment (years)	0.979	0.032	1.006	0.040	1.098 ⁺	0.052	1.082**	0.032
Educational attainment squared	0.994	0.005	1.000	0.006	0.995	0.005	0.996	0.005
Marital status								
<i>Never married (reference)</i>	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
<i>Married or in partnership</i>	0.973	0.312	0.701	0.207	0.54	0.166	0.653	0.202
<i>Widowed or separated</i>	1.084	0.774	1.168	1.570	1.479	1.058	0.851	1.083
Primary source of income								
<i>Salaries (reference)</i>	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
<i>Agriculture</i>	1.427	0.376	0.646 ⁺	0.163	--	--	0.708	0.362
<i>Income from rent</i>	0.259	0.337	1.022	0.997	0.342	0.343	2.389	1.777
<i>Other non-agricultural business</i>	1.439	0.476	0.964	0.304	0.642	0.210	0.904	0.297
<i>Money from people in [country]</i>	1.574	1.367	3.683	3.501	1.017	0.499	0.588	0.423
<i>Money from people abroad</i>	5.993	6.956	4.893	6.086	--	--	--	--
<i>Aid from other sources</i>	3.045 ⁺	1.647	4.326	4.386	0.382	0.239	0.777	0.281
Family members abroad	1.174	0.302	2.976***	0.755	0.758	0.192	1.537	0.783
R2	0.0707	--	0.1059	--	0.1540	--	0.1465	--
Observations	500	--	494	--	486	--	497	--

Odds ratios and robust standard errors from logistic regressions are reported. + $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$. Reference categories are: Male; Never married; Salaries. We measure educational attainment as years of completed education. Source: EUMAGINE survey data. Complex survey weighting applied.

Table 9 Determinants of migration aspirations, Senegal (odds ratios)

Research areas	S1 Darou Mousty		S2 Lambaye		S3 Golf Sud		S4 Orka-diére	
	Odd Ratio	Std. Error	Odd Ratio	Std. Error	Odd Ratio	Std. Error	Odd Ratio	Std. Error
Dimensions of standard of living								
Measured relative level	0.69***	0.068	0.982	0.110	0.994	0.132	0.867	0.103
Satisfaction with current level	1.053	0.140	1.501*	0.279	0.758	0.156	1.265	0.185
Perceived relative level	0.771	0.151	0.511*	0.145	1.998*	0.641	0.864	0.202
Perceived current change	0.686 ⁺	0.109	1.076	0.197	1.345	0.260	1.421	0.342
Perceived intergenerational change	0.991	0.100	1.142	0.144	1.088	0.133	1.067	0.135
Control variables								
Sex (female)	0.726	0.204	1.082	0.417	0.834	0.229	0.291**	0.109
Age	0.976	0.021	0.971	0.023	0.928**	0.026	1.001	0.024
Age squared	1.002	0.003	0.996	0.004	1.001	0.004	0.997	0.004
Household size	1.044 ⁺	0.017	1.011	0.019	1.013	0.036	0.998	0.017
Educational attainment (years)	0.964	0.073	0.857	0.099	1.027	0.030	0.894	0.048
Educational attainment squared	0.993	0.012	0.961 ⁺	0.020	0.994	0.005	0.986 ⁺	0.007
Marital status								
<i>Never married (reference)</i>	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
<i>Married or in partnership</i>	0.299**	0.119	0.364 ⁺	0.146	0.709	0.245	0.204***	0.086
<i>Widowed or separated</i>	0.217 ⁺	0.177	--	--	1.044	0.801	0.883	0.690
Primary source of income								
<i>Salaries (reference)</i>	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
<i>Agriculture</i>	0.169**	0.087	0.722	0.926	1.263	1.391	0.260 ⁺	0.175
<i>Income from rent</i>	0.350	0.344	--	--	3.786	3.551	0.534	0.626
<i>Other non-agricultural business</i>	0.314 ⁺	0.159	1.394	1.766	2.987**	1.094	0.547	0.445
<i>Money from people in [country]</i>	0.532	0.420	0.872	1.135	--	--	0.084 ⁺	0.087
<i>Money from people abroad</i>	0.644	0.412	2.416	3.339	3.13	1.986	0.303 ⁺	0.207
<i>Aid from other sources</i>	1.158	1.066	3.956	6.024	--	--	0.085 ⁺	0.092
Family members abroad	1.613 ⁺	0.431	1.536	0.533	1.213	0.329	1.007	0.327
R2	0.1259	--	0.1281	--	0.1061	--	0.1633	--
Observations	497	--	488	--	485	--	496	--

Odds ratios and robust standard errors from logistic regressions are reported. + $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$. Reference categories are: Male; Never married; Salaries. We measure educational attainment as years of completed education. Source: EUMAGINE survey data. Complex survey weighting applied.

Table 10 Determinants of migration aspirations, Ukraine (odds ratios)

Research areas	U1 Zbarazh		U2 Znamyanska		U3 Solomyansky		U4 Novovodolaz'ka	
	Odd Ratio	Std. Error	Odd Ratio	Std. Error	Odd Ratio	Std. Error	Odd Ratio	Std. Error
Dimensions of standard of living								
Measured relative level	1.133	0.099	1.030	0.083	1.385*	0.219	1.137	0.106
Satisfaction with current level	0.724*	0.096	0.602***	0.087	0.491***	0.078	0.62***	0.073
Perceived relative level	0.854	0.189	1.099	0.226	1.353	0.323	1.256	0.280
Perceived current change	0.943	0.140	0.866	0.132	0.629*	0.118	1.067	0.179
Perceived intergenerational change	1.007	0.117	0.99	0.124	1.062	0.139	1.073	0.135
Control variables								
Sex (female)	0.863	0.203	0.768	0.173	0.579*	0.130	0.875	0.185
Age	0.987	0.024	0.984	0.023	0.92**	0.024	0.971	0.022
Age squared	1.003	0.003	0.999	0.003	1.001	0.003	1.000	0.003
Household size	1.054	0.081	1.001	0.083	0.932	0.091	0.919	0.091
Educational attainment (years)	0.921	0.203	1.272	0.211	0.677	0.168	0.894	0.124
Educational attainment squared	1.006	0.019	0.986	0.015	1.043	0.023	1.018	0.015
Marital status								
<i>Never married (reference)</i>	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
<i>Married or in partnership</i>	0.475*	0.150	1.055	0.316	0.852	0.258	0.528*	0.142
<i>Widowed or separated</i>	0.498	0.281	0.991	0.387	0.713	0.301	0.917	0.404
Primary source of income								
<i>Salaries (reference)</i>	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
<i>Agriculture</i>	0.461**	0.134	1.861	0.991	--	--	1.467	0.497
<i>Income from rent</i>	0.521	0.389	--	--	--	--	--	--
<i>Other non-agricultural business</i>	--	--	0.802	0.730	0.854	0.630	0.872	0.542
<i>Money from people in [country]</i>	--	--	1.442	1.547	1.304	0.803	0.408	0.370
<i>Money from people abroad</i>	1.202	0.517	--	--	4.74	7.208	0.198	0.265
<i>Aid from other sources</i>	0.811	0.320	1.728*	0.530	1.104	0.750	0.714	0.329
Family members abroad	1.53*	0.360	1.870*	0.530	1.464	0.497	1.053	0.298
R2	0.0686	--	0.0693	--	0.1533	--	0.1533	--
Observations	478	--	498	--	495	--	495	--

Odds ratios and robust standard errors from logistic regressions are reported. + $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$. Reference categories are: Male; Never married; Salaries. We measure educational attainment as years of completed education. Source: EUMAGINE survey data. Complex survey weighting applied.

The following section describes in detail the effects of various dimensions of standard of living on migration aspirations and discusses the most salient dimensions in forming migration desires.

6.3.2 Living standard determinants of migration aspirations

The regression results, illustrated in Table 7, Table 8, Table 9 and Table 10, can be summed up in a few points. Looking at the associations between the five dimensions of standard of living

and migration aspirations, we observe that most indicators show no significant effect on migration desires. Of the 25 effects that are significant, five are in an unexpected direction: they contradict the consistent linear pattern of increasing migration aspirations with decreasing standard of living in the pooled sample (shown in Table 5).

The only measurements of standard of living that render significant results are *satisfaction with current level*, and *measured relative level*, of standard of living. Satisfaction with one's current financial level shows systematic significant association with migration aspirations in Morocco, Ukraine and Turkey, except in one research area in Turkey (T4). We observe that it is inversely related to wishing to migrate: the greater dissatisfaction with one's current financial situation, the higher is the tendency to aspire to move abroad.

In Senegal, there is no significant association between satisfaction with current level of standard of living and migration aspirations, except in one area: in S2 (Lambaye) the effect is significant, and the direction is opposite to findings in other countries. A similar scenario is evident in S1 (Darou Mousty), although the effect is not significant. In these two areas, individuals reporting higher satisfaction tend to be *more* likely to wish to go abroad. Ambiguous results for Senegal may relate to the country's overall economic situation and widespread poverty. It may be the more well-off who wish to migrate, since they have the economic ability to do so (cf. de Haas, 2007, p. 883; van Dalen et al., 2005).

Another aspect of standard of living that is significantly associated with migration desires is the measured relative level. In three research areas in Morocco, two in Turkey, and one in Senegal, the higher the score on the household assets and utilities indicator, the lower the tendency of respondents having migration ambitions. These cases thus reflect the general pattern of migration aspirations relating to living standard overall. In contrast, in one research area in Ukraine (U3, Solomyansky), the effect was the opposite: lower household assets and utilities score was associated with a higher tendency of migration aspirations. Solomyansky has low unemployment, the highest wealth level in the country, and the highest average measured level of living standard among all research areas. This may reflect a straightforward economic motive behind migration.

While satisfaction with current level, and measured relative level, of standard of living emerge as significant determinants of migration aspirations, the other dimensions of standard of living appear only occasionally. For example, a perceived change in current standard of living is not significantly associated with the desire to migrate, except in one research area in Senegal (S1, Darou Mousty) and one in Ukraine (U3, Solomyansky). In both areas, when the standard of living is perceived to be improving, migration aspirations tend to diminish. This is in line with the overall above findings that migration aspirations decrease as standard of living improves.

In this context, insights from the qualitative material should be recalled, and particularly the importance interviewees accorded to uncertainties and unpredictability regarding the financial situation both in the present and future. The survey question on "perception of change in standard of living" asked respondents whether their standard of living is "getting much worse", "getting worse", "staying the same", "getting better" or "getting much better". In the qualitative material, several of the interviewees' descriptions of their conditions suggest that they are unable to answer this question in terms of the given answering alternatives, due to present and future uncertainties. The qualitative interview transcripts make evident that uncertainty derives from the fact that price levels, salaries, and likelihood of being able to pay for housing, are constantly changing, and in effect, the economic present and future is unknowable.

Furthermore, perceived relative level of standard of living, which captures perceptions of inequality in a neighbourhood, is marginally significant in only three research areas: one in Morocco (M3, Tanger), and two in Senegal (S2, Lambaye and S3, Golf Sud). In Tanger and Golf Sud, the higher the perceived relative level of standard of living, the higher the desire for migration. In Lambaye (S2), however, the effect is reversed. In other words, results are ambiguous.

The variable that assesses the perceived intergenerational change does not render significant results apart from in one research area, in Turkey (T2, Dinar). The significance level is low, and the basis for generalisations is weak.

6.3.3 Consistency of findings within the same research area.

We also wish to compare different measures of standard of living within the respective research areas (vertically in the tables). Lack of consistency within research areas should not be surprising: “standard of living” is an analytical construct, and various dimensions capture different empirical aspects.

As we discussed above, the different measurements are not highly correlated and as such were used separately in the above analyses. In four of the 16 research areas, different measurements of standard of living have contradictory effects on migration aspirations, within the same area. In M3 (Tanger), for instance, the measured relative level, and satisfaction with the current level, of standard of living both have a negative relation with migration desires. In contrast, the perceived relative level of standard of living works in the opposite direction. Similarly, in S2 (Lambaye), we observe opposite directions in the associations between satisfaction with the current level, and the perceived relative level, of standard of living with migration aspirations. In Dinar (T2) the results indicate that whilst the measured relative level, conveyed in household assets and utilities, and satisfaction with the current level of standard of living, both have negative association with migration desires, the perceived intergenerational change works in the opposite direction. The latter indicates that those who perceive their own standard of living to be better than their parents, when they were the same age as the respondent, are more likely to wish to migrate. Finally, in Solomyansky (U3), the result shows that measured relative level has a positive association with migration desires, while satisfaction with current level, and perceived current change in standard of living, both have the opposite effect.

6.3.4 Control variables

Some additional observations can be made here. Firstly, the result shows that educational attainment, measured in terms of years of completed education, has a limited effect on migration desires. Secondly, being female, and being married, appear to be negatively associated with migration aspirations, whilst having family members abroad increases migration desires. Finally, being occupied in agriculture is found to reduce willingness to migrate, with the exception of M3, urban Tanger. This may be related to high investments in the agricultural process, and to land ownership.

7 Conclusions

The statistical analyses of EUMAGINE data provide some key insights: First, out of the five dimensions of standard of living, satisfaction with current level, followed by the measured relative level, are the most important determinants of migration aspirations. Our findings

suggest that the relationships are largely positive: as satisfaction with personal financial situation declines, people increasingly wish to migrate. Vice versa, migration aspirations fall when satisfaction with personal financial situation improves. By the same token, among people with a lower score on the household asset index relative to others in the same research area, the tendency to wish to migrate is higher.

Second, the analysis of the pooled results from 16 research areas shows that the relationship between migration aspirations and standard of living displays a linear pattern on all the dimensions of standard of living. Migration aspirations thus continually decrease as standard of living improves. This pattern thus differs from an “inverted U”-shape of the relation between living standard and migration aspirations, which renders migration aspirations least prevalent among the poorest and the richest. Our analysis corresponds with the findings of the systematic literature review for QuantMig (Aslany et al., 2021), which found that migration aspirations diminish with individuals’ positive evaluation of their economic well-being.

Several studies have emphasised that development processes affect migration differently in low-, middle-, and high-income countries. Their focus has been on migration behaviour and flows, rather than migration aspirations. With respect to migration flows, Czaika and de Haas have found that in lower-income countries, rises in GDP increase both international and internal (rural-to-urban) migration, which is linked to prospective migrants overcoming poverty constraints (Czaika & de Haas, 2012). In higher income countries, however, higher GDP lowers migration rates (Czaika & Reinprecht, 2020, p. 13). This reflects the conventional wisdom on the relationship between migration and development (M. A. Clemens, 2014).

The potential impacts of economic indicators on migration aspirations, on the other hand, are more elusive and less studied. de Haas argues that social aspirations change with increasing wealth, and that people become more motivated to migrate with increasing income, education and access to information (de Haas, 2021), thus partly echoing findings on migration behaviour. His argument also resonates with the perspective of anthropologist Arjun Appadurai, who like de Haas (2007) is inspired by the capabilities approach of Sen (1999). Appadurai argues that the capacity to aspire is unevenly distributed: “the relatively rich and powerful invariably have a more fully developed capacity to aspire” (Appadurai, 2004, p. 68).

Our findings add some nuance to this generalisation. In the EUMAGINE data, even those least satisfied with their standard of living – and who are relatively worse off in terms of household assets than others in their community – still aspire to improve their conditions through migration. More well-off persons to a greater extent aspire to make a life where they are. Overall, dissatisfaction with personal financial conditions does not discourage hopes of improving standard of living through international migration.

Our paper suggests a methodological way into survey-research at the micro-level – by encouraging a focus on personal satisfaction with financial situation and measured relative levels of standard of living. Different dimensions of standard of living may give contradictory results within the same research areas, in our case in four out of 16 areas. This brings attention to the importance of local-level factors in particular localities – beyond macro-level and economic contextual factors. An implication of this is that several different survey items should be included in questionnaires in order to capture the impacts of standard of living on aspirations to migrate.

While the EUMAGINE survey shows that satisfaction with current level of standard of living, and the measured relative level, are important determinants of migration aspirations, the qualitative interviews demonstrate that people narrate their standard of living in other terms – e.g. in terms of income, ability to cover living costs and securing employment. Standard of living is also articulated in terms of access to social protection and the quality of community

and other infrastructures. People who took part in qualitative interviews emphasised the balance between incomes and cost of living. To a certain extent, this balance may be captured by the “satisfaction with current level of standard of living” in survey tools.

Qualitative interviews further showed that interviewees associate differences in standard of living to varying scales: to individual and family differences of wealth, to community characteristics and marginalisation resulting from political processes, and to mentalities purportedly related to migration. Interviewees thus invoke relative concepts of standard of living on different bases, and their comparative framings differ from the individual, household, social networks, kin group, community, to state. Social protection and infrastructural elements also make part of relative assessments, as when interviewees compare health services or road quality between communities, local governance units, social groups and individuals. Interviewees’ varying framings are highly relevant to assessments of relative deprivation, as they show that persons compare the entirety of their community with other communities, rather than comparing self and household to other individuals and households in a given reference groups, like the community. This should extend reflections on the relative deprivation of individuals and households to larger social entities, to capture the potential role of relative community or group marginalisation in shaping migration aspirations, and collective experiences of such inequalities.

The introduction of the time dimension to living standards is another main insight from the qualitative material. Aspects of rapid change, uncertainty, anticipations and disappointed hopes are major themes in qualitatively based research on migration (see e.g. Kleist & Jansen, 2016; Kleist & Thorsen, 2016), and should be brought into studies of how living standard and economic development influences the formation of migration aspirations. Given the crucial role that uncertain economic conditions and futures play in people’s considerations, it is noteworthy that questions to address such concerns are overlooked by most survey tools, though there are obvious methodological challenges involved. Expectations of future economic conditions, as well as experiences of unpredictability and uncertainty, form an underexplored topic in survey-research on migration aspirations.

Most commonly, qualitatively based research is used in mixed methods approaches to reflect on variation in statistical findings across localities, emphasising the importance of contextual factors. Obviously, local articulations of standards of living may also provide guidance for how the measurement of standards of living might be refined in surveys. However, our mixed methods approach was motivated by a wish to allow qualitative material to influence the conceptual framework of analyses. Moreover, qualitative research methodologies should contribute to analytical twists, in our case towards the future, the tempo and predictability of change, and people’s framings of inequality.

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