

# opportunities

for a fair narrative on migration

## Newsletter 10

### *A message from Dakar: the right to be mobile*

*OPPORTUNITIES went to Dakar, Senegal, for an exchange and consultation meeting with African colleagues and partners. The main message is to reopen the debate on the right to be mobile. A natural right that presupposes a fair dialogue. Strengthening this right could provide an answer to the toxic debate and drastic measures that cost many lives and future possibilities.*



### **Cooperation is key**

For the first time, OPPORTUNITIES went outside of Europe. With three African partners in our consortium, it is more than interesting to exchange with African NGOs and experts. A view from an African country brings new thoughts and a more balanced vision of the migration debate.

So the journey to Senegal is an exercise in fair dialogue, an exercise in listening to them, instead of narrating about them.

Senegal's program was built together with our Senegalese partner, Professor Aly Tandian of Gaston-Berger University, and with local NGOs. Especially Oumar Sall, artist and critic, helped us organize the first days of the meeting. He introduced

us to the cultural and socio-cultural and journalist world of Dakar.

From the first idea of going abroad, OPPORTUNITIES wanted a meeting where consultation, dialogue and exchange with Senegalese was central. This intention became concrete by choosing meeting rooms of local organizations. We were warmly received in RAW MATERIAL COMPAGNY (RAW), an independent cultural center that gives room for the alternative cultural scene, and MAISON DES CULTURES URBAINES (MCU), a socio-cultural organisation that supports young people from Ouakam (a large neighbourhood of Dakar).

Working together with these organisations was a surplus for the meeting. It was already an immersion

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in the local society, the local discussions, and the local hopes.

### An immersion in Dakar and Senegal

The two first days were devoted to the history, the urbanisation of Dakar and the culture of Senegal. The alternative cultural scene is for them a form of 'African renaissance'.



The first day we were warmly welcomed by Fatima Sy, curator of programs at RAW. Carole Diop, architect and member of RAW introduced us to the history of Dakar and guided us through Dakar's "plateau".

Dakar is -what Africans say- an unusual African city. It was developed very recently, from the beginning of the 20th century. Before that there was a hub on an island that was used from the 16th century mainly for the transportation of slaves.

Dakar was populated in the late 19th century only by a few farming communities. When the French government decided to make Dakar the capital, the city began to flourish. The "Plateau" became the political and financial heart of Dakar.



As a result, the peasant communities were forced to relocate to other places (Medina and further Ouakam). Some remnants of these peasant communities are still visible on the "plateau".

The "plateau" is a vibrant mix of stores, restaurants, banks, government buildings, schools, hotels, small factories, street markets and the harbour; vacant places are next to new buildings, ruins are next to cultural centres; people live on the streets, beggars and street vendors, police next to tourists.

Raw capitalism next to solidarity is everywhere in the streets.

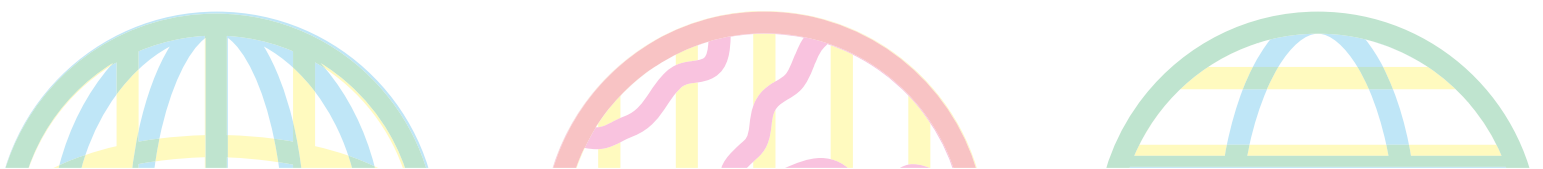
The second day we were warmly welcomed by Ismaïla Ba, director, for two days in MCU. The main activity was a cultural immersion.

We started with a debate with the topic of the importance of culture to give perspective to young Senegalese people. Oumar Sall introduced the topic. The alternative cultural scene developed from the 80ies on to give room for the bursting creativity. This scene existed next to the official and is an expression of the vital civil society of Senegal. It offers a real place for communities and young people to express themselves, for participation (community building activities), and for political participation (giving a voice to the communities). MCU is a typical example of such a centre. It even develops educational support for young people, introducing them into the digital world and gives them the access to this digital world.



This cultural scene has community building through artistic and cultural activities as a main objective. It gives young people a reason to build together the Senegalese society, investing in their own country.

Ousmane Faye, producer of the reality show 'Ferme Factory' showed how investing in local farming and making farming attractive for young people can reform and enrich the agriculture of Senegal. Professor Mamadou Dramé showed how the language of the young people is evolving by using several expressions and words from other languages, and by deforming words and expressions. A linguistic mix is the new language used in songs that expresses the hope and aspirations of young people.



The second day ended with a fashion show with the fashion designer Oumou Baldé of the brand TimTimol. "Re-succeed in Senegal" is her new collection. It continues with a musical performance



with the women calabash beaters of the village of Diofior, a town in western Senegal, located in Sine-Saloum, between Joal-Fadiouth and Fatick.

### The results of a dialogue

The third day focussed on the stories from migrants and on organisations working with migrants. A large group of NGOs was invited: Mamadou Dia from Centre KHAKHATAY; Saliou Sarr, from Kenu; Youssou Mbengue from Village du Migrant; Badara Ndiaye from DIADEM and Mademba Kamara from CARISM. After a presentation of the Cross Talk methodology and an introduction to our project we gave the word to their voices.



Stories of terrible trajectories through Libya and other countries, stories of how to defend the labour rights of seasonal workers, stories how return migrants are creating spaces for an investment in people, stories about women with children on the fled, ... showed the resilience of African people. They all raised the question of how to create a right to be mobile (going away and going back) with the objective to realize their human rights, to realize a peaceful journey.

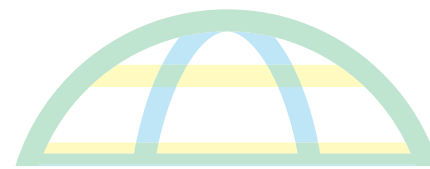
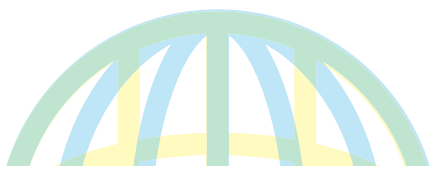


In the afternoon we had a panel of experts: from UCAD, Prof. Pape Sakho; from Université Cheikh Anta Diop, Prof. Mareme Niang Ndiaye; and from ESEA, Prof. Oumoul Khairy Coulibaly. Roy Sommer, scientific coordinator, and Marco Caracciolo and Simona Adinolfi introduced some key elements of OPPORTUNITIES: how journalists have problems with the scale of stories and which words we must use to counter the toxic debate on migration.

The experts showed that migration is more complex than we can imagine: the feminization of migration must be taken into account. We are talking about single women or mothers with children, sometimes very small children. This migration is separate from male migration. Some leave their village to avoid being married off, others because of the impossibility of building a dignified life there. This feminization means that our policies have to reckon with these trends.



Another characteristic of migration is that it is a business. A real business with major gains for several actors, so that the question arises who has an interest in stopping the migration business? The answer is easy: nobody. Because everyone (smugglers, families, the diaspora, the informal economy, weapon and defence industries, politicians, NGOs, ...) wins with this business. Except all these people who are dying on the seas, the Sahara, who are becoming slaves in Libya, who



are maltreated, ... An answer demands a paradigm shift: migration is a characteristic of human kind. Throughout the African countries, the world is populated because of migration. This right to be mobile is a natural right, this means it is something that everyone has the right to and mustn't be hindered to execute this right. Once this right is again accepted, we can realize a win-win for all countries.



The fourth day we discussed further on this paradigm shift with a lot of politicians.

Aly Tandian opened the debate with a presentation on "Analysis of Senegalese migration: between deconstruction and empirical decentralization of causes" by recalling that Senegal is a country with a very old migratory tradition. The Senegalese is a "great traveler" to optimize his opportunities and chances of success. He reminded us, based on the speeches of the Senegalese, that travel is associated with a positive act because it is supposed to forge the personality. Through the speeches of Senegalese, proverbs and songs on migration are often used to praise travel and migrants.



For the debate, we have invited le Commissaire Mamadou Bocar LY, Secrétaire Permanent du Comité Interministériel de lutte contre l'émigration clandestine (CILEC); Amadou François Gaye, Ambassadeur Directeur Général des Sénégalais de l'extérieure; Mamadou Diallo, Directeur du Projet Gouvernance Migration et Développement (DGASE); Mamadou Diop Thioune, HCCT; Valeria Falaschi, Chief of Mission, OIM; Oumar

Sall, auteur/critique Groupe 30 Afrique; Aboubacry Ngaindé et Mor Kane, membres of the Assemblée Nationale de Sénégal. The invitees from the UN and EU have apologized themselves last minute because of security treats in the streets of Dakar.



Two panels discussed a lot of topics: the treaties with Spain, the selling of the sea to foreign countries, the relation with Europe, how to overcome the maltreatment of refugees and migrants, how to create another language about migration.



Common in the answers are the need to create a better equilibria between the continents. Treaties with other countries about seasonal workers have to include social protection and fair wages; fair wages aren't the same as minimum wages; seasonal workers need also decent housing and decent living conditions. The treaties with companies must result in a win situation for the local people.

The right to be mobile must be the cornerstone of a migration policy. Once we have reopened this right illegal migration can stop, the business of migration can be redirected into a win situation for all countries. This needs a fair dialogue with Europe, a dialogue that is now problematized by the fear of too much refugees. Europe needs to use another view to start a dialogue with the African countries. This demands a fair dialogue, a dialogue on a same level telling foot.

A just conclusion of 5 days concertation on an equal level field.

