EUMAGINE
Imagining Europe from the Outside

Project Paper 1

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework EUMAGINE Research Project

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Introduction

During the last decade, debates on the meaning of Europe have been prominent in various disciplines (Christiansen, Jørgensen, & Wiener, 2001; De Teyssier & Baudier, 2006; Malmborg & Stråth, 2002; Wilson & Millar, 2007). Especially with the enlargement of the European Union (EU) to 27 member states, discussions on what exactly Europe is and where it is going to are gaining importance (Stråth, 2006). However, perceptions of Europe are usually studied *from within* the EU. In contrast, perceptions of Europe from the viewpoint of non-EU member states and their citizens remain largely unexplored. The concept of Europe is now of interest not only for European societies, but also elsewhere in the world (Wilson & Millar, 2007). Human rights and democracy are central features for the EU, also in its international policies and in its migration and asylum policies. This projects aims to study the links between such outside perceptions on democracy and human rights of Europe and (the desire to) migrate to Europe.[i]

This project does deliberately not only aim to analyze these perceptions of migrants who already decided to move to Europe, but will include perceptions of non-migrants. For theoretical and methodological reasons, the project analyzes perceptions on human rights and democracy of potential migrants, i.e. migrants, but also the large number of people who do not – perhaps not yet – move. In this way, the research disposes of an essential control group, namely the non-migrants. We likewise broaden the scope from perceptions on human rights and democracy in European destinations to perceptions on other possible destination areas. This enhances the understanding of the role and perception of Europe in the world. The innovative research design of this project would also enable to compare migration-related perceptions of Europe with perception of other major destination regions. Insight into the relative popularity of EU destination countries in comparison with other popular migration destinations – such as the U.S., Russia, Canada and Australia – is of particular importance in the light of recent EU migration policy objectives.

The ultimate goal of the project is to study the relation between perceptions of migrant and non-migrant individuals from source countries on human rights and democracy at the local, regional, national and international level on the one hand and migration aspirations and migration decision-making on the other. These perceptions, motivations and decisions are formed and changed within source countries. People form their perceptions and gain information about human rights and democracy from a range of different, specific local, national and international sources (Anderson, Regan, & Ostergard, 2002), implying that these perceptions, aspirations and decisions are socially and culturally embedded. This holds especially true for regions with a long tradition of out-migration, where migration has reached a certain own momentum through network and other affects and becomes self-sustaining (de Haas, 2008). We assume that the perceptions on human rights and democracy have an impact on the so-called 'cultures of migration', where migration becomes deeply rooted into people's behavioral repertoires (Massey, 1998). This culture of emigration as such – operational through popular discourses, media discourses, cultural artifacts, social networks – weighs heavily on potential migrants' perceptions, aspirations and behavior (Collyer, 2006; Pang, 2007). For this reason, we will operationalize the perceptions on human rights and democracy as socially and culturally constructed, influenced – among other things – by various

discourses on and representations of Europe and migration in the regions of origin. The term 'discourse' will be approached in a broad sense, referring to representations, practices and performances through which meanings are produced and legitimized (Gregory, 2000).

Human rights and democracy in migratory movements

Democracy and human rights are core values of the EU. The focus on the role of perceptions on human rights and democracy in migration aspirations and decision-making fits in with (EU) policy as well as academic needs. We assume that migration aspirations, decisions and behaviour are linked at these perceptions. The implementation of effective and proactive migration and human rights policies, maintaining and stimulating national and international competitive economies, has gained high political priority throughout the world. Perceptions on Europe and subsequent migration related motivations and behaviour are shaped within origin and/or transit regions. A thorough insight into the way these perceptions, motivations and behaviours are formed is therefore a prerequisite for an effective and proactive human rights and migration policy. Such an insight is ideally realized by means of a non-Eurocentric analysis within important source countries. So far, systematic empirical research on perceptions on human rights and democracy, and migratory aspirations from the viewpoint of potential migrants during this pre-migratory phase remains too limited (de Haas, 2007). Consequentially, the policy relevance of the project goes hand in hand with the academic added value. Various recent studies on international migration point at the importance of discourses and imaginations about migration and possible destination countries in generating and perpetuating migration aspirations and decisions. The discourses and imaginations related to democracy and human rights may focus at an individual (the specific rights of immigrants and asylum seekers) or at a more general level (human rights in a free marketplace and social welfare state characterized by the rule of law and democratic limited government). The role of perceptions on democracy and human rights and the link with migration motivation remains so far understudied (Boneva & Frieze, 2001). The extent to which policy with regard to rights of immigrants (e.g. limitation of procedural guarantees in matters of immigration or the right to family reunification), human rights in general and democratic government in the EU and its Member States may have an effective impact on immigration patterns, will depend on the said discourses and imaginations.

The transnational impact of human rights and democracy is undeniable and is the object of much contemporary scholarship with a predominantly institutional focus. Firstly, national constitutions and the concepts of rule of law, human rights and democracy embedded therein, function across borders. They form the framework for political and legal development at a regional level. Within the EU, they even take on the role of general principles of community law, binding upon the institutions and protecting the individual freedom and equality of those subject to EU law (Tsagourias, 2007). Conversely, they may also put limitations on the development of EU law, as has been the case of requirements of referenda or constitutional reform in different Member States prior to the adoption of new constitutive EU treaty law. Moreover, the transnational constitutional judicial dialogue, especially between higher courts, on issues of rule of law, including human rights and democracy, plays a multifaceted role in contemporary constitutionalism (McRudden, 2000). Secondly, regional and international law also increasingly acquire (semi-)constitutional functions (see e.g. Fassbend-

er, 1997). The call for international dispute settlement with regard to human rights violations, be it in the context of human rights courts, monitoring bodies or international criminal courts continues to increase, as well as the use of these mechanisms to resolve both internal and international disputes. At the EU level, European law has increasingly taken on constitutional features with the ECJ acquiring a role comparable to that of national constitutional or supreme courts (Ackerman, 1997).

Within temporary scholarship, the attention for transnational human rights and democracy focuses primarily on the institutional aspects and the appeal to institutional mechanisms by individuals. The effects of democracy and human rights in other domains, such as their role on migratory movements, remain largely unstudied (Caloz-Tschopp & Dasen, 2007; Battistella, 2005). Yet, the following aspects of democracy and human rights in the EU, and their conceptions, perceptions and the discourse thereon in source countries, may be of influence in the migratory process: free elections (including the passive and active political rights necessary thereto, like freedom of opinion, right to vote, right to be elected, freedom of political association, …); parliamentary democracy; rule of law (limited government; separation of powers; independent and impartial judicial review); individual rights and freedoms; social, economic and cultural rights and freedoms (including the relevance of a free market space and social welfare state); recognition of multiculturalism.

We propose to use a definition of human rights that focuses on one's capability to act in such a way as to take control of one's life and realized one's fundamental purposes. This concept focuses on the agency of individuals and groups to change their life circumstances and to escape from disadvantaged positions. By looking at the actual capabilities of people to improve their wellbeing (and their comparative perceptions thereof in sending and receiving countries), it allows including a large set of variables affecting people's aspiration to migrate. Within a capabilities framework, migration is an integral part of human development for two reasons. On the one hand, people can only move if they have the capability to do so by having access to social, human and financial/material capital (de Haas 2009). On the other hand, if people increase their freedoms through expanding their social, economic and human capital this tends to coincide with increasing potential levels of mobility or aspirations to migrate. So, the act or the possibility of moving in itself can add to people's wellbeing. This is the intrinsic argument why mobility can also be defined a a human right. The more instrumental reason is that the act of migrating – the move to a place offering more opportunities in terms of work, education, political rights, safety, health care – may also give people the capabilities to increase their social, economic, and political freedoms, and that the prospect of acquiring such capabilities often strongly motivates people to (aspire to) migrate (de Haas 2009).

The same approach of socially constructed conceptualization will be applied to both Europe and other possible destinations; we will not start from an *a priori* objectified and agreed conceptualization of what Europe is and then compare the perceptions of persons in relevant source countries. Europe and other destinations will be conceived as socially and discursively constructed locations, leaving space for respondents to elaborate freely their perceptions. Malmborg and Stråth (2002) argue that "Europe is an imaginary discursive construction, emerging out of nation state debates within the imaginary frame of a European identity". This holds equally true for other possible destination regions, since the majority of potential migrants never actually visited these places and usually possesses limited information on possible destination countries (Efionayi-Mäder, Chimienti, Dahinden, & Piguet, 2001). Media discourses and discourses of returned migrants, friends and family abroad are important sources in creating perceptions and imaginations on the democracy

and human rights situation of possible asylum and migration destinations (Koser & Pinkerton, 2004). This limited, second-hand information, often responding to locally emerging social and material needs, appeals to the perceptions of potential migrants of certain destinations. In this context, we will specifically explore the perceptions of persons in source countries on human rights and democracy, and analyze the link between these perceptions and migration aspirations / decision-making in particular.

The project explores the role that various types of discourses (media, politics, people and cultural artefacts) play in constructing 1) perceptions on human rights and democracy in Europe, 2) migration aspirations and 3) decisions of potential migrants, in not only regional, but national and international contexts as well. This interest in individual level processes such as perceptions, aspirations and decision-making is in line with trends in international migration studies (Massey, 1998). It was the New Economics of Migration (Stark, 1984) that first introduced the importance of the context in migration decision-making. A core assumption of the project is that human rights and democracy perceptions, aspirations and decisions are structured by various discourses, i.e. are culturally and socially embedded. Hence, the current project proposes a multidisciplinary approach, bringing together ideas and methods from law, human geography, political science, sociology, economics, anthropology, and psychology. In what follows, the rationale for the (initial) conceptual framework will be put forward, presenting a state-of-the-art by using concepts and research evidence from the various disciplines concerned. We will likewise indicate where and how our project goes beyond this state-of-the-art. Three major parts can be discerned in our conceptual framework for the specific theme of the impact of macro and meso level discourses on the construction of human rights and democracy perceptions, migration aspirations and migration decision-making: 1) *The impact of various types of discourses on perceptions*, 2) *The impact of perceptions on migration aspirations*, 3) *The* r*elation between migratory and geographical perceptions, aspirations and migration decision-making.* As one can notice, the first part deals with perceptions, the second with motivation and the third with behaviour.

The impact of various types of discourses on perceptions

Perceptions have become very important in the context of today's international migration, in which an increasing number of people are exposed to the idea of migrating because of the spread of mass communication and transportation possibilities and due to the rise in facilitating migration institutions such as human smugglers, international recruitment offices and marriage bureaus (Carling, 2002). Furthermore, migration can no longer be viewed as a simple, linear trajectory from A to B. Pieke, Nyiyi, Thuno and Ceccagno (2004) have argued that we have to move beyond the mechanistic bipolar model, acknowledging the growing complexity of the migration cycle, traditionally neatly divided into departure, incorporation and return. Because an increasing proportion of migrants engages in repetitive movements across national frontiers throughout their life cycle, they develop multiple attachments to various localities (Duany, 2002). This so-called 'Transnationalism' (Glick Schiller, Basch & Blanc-Szanton, 1992), relating 'source' and 'destination' regions into a single social field, blurs the territorial and linguistic boundaries between two places. These changing outlooks of today's international migration exert an important influence on potential migrants' migration related perceptions. And it is precisely this increasing complexity which twentieth century

concepts and migration theories fail to grasp, together with micro level processes such as the role of perceptions, aspirations and motivation in migration decision-making. A satisfactory theoretical and methodological account of international migration should also consider the motivations, goals, values and aspirations of individuals (Boneva & Frieze, 2001; Massey, 1998), a desideratum which will be addressed by the project.

While scholars have engaged in promoting a greater understanding of the universal value of human right principles, less attention has been paid to examining how these rights become relevant to individuals and communities (Aguilar, 2008). The dynamics of human right perceptions on the local level and how they are interpreted or given meaning in different (non-Western) cultural contexts remains understudied (Carlson & Listhaug, 2007). Furthermore, the role of perceptions on human rights and democracy on migration aspirations and decisions in major emigration regions also has so far never been studied systematically. A recent body of research points at the importance of a 'culture of emigration' in perpetuating migration aspirations and decisions (e.g. Collyer, 2006; Pang, 2007; Theo, 2003).

When exploring the traditional theories of international migration in *Worlds in Motion* (Massey, Arango, Huog, Kouaouci, Peregrino & Taylor 1998), all but one theory explicitly focus on the prominent role of the context in stimulating out-migration. The Theory of Cumulative Causation argues that each act of migration changes the social context within which subsequent migration decisions are made, so that additional moving is more likely to occur, a process first introduced by Myrdal (1957) and reintroduced to the field by Massey (1990). The theory incorporates the impact of socio-cultural community level changes on individual level motivations and behaviors. We cannot assume various discourses to be unanimously positive about migration, and potential migrants to be passive receivers of these messages (Riccio, 2001). The Theory of Cumulative Causation is a promising concept in that it dedicates a substantial role to the context in which migration decisions are formed while it also stresses the importance of culture for analyzing migration decision-making. Unfortunately, this theory only incorporates past migration's accelerating effects, without conceptualizing the possibility of negative feedback-loops (de Haas 2008). Is it possible that in certain areas critical migration-related discourses create a migration undermining dynamic, or does emigration continues disregarding the omnipresence of negative reporting on migration? These are interesting questions based on actual observations (Mai, 2004; Riccio, 2005; Timmerman, 2006a; 2008; Timmerman, Vanderwaeren, & Crul, 2003), which can not be explained by Cumulative Causation Theories but are longing for theoretically sound explanations.

Two types of imaginations will be incorporated in our research, which are generally approached as two different stages in migration decision-making: a general decision to move followed by a place-specific imagination at the second stage (De Jong, Warland & Root, 1998). For the first type, namely 'migratory imaginations', we introduce Mai's concept of a 'migratory project': "the term migratory project both encompasses and transcends physical displacement, as it designates the range of desired and desirable identities and lifestyles through which potential migrants *imagine* themselves" (2004:4). It is exactly this socially and culturally embedded migratory project that we will aim to grasp. For the place-specific imaginations, we will explore discourses on 'geographical imaginations', as introduced by Saïd (1978) and further explored by Gregory (1994). The concept of 'geographical imaginations' refers to the subjectivity of the human conception of locations, spaces, countries and the people inhabiting these physical places. In other words: people hold certain

images of the world's geographical regions and of the people inhabiting these regions. There are frequently many differences between 'the imagined regions' and the 'real regions', differences fostering mythologies, utopian dreams, popular culture, selective perception and prejudices about places and people (Timmerman, 2000, 2006a, 2006b,2008). Notwithstanding, 'geographical imaginations' are not fictitious, rather they are cultural constructions with real, material consequences. As such, this concept is very pertinent for the understanding of migration decision-making: imaginations of the qualities of certain places in the world, the people inhabiting these places and the existing social, political and economic possibilities characterizing these places significantly contributes to the decision to migrate and where to migrate (Gregory, 1994). In what follows, we present an overview of relevant literature, leading to the various hypothesized links between discourses and imagination in our conceptual model.

Popular discourses/social networks and imagination

Here we arrive at what Epstein & Gang (2006, 652) refer to as 'the influence of others' on the willingness to migrate and the locational choice of potential migrants. Popular discourses need to be understood as socially and culturally determined narratives and practices about migration, migrants and destinations within 'origin' and 'transit' regions. Discourses as defined within the framework of this research project include representations, practices and performances through which meanings are produced and legitimized (Gregory, 2000). Next to the influence of these more general popular discourses, migration related imaginations are also constructed with the informational input from social networks (Koser & Pinkerton, 2004). In international migration, social networks are typically composed of family and friends, community organizations and intermediaries such as labour recruiters and travel agents (Boyd, 1989). The impact of popular discourses on the continuation of migration can be situated within the Theory of Cumulative Causation (Massey, 1998) whereas Social Capital Theory attributes the endurance of international migration to the functioning of interpersonal social networks between migrants in receiving countries and relatives in sending countries (Hugo, 1981; Taylor & Stark, 1991). The focus of the latter theory is on micro level behavioral factors that initiate and perpetuate international migration (Heering, van der Erf & van Wissen, 2004). In the project, these micro, meso and macro level influences of 'the other' will be taken into account, focusing specifically on the influences of popular discourses on human rights and democracy. Likewise, we will be attentive for possible countervailing effects of past migration, or how past migration experiences have dissuading effects on potential migrants, an aspect missing in the above mentioned theoretical frameworks.

Research evidence on the impact of popular discourses on human rights and democracy related imaginations on migration aspirations and decision-making is far from unambiguous. A substantial amount of academic publications report popular discourses to have an advertising impact on migration aspirations. For example, Theo (2003) and Pang (2007) demonstrate how the meaning of migration in popular discourses in China positively influences potential migrants' imagination. In Chinese popular and media discourses, migration is represented as an opportunity which each young ambitious person should seize. This leads to the general imagination of migration as an opportunity to improve one's livelihood and increase one's status in the own society (Theo, 2003; Pang, 2007). Also in other prominent emigration regions - such as the Tanger-Tétouan region in Morocco, the Louga and Diourbel regions in Senegal, the Afyon and Kayseri provinces in Turkey, and the Volyn, Lviv, Zakarpattya, Ivano-Frankivsk and Chernivtsi counties in Ukraine - these posi-

tive representations of migration and certain destinations are common (Collyer, 2006; de Haas, 2007; Düvell, 2007; Lesthaeghe, 2000; Riccio, 2001; Timmerman, 2006a; 2008). An important constituting factor of popular discourses is the narratives and practices of returning migrants. Often these migrants strengthen the veracity of media images, partly to impress, and partly to deny any elements of failure to their relatives and friends back home (Wood & King, 2001). The demonstrated successes of these migrants appear to stimulate popular imagination of the people staying at home, especially when it is characterized by ostentation (Appadurai, 1996; Riccio, 2005). Returning migrants regularly function as a reference group for other villagers (de Haas, 2007). Being a point of reference, migrants can become models to be imitated and a source of inspiration (Minghuan, 1999; Timmerman, 2006a; 2008). Riccio (2005) for instance demonstrates how migrants take up pioneering roles in creating new fashions. Serving as important sources for identity, these popular discourses create demanding expectations for those left behind, on the one hand. Yet, on the other hand, they also have advertising effects for migration and stimulate migration related imagination (Theo, 2003). In this respect, the formed perceptions on human rights and democracy in the source countries may stimulate out-migration in regions with a particular human rights situation.

Not all research findings agree with the above mentioned positive and promoting images as spread by popular discourses and point at the prevalence of contradicting discourses. Mai (2004) for example demonstrates how the omnipresence of Italian television in Albania turned Italy into an attractive destination for migration in the past. However, because of an increased access to multiple sources of information and due to stories of disillusionment by returning migrants, today's migrants are changing their focus from Italy towards more distant and unknown places. This likewise reveals the dynamic and changing nature of discourses and the resulting imaginations over time, a finding also illustrated in the study of Riccio (2005). The overall success of migration in Senegal has brought along a shift in stereotypes. Whereas a migrant district was considered to be a ghetto in the past, today the inhabitants are talked about as idols and heroes. Timmerman (2000, 2006a; 2008) points at possible conflicting representations within one and the same discourse. In her studies on Turkish migration, Timmerman found that immigrants have a rather ambivalent status in their regions of origin. On the one hand, migrants are envied for their material successes, but on the other hand they are referred to as '*kultur sus'* (people without culture). All these examples demonstrate that discourses are far more complex and internally divided than generally assumed. Just because of these contradicting research findings, the project aims to present a detailed and nuanced picture of popular discourses and meanings attached to human rights and democracy related topics, in order to theorize their influence on imagination, migration aspiration and eventually decisions. With this aim in mind, other relevant (social, economic) factors affecting migration will not be ignored so that their influence in the migrant decision making process can be accounted for.

The role of social networks in international migration has been widely studied (Gurak & Caces, 1992). Ritchey (1976) summarizes the role of social networks in migration processes in three hypotheses: the *affinity hypothesis,* the *facilitating hypothesis,* and the *information hypothesis.* In the project, we are particularly interested in the informational role of social networks, since information dissemination through social networks seems most likely to influence perceptions on human rights and democracy and imaginations of migration and destination regions. Among other sources of information, social networks seem to be the most trusted source by potential migrants (Koser & Pinkerton, 2004), a finding confirmed by Schoorl, Heering, Esveldt, Groenewold & Erf (2000). In this survey among Senegalese and Gambian migrants, family, and to lesser extent friends, were

the main sources of information on the countries of destination. Paradoxically, this type of information cannot always be relied upon in terms of accuracy. There can be a tendency with migrants to overemphasize the positive aspects or to misrepresent their experiences (Efionayi-Mäder et al., 2001; Timmerman, 1999). Consequentially, potential migrants often posses limited and biased information on possible migration destinations. This limited, second-hand information, often responding to locally emerging social and material needs, appeals to the imagination. After all, a lack of information creates the space for idealization. It is precisely this role of information dissemination through social networks in the generation of 1) perceptions on human rights and democracy in Europe in relation with the local situation, 2) 'migratory imaginations' and 3) 'geographical' imaginations, that will be addressed in the project.

Besides the potential impact of social networks on imagination through information dissemination, participating in a network can influence imagination through what is called 'relative deprivation' (Stark, 1991). The core idea of this concept is that people do not appraise their properties in absolute terms, but rather in relative terms, i.e. in comparison with a reference group (Massey et al., 1998). As mentioned before, in major emigration regions this reference group is often composed of returning migrants or co-nationals who live oversea. People with family or acquaintances abroad are also more confronted with the limitations of immobility (Carling, 2002). In other words, persons who count migrant among their social network members will feel relatively more deprived from mobility than people not having friends or relatives in migration. Various authors find that this condition of deprivation – whether it is social, economic, political or mobility deprivation – stimulates imaginational processes (e.g. Carling, 2002; Theo, 2003; Mai, 2004). Besides popular discourses and social networks, there is one additional type of discourse that significantly shapes perceptions on human rights and democracy and imaginations on migration and on possible migration destinations, namely the perception of migration policy discourses.

Policy discourses and imagination

Following the moratorium on migration in 1973-1974, possibilities for migration to Europe have been gradually reduced by restrictive policies (Van Houtum & Pijpers, 2007). Various macro level studies – analyzing the relation between migration policies and migration streams - demonstrate that certain evolutions and aspects of migration policy are able to shape the nature and direction of migration flows (Efionayi-Mäder et al., 2001; Neumayer, 2004). Massey et al. (1998: 14) go as far as to say that "the state and its policies are central to explaining contemporary migration". In this regard, Carling (2002: 26) argues that the metaphor of a 'Fortress Europe' is misleading, because of its depiction of Europe as a "uniform, insurmountable wall". Instead, Carling reasons, European migration policy need to be compared to "a dense jungle with various paths, each associated with specific obstacles, costs and risks". International migration streams follow international policy developments, since migrants adjust their strategies and tailor their schemes to fit the prevailing rules and regulations. Despite this centrality of migration policies in explaining contemporary migration, theoretical approaches that integrate control policies in theoretical explanations of how migration streams are formed remain so far too restricted (Black, Collyer, Skeldon, & Waddington, 2006; Carling, 2002).

A topic gaining even less academic attention is the way in which human rights, democracy and migration policies are received and imagined about by potential migrants on a micro level. From a

policy perspective, insight into potential migrants' reception of policy initiatives seems crucial. At the same time, it is essential to take into account the tension within some of these policy initiatives. On the one hand, 'Europe' tries to run information campaigns discouraging people to migrate by informing them about the dangers and the economic difficulties it is confronted with. Yet, on the other hand, Europe also likes to portray itself as the beacon of prosperity, social justice and human rights. These policy objectives appear irreconcilable and to be going into opposite directions. The most important research gap surrounds the perception of information disseminated by various institutions in 'source' countries, such as destination countries' representative bodies and international migration institutions (e.g. IOM, OHCHR)[1] (Koser & Pinkerton, 2004). For example, it is unclear to what extent and what kind of information on migration procedures is spread by embassies and consulates in the most important 'source' countries. What's more, it is hard to find any empirical evidence on the way informational and sensitizing campaigns on migration are received by potential migrants. Therefore, the project explicitly focuses on the way that policy discourses on human rights, democracy and migration impact on perceptions on human rights and democracy, 'migratory imaginations' and 'geographical imaginations'. Particularly in the light of recent EU migration policy priorities, aiming to increase development cooperation with migrants' countries of 'origin' – and more specifically, of launching informational campaigns on the possibilities and conditions for legal migration within those countries -- this insight becomes indispensable. Past research for example has demonstrated that formal mechanisms for disseminating information about policies are hardly existing or inadequate, and that information disseminated by formal institutions is generally not trusted. The implication of this is that migrants often arrive in destination countries without evidence based knowledge of migration policies (Koser & Pinkerton, 2004).

Individual level factors and imagination

Next to media discourses, popular discourses, information disseminated through social networks and policy discourses, we hypothesize several individual-level variables to influence 'migratory imaginations' and 'geographical imaginations'. In the research, gender will be treated as a core constituting factor in shaping perceptions on human rights and democracy and migration-related imaginations, aspirations and decisions. Authors such as Carlson & Listhaug (2007) as well as Matsuda, Harsel, Furusawa, Kim & Quarles (2001) have argued that perceptions on human rights and democracy are influenced by individual-level factors such as gender. Migration is also a gendered phenomenon, requiring more refined theoretical and analytical tools than sex as a dichotomous variable (Piper, 2005). Some authors attribute women's relative invisibleness in migration research to the gender insensitivity of existing migration theories (Carling, 2005; Cranford, 2001). They argue that classic migration theories and frameworks are at best female aware rather than gender aware, continue to stress gender neutral explanatory variables and mechanisms for international migration, and often add sex as a dummy variable (Morokvasic, 1991). The "gender and migration" research tradition on the contrary treats migration as a gendered process, placing gender relations and hierarchies at the core of migration experiences. Since gender exerts a main influence in the pre-migration stage (Grieco & Boyd, 1998) and plays also a specific role in the context of human rights and democracy, the research in view will pay special attention to its interaction with migration-related imaginations, aspirations and decisions, and will explicitly incorporate gender into theory development. But also other individual level factors shape the nature of imaginations,

[1] IOM : International Organization for Migration; OHCHR: Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

aspirations and decisions. Mai (2004) for example descries the emergence of a new kind of (imaginary) subject in Albania, what he calls 'migratory youth'. The omnipresence of Italian media in Albania consequentially weighs especially on the imagination of youngsters, who are longing for new kinds of subjectivity in times of major social changes. We will therefore explore the impact and processes surrounding significant individual-level variables - such as gender, age, participation in social networks, migration history, educational level and income level - in both the survey and the qualitative fieldwork.

The impact of perceptions on migration aspirations

According to Carling (2002: 13), aspirations to migrate can be analyzed at macro as well as micro levels. On a macro level, this author refers to the question of 'why a large number of people wishes to emigrate', and attributes constitutive power to the *emigration environment*. This emigration environment consists of the social, political and economic context on the one hand, as well as the nature of migration as a socially and culturally constructed project on the other hand. The latter refers to the discursively constructed meanings of migration. The micro level approach to aspirations raises the question of 'who wants to migrate and who wants to stay'. Carling points at various individual-level factors that happen to influence migration related aspirations, such as gender, age, migration history and social status. Consequentially, the author distinguishes factors operating at and influencing aspirations on two distinctive levels and stresses the need for attention to both macro- and individual level influences (Carling, 2002). In the project, by moving through imaginations, we aim to combine these two approaches and also explore how macro (media discourses, policy discourses) and meso level phenomena (popular discourses) impact on individual level perceptions, imaginations and hence aspirations. So we hypothesize macro and meso level discourses in the emigration environment to influence aspirations indirectly through perceptions on human rights and democracy, 'migratory imaginations' and 'geographical imaginations', and this influence can be positive and/or negative.

In our conceptual model, we hypothesize perceptions on human rights and democracy and migratory and geographical imaginations to play a crucial role in shaping migratory aspirations. Whereas research on individual level processes of migrants - such as aspirations, motivations and imaginations - remains conceptually and methodologically too understudied in migration research (Boneva & Frieze, 2001; Chirkov, Vansteenkiste, Tao, & Lynch, 2007), this holds particularly true for the relation between imaginations and aspirations. Although imaginations and aspirations are clearly linked, we consider aspirations to be an essential intermediate phase between imaginations and migration decision-making. One can have images about migration or potential destinations, without really aspiring to leave or to migrate to these particular locations. While imaginations carry the basis for a motivation to migrate, aspirations refer to people's thoughts about migration as a possible strategy for themselves. Obviously, migratory and geographical aspirations need to be understood as a continuum, ranging from a vague wish to migrate or to move to a certain country to more concrete aspirations or intentions to leave. Whereas the majority of the population in many traditional emigration countries expresses a general willingness to leave their country, only a smaller proportion has concrete intentions to actually move (Drinkwater, 2002; Fassmann & Munz, 2002). In the project, we will operationalize these various gradations in aspirations through the in-depth interview

and survey questions. Next to for example asking potential migrants about their general wish to migrate, questions on their specific initiatives and plans will be included (e.g. IOM, 1998; Collyer, 2006). Besides variations in the intensity of migration related aspirations, they can also vary according to the various migration strategies (e.g. family reunification, family formation, asylum, temporary work programs, or illegal entry). Imaginations and aspirations for these several migration strategies appear to vary and may depend on the human rights situation in the country of origin. This is for example demonstrated in the study of Krassinets & Tiuriukanova (2001), where highly educated Russians especially aspire for short time labour migration, since among this group migration is perceived as a dangerous and risky step, particularly for women. Therefore, imaginations and aspirations for these several modes of migration will be accounted for in the project.

Two types of aspirations will be explored: 1) the aspiration to migrate and to opt for particular modes of migration, and 2) the aspiration to move to certain destination regions and not to others. We hypothesize perceptions and imaginations to be positively related with aspirations. This means that when perceptions on human rights and democracy and imaginations and ideas towards out-migration and certain destination regions are positive, the likelihood to aspire, migrate and choose for these places augments. Inversely, when migration as a life project and certain potential destination regions are negatively perceived and imagined, the probability of moving and choosing for these places decreases.

The relation between migratory and geographical imaginations, aspirations and migration decision-making

Whereas vivid imaginations, promising expectations, and high aspirations have pushed people to emigrate (Minghuan, 1999; Theo, 2003), the link between perceptions on human rights and democracy, imaginations, aspirations and migration decision-making is far from direct (Lu, 1999). In the current age of involuntary immobility it is necessary to include the vast majority of the world's population aspiring to migrate but missing the abilities to do so (Salt, 1997). While precedent authors point at the necessity of distinguishing between wishes or projects on the one hand and their realization on the other (e.g. Faist, 1997; Massey et al., 1998), Carling (2002) incorporates these two steps in an analytical framework which places the possibility of involuntary immobility at the centre of the migration process, namely the 'aspiration-ability' model. The conceptual distinction between aspirations and abilities permits to define three categories of potential migrants: 1) people who aspire to migrate and have the ability to do so ('migrants', e.g. pendulum migrants), 2) people aspiring to migrate but lacking the required abilities ('involuntary non-migrants', and 3) people not aspiring to migrate ('voluntary non-migrants'). Since perceptions, migratory and geographical imaginations and aspirations of people within these three categories are very likely to vary, they will be included into the project.

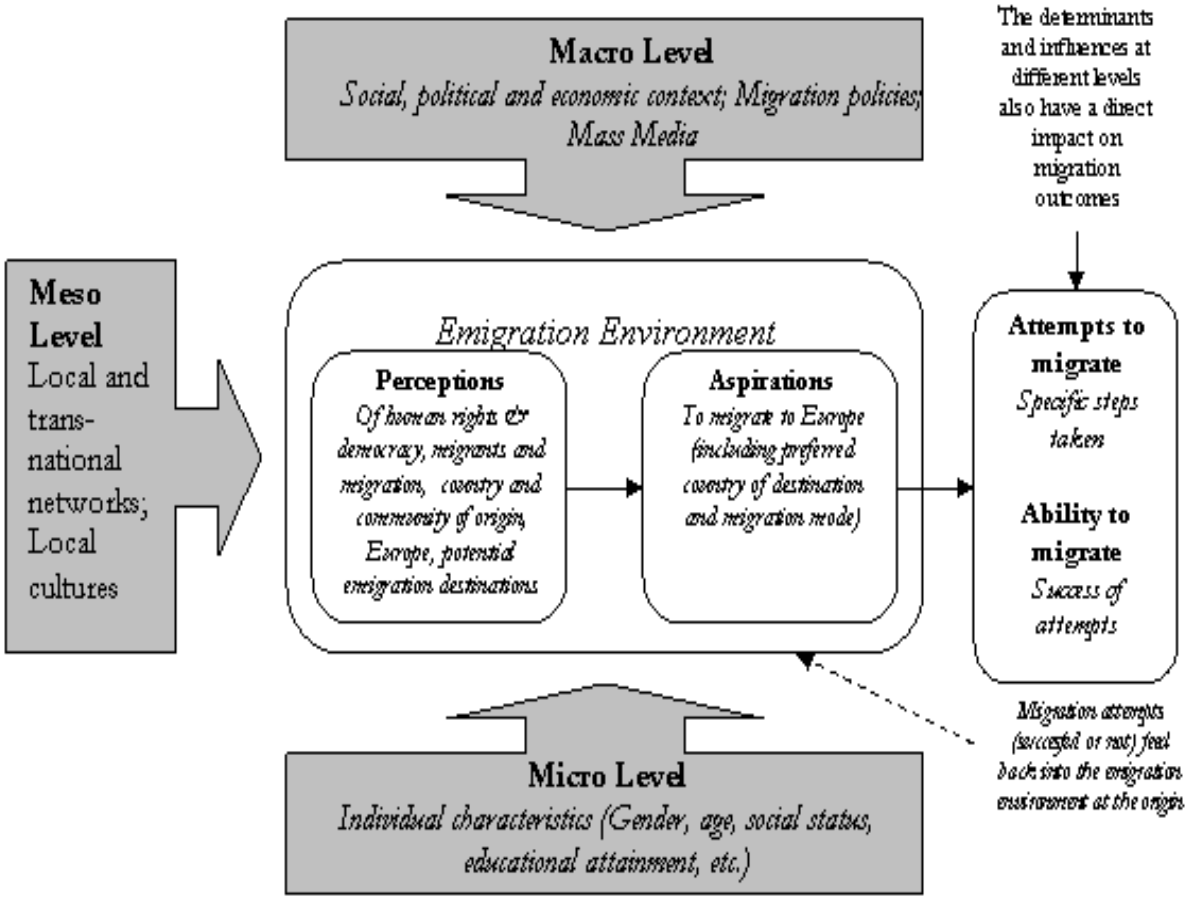
Our conceptual model builds further on this 'aspiration-ability' model, but incorporates the important constitutive impact of various discourses, and further of perceptions on human rights and democracy and migratory and geographical imaginations on aspirations to migrate, to aspire for certain modes of migration and aspiring to move to particular destinations. Empirical work on the relation between aspirations and migration decision-making seems to contradict conventional theories

of migration decision-making, positing a straightforward, sequential link between residential satisfaction, mobility intentions and actual migration (Speare, 1974; Speare, Goldstein, & Frey, 1975). Migration decision-making needs to be understood as a very complex process on which a large range of factors at various levels simultaneously play (Krassinets & Tiuriukanova, 2001). The influence of some of these forces will be operationalized in the research, more particularly the individual level variables and several aspects in the *emigration environment* such as mass media, international and local migration policies, transnational networks and popular discourses. However, migration decisions appear to be influenced by various elements that cannot be included in this project, like geopolitical factors and trafficking activities (Efionayi-Mäder et al., 2001; Neumayer, 2004). All-embracing conclusions on the effects of all these forces on migration decisions, and on the relative role of perceptions on human rights and democracy, imaginations and aspirations among these factors fall therefore beyond the scope of the research. Since the proposed categories of 'migrants' and 'involuntary non-migrants' include those who already decided to migrate, we can explore how perceptions, imaginations and aspirations relate to decisions, and compare these persons' perceptions, imaginations and aspirations with those of they who deliberately choose to stay. Furthermore, within the former group, the subgroup of returning and pendulum migrants can provide interesting insights into the feedback-loops of migration decisions on perceptions, imaginations and aspirations. The relation with migration decisions can further be explored on an aggregate level, through the method of region selection. By comparing perceptions on human rights and democracy, imaginations and aspirations in a relatively low emigration region with perceptions, imaginations and aspirations in a high emigration region, a high immigration region and a region with a specific human rights situation, we can gain insights on the relation between perceptions, imaginations, aspirations and migration decisions.

Because the study of migration decision-making raises substantial methodological and theoretical challenges, many academic researchers turn to the exploration of migration aspirations or intentions (e.g. IOM, 1998; European Commission, 2000; Epstein & Gang, 2006). Focusing on aspirations or plans to go abroad, and aspirations and plans for which country to go to - not actual decisions – clearly misses an important element, namely the difference between declared intentions and realized actions (Lu, 1999). However, data on migration-related aspirations can provide interesting results when we read them comparatively: they allow drawing conclusions on the relative popularity of certain modes of migration and of particular destination countries, an important objective of the research in view.

Conceptual framework

Attempts to migrate to Europe are preceded by the development of perceptions on human rights and democracy in Europe and in the home country, and aspirations to migrate. These aspirations could be very broad wishes for going to Europe or elsewhere, or more specific preferences in terms of destinations and modes of migration (e.g. through family reunification, family formation, temporary work programmes, asylum, or illegal entry). Migration-related perceptions and aspirations develop within a specific cultural, political-juridical and economic setting, which has been referred to as the emigration environment (Carling, 2002).The project is based on a specific analytical framework which has informed the project design (see Figure 1).



Ethnographic studies have demonstrated how migration aspirations are linked with socially and culturally constructed perceptions. These include ideas and meanings attached to the migration project, subjective images of one's current environment, and thoughts about potential destinations. While the Europe of the European Union is the principle focus of this project it will also explore how in the mind of residents of various emigration countries Europe compares with other major destination countries, notably the US, Russia, Australia and Canada. The project seeks to understand how perceptions on human rights and democracy are formed, and translate into aspirations and decisions to migrate to Europe or elsewhere. These processes are influenced by factors at three levels. *The macro level* includes the factors that are common to all potential migrants, such as national policies on emigration and immigration, the overall economic and political situation in the country, the mass media, and the human rights and democracy level. *The meso level* encompasses the factors in between the individual and the society at large (Goss & Lindquist, 1995). Most important are the local and transnational networks through which people collect information and exchange ideas. Finally, *the micro level* concerns characteristics of individuals. Perceptions are shaped not only by the human rights conditions within a country, but also by individual-level factors such as gender and political allegiance (Carlson & Listhaug, 2007). Also the resulting aspirations to migrate are clearly influenced by gender, age, educational attainment, labour market situation, political-juridical status etc. An important force in the framework is the feedback-arrow, stressing the dynamic nature of migration-related perceptions and aspirations. Each act of migration has an impact on the context in which subsequent migration decision are made (Massey, 1998). Therefore, we will approach perceptions, aspirations and decisions as dynamic processes, open to changes over

place and time. The individual characteristics as well as the meso- and macro-level factors affect the degree to which people with aspirations to migrate are able to go. There are substantial barriers, not least in relation to Europe's restrictive immigration policies, and literally millions of people have a dream to go to Europe that will never be fulfilled. Although the major focus of the project is on how and why perceptions and aspirations are formed, the specific project design permits to likewise include the link with migration decision-making.

Research questions

The project aims to present a dynamic non-Eurocentric analysis of the impact of perceptions of human rights and democracy on migration aspirations and decisions in important source countries. The project will particularly focus on the contribution of such perceptions on migration aspirations and decisions in emigration and transit regions outside the European Union. Four related themes will be addressed: (1) The relation between perceptions among people living in selected source countries of the human rights and democracy situation in Europe and in their own country and their migration aspirations; (2) The influence of human rights and democracy related perceptions on migration compared to the effect of other migration determinants (3) The extent to which migration is perceived as a valuable life project ; and (4) how potential migrants compare Europe with other major destination regions as the US, Russia, Canada and Australia in relation to their perceptions on human rights and democracy. The project is based upon a systematic analysis of existing literature and (quantitative and qualitative) data, and the collection of new material through a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods in selected regions of the source countries. It will look into the following five research questions:

How are human rights and democracy related imaginations in migrant sending countries constructed?

The goal of the project is to deconstruct human rights and democracy relating imaginations, hence it intends :

1. to grasp migration as a gendered, socially and culturally constructed project ('migratory imaginations');
2. to reveal the social and cultural construction of countries of destination as they relate to perceptions of human rights and democracy ('geographical imaginations') – more specifically: EU member-states;
3. to get insight into the relative popularity of Europe, and of specific European destination countries, in comparison and in competition with the US, Russia, Canada and Australia as other main immigration countries, and the importance of perceptions on human rights and democracy.
4. to understand how perceptions on human rights and democracy are related to migration aspirations and decisions.

How are perceptions on human rights, democracy, migration and possible destination countries affected by various factors?

At the different levels, the following factors will be taken into account: :

1. Macro level: human rights, democracy and emigration policy in source countries, political-juridical and socio-economic situation, EU policy and media;
2. Meso level: households, popular discourses, local and transnational networks, local culture;
3. Micro level: gender, educational level, migration history and political-juridical and socio-economic status.
4.

How do perceptions on human rights and democracy and 'geographical imaginations' relate to migration aspirations and migration?

In order to deconstruct the relationship between human rights, democracy and 'geographical imaginations' on the one hand, and migration aspirations and migration, on the other hand, the project will:

1. demonstrate how perceptions inform specific aspirations to migrate, to aspire for specific modes of migration and to aspire for moving to certain destinations;
2. demonstrate how perceptions and imaginations relate to migration decisions.

How to develop a better informed migration policy, taking into account human rights and democracy as important migration determinants?

With an eye to developing a better European migration policy, the project will:

1. analyze how European human rights and migration policies affect perceptions outside Europe on human rights and democracy in Europe as well as in sending countries, and subsequently influences migration aspirations and decision-making;
2. analyze whether and how non-state actors' activities affect perceptions on Europe migration decision making;
3. provide policy recommendations to foster a more balanced and feasible EU human rights and migration policy in relation and in cooperation with sending countries.

How to contribute to local capacity building in source countries, in order to prepare the ground for locally based research initiatives in the future?

Aiming to contribute to local capacity building in the source countries, the project intends to

1. closely collaborate with research institutes and policy think tanks in various sending countries;
2. involve students of relevant disciplines in the project.

Central assumptions

The core idea of the project is that macro and meso level discourses on human rights and democracy influence micro level perceptions on these themes in countries of origin and transit, which in turn influence migratory aspirations and decisions. This central theme embodies two large assump-

tions. In the first place, we suppose that these perceptions, aspirations and decisions are socially and culturally embedded, i.e. largely influenced by the context in which they are structured. In this environment, we particularly hypothesize that policy, media and popular discourses on human rights and democracy impact on the imagination of migration as a valuable life project ("migratory imaginations") and on the imagination about particular destination countries ("geographical imaginations"). Secondly, we expect that these perceptions and imaginations are positively related with migratory aspirations and migration decision-making. This means that when attitudes and ideas towards out-migration and certain destination regions are positive, the likelihood to aspire, migrate and choose for these places augments. Inversely, if migration as a life project and certain potential destination regions are negatively perceived, the probability of moving and choosing for these places decreases.

By dedicating a large influential role to potential migrants' perceptions in aspiring and deciding to migrate, we put large assumptions on migrants' individual choice and ability to effectively respond to their aspirations. We acknowledge that various phenomena in the migration environment can interfere with the direct relation between motivations and actual behaviour, such as social networks (De Jong, Warland, & Root, 1998), economic resources (Carling, 2002), trafficking and other migration facilitating institutions (Kofman, Phizacklea, Raghuram, & Sales, 2000; Pang, 2007). Nevertheless, the research takes the agency of potential migrants as a starting point and dedicates considerable attention to processes taking place in the person and the direct environment of the migrant. This micro level approach breaks with macro-structural international migration theories (e.g. Segmented Labour Market Theory (Piore, 1979) and World System Theory (Wallerstein, 1974)), that propose migration to be the result of a "black box" of macro historical and structural conditions such as "globalization", "population pressure", "dual labour markets", etc. In contrast, the current era in international migration research explicitly acknowledges migrants' agency and individual choices (Collyer, 2006; de Haas, 2007). By also focusing on the identities, perceptions, motivations and actions of the actors inside this box, much about the migratory process can be revealed (de Haas, 2007; Krissman, 2005; Massey, 1998). However, the spotlight on micro level processes and individual decision-making does not mean a return to neo-classical economic theories and structures. The chosen perspective applies both agency and structure approaches because it supposes migrants to be rational-choice beings, comparing the relative costs and benefits of remaining in the area of origin or moving to various alternative destinations (Castles & Miller, 2003). In the research, we precisely question the assumed rationality and context-non-specificity of neo-classical theories by hypothesizing that perceptions on human rights and democracy and the emigration environment are prominent in migration decision-making.

On the basis of the foregoing critical review of the literature, we now present the overall research questions which are derived from our conceptual framework.

Discourses, 'migratory imaginations', and 'geographical imaginations'

On the relation between representations of/ discourses on human rights, democracy and migration and possible destination countries on the one hand and 'migratory imaginations' and 'geographical imaginations' on the other hand, we propose the following:

1. We assume that migration is imagined as a valuable life project imagined in the four se-

lected localities within the four case countries

2. We assume that people have certain perceptions about human rights, democracy, migrants and migration in the four selected localities within the four case countries

3. We assume that there is a different perceived popularity of Europe in major emigration countries, in comparison and in contrast with other major destination regions, in particular the US, Russia, Australia and Canada

4. We assume that there are different perceptions of different European destinations for migration or asylum in major emigration countries

5. We assume that the forces in the emigration environment act upon the construction of 'migratory imaginations'

6. We assume that perceptions of possible destinations for migration or asylum in major emigration regions are socially and culturally constructed

7. We assume that popular discourses and information disseminated by social networks play on perceptions on human rights and democracy on source and destination countries, 'migratory imaginations' and 'geographical imaginations'

8. We assume that policy discourses in major 'source' and 'transit' countries contribute to perceptions on human rights and democracy in source and destination countries 'migratory imaginations' and 'geographical imaginations'

9. We assume that informational campaigns by international organizations and important destination countries' embassies are perceived by potential migrants and have influence the on perceptions on human rights, democracy, 'migratory imaginations' and 'geographical imaginations'

10. We assume that the relative importance of public discourses, information disseminated by social networks, and policy discourses in constructing perceptions on human rights, democracy, 'migratory imaginations' and 'geographical imaginations' are different

11. We assume that individual level factors such as gender, age, migration history, socio-economic, socio-political and juridical status interact with perceptions on human rights, democracy, 'migratory imaginations' and 'geographical imaginations'

12. We assume that perceptions on human rights, democracy, 'migratory imaginations' and 'geographical imaginations' differ between 'migrants', voluntary non-migrants' and 'involuntary non-migrants'

13. We assume that gender is a core variable and interacts with imagination processes

Perceptions on human rights and democracy and migratory aspirations

On the relation between perceptions on human rights and democracy and migratory aspirations, we propose the following:

1. We assume that the migration-related aspirations within the 16 selected locations have various gradations

2. We assume that migration-related aspirations in the four selected locations within each case country are socially and culturally constructed

3. We assume that perceptions of human rights and democracy impact on migration-related aspirations in different ways in the different countries/regions

Perceptions on human rights and democracy, migratory aspirations and migration decision-making

On the relation between perceptions on human rights and democracy, migratory aspirations and migration decision-making, we propose the following:

1. We assume that ‘migratory imaginations’ and ‘geographical imaginations’ differ between the four locations in each country
2. We assume that ‘migratory imaginations’, ‘geographical imaginations’ and aspirations translate into attempts to migrate
3. We assume that perceptions of Europe’s migration and human rights policies influence migration decision-making
4. We assume that there are inconsistencies between aspirations and abilities/ attempts to migrate
5. We assume that acts of migration impact on migration-related imaginations, aspirations and decisions
6. We assume that in certain areas critical migration-related discourses create a migration undermining dynamic (negative feedback-loop)

The research design: a comparative perspective

Between-country and within-country comparisons

In order to study the variety of contextual influences on the perceptions of human rights, democracy and subsequent migration aspirations and decisions, we opt for a case-study approach. The project is based on the belief that by comparing and contrasting a diversity of local contexts, it is possible to make analytical generalizations about how these perceptions are formed, and how they influence migration decisions and aspirations. Therefore, the starting point will be to generate an in-depth understanding of perceptions, aspirations and motivations in selected areas of origin of migrants. For that reason, the project encompasses four countries that are important as areas of origin: Morocco, Senegal, Turkey and Ukraine. All four countries are sources of substantial migrant populations in Europe. The four selected countries are also attraction poles outside Europe’s external borders for migrants coming from further afield. Migration flows to Europe from and through these four case study countries include regular migration based on family formation/reunification, asylum or employment, as well as irregular migration.

All four countries have a specific human rights and democracy situation and are the source and transit countries of substantial migrant populations in Europe. In order to reflect the diversity within each country, four types of locations will be selected. These 16 “cases-within-cases” will be carefully selected, especially based on the information provided by our partners from Morocco, Senegal, Turkey and Ukraine. In order to guarantee insight into the diversity of perceptions, aspirations and motivations within each country, four research locations will be located: 1) an area that is characterized by high-emigration rates; 2) a second, comparable socio-economic area with low emigration; 3) a comparable area with a strong immigration history; and 4) a location with a specific human rights situation.

Diversity within population with a special focus on gender

The target population of the study is the general population in the 18-40 age groups of the four countries and sixteen localities (4 localities x 4 countries), that is, those who are most likely to consider emigration as a possibility. Besides other relevant individual level variables such as age,

gender, socio-economic and political-juridical status within the target population, we will compare perceptions on human rights and democracy, and migration aspirations and decisions of three conceptual categories of persons: voluntary non-migrants, involuntary non-migrants and migrants (Carling, 2002).

The project participants of EUMAGINE are committed to the promotion of gender equality in line with articles 2 and 3 of the Treaty on European Union and the Commission's gender mainstreaming strategy in research, as articulated in the Communication "Women and Science: mobilizing women to enrich European research" (COM(1999)76-C5-0103). All partners are committed to the following aspects of gender mainstreaming: 1) research must contribute to an enhanced understanding of gender issues; and, 2) research must address women's needs. With Theo (2003: 433), we state that "Imagination may be interpreted in gendered terms and forms a basis for understanding the world and making decisions".

Research must contribute to an enhanced understanding of gender issues

The "gender and migration" research tradition treats migration as a gendered process, placing gender relations and hierarchies at the core of migration experiences. The discord between classic migration theories and the "gender and migration" research line corresponds to two different conceptualizations of gender, present in today's research on female migration (Carling, 2005; Donato, Gabaccia, Holdaway, Manalansan, & Pessar, 2006). In the first perspective, "gender" is operationalized as a dichotomous variable (male and female), easily included in quantitative models. According to the second perspective, gender has a highly relational and situational character - as variables such as class and race. Especially in the context of human rights, the situational and relational nature of gender is particularly relevant (Mahler & Pessar, 2006). The multi-method approach of the research permits to combine the rather static (in the quantitative part) and dynamic (in the qualitative part) conceptualization of gender, leading to a more holistic understanding of the agency inherent in the concept of gender in the pre-migration phase. Through its gender sensitive approach, the project contributes to the reconciliation of the existing gap between international migration and human rights research on the one hand and the "gender and migration" research on the other hand. In other words, the project contributes to the gender mainstreaming of international migration and human rights research.

Research must address women's needs

In order to equally address women's needs, the qualitative and the quantitative research parts strive for the inclusion of as much male as female respondents. In the quantitative part, this gender-sensitivity is operationalized through sampling equal numbers of men and women. The qualitative part will be attentive for gender as a contextual and relational factor – next to proportionally involving men and women. Human rights & democracy perceptions and migration aspirations and decisions will become especially transparent in the participant observation of the qualitative research part. Observational activities during meetings of women's organizations, in households, in secondary and higher educational institutes, etc. can reveal dynamic insights on gender as a relational construct. As discussed in the progress beyond the-state-of-the-art, feelings of deprivation – whether it is social, economic, political or mobility deprivation – stimulate imaginational processes. Research demonstrates that women and men experience relative deprivation differently, leading to

various migration patterns for men and women (Curran & Saguy, 2001). For example, the social constraints on mobility or specific social norms can disproportionally circumscribe women's over men's lives (Mahler & Pessar, 2006; Morokvasic, 1991; Piper, 2005), leading to gendered imaginations, aspirations and decision-making. Extensive ethnographic fieldwork can reveal these subtle, but influential processes.

Methodology

The methodology of the project will permit an in-depth study of local processes and people's subjective perceptions as well as systematic comparisons and quantitative generalizations. Therefore, there are three main methodological components: 1) ethnographic fieldwork in the community, 2) a large-scale survey, and 3) qualitative interviews with selected survey respondents, which will be directed by an interview guide. The research will use a three-method triangulation through combining the quantitative method with two qualitative research methodologies, namely in-depth interviews and participant observation in communities. A major challenge of the research will be to sufficiently draw together the quantitative and qualitative research parts and to have each informed the other. Various team members' extensive expertise with multi-method research will ensure the coherence of the project's composite methodological design.

Innovation and dissemination

The project team strives for innovation in various aspects of the project. First of all thematically; in contrast with a vast amount of studies concentrating on perceptions of Europe from within-EU member-states, this topic has rarely been addressed outside the borders of the European Union. The quest for a non-Eurocentric analysis is high, and keeps in with policy as well as academic needs. The approach is not only non-Eurocentric in words, but is deeply ingrained into the project through the innovative management structure of working with GDT's. Secondly, the project is conceptually innovative. Until recently, the link between democracy, human rights and migration were hardly discussed within political research (Dahlstedt, 2001). Moreover, the concept of 'perceptions' - 'migratory imaginations' and 'geographical imaginations' - remains relatively unexplored in migration research. Various authors point at the power of perceptions and imaginations in inducing decisions to migrate and to move to certain places. However, how this concept relates to other studied concepts in migration research such as a culture of migration, aspirations, migration decision-making, etc. remains so far out-of-sight of international migration research. This is closely linked with the third innovative aspect of the project, namely theoretically. The project will depart from an initial conceptual framework (see figure 1), that will be empirically tested and refined. The post-structuralist era in international migration and human rights research is in need for a multidisciplinary, multi-level theoretical framework that approaches migration as a socially and culturally constructed project. Finally, the project is characterized by an innovative methodological design. The 'between-within' research design permits to systematically compare perceptions on human rights and democracy, migration-related aspirations and decisions between several source and transit countries on the one hand, and to systematically compare the processes under study within a single country on the other hand. Within countries: triangulation of data material; comparisons between different types of data, different regions, and different profiles of potential migrants. Between countries: transcending the county level to make cross-country comparisons.

The project will be relevant to four main audiences: 1) academics, 2) policy makers, 3) civil society organizations, and 4) migration and human rights practitioners. By civil society organizations we especially refer to those organizations directing their activities at potential migrants. Civil society organizations can play a crucial role in informational campaigns, since information spread by official entities is often not trusted by potential migrants (Koser & Pinkerton, 2004). Migration practitioners refer to representatives from important destination countries in third countries such as embassy and consulate staff. Strategies for dissemination of accessible, and practical information to government agencies, and associations at all levels include: the construction of a project website; the creation of an advisory board outside the academy that links with non-academic organizations, interest groups and individuals in the field of the various participating countries; publication of articles in international refereed journals; the organization of an international conference and an expert seminar. Instead of publishing a large amount of thick reports, the team will set up a project working papers series to be published on the project website as a way of quick disseminations. These papers are important steps on the way to real publications. A selection of papers will be elaborated into manuscripts to be submitted to academic, peer-reviewed journals. However, some reports are necessary in order to streamline the presentation of information from each country for use in comparative analyses.

The composition of the multidisciplinary project team

The project team composition guarantees an interdisciplinary, non-Eurocentric perspective of the project that is closely linked with the conceptual and methodological approach. There have been four guiding principles in partner selection: 1) A diversity of disciplinary perspectives. The researchers involved have backgrounds in law, human rights, human geography, sociology, psychology, political sciences, anthropology and economics. 2) Inclusion of one research partner in each of the case study countries. This also serves the aim of capacity building in order to prepare the ground for future locally based research initiatives. 3) European research partners should have a profound knowledge of democracy / human rights and migration issues generally, and the four case study countries specifically. The team members of the University of Antwerp have a solid publication record on migration from Turkey and juridical/human rights situation in Morocco. Team members at the University of Oxford are experts on migration from Morocco, Ukraine and Turkey. The scholars from PRIO are involved in migration research in Senegal and Morocco. For each of the four origin country, these three EU-based partners form a ‘Geographical Duo-Team” (GDT) together with the local partner. 4) The analytical and methodological ambitions of the project require the best available expertise on these issues. The International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO) is included also due to the specific competence on migration aspirations and survey development, which has been central to the development of the project. Researchers at the University of Oxford and the International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO) have extensive experience with multi-method research on migration and will ensure the coherence of the project’s composite methodological design as well cross-project coherence and excellence in multivariate data analysis. Moreover, team members of the University of Antwerp (UA) have a solid track record in the fields of research on human rights (Europe, Morocco, Middle East), migration law (Europe) and economics of migration.

Various disciplines will be combined during the research since our interest in exploring various influences in countries of origin asks for specific disciplinary expertise: sociology, law, anthropolo-

gy, economics, human geography and politics. A continual communication between the various perspectives – through the local intranet and team meetings – can likewise solve potential problems. However, a major task is here reserved for the overall project coordination, carrying the final responsibility for streamlining various perspectives and an optimal communication between several research methodologies.

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i This quest for perspectives from outside the EU is addressed by topic 8.4. "Europe and the world" of the Seventh Framework Programme. In this broad theme, of particular interest is SSH-2009-4.2.2., on perspectives outside the EU on human rights and democracy. In the project, this specific subtopic will be placed within a broader research framework that addresses the impact of human rights and democracy perceptions of Europe in source countries on migration aspirations, decisions, and – eventually – subsequent migration behaviour.