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### Mobilization trajectories as a tool to study migration and protest intentions

*An illustration from Morocco*

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## **Working Papers**

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# **Mobilization trajectories as a tool to study migration and protest intentions:**

## **An illustration from Morocco**

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### **Abstract**

When dissatisfied with socioeconomic and political conditions, why do some people migrate, others protest, and others do neither? While existing literature shows that migration and protest are both responses to discontent, and that migrants and protesters have similar sociodemographic profiles, the initial choice between these two behaviors and their relationship at the individual level need further investigation. In this conceptual paper we introduce mobilization trajectories, an original analytical conceptual device that allows a combined analysis of migration aspirations and protest intentions as alternative, but not always equally available, strategies that individuals can adopt when dissatisfied with socioeconomic and political conditions. We argue that mobilization trajectories as an analytical tool offers three contributions: it (1) uncovers individuals' negotiations between multiple possible courses of action and inaction, (2) illuminates how intentions are shaped by changing socioeconomic and political conditions at home and abroad, networks, previous experiences with protest or migration, and gender, and by doing so (3) aids our understanding of why aspirations may or may not lead to actual migration. We illustrate the working of mobilization trajectories as an analytic tool for the combined analysis of migration and protest intentions with vignettes from interviews conducted in 2020 and 2021 with Moroccan youth aged 18-35.

### **Keywords:**

Migration, protest, aspirations, intentions, exit, voice, youth, Morocco

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## Table of Contents

<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>2. Mobilization Trajectories</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>3. Factors shaping the direction of mobilization trajectories</b> .....	<b>8</b>
3.1 Socioeconomic and political conditions at home and abroad.....	9
3.2 Families and social networks.....	10
3.3 Personal experience of migration and protest.....	12
3.4 Gender.....	13
<b>4. Mobilization trajectories: two illustrations</b> .....	<b>13</b>
4.1 Layla (voice and exit intertwined).....	14
4.2 Rafik (no more exit).....	17
4.3 Comparing trajectories.....	19
<b>5. Conclusion</b> .....	<b>20</b>
<b>6. References</b> .....	<b>21</b>

You can protest as much as you want, but if you don't change the head of the Government, if you don't cut the head of the snake, then you're not gonna do anything. We have to protest every problem at once in order to achieve the transformation that help the people [...] I have this debate with myself. I love my country, I want people who get their degrees to stay here in order to develop the country and to be successful when it comes to the economy and every other department, but, when you think about it, when you want to support your family, when you wanna create your own family, when you wanna make your goals and dreams come true, I think the only way is to go abroad and work [...] Right now I am waiting for my visa to go out. Like *right now* I am looking at my phone every two minutes to see if I got the visa or not.

(Mahmoud, 25, March 2020)

## 1. Introduction

In his seminal work, 'Exit, Voice, and Loyalty' Hirschman (1970:1) argues that "every society experiences failures of some actors [such as states or their representatives] to live up to the behavior that is expected of them". As the opening quote illustrates, when failures emerge, citizens can respond by adopting two alternative, but not mutually exclusive, strategies: 'voice,' i.e. expressing their discontent, for instance by protesting; or 'exit,' i.e. migrating from the society or community they live in (Hirschman 1970). Loyalty may influence the decision to 'exit' or 'voice'. Hirschman argued that people who are loyal are less likely to exit when dissatisfied and instead use voice to claim change proactively, or wait for the situation to improve (Hirschman 1970: 40). Later scholars added that people who are discontent may choose to do nothing and remain 'silent', rather than exercising voice or exit (e.g. Kolarska and Aldrich 1980).

As migration and protest are both responses to socioeconomic or political failure, we often see protest events and migration flows occurring in the same space and time. While their coexistence has been studied at the macrolevel (De Haas and Sigona 2012; Dowding et al. 2000), their relationship at the individual-level calls for further investigation (Hirschman, 1993b). Fomina observed that diaspora engagement in protest, or other forms of political participation, so voice *after* migration, "is [...] a widespread phenomenon" (2019: 15). In this paper we focus on the choices between protest and migration of those who live in the origin country, rather than the diaspora. We present a conceptual framework for understanding the choice between migration, protest and doing nothing, and how this choice evolves over time.

Our focus is on intentions rather than behavior. While not all intentions will translate into behavior, intentions are correlated with behavior at the individual level and offer a good predictor of aggregate behavior (Carling and Schewel 2018; van Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2017; Tjaden, Auer, and Laczko 2019). As pointed out by Aslany et al. (2021), migration theory often uses “aspirations” as an umbrella term for “intentions”, “aspirations” and “plans”. In our framework we therefore incorporate theory on migration aspirations as well as intentions. We understand the emergence of aspirations and intentions, and their possible transformation through time, as affected by individuals’ capabilities (van Heelsum, 2016). These capabilities in turn, as will be explained below, are influenced by macro and microlevel factors.

How individuals respond to socioeconomic and/or political developments in their countries depends on their perceptions, desires and beliefs. Studying how individuals come to develop migration or protest intentions given a certain context, is key to deepening our understanding of why migration and protest are present, or absent, at the macrolevel. In this paper we use migration and protest theory to build a framework for understanding why, when dissatisfied with socioeconomic and/or political conditions, some people contemplate protesting in the streets, others plan to leave their country, and yet others intend to do neither.

We introduce *mobilization trajectories* as an innovative explanatory tool through which we can examine how migration and protest intentions develop at the individual level over time. We borrow the term “mobilization” from protest literature and use it to indicate the process leading to individuals’ intention to protest, migrate, or do nothing. We understand mobilization as a process whereby individuals who are aware of their grievances and feel the need to change their situation, begin to evaluate possible solutions - here migration and/or protest - and plan to mobilize, i.e. to move towards a solution. Using mobilization trajectories as analytical lens offers insights into people’s considerations of possible courses of action in different moments in time. As such, it provides a theorization of how intentions to migrate or protest, or neither, can originate and sometimes change through time. Considering migration and protest as alternative strategies within a mobilization trajectory that unfolds over time can lead to a fuller understanding of why people may or may not aspire to migrate or protest, and of the interrelationship between migration and protest. For instance, an opening of political opportunity structures can increase hope for change through protest and encourage individuals to stay and fight rather than migrate. Conversely, negative experiences with protest participation such as a lack of results or personal sanctions may foster migration aspirations. Having the

opportunity to migrate, for example through networks, can discourage individuals from protesting, while a lack of migration opportunities can encourage protest intentions (Cf. De Haas and Sigona, 2012).

We argue that studying migration and protest intentions simultaneously at the individual level contributes to a deeper understanding of the drivers of migration. Migrants and protesters have similar sociodemographic profiles. People intending to and engaging in migration and protest are generally younger, higher educated, and more often live in urban areas than those who do not engage in these behaviors (Castles, De Haas, and Miller 2013; Schussman and Soule 2005; Stolle and Hooghe 2011). Yet, if the sociodemographic profiles of migrants and protesters are similar, why then do some intend to protest in the streets while others aspire to cross borders? We argue that migration and protest form part of an array of response strategies that high-educated young urbanites can consider when dissatisfied with socioeconomic and political conditions. We furthermore argue that the perceived desirability and availability of migration versus protest or doing nothing also depends on four sets of factors identified in the migration and protest literatures: 1) socioeconomic and political conditions at home and abroad (Docquier 2006; Goldstone and Tilly 2001; Gonzalez-Ferrer et al. 2013; Gurr 1970); 2) families and networks (Diani 2004; Massey et al. 1993); 3) previous experiences with protest and/or migration (Carling 2002; Della Porta 2009; Massey and Espinosa 1997; Snow and Benford 1992); and 4) gender (Sherkat and Blocker 1994; Toma and Vause 2014).

We illustrate how using mobilization trajectories as analytical lens can aid our understanding of migration and protest intentions by presenting two vignettes from a study on high-educated urban youth in Morocco. Morocco is a closed autocracy (V-Dem Institute 2021) that has seen modest liberalization since the turn of the century. It has a long history of migration, in particular to Europe and to a lesser extent to the Gulf and North-America (Berriane et al. 2010). As Morocco has seen both substantial protest and migration in recent decades it is an optimal “territory” for illustrating the contribution of mobilization trajectories to understanding migration and protest. The vignettes come from interview data collected in 2020 and 2021 among high-educated men and women aged 18-35 from three Moroccan cities. While migrants and protesters in Morocco vary in education level, age and geographical areas, previous research in Morocco, suggests that this demographic group is both mostly likely to aspire to and to participate in migration and protest (Desrues, 2012; Sánchez-Montijano and Girona-Raventós, 2017). We focus on the group most likely to engage in these behaviors to isolate demographic factors affecting migration and protest intentions, and analyze how other

non-demographic factors, e.g. socioeconomic and political conditions, interact with one another and shape individuals' trajectories. Although we use data on high-educated urban youth from Morocco to illustrate our framework, the framework is intended as a basis for understanding the development of migration and protest intentions of different sociodemographic groups and geographical contexts. More information on the data collection can be found in the Appendix.

Below we provide a conceptualization of mobilization trajectories highlighting how they evolve over time and can incorporate both migration and protest. We then outline how mobilization trajectories are shaped by socioeconomic and political conditions at home and abroad (including political opportunity structures and opportunities for migration), social networks and families, previous experience of migration and protest, and gender. In the subsequent section, we present two vignettes from interviews with Moroccan youth to illustrate how migration and protest intentions can emerge, disappear, and overlap within mobilization trajectories. The paper concludes by arguing how the use of mobilization trajectories to study migration and protest as alternative, but not always equally available options enriches migration and protest theories.

## **2. Mobilization Trajectories**

Both migration and protest are outcomes of a decision-making process that develops over time. As Van Bezouw et al. (2019: 1) point out, "research on protest departs from the assumption that people have stable, individually held attitudes about protest and participation in protests. However, the formation of these attitudes is rarely straightforward and people tend to change their opinions based on peer influence, current events, and socio-cultural developments". Likewise, migration is the product of drivers operating at different levels "in different *moments* of the migration process and creat[ing] the conditions within which people make their decisions whether to move or to stay" (Van Hear et al., 2018: 930). Throughout this process, individuals are enmeshed in social networks which provide not only information on the local, national and international socioeconomic and political conditions, but also social norms and values (Massey et al. 1993).

The desire to change their present or future situation pushes individuals to embark on a mobilization trajectory in which they contemplate the possible, available and most effective ways to do so (Carling and Collins 2018). Based on this evaluation, individuals can develop intentions to migrate, protest, or do neither. Aspirations to migrate and intentions to protest are often, but not always, a precursor of behavior (Carling 2002; van Stekelenburg and



Klandermans 2017). Aspirations and intentions are indicative of the directions an individual *desires* to take. As they are not fixed, and do not constitute a ‘concrete’ action, they can change over time. A mobilization trajectory can keep pointing in the same direction, e.g. migration, or change over time — e.g. first protest, then migration, or vice versa — offer a dual path in which both migration and protest are considered, and include periods of “individual abeyance” in which people neither intend to migrate nor protest (Corrigall-Brown 2012).

A change in direction may occur when a person perceives they lack the capabilities or resources to achieve their intended action, or new information or a change in personal circumstances or socioeconomic or political conditions leads to a revaluing of the best course of action. Mobilization trajectories offer a dynamic approach to understanding migration and protest intentions, showing how changes in the factors that are theorized to shape intentions relate to changes in intentions at the individual level.

Through the analytic lens of mobilization trajectories, we can incorporate “silence”, or inaction, as either a final decision — i.e. individuals who prefer not to protest or migrate — or a temporary decision — i.e. individuals who are waiting for better opportunities for migration and/or protest, and opt for staying put for the time being (Corrigall-Brown 2012). As such mobilization trajectories shed light on inaction as a behavior that is common in practice but understudied in both migration and protest research (Petrovic, van Stekelenburg, and Klandermans 2018; Schewel 2015).

In short, mobilization trajectories are an analytic tool that enables an investigation of individuals’ considerations between multiple possible courses of action and inaction and of the factors that shape and reshape intended actions. By doing so mobilization trajectories can provide novel insights into how and why intentions turn into actions.

### **3. Factors shaping the direction of mobilization trajectories**

In this section we present four types of factors that can explain differences in the direction of mobilization trajectories between people and changes in direction of a given trajectory over time. If migrants and protestors have overlapping sociodemographic profiles—young, urban, highly-educated—what explains why people embark on different mobilization trajectories? Social psychologists argue that people base their intentions on their perceptions and interpretations of events and situations (van Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2013). People similar in age and education level may have different perceptions of socioeconomic and

political conditions. Their desire and capability to engage in migration and/or protest may differ as a result of their embedding in different families and social networks, experiences, and gender. Using mobilization trajectories as an analytic lens, we can zoom in on the role of perceptions in creating intentions.

Mobilization trajectories may change direction in response to changes in the socioeconomic and/or political conditions at home or abroad, such as economic crises, upcoming elections, or migration policies (Bakewell 2014; Castles, De Haas, and Miller 2013; Gamson 1990; McAdam and Schaffer Boudet 2012). Changing conditions, or, more precisely, a *perceived* change in conditions, can lead to a reevaluation of the preferred course of action. While socioeconomic and/or political conditions are broadly similar for all individuals, they can have divergent impacts on trajectories due to differences in how individuals perceive these changes. Second, families and social networks affect trajectories by setting norms and providing information, often by sharing experiences of migration and/or protest (Della Porta 2009; Van Mol et al. 2018). Families also matter in terms of economic needs and reliance on financial or social support. For instance, having the responsibility to provide for the family financially, or coming from a family unable to afford sending their children abroad has a considerable impact on the decision to migrate and/or protest. Third, intentions are shaped by past personal experience with migration or protest: people internalize and reflect on their experiences, learn from them, and use them to decide on future actions (Diani 2004; Massey 1990). As we explain below, changes in networks and new experiences can influence how the direction of trajectory unfolds over time. Finally, we consider gender as a moderating factor that shapes perceptions of socioeconomic and/or political conditions, families and social networks and experience, and, as a result, also affects trajectories. Below we offer a theoretical elaboration of how each of the four sets of factors sketched out in this section may lead to differences in trajectories between people and over time. We enrich this elaboration by presenting examples from the interviews in Morocco.

### *3.1 Socioeconomic and political conditions at home and abroad*

Individuals contemplate the type of actions that are available to them based on their perception of the socioeconomic and political conditions in their origin country and abroad. Migration scholars identify drivers in both countries of origin and destination (Bakewell 2014; Castles, De Haas, and Miller 2013; Mayda 2010). Countries of origin and destination are connected in a migration system containing migration policies, mass culture connections and family and

social networks, which can both encourage or discourage migration (Bakewell 2014). Socioeconomic and political conditions of the country of origin, such as corruption, structural un- or underemployment, but also perceived disparities between countries of origin and of destination, e.g. in earnings and living standards, can inform the decision to migrate (Van Hear, Bakewell, and Long 2018). Changes in the socioeconomic and political conditions abroad can lead people to redirect migration intentions. For example an economic downturn in the prospective destination country can make migration less appealing (Durand and Massey 2019). Changes in visa policies of destination countries may affect the extent to which migration is seen as a possibility or risk (Boccagni 2017). It is not the actual political or socioeconomic conditions or changes therein that matter, but the way they are perceived. In the absence of perceived migration opportunities, intentions may shift away from migration and towards protest, or silence. Conversely, a perceived increase of migration opportunities may encourage a shift away from protest or silence.

Protest scholars indicate political opportunity structures as determinant of protest participation. Koopmans (1999) argues that opportunities are crucial in determining individuals' degree of engagement and modes of protesting. In particular, “structural characteristics of political systems, the behavior of allies, adversaries, and the public; *societal "moods"*; *economic structures and developments*; cultural myths and narratives— all of these can be sources of mobilization opportunities” (1999: 96 – our emphasis). For instance, before the 20<sup>th</sup> February Movement, the Moroccan equivalent of the Arab uprisings, took place, pro-regime media undertook an anti-movement campaign framing young participants as unbelievers and unpatriotic (Desrues 2013: 417). As we will see below, this narrative of the movement resulted in perceiving closing political opportunity for many who did not participate because did not want to be considered “atheist” or “against the system.” A change in government, political liberalization, the availability of financial and/or human resources, and organizational structures can contribute to stirring protest mobilization (Gamson 1990; McAdam 1999; McCarthy and Zald 1977). Similarly, increasing restrictions of political freedom, i.e. repression of protest, may discourage protest and make silence or migration more appealing.

### *3.2 Families and social networks*

People may embark on different mobilization trajectories depending on whether or not their families and wider social networks have protest or migration experience and their attitudes

towards these actions (Diani 2004; Van Mol et al. 2018). Families and social networks shape protest and migration intentions through information, norm-setting, and practical support (Epstein and Gang 2006; Heering, van der Erf, and van Wissen 2004; Schussman and Soule 2005). Access to information can reduce the costs of migration or protest but may also make people more aware of the risks such as discrimination, arrest or loss of employment opportunities. Families and social networks influence the perception of socioeconomic and political conditions at home and abroad and help individuals define their position in society (Diani 2004; Haug 2008). In some families or social networks migration may be common and encouraged as route to improve economic circumstances, whereas in others migration may be judged a lack of loyalty to the origin country or as a high-risk endeavor that is unlikely to lead to economic benefits. Conversely, a family or network may have a proud history of protest which influences the appeal of this action.

The need to support their family, either practically or financially, may influence the perceived costs of or needs for migration and protest. While the new economics of labor migration suggests that households may encourage the migration of a household member to improve the household's economic situation (Massey et al. 1993), family members' reliance on their financial or practical contributions may also pose a constraint on individual's migration aspirations. While migration may bring economic benefits, it is also a risk. Similarly protest can be discouraged by family reliance if there is a perceived risk of arrest or negative economic consequences. The type of jobs parents have, has an impact on individuals' intentions to protest. For instance, Mahmoud, quoted at the beginning, never participated in a protest because "my dad is a cop. And I'm not gonna try to have any problems with that. I mean, I am with the idea of protest, but I also have to think about my dad" (March 2020).

Families and social networks can influence mobilization trajectories in a multitude of ways. They do not only help explain differences between individual trajectories but can also help understand changes within trajectories over time. Changes in social networks or the information provided through these networks may encourage redirections of a given mobilization trajectory. For example because new information or a change of norms leads individuals to come to believe that protesting or migration is not going to improve their situation.

### *3.3 Personal experience of migration and protest*

Intentions are shaped by prior experience with migration and/or protest: people internalize and reflect on their experiences, learn from them, and use them to decide on future actions (Diani 2004; Massey 1990). Having experienced migration and/or protest in the past can influence individuals' perceptions of the feasibility and potential success of these activities (Della Porta 2009; Massey and Espinosa 1997). Individuals who experienced migration are familiar with the procedures and the risks and costs that migrating entails, and are part of migration networks that connect them to potential destination countries. They have gone through the process of settling and finding a job in a foreign country, which makes migration easier for them than for those who have no experience of migration whatsoever. However, migration experience also creates awareness of the downsides of migration, such as exposure to discrimination or racism, and culture shock. These experiences can discourage future migration, thus re-directing mobilization trajectories away from migration, possibly towards protest or silence.

Similarly, previous experiences of protest can have an impact on individuals' perception of opportunities, threats and resources (Sherkat and Blocker 1997). Individuals who experienced protest may have easier access to organizational resources and networks, and have a better sense of the dangers that protesting can pose, particularly in terms of authorities' reaction (Van Laer 2010). The perceived efficacy of protests attended in the past can influence future participation and shape the direction of individuals' mobilization trajectories (van Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2013). Perceiving experiences of protests as successful can have a positive impact on future protest intentions and encourage individuals to maintain the same direction in their mobilization trajectory. Perceptions of previous protest participation as negative or ineffective can have two opposite effects: it can cause anger and indignation and motivate individuals to continue protesting until they achieve their purpose, or it can discourage them and push them to exit the protest arena (Della Porta 2009). Moreover, it might lead them towards other options to improve their situation, such as migration.

As the vignettes below illustrate, experiences with protest and migration can explain differences between individual trajectories but also lead to changes within a trajectory over time. New experiences provide feedback on possible outcomes and costs of intended actions. People may come to perceive that protesting or migrating will not have the desired effect, which may lead them to redirect their trajectory.

### *3.4 Gender*

Socially-sanctioned gender-related roles result in different perceptions of social issues by men and women (Boyd and Grieco 2003). The role that socioeconomic conditions play in shaping migration and protest intentions depends on the importance attached to having a (good) job (Bastia 2011). As women do not always expect to participate in the labor market, this makes it less likely that they will see a failing economy as a cause for action (Bastia 2011; Gheyanchi and Moghadam 2014).

Gender also influences the perception of available actions. As the significance of gender is socially constructed, what constitutes the ideals, expectations and behaviors related to masculinity and femininity varies across societies (Boyd and Grieco 2003). In countries such as Morocco, it is traditionally more accepted that men migrate to provide a better future for their family, while women are expected to stay at home, contribute to the family and provide parental support (Wets et al. 2015). Migration networks have a different impact on men's and women's migration aspirations. Family networks in destination countries are more important to women than men, as the former are considered to incur in higher risks when migrating alone (Heering, van der Erf, and van Wissen 2004).

Protest participation, too, is sensitive to gender variation. Protest scholars have emphasized the influence of structural inequalities on protest participation and how socially-sanctioned gender-related roles often translate into different levels of protest participation for males and females (Isakkson, Kotsadam, and Måns 2014). Gender differences in protest participation are particularly salient in societies where patriarchal traditions of male dominance in the private sphere are reflected in women's passivity in the public sphere (Hudson, Bowen, and Nielsen 2015; Robinson and Gottlieb 2019). In Morocco, while both men and women can encounter repression including arrest, the consequences may be more dire for women as their reputation is at stake.

#### **4. Mobilization trajectories: two illustrations**

To illustrate how people's intentions develop and change over time and how this process is shaped by the socioeconomic and political conditions, families and social networks, and experiences of migration and protest we present the stories of Layla and Rafik. Their mobilization trajectories exemplify how migration and protest intentions, the desire to stay put or remain silent, can coexist and overlap within an individual's life history.

#### 4.1 Layla (voice and exit intertwined)

Layla, is a 27-year old female graduate living by herself in Rabat, where she works as a professional in the non-profit sector. She grew up in a small city in a mountainous region. When she was 14 she moved to Rabat, where she attended high school and then university. Her father left the family and moved abroad when Layla was a young child. Her mother, a divorced woman, migrated for several years raising money to send back to her children, while Layla was taking care of her brothers in Morocco. From a young age, Layla has been living by herself, though financially supported by her mother.

In 2011, when the Arab uprisings reached Morocco, Layla was attending high school. Before she eventually joined the street protests, different questions overlapped in her mind, all seemingly connected to one major decision to make: “shall or shall I not participate?”

*I feel concerned*, because I come from another part of Morocco, which is completely marginalized, and there is no territorial justice, there is no justice in general. There is inequalities, and lack of dignity as well and here I can see that there are those issues of freedom, I mean, do I feel completely free in Morocco? Can I say whatever comes to my mind? Should I think twice before saying anything? Should I express my opinion or not? *Should I even take part in this protest or not?* So many questions and then I just joined the movement. (March 2020 – our emphasis).

Layla eventually participated in the *Mouvement du 20 Février* (M20F) protests. The formation of Layla’s protest intention results from a synthesis between her perception of Morocco’ socioeconomic and political conditions - her sharing the protesters’ motivations, such as lack of freedom and social justice - and her personal situation, as Moroccan, as young woman, as member of one of Morocco’s Amazigh communities, as high school student, as sister and daughter. Additionally, when reflecting on her experience of the 2011 uprisings, Layla recollects that her social embeddedness also influenced her mobilization trajectory towards protest: “I was discussing the possibility of participating mainly with my classmates and friends, but not all of them were in favor”. While some of her classmates shared her views and joined the demonstrations, others refrained from participating because among their friends and family “[t]here are those who say “those people who are protesting are just atheists, and are against the system” (March 2020). Families, thus, have a considerable influence in Layla’s peers’ decision to protest, a type of influence that Layla manages to avoid, as she is physically distant from her family, which can exercise much less control over her decision to protest: “I was living alone and I didn’t have for example like parents to tell me to go or not to go” (March 2020). Yet, while her physical distance from her parents eased her capability to participate, it

did not affect her intention which was already present in Layla's mind: "I think outside of the box and say sometimes even if we are part of a family which is against the movement, we can still have our own ideas, and our own perspectives and our own motivations to go and join the movement" (March 2020). Layla is not alone in her decision to break through family norms that would prevent her or, at least made her reconsider, her participation: her perspective is shared within her networks:

I know cases of some friends whose parents work for very strategic positions in the state and their children having this sense of solidarity, they used to escape home and join the movement and I know some whose parents were completely against the movement, and against people who go to the movement, and still they find a way to join the movement and support it (March 2020).

Experiencing the authorities' reaction to the protests in 2011, and the "demands only partly fulfilled", led Layla to come to consider protest as ineffective to tackle personal and political issues (March 2020). In 2016 Layla follows what is happening in the Rif, through news channels, social media, chats with friends and family, but she does not participate in the fierce protests those days. She understands that these protests are a "sign that it [the system] doesn't work" (March 2020).

What makes her refrain from participating, however, is the mode of expression of this voice: she feels that this is a story she has seen before, in 2011, and she knows that the demands will not be heard, regardless how loud the protesters shout. "If ever there is a movement, there should be a follow-up," she states (March 2020). In her view, protest shifted from being the first choice, best possible action, to being a viable option, necessary to raise awareness on the existing problems, although not effective if not accompanied to a consistent work of advocacy, through NGOs and similar organizations, outside of the street.

What is interesting about Layla's trajectory is that it is her experience of protest that encouraged her to migrate. She migrated "just to be trained. Because after 2011, I opened my eyes. I need[ed] some skills that I need to be interested in, like, NGO works and so on." During her BA she spent a period working and studying abroad, dissatisfied with the educational offer of the Moroccan state university system. This new segment of Layla's trajectory adds to her already existing experience of migration, both direct (her move from a smaller town in another province to Rabat) and indirect (through the experience of her mother), which make her aware of the losses and gains that migrating entails. For instance, she aspires to migrate to have more freedom and safety, among other reasons, like her mother, who



Lived in different [European] countries. [...] When she was there, I mean, she liked it a lot. She was free as a divorced woman. The view is different because there no one cares, but here, they look at a woman living alone, like in a bad way (March 2020).

Along with protest, migration is, thus, also part of Layla's trajectory, both as a past experience, and still, even after her return, as an aspiration. She speaks about it as an instrument to contribute to a better future for herself and her family. What keeps her aspiration "alive" is her perception of Morocco's socioeconomic conditions, especially compared to what her situation as a young woman working and providing for her family would be elsewhere:

I am also looking for welfare. I mean, I am working eight hours, or most of the time more than eight hours, every day, and I barely have a personal life. I don't feel like I am reaching any *bien être* I mean, I work hard and I get paid [but] it all goes into schools for my brother, and then rent, and all. I mean, the basics of life. So I am not really enjoying my life, let's say, and this is due to the system (March 2020).

Yet, her aspiration to migrate is much more fragile than it was before. Her family situation, mainly her necessity to provide for her brothers' education, especially after her younger brother, 18, quit high school, urges her to reconsider her migration plans:

I am fine just being myself somewhere, I can manage it. It's just that sometimes I worry about my two little brothers, I still don't know what I would do in this transition, so they are also contributing to the fact that I am still in Morocco, otherwise I would leave (March 2020).

As explained above, in traditional and patriarchal societies such as Morocco, it is more accepted that a man migrates to provide for the family financially, through remittances, while a woman should stay at home and provide for the family in terms of social care and support, be it for sick parents or younger brothers. Interestingly, while Layla explains her necessity to support her family as a financial issue (paying her brothers' school fees), she stays in Morocco, even though she would probably be better off and give more financial support if she were working abroad.

Layla's trajectory illustrates how family - as a source of information and as a factor restricting the available range of actions - and previous experiences shape migration and protest intentions. It also shows why examining protest and migration simultaneously aids our understanding of both behaviors; Layla's experience with protest was a contributing factor to her later migration behavior. We argue that Layla's case is particularly relevant as it challenges the expectations of gender influence on the decision to migrate. Her decision to stay is not due to the fact that she has to contribute to her family "because she is the *daughter*," but because

she is the eldest child of a family with a single parent. Layla is aware that it is her responsibility now to provide for her brothers, as her mother alone lacks time and financial resources. It is her duty to contribute to her siblings' upbringing, making sure that her youngest brother does not drop out of school like her younger brother, and that the latter does not end up "in the street" like other teenagers who quit high school before him. Thus, it is Layla occupying the position of a missing parent, her role within her family, and not her being a woman that affects her current capability to migrate, and further reduces her migration intentions.

#### *4.2 Rafik (no more exit)*

Rafik is an MA graduate of 26 who lives in Rabat, where he works for an NGO. He was born in a small town close to Rabat, but moved to the capital to attend university. Both his parents are professionals employed as civil servants. His grandparents took part in the independence movement against the French. Rafik shares Layla's discontent with the socioeconomic and political conditions of Morocco and has extensive experience of protest participation. Unlike Layla, protesting in 2011 did not lead Rafik to develop migration aspirations. Rather, it reinforced his perception of protest as "the best means for citizens to pressure the state into succumbing and giving the citizens what they want" (March 2020). This convinced him of the importance of engaging in party politics, thus diverting his trajectory towards a different type of voice, and erasing any trace of migration aspirations.

While Rafik's motivations to act in 2011 were similar to Layla's, i.e. sharing the protestors' cause and indignation about Morocco's socioeconomic and political conditions, their contemplations to migrate or not are different. While Layla's past migration and current aspirations to migrate are grounded in her desire to gain more skills to contribute to Morocco's development, and to gaining more freedom and better welfare, Rafik's lack of migration experience and aspirations are related to his "patriotism:"

I never migrated. I thought about it. All Moroccans do [...] Personally, while thinking about it I was really hesitant. I had so many questions which were due to my patriotism. Not everybody can struggle for their rights. The majority of people are selfish, and that is because of education. When we were students, our classmates were considering us (protestors) as weirdos. That is what happened in M20F, some were fully in and some were scared of the revolution and decided to leave [Morocco] (March 2020).

Rafik's rejection of migration as a solution is deeply connected to his family history and sense of responsibility towards what previous generations of Moroccans fought for:

Migration cannot be [a solution]. If we all leave, to whom will we leave this country that our parents and ancestors fought for? [...] it would be a coward choice: “Oh I am educated. I will leave this country” No! Just like our parents fought for the independence of this country, we should fight for its development (March 2020).

Rafik’s perception of institutional political participation as the best possible solution to the socioeconomic and political challenges that Morocco is facing, is linked to his experience of protest in 2011. Participating to the M20F was a “rebirth of ideas” and opened Rafik’s eyes on the problems of Morocco’s political system:

I had my own reservations regarding political parties. I used to say that they are good for nothing as long as the King controls everything. I thought a lot and read a lot. I compared the ideas of the parties involved in the movement [...] I had an idea about all the parties before choosing [party name] (March 2020).

Rafik’s experience of protest not only reinforced his idea that voice is preferable to exit, but it also thoroughly removed migration from his future projects, as it is “not good for the country” (January 2021). What inhibits his migration aspirations is not his lack of capability, unlike Layla, but his firm conviction that

If you believe in change you can only achieve it through politics, organizations, and movements. The *Mouvement du 20 Février* was led by youth asking for reforms and claims, a new constitution, jobs, fundamental rights, etc. the least one can do is join civil society associations fighting for human rights (March 2020).

Rafik’s perceptions of the socioeconomic and political conditions changed as a consequence of what he sees as poor state-management of the COVID pandemic, and first-hand experience of fellow citizens’ suffering through engagement in civil society activities:

These [socioeconomic] problems have always existed. But, this is actually the first time that they have fully surfaced [...] this pandemic unveiled everything and took all the alternatives [to tackle grievances] from people leaving only that of the state (January 2021).

Failure of government in managing the pandemic made Rafik more indignant and frustrated:

Two months into the virus outbreak, people who had received social aids in the previous month did not receive any more two months later, which caused some sort of progress in the public frustration. People are mad and angry with the state for not giving them money anymore. [...] Moroccan citizens have grown to criticize and hate more the policies adopted by the state (January 2021).

His changing perception of the socioeconomic and political conditions further strengthened Rafik’s sense of duty towards his country keeping Rafik’s trajectory towards

voice, but not necessarily towards protest. As Hirschman theorized, Rafik's loyalty and will to contribute to Morocco's improvement, inhibited his migration aspirations:

I want to stay because I have a lot of commitments towards my country. My first commitment is my citizenship. I want to do things daily to improve the situation of Morocco. Yes, I can do that from abroad but there is nothing better than living here with my people and doing things regularly to make the situation better, through political participation, through elections, through civic work (January 2021).

Like Layla's trajectory, Rafik's trajectory illustrates how family and the evaluation of previous experiences shape migration and protest intentions.

### *4.3 Comparing trajectories*

These two mobilization trajectories show how protest experience can have opposite effects on migration intentions. Layla's 2011 experience makes her trajectory shift away from protest towards the "third option" of advocacy and personal development through migration. Conversely, Rafik's 2011 experience strengthens his perception of efficaciousness of (and preference for) protest and encourages his expression of voice within political parties. The different effects of protest experience can be understood through the different ways in which Rafik and Layla evaluate their experience. Protest experience showed Rafik there is a place for him to express his political views and contribute to the desired change, while Layla felt unrepresented and found advocacy the best way for her to express her voice, as she does through her non-profit work. Most importantly, protest experience pushed Layla towards migration, as a way of improving herself and becoming an even better "advocate". While the resulting intentions differ, in both cases protest experience is key to understanding current migration and protest intentions.

Both trajectories were shaped by their respective families. Layla's capability and aspirations to migrate are affected by both her family's experience with migration and by the fact that she has to cover the role of a missing parent and take care of her younger siblings. Rafik's family history led him consider migration dishonorable. The effect on his protest intentions is more complex, on the one hand his grandparents serve as role model inspiring protest intentions on the other hand his parents' societal position poses limits on his protest capabilities: "My father was kind of sanctioned and placed in another department because my brother and I were protesting [...] Things escalated quickly and I decided to not march in my hometown but rather come to Rabat, every Sunday" (March 2020).

## 5. Conclusion

This paper argues that studying migration and protest conjointly can contribute to both migration and protest literatures. It introduces an innovative explanatory device, mobilization trajectories, which allows the simultaneous investigation of migration intentions, protest intentions, and the desire to do neither. Using mobilization trajectories to study the development of migration and protest intentions places the focus on the individual, and sheds light on the reasons why individuals with similar sociodemographic profiles in terms of age, education and urban residence, theoretically similarly conducive to both migration and protest, may take different paths. We argue that mobilization trajectories as analytical tool offers three contributions: it (1) uncovers individuals' negotiations between multiple possible courses of action *and* inaction, (2) illuminates how intentions are shaped by changes to personal and socioeconomic and political circumstances, and by doing so (3) aids our understanding of why intentions may or may not be turned into actions.

Migration and protest are alternative, but not equally available or desirable, response strategies to socioeconomic or political discontent. While they may exist simultaneously in the mind of the individual as potential solutions, how individuals understand exit and voice, and negotiate between them, is not fixed over time. Through the two vignettes we described how migration and protest are alternative, but not equally available strategies that individuals can adopt when dissatisfied with socioeconomic and political conditions. That is why we not only see individuals developing different aspirations and intentions, but also diverse aspirations and intentions coexisting within the same individual's mobilization trajectory. By tracking and examining the shift in aspirations and intentions over time, mobilization trajectories treat migration and protest as "actions in time": developing and existing as part of individuals' biographies: their past, present and future (Halfacree and Boyle 1993: 337). Moreover, analyzing intentions through mobilization trajectories allows to unpack silence or inaction as either a 'final' or 'temporary' decision for individuals who are waiting for better opportunities for migration and/or protest, and opt for a different course of action for the time being.

While acknowledging that migration and protest intentions develop over time, few studies have actually illustrated *how* these intentions emerge, *how* individuals negotiate between them, and *why* they may have different intentions in different moments in time (Boccagni 2017; Pfaff and Kim 2003). We claim that differences in intentions, and thus mobilization trajectories, must be sought within the individual. Perceptions of self within the

socioeconomic and political context, and perception of such external context based on personal situation and experiences shape the direction of individuals' trajectories. Families, social networks, migration and protest experience, and gender shape individual's perceptions of current socioeconomic or political challenges, and of migration and protest as possible and desirable solutions.

Finally, in line with the existing literature, mobilization trajectories analyze how previous experiences of migration and protest influence the way individuals negotiate between migrating or staying put, protesting or remaining silent. Having protested once, does not necessarily mean that migration is off the table as a strategy to improve one's situation, and vice versa. The world does not divide in protesters and migrants: all the contrary! Past experiences of migration and/or protest have an impact on the individual's perception of such behaviors, in terms of their efficacy, their costs and benefits. We showed how previous experiences of migration (Layla) and protest (Rafik) can have a positive impact on future aspirations to migrate or intentions to protest respectively. In addition to this, we illustrated how experiences of protest can also have either a negative or a positive impact on migration intentions, depending on how these experiences are evaluated.

This paper argued that studying migration and protest *combined* as part of the same mobilization trajectory, both as aspirations/intentions and experiences, offers insights into the reasons why people may, or may not, want to engage in such activities in a certain period of time. Insights that we would miss, if we were to study people's aspirations to migrate or stay, and intentions to protest or remain silent, separately.

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## **7. Appendix: Methodology and data collection**

The study has a longitudinal design aimed at capturing the development of mobilization trajectories over an 18-month period. Respondents are residents of the cities of Rabat, Tangier and Nador. Respondents were recruited with help of local research assistants – all women. They selected the respondents through a snowball sampling that started with their second/third degree

connections. The respondents gave their informed consent at the beginning of the interviews. The first wave of interviews, took place face-to-face in February/ March 2020 in Rabat only, as the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic interrupted fieldwork. The second wave of data collection was conducted online - using WhatsApp and Signal - in January/March 2021, with young Moroccans living in Rabat, Tangier and Nador. In total 18 respondents participated of which 9 were men and 9 women. All but 6 have completed or are currently in higher education (university). The age ranges from 18 to 35. Interviews were conducted by the first author who has intermediate knowledge of Modern Standard Arabic and basic knowledge of Darija (the Moroccan dialect). Interviews were conducted in English (N=4) or Darija or Tarifit - the dialect of Nador (N=16). Except for the interviews in English, a research assistant was present during the interview to offer translation. The research assistants also transcribed the non-English interviews.