This dissertation examines how individual and interpersonal, economic and social aspects of migration and transnational dynamics are interconnected. The analysis is based on an ethnographic, multi-sited study of Senegalese migration to Spain and the transnational dynamics generated by this migration. I analyse how the motivations behind migration projects are informed by values, norms and expectations that are reflected in social interaction. I moreover investigate the two-way connections between individual migration trajectories and interpersonal ties between migrants and their social relations. I examine the social dynamics that surround desires and projects to secure a socially desirable position through migration and how social belonging at home is sought and negotiated through the fulfilment of interpersonal obligations. Data was collected through interviews and participant observation during eight months of fieldwork with Senegalese migrants and non-migrants in Spain and Senegal. The dissertation is guided by two overarching research questions:

- How do individual migration trajectories and relations between migrants and non-migrants affect each other?
- How are the economic and social aspects of migration interrelated?

These questions are explored through three conceptual entry points: money, moralities and uncertainty. In combination, these concepts allow exploring interpersonal obligations and expectations and how migration is imagined and approached in relation to local alternatives. The analysis relates to different theoretical traditions and concepts, including migrant transnationalism and transnational moralities, economic sociology, theories of solidarity and the gift, remittances, imaginaries and hope.

The dissertation begins with a foundation chapter that provides an overarching contextual, conceptual and methodological framework and a brief presentation of the four single-authored papers (three articles and one book chapter) that make up the core of the dissertation, including how the papers relate to the overall research questions and to each other. The foundation ends with conclusions that sum up the dissertation’s overall findings.

Of the four papers, one is published, another is forthcoming as a chapter in an edited volume, and the other two are at different stages of the academic peer-review process:

- Hernández-Carretero, María. The desirability of obligations: social and moral gains from migrants’ transnational redistribution. To be submitted to an international peer-reviewed journal.
- Hernández-Carretero, María. Migration imaginaries in flux: Senegalese migration to Spain in times of crisis. Under review at an international peer-reviewed journal.


The first paper examines the socio-moral dimensions of migrants’ transnational interactions. The second analyses how migrants seek to balance private goals with interpersonal commitments. The third highlights the heterogeneous and changing nature of the values attributed to migration, especially in times of major contextual change. The final paper describes contrasting individual attitudes to emigration and return in terms of uncertainty and hope, as taking chances bears different implications at the start and end of the migration project. The dissertation overall suggests that social recognition and belonging in their community of origin and its transnational extensions is an important part of the socioeconomic success many migrants seek.