

## **Abstract**

At the heart of migration studies lies a fundamental question: how and why people desire to move. Over the past two decades, the concept of migration aspirations has emerged as a useful and widely applied lens to approach this question. Yet a remaining fundamental blind spot is how and under what conditions migration aspirations change over time, including through actual migration. This omission is particularly grave because (changing) migration aspirations likely affect the wellbeing of individuals decisively—a second acute blind spot in research on migration.

This project is dedicated to these issues. Specifically, it focuses on how (1) changing personal circumstances, (2) opportunity structures and temporal regimes, and (3) migration-related experiences themselves effect changes in migration aspirations among individuals living at their country of origin. Second, it examines how and why migrants' initial aspirations to settle, return, or move onward change during their stay at a destination, paying particular attention to the role of migration, residence, and citizenship policies and bureaucracies. Third, the project scrutinises across both settings how changing migration aspirations shape—and are shaped by—human wellbeing across multiple dimensions.

Laying the groundwork for these insights, the project conceptualises key dimensions of aspirations to migrate and stay to track subtle changes over time. It draws on a two-wave survey with current and retrospective timeframes, biographical interviews, and ethnographic data collected with young Nepalis living in Kathmandu, Barpak, and Inaruwa (Nepal) and Lisbon (Portugal)—an emerging destination for Nepalis with both settlement and onward migration aspirations. The project applies an interdisciplinary lens, engaging with literature from sociology, geography, psychology, anthropology, and economics. The project aims to advance foundational migration research by introducing new approaches and insights into the temporality of migration aspirations and their relationship to human wellbeing.