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ABIMS: a New Tool to Assess Measurement Inconsistencies in International Migration Bilateral Databases (1990-2017)

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ABIMS (Aggregated Base of International Migrants Stocks)

A New Tool to Assess Inconsistencies in International Migration Bilateral Databases (1990-2017)

An investigation on data quality with possible huge implications

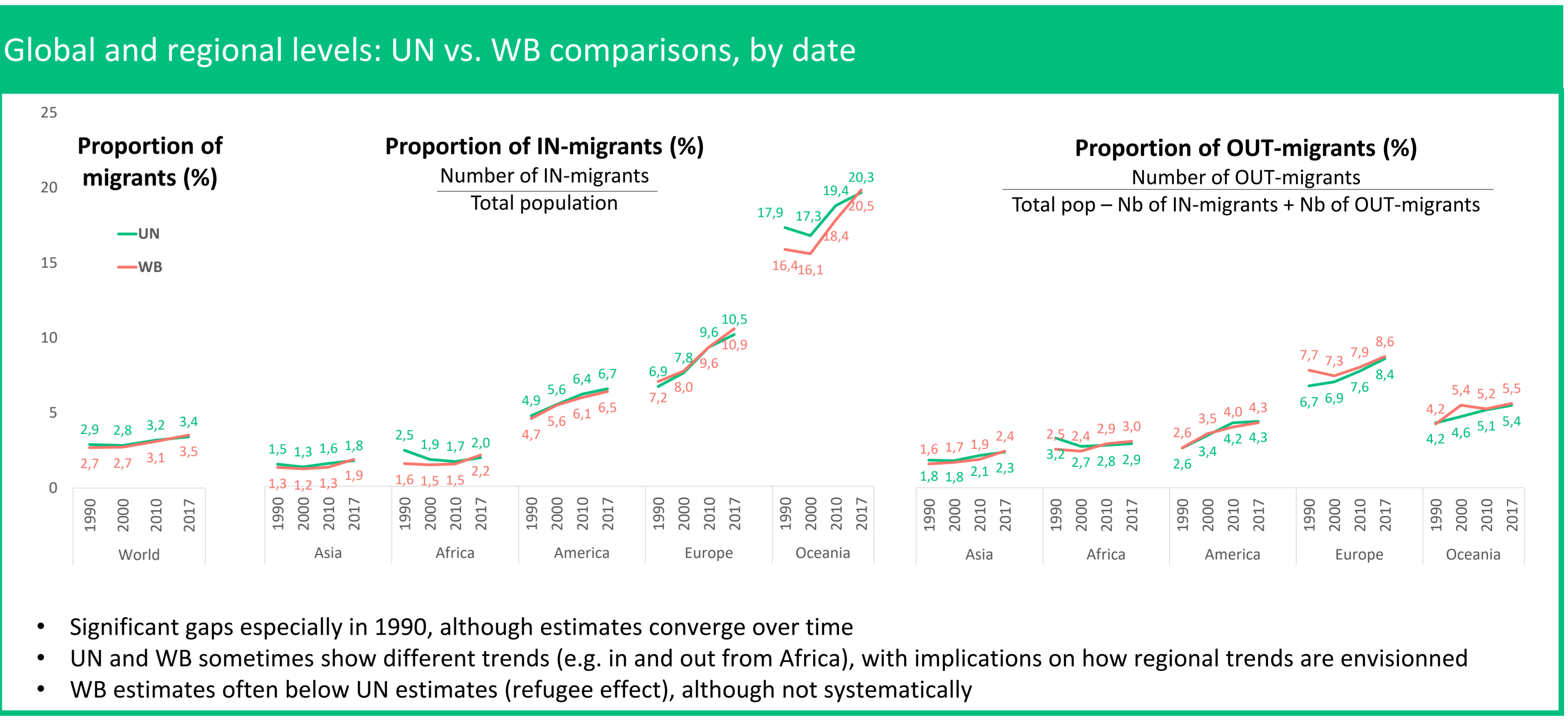
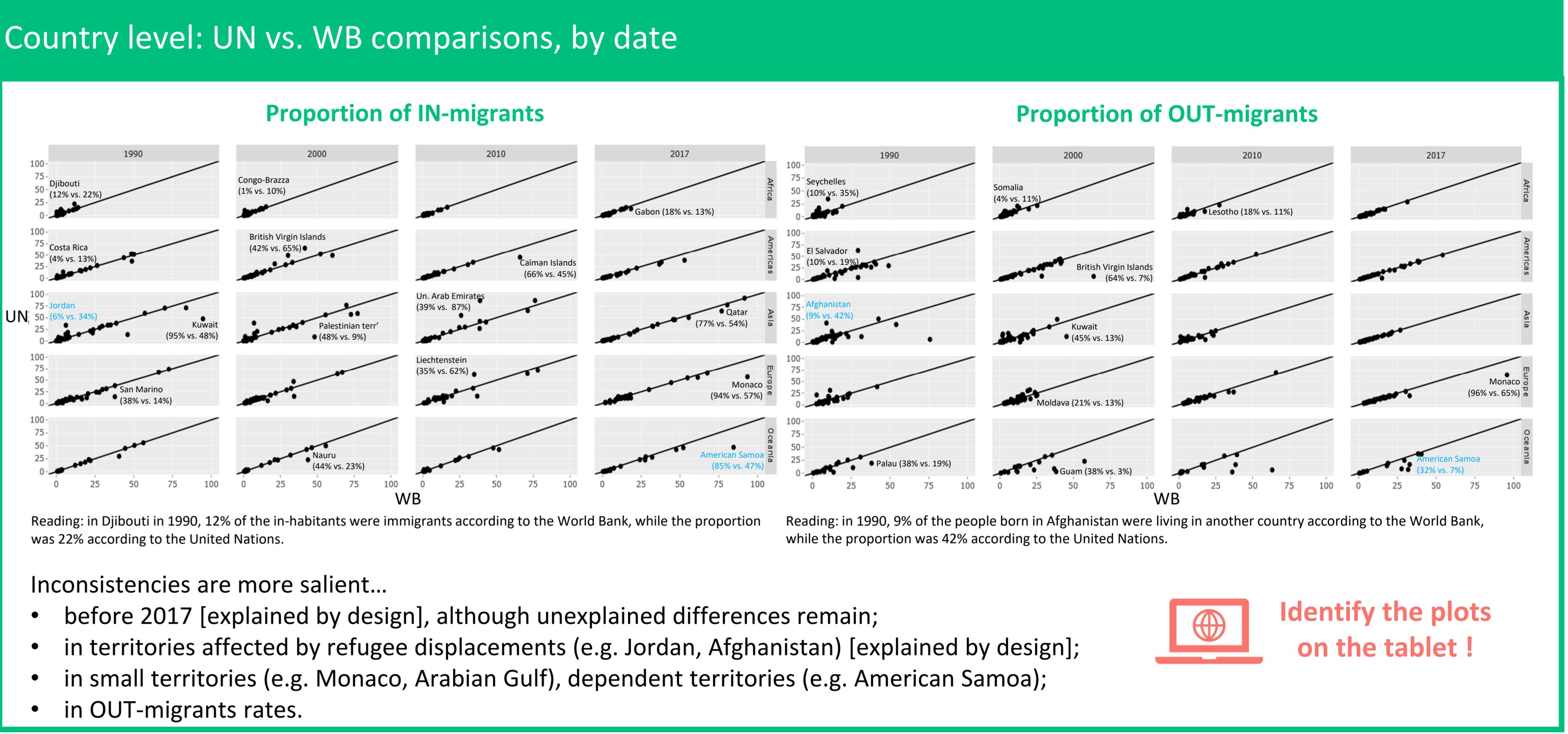
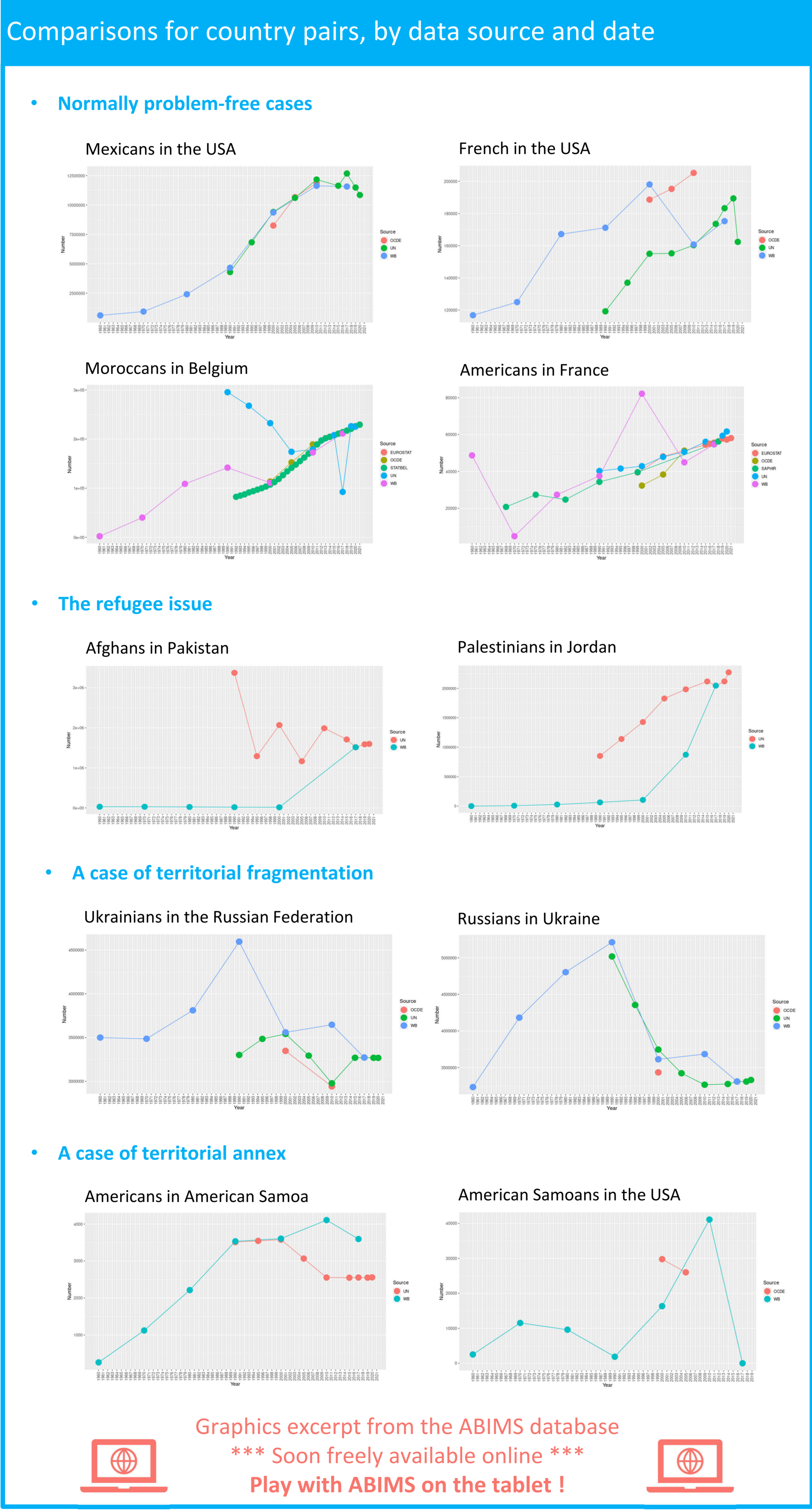
- A revolution in migration measurement:** at the turn of the 2000s, the United Nations (UN) and the World Bank (WB) created new worldwide databases providing stocks of international migrants, crossing all possible origin and destination countries:
 - World Bank: - the « Global Bilateral Migration Database » (1960-2000) - the « Migration Matrix » database (2010-2017)
 - United Nations: the « International migrant stock » database (1990-2020)
- These **international migration bilateral databases** have become **major sources** for policy reports and migration studies (analyses of trends, causes and consequences of migration).
- The **new ABIMS database** brings together these data sources to compare their estimates with each other and with other data from national statistical offices (France and Belgium, so far) and regional organisations (OECD, European Union), that can serve as benchmarks.

International migration bilateral databases: commonalities

- The **bilateral databases aggregate immigrant stocks for all destination countries by origin**, thus providing migrant stocks for all possible origin-destination pairs.
- Data sources:** mainly censuses, population registers, occasionally surveys.
- Definition of international migrants:** persons born in a country different from their country of residence (or, failing that, whose nationality is different from that of their country of residence).
- Territorial recompositions:** stocks re-estimated with a constant definition of territories (e.g.: former USSR).

Data sources differences

	World Bank (1960-2000) "Global Bilateral Migration Database"	World Bank (2010-2017) "Migration Matrix"	United Nations (1990-2020) "International migrant stock"
Geographical coverage	226 countries	213 countries in 2010 214 countries in 2013 and 2017	232 countries (including territorial annexes)
Temporal coverage	1960, 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000	2010, 2013, 2017	1990, 1995, 2000, 2005, 2010, 2015, 2017, 2019, 2020
Refugees	Excluded	Apparently included	Included
Estimates in the absence of a data source	Interpolation or extrapolation from other estimates	No detailed explanation	Interpolation or extrapolation from other estimates
Redistribution of migrants in the absence of information on country of origin	Yes, based on other data on the origin of migrants	No Two residual categories "Other North" and "Other South"	Some Two residual categories "Other North" and "Other South"
Treatment of empty cells	No empty cells	Many empty cells (missing data)	Many empty cells (missing data)
Adjustment to the fixed dates of the bases (1960, 1970...)	No	Yes Apparently following UN estimates	Yes Stocks interpolated or extrapolated



Summary

- Global level:** consistent estimates
- Regional level:** some opposite trends
- Country level:** large gaps concentrated in specific contexts
- Country pairs:** erratic and, sometimes, huge gaps

>>> Large implications for studies and reports using bilateral information

Next steps

- To better understand the causes of inconsistencies.** Systematic analysis of the outliers (quantification, factors).
- To provide a new database without inconsistencies,** using - if possible - additional original data sources.
- To assess the impact of inconsistencies on studies** using data on bilateral stocks (pairs of countries).