Long Journeys. African Migrants on the Road

Africa-Europe Group for Interdisciplinary Studies

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Long Journeys. African Migrants on the Road

Edited by

Alessandro Triulzi and Robert Lawrence McKenzie

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

HOME

Warsan Shire

no one leaves home unless
home is the mouth of a shark

you only run for the border
when you see the whole city running as well
your neighbors running faster than you
breath bloody in their throats
the boy you went to school with
who kissed you dizzy behind the old tin factory
is holding a gun bigger than his body
you only leave home
when home won't let you stay.

no one leaves home unless home chases you
fire under feet
hot blood in your belly

it's not something you ever thought of doing
until the blade burnt threats into
your neck
and even then you carried the anthem under
your breath
only tearing up your passport in an airport toilet
sobbing as each mouthful of paper
made it clear that you wouldn't be going back.

you have to understand,
that no one puts their children in a boat
unless the water is safer than the land

no one burns their palms
under trains
beneath carriages
no one spends days and nights in the stomach of a truck
feeding on newspaper unless the miles travelled
means something more than journey.

no one crawls under fences
no one wants to be beaten
pitied

no one chooses refugee camps
or strip searches where your
body is left aching
or prison,
because prison is safer
than a city of fire
and one prison guard
in the night
is better than a truckload
of men who look like your father

no one could take it
no one could stomach it
no one skin would be tough enough (…)

A MIGRANT'S LAST JOURNEY

Kevin Eze

Amadou pulls out a bench through the door and reaches for the small kettle used in making *attaya*. The kettle looks as if it was used for packing charcoal rather than tea mélanges; its interior of metal ore is coloured in black dye, as are the lips of his grandmother lying on a mat in the courtyard. The kettle is small, smaller than Amadou's soup bowl back in the kitchen. Amadou drops the kettle and its base squeaks against the sandy floor. Amadou's hands shake, his head spins from thinking of being without a job, at forty. He craves for *attaya*, an accessible tranquiliser, to make him forget his troubles. As soon as he opens the pack that contains the leaves that, after boiling, would become *attaya*, someone taps him on the left shoulder saying, "Bouba has reached Italy."

The leaves fall off Amadou's hands. "*C'est vrai?*—Is it true?" he says. Then pauses. Gazing at the thin air like a man bewitched, he recalls Bouba sitting with him on the same bench to drink *attaya*. Both were jobless and mocked by the girls. But now, Bouba has swabbed his unwaged fatigues for *a new look*. "He will bring esteem to his parents; he will buy a marble house in Dakar; he will send cars home; he will fly in from 'Italo' dressed in an original Valentino suit and marry a beauty-queen; he will...he will...he will...," Amadou whispers.

Ibou touches him again to bring him back to himself. From the nerves standing on both sides of his friend's face, Ibou can tell he is fit to travel. He lights the gas cylinder standing by the side, fills the small kettle with water and places it on the fire. He stuffs the kettle with green leaves and adds loads of sugar in it. He puts in mint for added flavour. The water begins to boil. He then starts the ritual, mixing the liquid back and forth using two tiny glasses. With each round, the tea gets thicker and darker, white bubbles encircling its top. He continues the rite for a few more minutes. An unhurried, customary activity and social pastime, with the chitchat in the company of a close-knit group of friends. Ibou wonders if he has done well in letting out the news, if the occasion was apt and if the ritual will turn out a rendezvous of delight. "*Al humdul'allah*—God is great," he yells, and offers a glass of *attaya* to Amadou who accepts it and sips slowly from the glass as the tea is hot. If fate chooses someone

to punish, Amadou is one. He has tried everything. School. Trade. Soccer. He sips the *attaya*, then lights a cigarette and says, "Thank you for telling me. Another boat will leave next week and it's either I get into that one, or I die. It's all good of you for telling me."

"Is a boat leaving?" Ibou asks him, in a voice so supple it sounds like a whisper. "You know I'm like a coffin, where you drop me is where I stay."

"Yes," Amadou says.

"From where is it leaving?"

"From here. But you've got to have your connection fee."

"How much?"

"A thousand dollars."

Ibou has no reason to debate the fee. He knows nothing about the adventure: the closest he has come is the televised campaign by Youssou, sponsored by the Belgian government, on the dangers of braving the ocean to Las Palmas. Sitting on a rickety boat, Youssou puts his palm on his chest singing "The ocean is dangerous! The ocean is full of dead bodies! Stop it my brothers!" Moreover, he would not have seen Youssou on the campaign if not for the fact that it was aired in the finals of the Cup of Nations. And at the end of the three-minute clip, Youssou's question—"Want to die in a drifting corpse?"—was not scary enough to deter Amadou from hopping into any fishing boat that points its nose to Lampedusa.

Amadou swallows a thick amount of saliva. That morning, he had a row with his father, Pa Cissé. He reminds Pa Cissé, who considers him unmanly, of his age and stresses that he is tired of remaining on the dole and needs to get married. The discussion ends in his father screaming in Wolof "You want to kill me! You want to kill me! You want me dead so you can sell the house!" The neighbours hear Pa Cissé and come rushing, squeezing into the corridor, overturning the basin full of cabbage, carrot, lettuce, khouligné and red pepper that Amadou's mother left so early for the market to buy. They scoff at Amadou, calling him a *"vaut rien—*good-for-nothing." Amadou's temperature rises. To cool down he fetches the kettle and gears up for *attaya*, when Ibou strokes him at the shoulder.

Amadou asks for another glass of *attaya* by extending his glass towards Ibou. It is the last portion, from the depth of the kettle, the best-quality brew. He looks in the direction of the ocean, visible from their doorstep, with his rust coloured handle-bar moustache swinging in the air. The ocean is quiet at first, but then comes the sound of angry waves. They stare at each other and, impulsively, open their mouths in awe. Amadou mumbles a few words in-between sipping tea and puffing a cigarette. All

Ibou can make out are cracked words in Wolof "*Mom, dem, demna*—Me, leaving, I'm out of here."

"Can you pay?" Ibou asks him.

"I'll sell land," Amadou answers.

Ibou fills the kettle with water, adds extra cubes of sugar and sets it on the fire for a second round of brewing. He sits back and stares at his friend, the latter's face beaming in uncertainty. He could see the anxiety, and the sight makes him burst into laughter. To his surprise, Amadou opens one eye while the other remains closed. He stays like that for a while and then blinks the closed eye open. He unleashes a loud gasp and tears gather around his eyes. "*Serigne Touba!*" he breathes, and lights another cigarette. The smoke from his mouth runs confidently, mixing with steam from the kettle. Ibou begins the ritual and in the course of it asks, "Who's in charge of the boat?" Amadou does not utter a word, except to thank him when he offers a glass of *attaya*. "*Dieuru dieuf wai*—thanks a lot, guy," he groans. They drink the last round. "For the route," Amadou says. And Ibou stands up to leave.

Amadou treks down the lane to the beach. He walks through the hulks of abandoned boats in the corner of the harbour. Around them are scattered huts and fleeing debris up to the place where fishing boats are launched. A man is discretely checking the pirogues; a cowboy hat sits on his head and a piece of paper dangles from his hand. Amadou approaches him and asks:

"Are you Moussa?"

"Yes," he answers, "can I help you?"

"I'm interested."

"One is leaving tonight, if you have what it takes."

Amadou tingles with excitement and imagines himself equal to Bouba. How to get the fee now becomes the worry. A thought runs up in his guts. It is the 5th of July, the day rent is settled, and their family rents out a few rooms behind their house. He nods to the idea of collecting the rent and using it for his trip; for once in Europe, he'll pull down their antiquated house and substitute it with a magnificent glasshouse. Thrilled, he returns home and heads to the backyard asking tenants to pay their rent. From one door to another, he collects the money and tells his family that he is going to put it into their bank account. He collects the documents from his mother, grabs his prayer beads and his wallet containing who knows what and disappears. "I'll make it," he murmurs while departing.

"I'll prove them wrong," he boasts. "I fly into Dakar and marry Fanta, *Miss Senegal.*" He unzips his worn jean-trousers and slides the money

into the inner recesses of his swimming pants. He double checks again to ensure the money is still there. Magic, and belief in it, is interwoven with life in their village: "lest they evoke it," he says. "We're encircled by witches and wizards."

Amadou places his hand permanently on the point where the money is; he sees it as his life, his hope, his last chance of scrubbing out the dent of "failure." Approaching the corner where he first saw the man, he looks at his right palm to check if the three proverbial lines of good fortune are still traced there in the form of an M, that is, *Miracle*. "*Bai oui*, I'm standing at the door of my future," he says.

"You're here," Smuggler says. "We'll leave around midnight."

"What about the others?"

"They'll wander in one by one. This is a back-door business."

"How long will it . . .?"

"Avoid too many questions, *my friend*."

Amadou walks close to the nearest fishing boat sitting on white sands that border the rippling waters, ocean breeze wafting into his nose. He raises his hand to his forehead to swat a fly pestering him. Ordinarily, he tolerates flies, but at this moment, he wants nothing to disturb him. "I'll kill you if you persist," he says to the stubborn fly. Smuggler strolls by and asks him:

"Is it your first time?"

"Yes."

"What about the old route?"

"You mean . . .?"

"The old route—from Rosso to Nouckchott to Nouadibou to Dakhla to Agadir and to Cueta."

"No."

"You may be lucky at one. Some try twice, five times, eight times; they make it their life."

"*Borom Touba!*" Amadou yells, "I'll make it at once."

"Yes, yes. The ocean is better; the old route has become bandits' paradise," Smuggler counsels.

Amadou looks at the brightly painted wooden boat. It is equipped with two forty horsepower outboard motors. He stares at the barrels of fuel packed beneath the deck where they'll seat. His eyes move to the lower interior sideboard marked with a prayer written in Arabic asking God for a safe passage. On the outer edge a line runs, "*Merci papa et maman—* Thank you papa and mama." He stops to think: the week-long crossing is

very risky and local radios report hundreds of migrants have died in the ocean. Night begins to fall. Other migrants meander in.

The smuggler rows the boat on the Atlantic breakers, away from prying eyes. Waving at them, he invites Amadou and the other migrants on board. They follow him to the shaded bend, and, wearing life jackets supplied to them, one by one, they hop into the boat. Where they all came from Amadou could not tell as there are, surprisingly, hundreds of migrants. They stand huddled together in the rickety boat like a *pâté de sardine* in the horizontal form. Beneath them is something of the evolving journey: simple belongings and bits of food. Smuggler collects the fees, faces the boat westward and hits the ocean.

Amadou remembers his tricks and wonders what will be going on in his parents' minds, as they search for news of him. And he wonders, too, if they would not have given him the money had he mentioned his intention. But all of that is by-gone. A *kola* that is eaten is eaten; he is westbound, by ocean. Once he sets his foot in Spain or Italy, he will call home and the joy will be so complete nobody will remember his gaffe. Like how their people re-elected a failed government because he was building fly-overs in the capital. Like how they allowed their democracy to slip into monarchy because the president's son successfully organised the Islamic Conference.

Amadou's musings are interrupted when a voice from behind intones:
There is a migrant cryin'
Crammed in a boat at the deep
His tiny head's about crackin'
Just for lack of shield
Amadou tries to steal a look in the direction of the voice, but his head is at bottleneck with the person behind him. He lifts his hand to his forehead once more. Ill at ease, he attempts to lower himself and squat, much lower than the rest of the bunch. A storm of protest forces him to return to his former position. A foul smell carried on the breeze and drifts into his nose. So horrible is the smell like the defecations of a horse.

The voice sings again, loudly:
I'm in peril because I'm hungry,
I'm in peril because I'm thirsty,
I'm in peril because I'm no state minister's son—
"Is he a *griot*?" Amadou asks himself.

The boat plows on, a half-moon drooping above the dark waters. The stench of aquarium returns and continues unabated; Amadou feels as if he is given a raw fish to eat. Sickening. Off-putting. Nauseating.

Amadou begins to vomit. Liquid contents spill out from his mouth and nose. He exhales abruptly and that sends the gastric content into his respiratory tract. He is under the influence of alcohol for he had "washed up" before their departure. He throws up till he becomes nearly unconscious. No care from anyone. No sympathy. The boat whacks ahead. All but its fate is uncertain and unsure; its wooden frame floating in the wide basins, its tail dripping in water, its interior soaked with salty water. "My Europe, my chance," Amadou whispers with a flicker of hope.

He wonders if his pain is a necessary canal before reaching there, if that is the price to pay before he begins to earn in Euros. He wishes Bouba were there. He pictures himself sweeping the streets or serving as a security guard somewhere in Milan, his mouth opens in desire, meaning he's ready to endure even more torment as long as light beams at the end of the tunnel. That part of the great chain of being. He imagines the ocean crossing as a sort of prison, and the passengers like prisoners clustered in stinking cages, but who will enjoy their freedom upon arrival at the harbour. Every migrant suffers, before, during and after the journey, but rejoices afterwards—if he's a friend of God. Then he feels a prick of guilt for lying to his parents, hoping God would not hold it against him.

"That was a necessary lie," he mumbles in excuse, and then gazes toward the night sky in a plea of *not guilty*. "I lied? Yes, a big one, perhaps. I lied for lack of what to eat." He fails to add that the rent helps his family get by, and that they not only survived on it, but it also pays for water and electricity bills and it buys medicine for their father should his health ebb. And now that he has deprived them of it, their goose is cooked.

"*Sant Yalla*! What is happening to me?"

Amadou sees in blurry shapes and hears in cacophonous sounds. The rocking motion of the boat changes his sense of sight and sound. All he could see or hear is flux and foul. He feels the pressure on his bowl against his diaphragm as they shift with the rising and falling boat. Everything is discordant with his dreams.

"Someone's chasing me," Amadou mutters and shakes his head in wonder.

"Every time I build, those witches demolish," he says in a soft voice.

The boat suddenly slows down to the force of a strong wind blowing from the north. The motion of the ocean surface accelerates. Because he is unaccustomed to travelling on the ocean, seasickness waylays him. He blocks his right ear with his index finger. He keeps his mind occupied with the dream of reaching *there*. He fixes his eyes on the invisible horizon.

He pricks his finger to keep busy. And then reaches for a bottle of ginger beneath the hull.

"I'll fight back," he says.

"May the one wishing me death die first."

"I am a Sarakhole."

"I did no wrong. I'm only fighting for my life—."

By the time Amadou swallows the bubble of saliva in his throat and indulges in further monologues, their boat is hit by a powerful whirlwind. The pounding tempest tosses the boat out of its track. It whips up huge waves that cover the boat. The smuggler and his assistant struggle to save the boat from overturning into the Atlantic. The waves toss them up and down as if the ocean opens its mouth to swallow them and reopens it to spit them out. For several hours the smuggler battles with the raging storm. A voice warns of impending danger and barks that if ever the engine goes off each person would have to swim his way to the shore. The migrants call on God and on their Marabout to save them from disaster crying:

Yalla dimbalema!

Borom Touba Saturalma!

Borom Touba Yeurema!

They roar it ceaselessly. The ocean quiets, and it seems the Marabout has heard them. But then strikes a sudden pull of a violent storm, *whaaaam-mmm!* The boat splits in two, emptying the migrants into the perilous ocean.

Swimming is not his trade. Days before he signed on with the smuggler, he tested his strength at the beach close to their house. He had asked an experienced fisherman to observe his reflexes; the boat could sink, the riders may dose off, or a storm may serve a disaster, leaving each one in God's hands. If the boat did not make it to the harbour at Las Palmas each person would be expected to swim the rest of the journey.

Amadou's heart jumps at several hundred beats per minute as he battles for his life. He propels himself forward, focusing on shoulder rolls, and he stays horizontal. At first it looks impossible, and the ocean is twice salty. He applies pure determination and relentlessly swims on. He does not think about the others opposite him. There's no room for such leisure.

Time passes at a snail's pace, and he knows not where he's headed. He tries to stay horizontal by keeping his head in line with his spine. He holds tight his lips, lest salty water enter his stomach and speed up fatigue. All he pays attention to is the position of his hands and his head. He has barely begun, but it seems like the story of an hour. When he was tempted

to raise his head, he forced himself to look straight down. He drove his arms underwater. A good wind to his back and lots of luck. Maybe.

How little he uses his legs. Small kicks only to help him turn his hips and move his arms forward. Forty degrees isn't far off the average. He conserves energy, the battle is young. He does not swim on his stomach; he remains actively streamlined and tries to dodge some jellyfish that seem so relentless. They spray their perfect wings, perfect tans, and shiny green eyes. They are glorious marine messengers. He hates them. But one, with trailing tentacles, moves close to him on mute and plays its acting as an overseer. He knocks the jellyfish square with his forehead. He apologizes within him, to Mammy-Wata, the she-devil of the river.

Every movement he flags his arm, but he droops more than before. He has always drooped, but his back is sore and weaker. He droops until his stomach hurts, and he has to straighten up and pull his shoulders until his stomach levels. He has no reason to give up. He either continues or dies, unidentified, unknown, unburied.

Thoughts flood his mind as he whirls on:

His forefathers were forcibly taken across the Atlantic Ocean; today, he willingly risks the perilous journey. He's not alone; thousands are in similar cages. Some, like Bouba, try and succeed; others perish; and others still, even after getting there, face deportation. The government refuses repatriation agreements with Europe. He lives in desire, and Europeans seem to desire something as well, if not, why is Spain recruiting workers from his homeland. He was in a boat owing to Europe's refusal to pick his entry; that applicant behind the visa counter fumes. Why is every applicant not considered? Is every migrant not in need of compassion? Try as it might, Europe cannot keep invisible feet like his from arriving. At Goree Island in the 1500s, they build a slave fortress. Now they create "Fortress Europe" to stop people like him from coming. No way. He pushes forward.

He stretches his extended arm and body to breathe. Amadou pants loudly; and his tongue lets out wider and wider out of his mouth the longer he pants. He's hit by muscle cramp. He swallows dirty salty water. It smells exactly like the refuse van back in Dakar when filled with rubbish: the mix of cat piss and shit, dog piss and shit, and every other gut-wrenching smell. The salt soaks his stomach when he begins to sink. A pilot whale rushes around close to the ready available meat. It pushes its jaws from one end to the other. An intruder is dead. He is Amadou. He is food for the ocean.

His death is undignified, drowned in the ocean. No funeral. No tears. His stomach bulges and blood drips from his mouth, with a ridiculous

leather rectangular-shaped amulet around his arm. Unknown to him, he is a migrant on his first journey, last journey. Utterly fearless. Utterly desperate. His is a tale of hopelessness, of steady hard knocks, of turbulent winds and chaotic weather, of cheating, of scorching days or heat stokes; a tale of teething troubles, of resources squandered, a tale of despair, of valour distorted, of accident or fate.

His death is unjust. He weighs sixty-six kilograms, has dug graves for the unknown and has been to funerals and wakes. He was in the room when his grandfather succumbed to a heart attack, but even that could not deter the ocean from swallowing him up. Undeniably, the ocean does not recall the past. It flows large, it flows fast, and its wide arms are stiff and hover relentlessly. Its eyes are silky, and blood smears its teeth. It moves unstopped. The flow is intense. If only someone will dig Amadou's grave, or put him in one already dug, or afford him a fitting burial.

Dauda spends fifteen hours swimming in the ocean. Dehydrated and exhausted, he is spotted on a Sunday morning by a routine border patrol that immediately plucks him off the ocean by a Save the African Migrant helicopter flown by Guardia Civil. Dauda is so desperate to get out of the ocean, he pulls the Spanish rescuer down into the water. He lands in the helicopter and swallows three litres of water within seconds.

"We are hundreds of us," he utters indistinctly. "They dead by now."

The rescuers take him to Notre Dame Hospital on the Cape Verde islands. He weighs eighty-nine kilograms. He leans over a plate of fried chicken and, slowly and inarticulately, as if without teeth, speaks about the man that stood beside him in the boat, as if he's his brother. The nurse wipes a tear from her eye. Dauda regrets that the man's family will never find his body. The nurse rolls her eyes and wipes another tear.

"Do you know their telephone number?" she asks him.

"*Wau*," he says in Wolof, meaning yes.

The nurse dials the number and gets Jaba, Amadou's sister, to whom she announces the news.

Jaba says, "Thank God, at least we can mourn him." Jaba had been worried about her brother for years.

Knowing that Amadou's mother is suffering from high blood pressure, great care is taken to communicate to her as philosophically as possible the news of her son's death. It is his uncle Pape Tall who spoke to her, in idioms. Pa Cissé, Amadou's father, is away. He has gone to the pension office to know if something has trickled down. So when Pape Tall heard the telephone ring, he calls Jaba to answer it. He forgets to ask Jaba what it is about before leaving to do his ablution prior to saying prayer.

Amadou's mother understands and does not react to the story as many mothers would, that is, with an inability to accept its meaning. When the rage of grief wanes she walks alone to the boy's room. She is silent, her hands supporting her tired chin.

There hangs, facing her, a picture of Amadou at the age of six. An old, wooden bed lies opposite it. Into the bed she drops, weighed down by a shameful loss that wearies her body and tortures her soul.

LISTENING TO MIGRANTS' NARRATIVES: AN INTRODUCTION

Robert Lawrence McKenzie and Alessandro Triulzi

At the third European Conference on African Studies in 2009 (ECAS 2009) held in Leipzig, Germany, the co-editors of this volume convened a day-long panel under the rubric of "African Migration to Europe." The idea for the panel was conceived roughly a year earlier in June 2008, at the AEGIS Summer School held at Cortona, Italy, which gathered scholars from different disciplines to examine and discuss the broad theme of "Borders and Border-Crossings in Africa." It was there that we first met and presented papers on what could be broadly defined as "irregular" African migration to Europe. Despite the growing and considerable political salience about irregular migration, we were concerned about a deep discordance between European public imaginings and the experiences and lives of irregular migrants. Five years later, things have not changed much.

While it has been argued that scholarship should distinguish between dominant discourses and policies (cf. Czaika and de Haas 2011), it is also self-evident that academic discourses are not without social and political consequences. In the case of irregular migration, a set of tropes echoing alarmist rhetoric has increased public disquiet—and shaped ideas and ideologies—about the nature and consequences of new forms of transnational mobility. By and large these tropes have helped fashion and usher in anti-immigration movements, led to xenophobic fears of immigrants, increased racial, ethnic and religious tensions, and isolated new immigrant communities and long standing diasporas alike. What's more, compassion for the plight of migrants, including exiles and refugees, particularly those coming from Muslim lands, has given way to near fever pitch concerns about security in a post 9/11 environment. That these circumstances have coincided with an increasingly turbulent global economy has only strengthened the resolve of the far-right, fuelled intolerance, and led to a public backlash against nearly all immigrant communities in Europe.

Within this political topography, European states have used instruments of national power to develop a set of comprehensive strategies to restrict immigration through "non-arrival regimes" (Castles 2003: 14). To this end, European states have worked with foreign partners south of the Mediterranean to construct "architectures of exclusion" that have

shifted immigration controls and entrance decisions "away from state borders to a range of new places (the high seas, consular offices, and foreign airports)" (Gibney 2005: 4). These policies have not only been short-sighted and counterproductive, but they have also put countless migrants directly in harm's way. Restrictive immigration policies have eviscerated old routes and networks and forged new and troubling pathways to (il)legality. Unable to find what once were legal means of travelling to Europe, an increasing number of migrants are drawing on their own capabilities and agency, creating new networks, and embarking on extraordinary and dangerous journeys to reach European shores. But these new routes, networks, and methods do not guarantee success—far from it. In the last decade alone, some twelve thousand people have perished in what some African migrants aptly call the "Cemetery of the Mediterranean."[1] And these numbers reflect only the casualties that are known.

Worse yet, as the result of misleading nomenclature and criminalising labels—such as, illegal, irregular, undocumented, overstayer, *sans papiers, clandestino*—European states have become unable or unwilling to imagine irregular migrants as ordinary human beings, who, under the weight of highly complex circumstances, are compelled to use irregular routes and irregular methods. What's lost in the deafening din about the dangers of irregular migrants are the complex and multifaceted reasons why a growing number of Africans make these perilous journeys. As researchers who are troubled by serious human rights abuses against migrants, we were and remain convinced of the urgency to contest and dislodge pervasive misinformation and misconceptions about irregular migration in the European public sphere.

It was against this backdrop that we proposed a one-day panel on the issue of irregular migration for ECAS 2009. The panel offered a rare opportunity to generate dialogue and debate among scholars from diverse disciplinary backgrounds on questions related to irregular African migration to Europe. We received thirty-six paper proposals on a wide range of thematic issues, spanning broad geographic regions of Africa. And we were certainly pleased to see well over one hundred scholars attend our three sessions of twelve papers, each representing fresh research by new or recent doctoral students. Though the panel afforded a platform for a much-needed discussion, it was clear that there was far more to learn

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[1] See http://fortresseurope.blogspot.com/2006/01/mamadou-va-morire-la-strage-dei.html.

about the lives of Africans before, during, and after their "migratory projects" to Europe.

Building on the ECAS 2009 panel, this volume subjects to critical inquiry transnational mobility and explores the different phases and contours of African irregular migration to Europe. Through a wide-ranging probing of the topic, we investigate the direct and indirect relationship of macro-power forces on ordinary African lives, examining how these forces at once enable and constrain human agency and action. The central animating theme of this volume is the exploration of the local-to-global context of migration, namely the inextricable links between the so-called drivers of migration, its governance and management, and the various patterns, experiences and forms of agency it leads to. If there is but one fundamental and object lesson it is that one-size-fits all policies for governing and regulating migration have dangerous consequences on both sides of Mediterranean. This is true not only for African migrants, but also for sending, receiving, and transit states and their societies.

Framing Irregular Migration

The concept of irregular migration is problematic, unclear, and, at times, contradictory (cf. Düvell 2009; Vollmer 2008). As a result of inadequate data and confused nomenclature, the concept of irregular migration is a source of political and analytical uncertainty that impedes our understanding of this highly complex process (cf. Black 2003; Koser 2005). Therefore, as a starting point, we must ask how *is* irregular migration conceptualized? In other words, how is it defined, by whom, and with what consequences? Does this bedrock designation accurately define African migration or does it obfuscate and obstruct—analytically and politically—our understanding of new forms of transnational mobility? As we begin to complicate our understanding of these issues, we must also ask what is the nexus between patterns and experiences of migration, and forms of governance, management and control? These are but a few of the questions that inform and frame this volume.

It is our contention that western publics have been habituated to think of irregular migrants in binary and reductionist terms. Any casual survey of a wide range of European genres immediately reveals that the public is saturated with myopic depictions of real versus bogus refugees, involuntary versus voluntary migratory fluxes, legal versus illegal entry, regular versus irregular migration, among a growing list of categories

(cf. Zetter 2007). Pundits and politicians alike routinely leverage and magnify these easy-to-grasp notions as a lightning rod to garner support for their own political enterprises.

In this context, it is small wonder that one hears incessantly of irregular African migrants as being part of an "African exodus" or impending catastrophic "invasion" (de Haas 2007). By overstating the threat posed by migration, Canada was, as far back as 1997, spending one billion dollars a year on its internal refugee determination system or about ten times more than it spends on aid assistance to refugee camps (cf. Stoffman 1997). In an attempt to mitigate irregular migration, Canada, the United States, along with Germany, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, spent no less than seventeen billion dollars in 2002 alone (Martin 2003 quoted in Khoser 2005: 4). Yet the fact remains that the vast majority of people in the South, including those who have the means and opportunities to migrate, do not do so (Horst 2006).

That western states are spending so much on migration controls and management systems illustrates the extent to which uncompromising interpretations of irregular migration have shaped global opinion and imprinted themselves on immigration legislation and policies. In short, irregular migrants have been discursively reduced and crudely rendered in convenient images of victims and villains. Bridget Anderson (2007, 2008) aptly recognised that this discourse bifurcates "foreigners" into monolithic and moralising categories of "good" and "bad" migrants. The former have been designated as victims of trafficking and rightly deserve institutional and state assistance, while the latter are framed as cunning queue jumpers and welfare frauds, who, among other things, are responsible for the loss of jobs, rise in crime, social decay, and blight in the poorest areas of European countries.

For the purpose of this collection, we would like to suspend these dominant notions of irregular migration, widen our myopic gaze, and instead ask how are these categories and labels fashioned and reified in the corridors of power in the North and what are the resulting consequences for Africans on the move? Though we engage with these categories, our aim is not to work from a set of rigidly defined designations but rather to dislodge them through rich empirical, evidence-based analysis. Therefore this volume situates the concept of irregular migration within a global and historical context, a context that has allowed for shifting notions of criteria for those who can or cannot enter Europe, with an emphasis on those who cannot.

Towards a New Narrative of Irregular Migration

To move beyond binary and easy-to-grasp notions of irregular migrants, it is well to ask: What should we make of the untold numbers of migrants whose complex, heterogeneous lives and experiences do not fit easily within these monolithically consistent categories? What should we make of those, who, as neither refugee nor *homo economicus*, flee grinding marginalisation, injustice, pestilence, and crippling adversity, which has been created from "extreme, even life-threatening, postcolonial poverty" (Malkki 2007: 341)? And how should states, institutions, and international humanitarian regimes label and respond to these nebulous categories of persons? What would these "speechless emissaries" (Malkki 1996) have to say to us if their candour did not prevent their entry or ensure their deportation from Europe?

Clearly we do not mean to suggest that there are no victims. In fact, quite the opposite. The evidence is overwhelming that millions have fled mass human rights abuses, armed conflicts, and brutally oppressive regimes. Worldwide there were no less than ten and a half million refugees in 2011, twenty six million internally displaced persons as of 2007, and twelve million stateless persons as of 2009.[2] Therefore our contention is not to turn a blind eye to victims, but rather to highlight that a paradigm of factually ill-informed nomenclature and political charged rhetoric has fashioned an increasingly xenophobic ethos, inflated the threat of an invasion, and conflated different categories of migrants. The cumulative effect has forged a European environment that is increasingly inhospitable to migrants, regardless of how one labels them. Far too many European states have been unable or unwilling to grasp the basic human nature of transnational mobility and the variety of experiences that animate such a world-wide phenomenon.

Accordingly, we feel that there is a strong need for a new narrative from which to contextualize and grapple with the complex issues of irregular migration. To gain a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the issues—and to disabuse or undeceive ourselves from easy-to-grasp notions—the starting and end analysis must be with migrants themselves and their multiform agency grounded in and shaped by local contexts. By listening to their stories and documenting their often rich

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[2] For a detailed breakdown of the statistics see the United Nations Refugee Agency's Website: http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c11.html.

experiences—as they understand them—our research and analysis may begin to offer alternative readings and interpretations of irregular migration. In other words, it will only be through engaging irregular migrants in open and meaningful dialogue that we will be able to expand our own considerations of "irregular" migration.

Therefore an important point of departure for this publication is the focus of migrants' narratives within each individual chapter and research experience. These heterogeneous narratives, when juxtaposed to empirical findings, offer creative ways of thinking about and representing African migration, an approach we believe is too often underrepresented in scholarly works and public discourse. The integration of these diverse narratives demonstrates that one of the most vexing aspects of new forms of African migration is the extent to which migrants' narratives are ignored, muted, or elided in the public sphere.

While we are attempting to include migrants' narratives, we are well aware of the methodological and ethical complexities of the very reaching out and "listening" to migrants' voices. The link between migration and the colonial past, for instance, appears to be poorly perceived among the new generation of African migrants, mostly unemployed urbanized youth who appear to be escaping from the present "regimes of violence" (Mbembe 2001: 102), rather than from their nebulous colonial past. What these youths are interested in is not the colonial past per se, but whether their present life in poverty has any viable future.

Therefore, this volume demonstrates that the lives of irregular migrants offer many insights into the making and unmaking of today's transnational mobility. But they also offer a window into the migratory ecology of survival, whereby a morally ambiguous "gray zone" (Levi 1998) allows for the victim to become the victimiser and where, in fact, any clear-cut distinction between perpetrator and victim is often blurred and indiscernible. For this reason migrants' narratives are sometimes perceived at best as flawed, and at worst as mere rhetorical constructions riddled with secrets and lies. To be sure, the narratives which are presented in this volume were not aimed at providing asylum or refugee status evidence in front of a State commission, but are merely offered as fragments of lives and voices emerging from migrants' communities in the field or in the country of transit or arrival. In a way, these voices and silences describe the very *hubris* of today's abused humanity currently displayed everywhere towards irregular migrants. Accordingly, these voices and silences are a useful reminder to a forgetful Europe of what migrants' conditions meant to its own, often irregular, migrants of the past.

Manuscript Structure

The volume offers thirteen contributions from a variety of different local actors and situations, and it privileges the immediacy of firsthand accounts and self-representations. Through rich empirical chapters, the volume attempts to dislodge easy-grasp labels of irregular migrants as either "victims" or "villains." Moving beyond simplistic terms of how migrants attempt perilous journeys out of visible poverty, chapters demonstrate the complex set of ecological and human factors that help shape migrants' ideas and inform their decisions on the move. To this end, the volume aims to explore the constant conflict between the externally-imposed and internally-moulded laws of migration, examine its mixed and contradictory governance, and present live experiences and actual cases of individual migrants.

As a coda to the volume, we have included a narrative by an Ethiopian forced migrant living in Rome, who works as a filmmaker-cum-activist. The narrative speaks volumes about the long journeys that some Africans must make to escape suffocating structural violence in the South. Yet the narrative demonstrates that migrants' journeys, trials and tribulations, rarely end upon reaching European shores. In fact, it is often upon arrival that the painful remembering of the long journey surfaces and the urge to speak out is confronted with the silences and pain of one's abused dignity. As an Ethiopian female refugee stated in Dagmawi's film "Like a man on earth" (2008):

> I don't want to remember all this, I know what I went through all along. I can't tell anymore, but I want it to be exposed...I say this not because I seek pity...but in the hope that a solution can be found for everyone who's...going through this ordeal.

It would be disingenuous or naïve to suggest that this volume provides comprehensive and sustainable solutions to the intractable problems leading to and resulting from irregular migration. But in a similar vein to the Ethiopian woman just quoted, it is our hope that the narratives and empirical analyses found in this volume provide the rightful opening and exposure, not merely to public awareness and meaningful dialogue, but to the direct voicing of African migrants and refugees and of their struggles and painful journeys.

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SUB-SAHARAN MIGRANTS HEADING NORTH:
A MOBILITY PERSPECTIVE

Joris Schapendonk

Introduction

Sub-Saharan African migration towards the European Union (EU) belongs to one of the most stigmatised forms of migration of the 21st century. For this reason some contextualisation is necessary to avoid Eurocentric discourses with strong apocalyptical connotations of an "African exodus" or "invasion" (de Haas 2007). First and foremost it is important to note that mobility is, and has always been, a vital component of social life in sub-Saharan Africa (de Bruijn, van Dijk and Foeken 2001). Contemporary migration from this region towards the EU must therefore rather be seen as an extension of age-old mobile and multi-local lifestyles than a complete new phenomenon (Hahn and Klute 2007, Bakewell and de Haas 2007). Secondly, it is worth mentioning that the bulk of contemporary African international migration takes place within the continent and does not reflect the iconic picture of migrants moving to "the West." Sub-Saharan migration to developed countries is in fact marginal. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) notes that in 2004 some 7.2 million African migrants were officially identified in the OECD member countries.[1] This figure represents 13% of total immigration to OECD member states originating from non-OECD members. The slight majority of this 7.2 million people (3.8 million) originates from North Africa while an estimated number of 3.4 million migrants comes from sub-Saharan countries (Gnisci 2008). These figures strongly put into perspective the notion of an "African exodus" directed to the West. Even for West Africa, the region where migration is believed to be highly oriented

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[1] These figures do not include the number of irregular African migrants in OECD countries. The Migration Policy Institute "*guesstimates*" that some seven or eight million African migrants live in the EU without the right documents, particularly in the Southern European region. This includes people from the Maghreb countries. There is no evidence to suggest that the share of irregular migrants originating from sub-Saharan African countries is proportionally high (for an extensive discussion on the quantification of irregular migration see: de Haas 2007, Kohnert 2007).

towards Europe, the majority of international migrants move within this specific region. Moreover, there is a strong diversification of destinations in the context of African migration (Adepoju 2000, 2008). South Africa and Libya have developed into important destinations for migrants from West and Central Africa. Next to Europe, the Middle East, the United States and China are important extra-continental destinations for sub-Saharan African migrants. Thus, although regional, historical and linguistic linkages provide some axial routes, these factors are far from composing a complete picture of contemporary sub-Saharan African migration. Migration has generally become more spontaneous (Adepoju 2008) or "turbulent," as Papastergiadis outlines:

> The diversity of paths, and the complexity of forms of migrations, have meant that it is now almost impossible to map movement with a series of arrows, on a flat two-dimensional representation of the world. There would be a greater number of arrows going in multiple directions, and also the time scale would have to be so contracted and irregular that the map would lose its objective of representing movement (Papastergiadis 2000: 23–24).

Stepwise Journeys in the Age of (Im)mobility

As the paths of African migrations multiply, several researchers observe that "Europe" is increasingly present and becomes deeply rooted in collective representations concerning social success within African societies, especially amongst youngsters in urban areas (e.g., Riccio 2005, Prinz 2005, Jónsson 2008, Barten 2009). Consequently, African migration towards the EU must not only be analysed in terms of the traditional economic and political push factors. The more cultural explanations concerning social status and the opening up of African societies in terms of global interconnectedness and hence the growing fascination for "modern lifestyles" gain importance in the field of international migration from South to North (Appadurai 1996, Ferguson 2006). Several media show images of Western luxury to African juveniles contributing to their *"imagined worlds"* (Appadurai 1996). The "bright lights"[2] do not merely come from African metropoles, but also from music downloaded from the internet, information communicated by mobile phones and movies seen on television. In this context it is interesting to note that *"adventurism"* has always been

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[2] This is a reference to what is called the bright lights theory of Gulliver emphasising that the excitement of urban life attracts young would-be migrants (see also du Toit 1990).

an important motivating factor to migrate (van Dijk, Foeken and van Til 2001). This counts for Congolese *aventuriers* migrating to Paris in the 1980s (Clifford 1997), rural migrants migrating to Dakar (Lambert 2002), Senegalese street vendors in Barcelona (Kothari 2008) and urban youth, the would-be emigrants, in the streets of Segou, Mali (Barten 2009).

However, if globalisation may be said to produce smaller worlds, it also contains a recurrent paradox: it does not mean openness *per se* for all people. For many Africans, globalization means social and political closure in which "immobility regimes" keep people in their place, which contributes to frustrations concerning people's involuntary immobility (Carling 2002). Mobility has become one of the most important stratifying factors of modernity (Bauman 1998, 2004); we have the global nomads and locally bounded people living in the same world. There is indeed a "*power geometry*" involved in time-space compressions. This implies that people have different accesses and possibilities to connect to global flows and interactions (Massey 1994).

As a result of the increasingly restrictive European migration and asylum policies, many Africans lack the possibility of going directly to their desired destinations. Consequently, for a considerable group of people migration processes have turned into long-lasting and often risky undertakings with a strong fragmented character (Collyer 2007, Schapendonk and Smith 2008, Schapendonk 2011). As a cumulative policy effect, so-called transit countries are increasingly involved in European initiatives to control migration. This has shifted European borders southwards and has transformed North Africa from a "transit zone" to a "holding zone" (Bensaâd 2007). This study focuses exactly on these stepwise journeys of sub-Saharan African migrants who are heading for 'Europe.' The analysis captures a variety of migration journeys from West Africa to Europe including two important pathways of irregular migration; the trans-Saharan route to Morocco and eventually Spain; and the route to Greece via Turkey. Before commencing the analysis, I should discuss the analytical and methodological consequences of investigating migration journeys.

Uprooting Migration Analyses: From the *Roots* to the *Routes* of Migration

Traditionally, migration-related research has been conducted on both ends of migration. On the one end, the pre-migration phase, the decision-making process of migrants has been investigated intensively, whereas on the other end, the post-migration phase, the (economic and social)

impact of migration on host societies has been the main topic of research. It is striking that the story of human movement has mainly been told from the position of fixed points; the A and the B, the push and the pull, the sender and the host, the origin and the destination. Indeed, to explain migration we have used "sedentarist" frameworks in which *roots* dominated over *routes* (Cresswell 2006, see also Malkki 1992, Clifford 1997, Urry 2000, 2007, Schapendonk 2011). The sedentarist perspective on migration is highly questionable, as Du Toit argues:

> [M]ore attention should be given to the 'journey' than to the 'origin' or 'destination' because people who move may not know exactly where they are moving to, nor do they necessarily remain there once they reached this destination. The migrant may explore better opportunities, may move on to a new situation, or may return to the point of departure. Migration is not an act but a process. (du Toit 1990, 308)

The above quote indicates that a focus on the mobile part of migration has profound consequences for migration as an analytical object: It puts the beginning and ending sides of migration (departure/arrival) into perspective. It complicates departures by stating that there can be more than only one moment and place of departure. At the same time, it challenges the finiteness of arrivals since a destination can be transformed into nothing more than another place of departure. Hence, the idea of migration as a movement between two fixed points is profoundly questioned. From the perspective of the journey, migration is never permanent (Grillo 2007). The focus on the supposedly "in-between phase" of migration introduces an ontological shift from settlement and permanency to mobility and process. This perspective suits better the turbulent character of contemporary migration; as Papastergiadis notes (2000, 4): "*[I]t is increasingly evident that contemporary migration has no single origin and no simple end.*"

The Mobilities Turn

To sustain this shift in perspective, the analytical framework of this study is mainly based on the so-called mobilities turn in social science (Sheller and Urry 2006, Urry 2007, Cresswell 2010). Scholars who engage with this mobilities turn plead for a social science that is movement-driven, both empirically and methodologically. They do not argue that social science has never dealt with movement, but emphasise that social science has traditionally approached mobility as "residual death time" (Sheller and Urry 2006; Cresswell 2006). The preceding analysis of migration is a good illustration of this. Although migration research has focused on questions

with regard to human movement, the analytical starting point has been fixity and, partly as a result of this, the actual movements of migrants have been neglected in empirical studies. Some analysts go one step further by showing how mobility has been perceived as "a given—an empty space that needed to be expunged or limited" (Creswell 2010: 18).

Although the launch of a "new paradigm" (Sheller and Urry 2006) may suggest otherwise, this new strand of theoretical and empirical investigation does *not* imply an understanding of the world as being in constant movement and shaped by laminar flows melting all that is solid into fluids (e.g., Bauman 2000). The mobilities turn is above all a relational approach as mobilities researchers maintain that there is no increase of mobility without a substantial increase of immobility (Adey 2006, 2010, Urry 2007, Schapendonk 2011). Moreover, by taking the politics of mobility as a starting point (Adey 2006, Cresswell 2010), scholars stress that some movements face less resistance, while other movements are decelerated, traced and/or blocked. Finally, and most importantly in the context of this contribution, scholars empirically investigate how mobilities are experienced. Some mobilities are more convenient than others, whereas some immobilities are more frustrating than others. As Peter Adey (2010: 4) puts it: "Our mobile life-worlds are mobile for us, with us, and sometimes they are against us." With this starting point, the trajectories of sub-Saharan African migrants on their way to the European Union (EU) are analysed.

A Trajectory Ethnography

A focus on journeys in migration research also challenges conventional methodological frameworks. After all, to capture the dynamics of individual journeys the researcher is asked to be flexible and mobile. With the emergence of multi-sited ethnographies (e.g., Marcus 1995, Hannerz 2003) several scholars have broken with the traditional notion of ethnography as a "special kind of localized dwelling" (Clifford 1997: 21). I follow the notion of a multi-sited ethnography to a large extent. However, there is also a difference between the multi-sited ethnography and my attempt to grasp the dynamics of migration trajectories. A multi-local design aims to know more about the interactions between places—the purpose is to gain further insight into the functioning of "world systems" (Marcus 1995). This research project does not focus on the interactions between particular places in order to gain more information about the way in which activities, rules and beliefs in different places influence each other. Instead of the world system, it takes the path between and through places as its

central study object. For this reason, this methodological design is not so much a "world system ethnography" (Marcus 1995, Freidberg 2001), but rather a 'trajectory ethnography,' (Schapendonk 2011) whereby the trajectory is seen as an important building block of world systems—as the path that is both cause and effect of an increasingly interconnected world (Marcus 1995).

This trajectory ethnography started in 2007 with an extensive fieldtrip to explore the dynamics of African migration journeys to Europe. The philosophy of this trip was to travel the routes of sub-Saharan African migrants who are on their way to Europe in reverse direction. I went to Spain first where I stayed two weeks to visit Barcelona, Madrid, Granada, Almeria and Roquetas del Mar. From Spain I moved to Morocco and visited Oujda and Rabat as well as the Spanish enclave Melilla. Subsequently, I went to Senegal where I stayed three weeks to visit Dakar and Saint Louis. Thereupon I decided to collect so-called migration biographies (Halfacree and Boyle 1993, Ní Laiore 2000) of sub-Saharan Africans who stated to be "*en route*" to Europe. I revisited Morocco in January 2008 and interviewed thirty migrants about their migration trajectories. For the same reason I went to Turkey where I interviewed twenty-seven migrants (mainly in Istanbul). Additionally, I collected thirty-six migration biographies among sub-Saharan Africans in the Netherlands in order to have broader insights into how migrants travel to Europe.

A vital addition to the collection of migration biographies was to "follow" migrants through time and space. By exchanging email addresses and telephone numbers, I was able to connect with some of my respondents over a longer period of time and across considerable distances. From the beginning of 2008, I remained in contact with seven of my thirty respondents in Morocco and with six of the twenty-seven respondents I interviewed in Turkey. I also followed three of my respondents in the Netherlands for a longer period of time (Schapendonk 2011).

It is important to note that there is a strong gender bias in my research since only twenty of my respondents were women. Especially in the so-called transit areas of Turkey and Morocco it was difficult to approach women for interviews. Another important remark is that, in line with other migration researchers (e.g., Papadopoulou-Kourkoula 2008, van Hear 2004, Gnisci 2008), I follow the notion of mixed migration indicating that the reasons to migrate are often overlapping: underdevelopment, weak governance, conflicts, human rights abuses and environmental degradation are all interlinked. Hence those who are usually categorised

by researchers and policy makers as economic migrants are not merely migrating for economic reasons. Those in need of international protection, at the other hand, often have economic considerations as well. Moreover, political refugees and economic migrants use the same migration means and are to be found on the same routes. Thus, in this research there is no distinction made beforehand between the two conventional categories. It is acknowledged that, in many cases, fleeing from a violent conflict all at once has different implications for the migration trajectory in terms of preparation and organisation of the journey. However, it does not mean necessarily that the trajectory is predominantly characterised by this first movement.

Migration Trajectories

To analyse individual migration trajectories I have distinguished three general components of journeys: the motivation behind journeys, the facilitation of journeys, and the velocity of journeys. I have defined the motivation of journeys as the migration aspiration. Migrants' aspirations differ slightly from intentions and plans, as aspirations are not necessarily linked to what is feasible (Carling 2002). In other words, migration aspirations are not a reliable predictor of future migration. For those who have commenced their migration process, however, aspirations are vital in giving some direction, in its social and geographical sense, to migrants' trajectories. They indicate what the migrant hopes to achieve by migrating, and reveal much of the social meaning that is attached to migration (Schapendonk 2009).

The facilitation of migration is investigated by focusing on migrants' connections. Studies on migrants' social networks and smuggling practices have gained rich insights into the facilitation of migration (e.g., Wilson 1998, Van Liempt 2007). However, little attention is given to how personal and not-so-personal connections are mediated along the way and how new connections change the direction and character of individual journeys.

Finally, I have examined the velocity of migration journeys by taking into account how migrants experience phases of mobility and phases of immobility. Thereby, I have distinguished voluntary (im)mobility from involuntary (im)mobility.

In keeping with the overall theme of this volume I present below two different trajectories from the perspective of the migrant. The first trajectory

is that of Mariama,[3] a 27-years old Mauritanian woman whom I have met in Nijmegen (the Netherlands). The second trajectory is that of Destiny, a 32 years-old Nigerian man that I have followed during his stay in Istanbul and his subsequent passages to Athens and Heraklion (Crete).

Mariama's Back and Forth Movements

In 1998, Mariama left her country of origin. At that time she was sixteen years old. During two interviews in Nijmegen she explained her project as follows:

> When you have your bachelor degree, you have a certain potential in you, you want to develop yourself, maybe with work, but I had the dream of going to the university. I had this dream already when I was eleven years old. But in my situation you could have many dreams, of getting a job, going to the university, it does not get you very far because there are no possibilities in my country. And that is very frustrating because you invest in your education. You invest a lot and you end up nowhere . . . At a specific age you cannot handle a major standstill, you want change, progress! That is why I left my county just to find an environment in which I could develop myself and support my family at the same time.

The first time Mariama left her home country she went to the Canary Islands:

> The Canary Islands are only three hours flying from Nouakchott. A friend of my father helped me with this. I asked my father for help and he brought me in contact with a French friend that worked for the organisation Médecins sans Frontières and this friend helped me with the whole procedure to go to Spain . . . I was formally not allowed to leave my country, but I just went in the name of the organisation. I stayed there for only three months. Just because it was too big a change for a sixteen years old girl! The language, well actually everything in daily life was different! I had the feeling that I had to start all over again, and I thought to myself, well if this is it to be abroad, I am not happy with it. I also missed my family a lot. So for me it was better to return to my country. There I was punished by the government with a formal house arrest for leaving the country. This situation made my wish to leave my country again even stronger than before. At that time I came in contact with a Frenchman working for another international organisation. He was looking for a babysitter, and I said that I would love to work for him. I would never work as a babysitter in a different situation [*laughs*] but I was hoping for this new connection.

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[3] For reasons of confidentiality, I am not using migrants' real names. In both cases the respondents have chosen a pseudonym themselves.

Mariama worked for the Frenchman's family in Mauritania for some months. But during this period the family was preparing to leave for France. That led Mariama to ask the man whether she could work for them in France as well. She received a positive answer and joined the family in Toulouse some months later. In France, however, she felt dissatisfied with her situation because she wanted more from life than working as a housekeeper. She suddenly decided to leave the family in Toulouse. A serious argument with *"her boss"* followed, Mariama explained:

> My boss, of course, expected me to show some loyalty since he helped me that far. He was really angry with me, and I can understand it. But I had my own plan, my own life, and we had some serious arguments and I decided to leave the family ... And so a new phase started. I had to leave Toulouse, but I had nowhere to go. And there was another complication, my boss was so angry that he kept my passport. So in fact I became illegal, this made my train-travel to Brussels nerve-racking. I was so scared that the wrong policeman would ask me the wrong questions!

In this stressful period Mariama called her mother for advice.

> I asked her for a place where I could go to. Anywhere in Europe! She only had one number of a Halpulaar man living in Amsterdam. This man advised me to go to Brussels where another Halpulaar man from Senegal lived. He also sent me 100 guilders [*approximately 50 euros*] for the train. So in Brussels the Senegalese man was waiting for me, I was very nervous because my family did not even know this man, but he turned out to be a good person.... After one week of rest the Mauritanian man [*from Amsterdam*] picked me up and brought me to Amsterdam. This man told me very honestly that the Netherlands is not like Mauritania, you cannot arrange things only with the right contacts and money. He advised me to apply for asylum. I needed time for that decision, I took a month. In this month I seriously considered going back to Mauritania, because it feels so intensely strange to go to the police and say; "here I am," while you are running and hiding from the police. But at the end I decided this was the best idea ... After that you start a new phase. They kept me in a cell for two days, you feel like a criminal! It is ridiculous. After these two days, they sent me to Ommen, for the second interview. There I had to stay seven months. Now it does not seem to be a long time, but at that time it felt like a prison, all this insecurity is not good. After this period, I was sent all over the country and you have no stability. But finally I went to Nijmegen because I knew that there was a Mauritanian community there ... This place has become my resting place.

Destiny's Moving Destinations

At the time I met the Nigerian man Destiny he was thirty-two years old. He was born in a village not far from Lagos. When he reached the age

of fifteen, he moved to Lagos to live with his brother and look for work. There, he was thinking of going abroad for the first time.

> My plan was to go to South Africa. Many many Nigerians were going to South Africa. I wanted to do the same. I wanted to go out! Because Nigeria is not a good place, there is too much corruption . . . God decides when it is your time to go. It was 2002, everything was arranged and I had a good visa, but still they don't let me enter the country. They sent me back to Lagos. In that period I was very discouraged about life. I told my pastor that I wanted to go back to my village. But he said: "No, you can try Europe now. If you find the money for the travel, you will succeed." He is a prophet, so you do not doubt his words! From that time I was thinking of ways to get to Europe.

Destiny had been saving money for five years to immigrate to Europe. However, a direct journey to Europe was not possible.

> You try to get a visa for different countries. But they block you. That is why people take a different route . . . I paid someone to bring me to Turkey . . . Ohh . . . it is very expensive. Maybe one thousand dollar! You enter Istanbul with a visa, it is valid for three months.

At the time I met Destiny, he had been living in Istanbul for approximately three months. He shared a room with four other Nigerians. At that time he was dreaming of a life where he could combine his stay in Europe with his life in Nigeria.

> Let me explain, when I am a citizen of Europe, I don't lose my feelings for my home country. I will travel to my home country. Visit my family . . . and so on! This is very important. I can go back to Nigeria from here [*Istanbul*] . . . but I will lose everything. This room will be filled by another African. If I go back, I lose my chance to move to Europe. When you are a citizen of Europe you can travel as much as you like!

Destiny made the "jump to Europe" in June 2008. He thus spent some six months "in transit" in Istanbul. I visited him again in December 2011. During the week I spent with him, he commented on his journey as follows:

> The Sudanese man C. arranged my connection. He is very famous in Istanbul, every black man knows him. You might have seen him . . . I did not make use of a contractor.[4] I paid USD 1200 for a guaranteed cross. Even if the Greek soldiers catch you, you can try again for the same money. For this reason,

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[4] The contractor is a middle-man in the migration process. To ensure his passage to Europe, the migrant gives the contractor usually half of the total sum of money for the smuggling process. The contractor is asked to transfer the money to the connection man after the migrant has successfully reached European grounds.

this connection man is very popular. Everybody knows that he doesn't eat your money . . . Then you go to Izmir, and there you wait. You don't know when you are leaving. But then, in the middle of the night you wake up in the hotel in Izmir. People say "go, go, go." Then you are brought to a container, it is very dark so you don't know what is happening! We enter the container with twenty-nine or thirty people. They drive to a distant place. We are all scared, because we don't know what is happening. Then the truck stops, and the people tell you to be very quiet. You go out. You enter a place with rocks and swamps. The water was getting to my knees. I lost both of my shoes there. People tell you "phones must be off, or they catch you!" and "don't smoke, or they catch you!" You know there is the light of the Greek border guards reaching this place, so if it approaches you have to dive. No matter what is underneath you, you dive! Then you enter the sea, there is no light, so you see nothing, you only follow. The water was coming above my knees before I entered the boat. It was a very little boat, we call it a "balloon" because there is air inside. We all entered with thirty people, and there was one white man, the captain. The boat was so full you couldn't move your arms. That's why you cannot bring any bag with you, they forbid you, there is no space! Then we start moving, and the boat was filling with water. We used little cups to get the water out. You cannot scream because the people tell you to be silent, but I wanted to scream like a girl! I sat on the boat for two and a half hours until the light appeared. It was a boat. We thought it was maybe the Greek soldiers. But it was a fishing boat. When our balloon was approaching the boat, I saw our captain taking a knife from his pocket, and he put it in the rubber—PFFfffff! We were sinking! I couldn't swim, so I took some rubber to be above the water. The fishermen helped us one by one, and brought us to Samos. There you are picked up by the Greek soldiers. You pretend that you don't speak English, because you don't know what is happening. Then they bring you to the hospital and later to the camp. I only stayed eight days in the camp, after that they brought me to Athens.

Destiny was very happy to have left Turkey. According to him, Greece knows at least the "*meaning of human rights*." Yet, his life in Athens had not been easy. He worked as a street vendor, but he did not make sufficient money out of it. As he explained:

You cannot do business there, because there are too many blacks around. Many people are involved in drugs, but I did not want to do that. It is too risky for me.

After ten months in the Greek capital, he moved to Heraklion, the capital of Crete. I visited him there in December 2011. He told me that he started a relationship with a Greek girl. Although he was hoping that this relationship would help him to get a residence permit in Greece, he was also saving money for the next step of his trajectory.

Today my brother [*not belonging to his family*] in Austria called me. He is in the camp there. He told me that life is so much better out there. They give you little money to survive, and they give you a place to stay. That is the real Europe. Greece is not the real Europe. Too many people are struggling here. And people cannot move here. What I need is complete papers. If I do not get the complete papers then I will move to Italy, very soon. From there I can reach other places. Maybe Austria, maybe Holland, maybe Switserland. I will look for the best place!

A synthesis: Shifting Destinations in the Age of (Im)mobility

Both migration stories indicate that migration can be a trial-and-error undertaking and may involve more than one destination. Mariama first moved to Spain and Destiny to South Africa. Both destinations were not so much the result of an economic motivation, but were believed to be places where the persons in question could make the best out of life. Both destinations, however, were not the places where the migrants had settled. Mariama and Destiny moved backwards (to respectively Mauritania and Nigeria), and onwards (to respectively France/Belgium/the Netherlands and Turkey/Greece). It became clear during my study that the shifting of destinations was a main characteristic of the trajectories of many migrants.

The shifting of destinations and migrants' onward movements can be seen as a mixed blessing that results from the turbulence of migration in which two main processes occur simultaneously, namely, the growing demand for flexible and temporary labour in post-Fordist economies, and the increasingly hostile geo-political climate which destabilises the lives of many migrants (Papasterigiadis 2000). This mixed blessing was well illustrated by the following answer of a Congolese woman in Rabat to my question whether I could find her at her home the next time I would visit the city. As she responded: "*I don't know, you better call me because my mobile is my address*." This quote contains a double connotation designating her personal flexibility (if she has the possibility she might move to "Europe" the next day) and insecure position in Morocco (a lack of income, or an intervening act of the Moroccan authorities might lead to an involuntary move to another place in the country, or worse, expulsion to a third country).

The insecure living conditions, in combination with migrants' flexibilities to a given context, mean that mobility becomes more central to migrants' life-worlds. It follows that migration journeys do not follow (if

they ever did) the logic of the straight line—migration is not a simple move from a place of origin to a certain destination (see Skeldon 1997).

This certainly applies to many sub-Saharan African migrants who undertake long and fragmented journeys to the North (see Collyer 2007, Schapendonk 2009). However, the shifting of destinations and onward journeying of sub-Saharan African migrants do not at all resemble the notion of *sojourners* or *free floaters* (e.g., Piore 1979) that are often used to describe "mobile migrants." These notions tend to romanticise migration processes. They overlook the exhausting and dangerous character of many journeys. Moreover, such terms also undermine the power of the "immobility regimes" restricting migrants to move in desired directions and making in fact involuntary immobility (Carling 2002) a daily reality for so many people. Many sub-Saharan African migrants are travellers in *the age of (im)mobility* in which some people are able "to get there quickly" by choice, which is a sign of exclusivity, while others are destined to wait or to undertake slow and fragmented journeys (Bauman 1998; Adey 2006; Cresswell 2010).

A related question then is how to consider these *unfree* floaters: as victims, heroes, global nomads? After all the interviews, I consider them as a mixture of the three. But what has become even clearer to me is that these journeys are, in its essence, not directed to "Europe" but rather to "full membership" of a global society (Ferguson 2006). Therefore the most profound critique on the African position in the world order today does not come from anti-globalization networks or critical politicians in the North, but from these young men and women knocking on Europe's door.[5]

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[5] I would like to thank Dr. Chiara Brambilla for raising this issue in her statement during the GLOMIG workshop at the Radboud University Nijmegen, October 2006.

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NIGERIAN BORDER CROSSERS:
WOMEN TRAVELLING TO EUROPE BY LAND

Kristin Kastner

PROLOGUE

On their way to Europe male and female African migrants pass through the same places and share many experiences. Yet there is a specific way of migration that is related to the female body, a critical and central point to this chapter. Crossing borders successfully, earning one's living and avoiding deportation are intimately connected to a variety of tactics conferring a crucial role to the body.[1] For Nigerian women who migrate to Europe, the body often remains the only resource and capital on their way to Europe and during their lives in Europe. At the same time, the body represents an object of gender-based violence. Focussing on the body as the guideline of the research therefore highlights the interconnectedness between structural constraints and human agency.

Field research was conducted in the border zone of the Strait of Gibraltar, between Spain and Morocco. During a total of thirteen months between autumn 2004 and autumn 2006, I made Tarifa, the most southern town of Spain, my starting point for research in Andalucía. Tarifa was, until 2003, the favourite destination of *pateras/zodiacs*[2] coming from Morocco. I also crossed regularly to Morocco, where the research was mainly carried out in Tangier, a seaport just some 20 kilometres away from Tarifa.

The migration of women from Edo State with its capital Benin City in the South of Nigeria, where most of my interlocutors came from, is not a recent phenomenon. Eno Ikpe, who draws a brief historical outline of the migration within Nigeria and to neighbouring states, considers the present international and intercontinental migration of Nigerian

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[1] A preliminary Spanish version to this article was published in 2011: Vivir con la frontera a cuestas: migrantes nigerianas de camino hacia Europa. In *El Río Bravo Mediterráneo: Las Regiones Fronterizas en la Epoca de la Globalización*, ed. Ribas Mateos, Natalia, 512–528. Barcelona: Edicions Bellaterra.

[2] The term *patera* (span.)/*zodiac* (engl.) refers to the boat equipped with an outboard motor, which migrants use to cross from Morocco over to Spain. Formerly small wooden boats and originally used for fishing, they are nowadays replaced by faster inflatable rubber boats. Nigerian migrants use both terms interchangeably.

women as an extension of the already existing forms of female autonomous migration in Nigeria (Ikpe 2005: 5).[3] As for clandestine migrants from other Sub-Saharan countries, the number of Nigerians who embark on the road to Europe can only be roughly estimated. Nevertheless, it is commonly believed that in almost every family in Benin City one or two children, mostly females, live abroad (Adesina 2006: 4). I can confirm this assumption after my own stay in Benin City in autumn 2007, where mobility to other cities, states or neighbouring countries is omnipresent and where nearly every family I came across, was supported by a child living in Europe or in the United States.

Due to the clandestine character of most of the migrants' journey, only vague figures are available. According to Jørgen Carling, since 2000, on average 350 African boat migrants have been intercepted along Spanish shores every week, with a weekly death toll of four among these migrants (Carling 2007: 3). Drawing on different official and unofficial sources, Claire Escoffier states that 65,000 Sub-Saharan migrants enter the Maghreb every year on their journey to Europe (Escoffier 2006: 96, 178–180). The lack of reliable data is due to the fact that many migrants travel without documents and are therefore rarely registered by authorities. Moreover, information on personal data provided by the migrants have to be interpreted within the context of their clandestinity: migrants frequently adopt various identities in order to proceed with the journey, which makes the effort to distinguish between "true" and "false" identities obsolete.

The women I met in Morocco and Spain were roughly between 17 and 28 years old and the majority declared to originate from the region of Benin City. They are not among the poorest of the poor who cannot afford travelling, and their family background is to be ranked, according to Western sociological terminology, within the lower middle class. Compared to their male travel companions, the women were not as well educated. Many of the young women claimed to have dropped out of school after a few years of education due to high school fees and in order to care for younger siblings.

The fact that mainly female Nigerians from Edo State leave the country gave rise to a range of (partially dubious) speculations, especially as Benin

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[3] By employing the term "autonomous migration" I refer to the phenomenon that, in many cases, Nigerian women migrate on their own and not as mere appendage of their husbands or other (male) family members.

City has become the hub of the international sex trade.[4] If some years ago trading activities and the love of adventure contributed to the decision of young Nigerian women to leave their country, it is these days mainly the economic plight of the family which is stated as the main motive for travelling to Europe. This is not to say that a sense of adventure or the prospect of escaping strong family ties, though rarely stated explicitly, may not also still be underlying incentives to migrate.

Introduction

Those migrants who make their way to Europe overland are confronted with a range of borders: political, legal, cultural, linguistic and individual ones. This chapter will focus mainly on political borders and border crossings within the context of the migration of Nigerian women to Spain and will address the following questions:

1. How do the migrants describe border zones? 2. How do political borders influence and mark their lives? 3. How do the migrants deal with these borders that have, in the course of the years, become nearly invincible and, though not visible on any map, have shifted considerably from the north towards the south?

Borders in general are a deeply ambivalent phenomenon as they divide but connect and unite at the same time (Haller 2000: 14). Another ambivalent feature of borders is underlined by Douglass, who states that they are "simultaneously both highly structured and liminal zones" (Douglass 1998: 89). Moreover, the multidimensionality and the polisemantics of borders have recently been stressed, since borders are "as much boundaries of the mind as they are geopolitical realities" (Driessen 1996a: 290). With respect to the Moroccan-Spanish border it should be noted that this border has never been as unequivocal and clear-cut as the lines of a map would suggest, although this border seems to be "natural" due to the sea that separates the two continents: until the 16th century the Strait of Gibraltar did not represent a political border. Therefore, Henk Driessen suggests perceiving the border from an anthropological perspective as

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[4] I will not pursue this question here. For a discussion on the reasons why young Nigerian women engage in sex work in Europe see Adesina (2006) and Le Meur (2005). As a matter of fact I met many Nigerians not connected to sex work.

a "shifting space in which peoples with different identities and cultural backgrounds meet and deal with each other" (Driessen 1996b: 181). Nevertheless, the perception of the Mediterranean as a site of encounter and exchange does not have much to do with the daily realities of Sub-Saharan migrants who find themselves in the border zone of the *Estrecho*, as the Strait of Gibraltar is called in Spanish. Especially for the migrants waiting to cross over to Europe this border has literally been transformed into an "Iron Curtain" over the last few years, although the other side of the *Estrecho* seems within easy reach on a clear day. While these migrants often have to wait for years, I could make the 17 kilometres between Spain and Morocco without any trouble by ferry.

CROSSING THE DESERT

Generally, Europe is imagined as a place of *sweet life*. However, especially when travelling through land, the European continent turns out to be a very distant place, and the daily realities on the road sharply contrast with the European dream.

Most Nigerians take the route via Mali and Algeria. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), an agreement on the free movement of goods and persons, facilitates the journey to towns like Gao in Mali or Agadez in Niger, both important junctions for Sub-Saharan migrants. Those who continue to northern Morocco have to cross the border to Algeria before they can try to enter Morocco near the border town of Oujda. The subsequent stay in Morocco mainly means waiting until the necessary *connection money*[5] can be raised, and until the wind and weather conditions in the Strait of Gibraltar as well as gaps in coastguard surveillance allow the crossing to Spain.

Over the past years, the increased pressure of the European Union on the North-African transit states and the steady shift of the southern border, though not visible on any map, have resulted in frequent deportations to the border zones near Algeria and from there back to Mali. Therefore, I argue that additionally to the shift of the border between the two continents, a multiplication of the border can be noted. The border between Morocco and Spain is still very present in the life of the migrants due to

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[5] This term refers to the amount of money which has to be paid for crossing the Strait of Gibraltar by *zodiac*.

the sophisticated system of surveillance. Moreover, the border between the two continents seems to be multiplied both within Morocco itself and the neighbouring countries, as migrants regularly face deportation to regions far from the actual border zone. As a consequence, they often have to cross the very same border several times.

Jennifer, who entered Spain in 2005, was deported from Algeria to the border with Mali. In the following, I want to draw on her description in order to illustrate the specific vocabulary used and even partly created by Nigerian migrants on the road:

> NIGERIANS, they go to that place, that is where they deport Nigerians. In Algeria, they **catch** every *kamarad* in Algeria now, they will **transfer** them to that place, they will go and **dump** them there. Then anyone that have money will find their way out from that place. (Jennifer, 12.11.2005, Spain)

Verbs like *catch, transfer* und *dump* reflect the way the migrants are treated by security forces—they are regarded as goods rather than persons. The strenuous deportations that take migrants to their financial and physical limits are part of their daily reality. Their narrations describe existential experiences and corporal deprivations like thirst, hunger and the powerlessness when faced with the death of travel companions while crossing the desert. Therefore, on their way to Europe, migrants do not simply overcome a particular distance, but a way paved by various obstacles and detours.[6] In this liminal phase they constantly have to look for niches and hiding places.[7] They choose unconventional routes and keep away from certain places to avoid being caught by the Moroccan police. At the same time, it is easier for female migrants to preserve their mobility, especially for pregnant women and young mothers.

Despite the difficult circumstances, since the second half of the 1990s Sub-Saharan migration is increasing. This phenomenon impacts on the people living in the border zones on the road. Towns like Agadaz (Niger) and Tamanrasset (Algeria) have experienced a demographic and cosmopolitan peak. In 1988 Agadez officially had some 49,000 inhabitants, while in 2001, 78,000 inhabitants were counted (Brachet 2005: 239). A strong

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[6] For Sub-Saharan migration to and via Morocco, see, among others, Barros et al. (2002), the journal *Maghreb Machrek* 18 (2005), which comprises five articles on Trans-Saharan migration and Escoffier (2006). For the Euro-Maghrebian space and the political relationships between the North African countries and the European Union, which sharply mark migratory living conditions, see the contributions in *L'Année du Maghreb* 2004 (2006).

[7] Malkki (1995; 1997) also applies Victor Turner's concept of liminality to the situation of refugees.

population growth over the last decade was also registered in Tamanrasset, which has changed from a village with some 50 inhabitants in 1920 to a town with currently 100,000 inhabitants belonging to 45 different nationalities (Nadi 2007: 279). Due to the clandestine migration, the importance of the old Trans-Saharan trade routes has been reinforced. Only the means of transport have changed and new products meant for the Sub-Saharan clientele have been introduced (Badi 2007: 260–264). Bensaâd (2005) points to the revaluation of the Saharan space, a periphery, which has been marginalized for decades. Its vast and therefore incontrollable space has contributed to its transformation into a new hub of international clandestine mobility—not only from Africa but also from Asia. Nevertheless, it is by no means easy to cross this periphery, as Ifoma, who now lives in Spain, pointed out:

> About 35 people, we sit on it [the Pick-up]. So at times, when you are not lucky, you will fall and you lose your life. At times, the car will spoil inside the desert, everybody will die, because of no food and water. So it was God, it was God that helped us. It is not easy. And many along the road, because of the car spoilt, no way to survive them, because the desert was too far from town. So they have to lose their life. Many of them, they lost their life. (Ifoma, 9.6.2005, Spain)

Assistance to clandestine transportation and border crossing has become a lucrative business for local populations in Mali, Niger, Algeria and Morocco. Especially the Touareg have re-established themselves as drivers, smugglers and guides and make use of tracks that correspond to the old caravan routes (Badi 2007: 271). The migrants have to be careful, because the vehicles are often overloaded and drive with high speed. As a result of failed attempts to cross the desert by car, migrants must often continue their journey on foot. Consequently, migrants have developed a range of practices to stay as invisible as possible for security forces that have also impacted on the migrants' language. In the following I will deal with *beating*, *staying trankil*, the high mobility and the dressing up used by the migrants in order to survive and to proceed with their journey. Moreover, female migrants broaden the repertoire of possible changes of roles and styles.

BEATING AND STAYING TRANKIL

For Nigerian migrants on the road, the verb "to beat" was attributed a special meaning that describes the way of hiding from police forces while

continuing the journey at the same time, as Marian, now living in Madrid, pointed out:

> We take Jeep. When we take the frontier, we will come down—*gendarmes*, that is police. We come down, we will still BEAT BEAT BEAT. (…) So we come down, somewhere *trankil*, after, in the night, move again. (…) Maybe, when the Arab man will drive the Jeep, everybody will come down, will *trankil*. Then he will take the Jeep to FAAAAR place to go and look whether there is not any police. (Marian, 10.5.2005, Spain)

It is mainly the border zones that force the migrants to take large detours to stay out of sight from border patrols to *beat* the police. In the same context another expression was introduced into the Nigerian Pidgin by the migrants travelling to Europe overland: As denoted by Marian, *trankil* (from the French *tranquille*) is used both as a verb and an adjective. Rita, another migrant who crossed the *Estrecho* in the same zodiac as Marian, explained the exclusive significance of this *terminus technicus* when she underlined that "Nigerians that take flight to Europe don't know the meaning. Even I, when I entered the road, I did not know it" (Rita, 8.5.2006, Spain). Here, Rita referred to the act of hiding from the police. Due to the considerable Spanish influence in Tangier and the North of Morocco the modified form *trankilo* is employed. In times of raids I was frequently informed by the migrants via mobile phone: "I am trankilo, I stay trankil—I cannot come out." In the jargon of those waiting to cross the Mediterranean, *trankilo/trankil* is converted into *trankilo point*, which describes the site near the seaside where the migrants hide some days before the actual crossing. Nevertheless, before the last border— for the time being—can be crossed, two other difficult border crossings have to be made: the border between Mali and Algeria and the Algerian-Moroccan border:

> I travelled through land. I walk, I take transport and most of all, we walk, especially if you want to pass the border. We always come down before the border, we go and walk around so many miles. Where we are going is very close to, but just because to beat the police we go inside. That was how many people died. There was no water. You cannot even carry your bag when you are trekking, you have to throw away EVERYTHING. You can't even hold a phone like this (*pointing at her mobile phone*), when you are trekking! You know, the desert, it is full of sand, it is like when somebody is walking in the water. It is very tired, it is not easy. (…) Sometimes we trek three days, just to run away from the police. (Beauty, 8.10.2005, Spain)

In these border zones the migrants reach their physical and psychological limits. Beauty used the image of walking in the water to make me

understand the exhausting walking in the sand, where it is impossible to carry anything. It is only the own body that remains. In the migrants' recollections, the desert plays a prominent role as, at least for Nigerians, it represents a complete unknown and inhospitable landscape.

Numerous deportations are a part of the migrants' biographies. Once the migrants have entered Morocco, they constantly fear deportation to the border with Algeria. This border, which has officially been closed since 1994, is composed of a border zone of about 14 kilometres. Rather a zone than a clearly demarcated line, the political tensions between the two countries directly impact on the migrants. Ifoma described the dense atmosphere when she talked about her deportation to Oujda and her subsequent stay in the Algerian border town of Maghnia:

> And they dropped us in Oujda and we are coming back to Morocco side. They say: No, we should go back to Algeria side. We get to Algeria side, Algeria will tell us 'This is Morocco, go Morocco.' (…) We have to sit inside Maghnia and look for some people that is helping blacks. So I have to sit there, I spent MANY months there. (Ifoma, 9.6.2005, Spain)

Once they migrants are abandoned in the *no man's land* they are directed by Moroccan guards towards the Algerian border and vice versa—a situation that can last up to several days or, as in the case of Ifoma, several months, before the migrants are finally able to find a way of re-entering Morocco.

Since the migrants do not have a legal status and do not speak the local language, they are, in most cases, not able to make use of the local infrastructure. Therefore, they have to rely on alternative zones of refuge that are indispensable to continue the journey successfully. By establishing informal camps, the migrants have created very well-organised sites similar to small states but situated on the margins of the official national territory as well as on the margins of public conscience. They represent *non-lieux* (Augé 1995) as they do not appear on any map and have gained importance only because of the migrants who have appropiated these formerly neglected and uninhabited zones. A differentiation has to be drawn between Anglophone and Francophone camps: while Mehdi Alioua describes the camps organised by Francophone migrants as zones of a remarkable inter-migrant solidarity (Alioua 2005: 40), this very solidarity has disappeared from the Anglophone *ghettos* and has been replaced by violence and the notion of might makes right.

Tangier

Once the migrants have managed to cross the *no man's land* between Algeria and Morocco they try to leave Oujda as soon as possible to continue their journey via the village of Guercif to Rabat or Tangier. Male migrants may also take the route to the border town Nador near Melilla where they try to climb the barbwire—an impossible enterprise for pregnant women or migrants with babies. Depending on the individual financial situation, there are different ways to Tangier: with money and contacts there is always a *moto* with a driver ready to bring the migrants to Rabat or Tangier—a trip that will cost them around 150 euros. Without financial means there is no reasonable transportation available, and the migrants have to continue travelling on foot or by hiding under a train.

Tangier is a site of borders and passages. Referring to the anthropological encounter with port cities and to the particularity of Tangier, Driessen claims the transience shared by all port cities is reinforced in Tangier by the city's close proximity to Europe (Driessen 1995: 149). In Tangier the transitional atmosphere is not provisional but a structuring feature of the city. The particular *between-and-betwixt ambiance* of Tangier (Driessen 1995: 149) is not only characteristic for the city but also for its (provisional) inhabitants. Especially Nigerian migrants consider Tangier as a transitional site, but the weeks they originally planned to stay turn into months or even years.

Hotels. Coded Houses. Bush

> First time I come to Tánger, I stay in, you know, HOTEL! (…) After then, so when they say, there is no hotel, they don't want to give hotel to black people, we went to Plaza Toro. (…) You know, before, somebody can stay in hotel for two years or four years. In the morning you give them their MONEY—finish! (Marian, 10.5.2005, Spain)

Referring to the changing housing conditions for *black people* Marian described with a few words a process intimately linked to European politics. Until a few years ago the presence of Sub-Saharan migrants was part of Tangier's street life. They rented small rooms for 20–40 Dirham (2–4 euros) in the cheap hotels situated in the medina and paid their rent every day. Marian referred to the year 2001 when apparently many Nigerians lived in the medina, which they ironically used to name *Ajegunle*

according to a poor neighborhood in Lagos. When I first came to Tangier in autumn 2004, only few Sub-Saharan customers remained in the modest hotels of the medina due to the increasing pressure from the European Union. Like on the road, the consequences of the European im(migration) policies impact on the migrants also in Tangier. Only a few months after my first stay in Tangier, not a single hotel room in the entire medina was rented to Sub-Saharan migrants any more due to increasing repressions by the Moroccan police. Nowadays, mainly future migrants from Morocco itself, the *harragas*,[8] inhabit these small hotels.

The *coded houses* in the medina function as alternatives to the little hotels. Rented via a Nigerian mediator, these houses are inhabited by five to 35 Nigerians, depending on the season. Nevertheless, this type of housing is also on the decrease due to frequent raids in the medina. More and more, Nigerians prefer to stay in the outskirts of Tangier and rent rooms in neighborhoods like *Plaza Toro*, mentioned by Marian, or *Tanja Belja* where the *police problem* is not as persistent as in the medina. Since most migrants have been waiting for years to cross over to Spain, many of them settle in a "permanent-provisional" way. Most of them are not solvent any more because of the long waiting period and the impossibility to find work in Morocco. Therefore, some move to one of the *bushes* outside Tangier, like *Mesnene bush* or *Zianten* close to *Mesnene* or to *Bel Younesh* near Ceuta. Due to the increasing repressions even in these zones, the inhabitants of the *bush* are faced with the fact that they must move their camps, which takes them hours of walking through the undergrowth to reach their new camps. Like on the road, the migrants have appropriated *no man's land*.

Managing. Earning One's Living

Nigerian migrants are not able to find work in Morocco. Therefore, many rely on the *business* sector.[9] This means for men to occupy one out of many positions in the field of the informal organization of the journey. Those Nigerians who are neither able to participate in the *business* nor to rely on their own financial resources can only hope for support from *upstairs*

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[8] This is a neologism from the 1990s referring to those Moroccans who try to reach Spain by clandestine means.

[9] The situation of Francophone migrants in Morocco is different as they are not confronted with the language barrier and, in case they come from a Muslim country, also share the same religion with the Moroccans.

(Europe) by family members or friends. Those without any contacts to Europe try to survive through *salam aleikum*, as begging in the street is denoted by Nigerian migrants in Morocco. On the contrary, for women, the collaboration in the *business* is not envisaged. Very few of them manage to finance their migration project by their own means by establishing their own ambulant business to satisfy the needs of other Nigerian migrants by selling clothes, sexy underwear, creams and hair extensions to women and beer, cigarettes and hashish to men. This possibility only holds for those women who have already acquired trading experience, which is a female domain in Nigeria, and who have the required self-esteem and age to confront themselves with Moroccan guards and their own countrymen. This is why most young women are not able to establish their own business and, therefore, have to find other sources of income in order to survive in Tangier.

For women, and specially for pregnant women or women with babies, it is easier to earn their living by *salam aleikum* since most of the Moroccans show themselves more generous towards pregnant women or mothers. With time, the migrants appropriate a *savoir faire* for moving around the city and develop a certain routine in respect of time and routes. Nevertheless, shame accompanies their narrative about *salam aleikum*, as none of them had ever imagined to beg in the streets of Tangier before leaving Nigeria for a better life in Europe. This activity contrasts with their pride and extravagant attitude and look. Similar to subsequent work in prostitution in Europe, many of them have to overcome a personal border that some months ago had been unthinkable to touch.

The Significance of Borders for the Migrants' Life

The phenomenon of the continuing shift of the border between Europe and Africa results in steps backwards for the migrants. Apart from crossing various borders and boundaries on the road as a central theme in their recollections about the journey to Morocco, they also experience various borders within the Moroccan territory. Not only is the shift of the border between Europe and Africa observable, as described by Bensaâd (2005) or Perrin (2006), but, the border is also multiplied: intercontinental borders continue to be omnipresent in the lives of the migrants who are often forced to cross the very same border several times. The presence of these borders, albeit not always visible, also impacts on the vocabulary used and partly created by the migrants, as has already been shown.

Hot and Cool. Downtown and Uptown.

For Nigerians, Tangier is extremely *hot.* The summer time, when the crossing of the Mediterranean can be attempted, means that it is high season for the migrants. Due to the proximity to the Spanish peninsula and to the ex/enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla the Northern shoreline and the city of Tangier are especially well controlled. In contrast, Casablanca and Rabat, where it is possible to move more freely, are often chosen as places of residence during the winter and are linked to the image of *cool places. Casa is freedom! Casa is a free place!* are frequently uttered characteristics of Casablanca when comparing this city to Tangier. When I once visited Nigerian migrants, who I knew from Tangier, but who had moved to Casablanca temporarily, I was able to concretely observe the significance of the term *freedom.* While in Tangier they tried to move as secretly as possible, free movement was celebrated in the streets of Casablanca. Even *single girls* (women without babies) were able to walk through the streets without any problem which would never be possible in Tangier. The newly received freedom also impacts on the physical image of the migrants, which does not correspond to the typical European and Moroccan image of the "poor migrant": for many women costly hairstyles with extensions or wigs, sexy clothes, accessories like extravagant earrings, bags and make-up represent one of the priorities in life. Once they have reached the European shore, they engage themselves even more in styling, but even in Morocco they look spruce despite the harsh living conditions.

In Casablanca and Rabat the migrants are clearly able to move more freely, but even *cool places* have some disadvantages: situated at a considerable distance from where Europe can be reached, especially men get used to the more pleasant living conditions of a *cool place.* In contrast, in Tangier, the physical proximity towards the European continent, the constant presence of the sea and the daily view of the other shore remind them of their destination and objective. Therefore, there are Nigerian migrants who, despite the heavy *police problem* in Tangier, have decided to stay in order to not forget about their initial dreams.

Apart from the opposition *hot-cool*, another frequently used linguistic opposition can be observed in the context of Nigerian migration: *uptown-downtown* refers to the difference and the gap between north and south, in other words, a geographical distinction. Moreover, it implies a categorization because *uptown* is positively connoted, while *downtown* is associated with a negative aura. These two terms depend on the current

position of their users and can be applied everywhere: on the road in Mali or Algeria, the migrants come from *downtown* and try to reach *uptown*, which means Morocco, Tangier in this context. From the viewpoint of those migrants who have already reached Tangier, Europe is denoted as *uptown* or *upstairs*, while Oujda, the border town with Algeria and frequent destination of deportations, is referred to as *downtown.* These terms migrate together with their users and are later applied in Europe as well.

Border Laws

In November 2003, the Moroccan kingdom presented a new law based on the immigration law of the former protectorate, which was approved in January 2004. The *Loi 02–03 relative à l'entrée et au séjour des étrangers, à l'émigration et l'immigration irrégulières* provides for a major competence for Moroccan security forces and legitimates deportations towards the border with Algeria. This law underlines that the migration policies of the Maghreb states, which are supported by the European Union, mainly consist of repressive measures. The negotiations and the political relationships between the Maghreb and the EU clearly impact on the migrants' lives: the pressure from the EU seems to be directly proportional to the ratio of detentions and subsequent deportations. Obviously, Morocco tries to orient towards European interests—an enterprise which is supported logistically and financially by the members of the European Union. Axel Kreienbrink sums up the current tendency by claiming that "[t]he externalisation of the European borders goes along with the "schengenisation" of Moroccan policies (. . .)" (Kreienbrink 2005: 212). Claire Escoffier, however, remarks a "laxisme favorisant la porosité des frontier" (Escoffier 2006: 70) opposed to the European interests due to the following reasons: the omnipresence of emigration from Morocco, the binding ties of Morocco with the Arab League and the ancient relations with Sub-Saharan Muslim countries. Despite these factors, the daily reality faced by Sub-Saharan migrants is marked by political oppression.

The Spanish territory is, moreover, characterized by technological oppression of the migrants. The SIVE (Sistema Integral de Vigilancia del Estrecho) system has already been established from Cádiz to Almeria, and the borders with Ceuta and Melilla have been reinforced after the events of October 2005. The double-fences currently measure up to six metres and are equipped by microphones, infrared cameras and tear gas facilities. Moreover, a 33 million euro project of constructing a technological trap

in the form of a labyrinth of steel cables at the first fence, in which the migrants are supposed to get caught, has already been realized.[10]

Consequently, the migrants have reacted with new modes and new routes of border-crossing. First, the *car connection* represents one of the favourite means to enter Ceuta and Melilla. Second, to cross over to the Spanish peninsula, the migrants now depart from the shore of Southern Morocco and cross the Atlantic Sea to reach the Canary Islands, which represents a considerably longer and, therefore, more dangerous journey than crossing the Strait of Gibraltar. As the surveillance of the zone between Morocco and the Canary Islands has been stepped up with helicopters and military vessels of the European agency created to control the EU's external borders (FRONTEX), Sub-Saharan migrants now even try to reach the Canary Islands from Mauritania and Northern Senegal.

COPING WITH THE SYSTEM. TACTICS

Between Constant Mobility and Staying Trankil

Due to the constant need to look for places to hide from the Moroccan authorities, strong dynamics—both spatially and socially—develop. Beauty, who came to Tarifa in 2003 and who gave birth to a baby girl on the very day of her arrival in Spain, described her husband's life in Morocco. He had been waiting there for years, until, in 2006, he was deported to Nigeria:

> He stay in Rabat, sometimes go to Tangier, because they don't have a specific place to stay, they always move around. Maybe if today Tangier is very hot, the police are too much, they run to Rabat. If Rabat is hot, they will come back to Tangier.
> (Beauty, 8.10.2005, Spain)

The constant hiding from the Moroccan authorities becomes the rule: also in Tangier, migrants must adapt their movements according to the situation. Therefore, every time I returned to Tangier, the situation had changed: some migrants had been deported to the Algerian frontier, others had moved to the big cities of Casablanca and Rabat, where life is easier because of the cities' anonymity, and still others had managed to enter Spain.

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[10] Personal communication with Mimoun Aziza (Meknés University) on June 20, 2008, La Coruña (Spain).

In times of police raids in Tangier, migrants only leave their houses when it gets dark. The routes they choose differ from mine, and they avoid certain places in order not to get caught by the Moroccan police. For female migrants, however, it is easier to preserve their mobility, especially for pregnant women and young mothers. Nowadays, women are more likely to get pregnant on their way to Europe due to the simple fact that their stay in North Africa has become much longer. Even little children must get used to the precarious living conditions and embody the clandestine life, as described by Owens when referring to the time she and her baby had to hide at the *trankilo point* before crossing over to Europe:

> And we only walk in the night because of the police. In the daytime now, everyone will just be lying down, because there is helicopter looking for people. So you be in the bush, you can't ease yourself, my baby at a time, he wants to go to toilet, he has to crawl, because he was used to the system already. He was used to it, that we were HIDING from people. If he wants to talk to me, he will lower his voice. Then he was just two years plus. He was two years, going to three years.
> (Owens, 24.7.2006, Spain)

Even small children have to get used to the "system" as denoted by Owens. Crawling instead of walking and whispering instead of talking: the migrants and their children incorporate the clandestine life.

Babies

Although frequently a result of forced relationships or, at least, not on mutual consent, children born on both sides of the Strait of Gibraltar play a crucial role. On the Moroccan side, (unborn) children help their mothers to earn a living and may even protect them from violations or deportation. During the stay in North Africa, which is marked by raids and violence, (unborn) children represent a kind of "papers" and protection for their mothers' life. Although the prohibition to deport pregnant women and young mothers is also embodied in Moroccan law (as well as in Spanish law), theory and practice are not identical. Nonetheless, pregnancies and young children may be a way to escape strenuous deportations or violent acts towards the mother. In Tangier, mothers sometimes ironically presented their babies to me: *Look, this is my paper!*

Nowadays, babies or unborns literally function as "visa" for their mothers on both sides of the *Estrecho*. In times when Tangier is *hot*, pregnant women or young mothers are the only visible migrants in the streets of Tangier. Here, the conventional association of pregnancy with immobility

is turned upside down: it is due to their very pregnancy that women can move more freely.

A baby in the belly or on the back not only secures the mother's physical presence but also her survival: babies help to make a living with *salam aleikum*, as already mentioned. Therefore, also single girls borrow babies from their mothers to be able to leave the house and to do *salam aleikum*.

Often, these babies born on the road do not even exist officially, because their birth was never registered by any authority. In case the mothers give birth at a hospital, they frequently declare another name—either from sheer force of habit or out of fear. Later in Spain it is, therefore, nearly impossible to obtain a birth certificate for these babies. The discrepancy between the babies' importance—even before their birth—for their mothers on the one hand, and the official negation of their existence on the other hand is an inherent characteristic in the life of these children.

On the Spanish side, (unborn) children protect their mothers from being deported: migrants, who entered Spain pregnant or with small children, are tolerated to stay in the country because of exceptional circumstances. Although they are not given papers, young mothers have an advantage over male migrants or single girls who regularly face deportation to their home country. Generally speaking—and contrary to allegations made in the media—migrants do not become pregnant on purpose; nevertheless, once the children are born, they assist their mothers in various ways through their mere presence.

The importance of children on the road as well as the significance for the migrants of the border between Africa and Spain is also reflected in the name giving, which is often connected to the place of birth: born on the Moroccan side of the Strait of Gibraltar, babies are often given names like *Hope* or *Destiny*, that point to the indefinite period of waiting but also to the perspective of a better future. Children born shortly after their mother's arrival to Spain are often named *Success*, *Will* or *Progress*, which expresses an end to the suffering in Morocco and a positive view of the future.

Styling

Single girls have adopted further modes of maintaining their mobility: the manipulation of the body by non-styling and styling, under-dressing and dressing up. In Morocco, pregnancies are sometimes pretended for

various reasons. Rita described her arrival in the *bush* of *Gourougou* near Melilla, an informal camp with hundreds of migrants:

> My husband and I entered the bush with three other girls. The men told the girls: 'You go here with this, you go there!' My husband begged and begged for me and the other girls, who pretended to be pregnant one month, two month, to have their husbands soon come. I was small small and pretended to have mental problem. I was looking like this [like a mad person], not wearing fine cloth. Finally they let us go. (Rita, 20.9.2005, Spain)

The two female travel-companions of Rita pretended to be pregnant to prevent sexual harassment by compatriots as well as, in some cases, by the Maghrebian authorities; Rita herself dressed and acted like a mad person in order to make herself unattractive for her compatriots' sexual desires. This shows that the (manipulated) body is often the only means for the migrants to get further.

The experience of suffering is opposed to the act of styling. Looking sexy or elegant in combination with a fair skin also increases the chances for more mobility in Morocco. When I asked Jenny, a single girl, how she was able to manage travelling between Tangier and Casablanca without a baby or a pregnant belly, she answered: "I dress like a student when I travel" (Jenny, 9.9.2005, Morocco). And Grace, who came pregnant to Spain in 2005, told me about her stay in Morocco:

> In Tangier, they [the police] didn't know where I came from, because I was very light. I had long, long hair, I painted my lips and when they asked for my passport, they just said 'safi, safi [it is ok, it is enough]'. (Grace, 20.7.2005, Spain)

For Jenny and Grace, a styled body proved to be helpful when they were confronted with Moroccan authorities. In contrast, the non-styling and her mad behaviour helped Rita to escape from a delicate situation. Migrants act according to the situation: in one case, styling increases the opportunity to avoid deportation, in another case, the opposite, the choice of non-styling or pretending a (mental) illness are advantageous.

Dressing up constitutes one of the migrants' decisive tactics: on the road, many migrants dress as Muslims in order to avoid deportation and to be able to benefit from the locals' hospitality. In Tangier, single girls dress as students and use accessories like briefcases, handbags or eyeglasses, while Nigerian men either dress as Muslims or, in a more audacious way, as rich visitors with modern suits, elegant leather shoes and false Rolex. Often, their demonstrative self-esteem makes it nearly unthinkable for police forces to imagine who is behind this disguise. Compared to their

male compatriots, female migrants are able to amplify the repertoire of possible identities: as pregnancies can avoid deportation, they are often pretended and stylish Nigerians transform their bodies into those of poor pregnant Muslim women ready for *salam aleikum.*

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I wanted to show how Nigerian migrants describe and treat the range of borders they have to cross on their way to Europe. On the road the migrants have created a specific vocabulary that reflects their clandestine living conditions like the *beating* or *staying trankil*. Though the migrants try to be as invisible as possible, their clandestine presence impacts on the local populations that participate in the lucrative business with the migrants.

The migrants are marked by the harsh journey over land, and the consequences of the European and Maghrebian migration policies directly influence their situation and their bodies. While physical violence, injuries, abortions and death endanger the corporal integrity, the body—especially for female migrants—often remains the only resource.

Rather than acting according to well-planned strategies, migrants take opportunities whenever possible, although they often remain limited within their sphere of action. Due to the fact of being clandestine female migrants, they are exposed to gender-related violence; at the same time, they have more possibilities of proceeding with the journey than male migrants. Women make use of their bodies, both on the road and in Europe, as protection and capital: they simulate pregnancies or illness in order to avoid rapes, they enter relationships with countrymen to make their life easier and they form, under-dress and up-dress their bodies to avoid deportation.

The continuous move between the two poles of structure and agency is reflected in the realm of suffering and styling, two frequently used terms by the migrants as well as two characterizing features in the life of Nigerians in Morocco and Spain: on the one hand, they are often helpless in the face of gendered violence within the Nigerian community, the multiplication of borders and, as consequence, the yearlong waiting periods. On the other hand, they know how to move and most times manage successfully to realize their migration projects. Neither only passive victims nor exclusively creative actors, these migrants are both at the same time.

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HIGH-RISK MIGRATION:
FROM SENEGAL TO THE CANARY ISLANDS BY SEA

Miranda Poeze

INTRODUCTION

Several years ago, European newspapers regularly published stories and pictures of West African men arriving dehydrated and exhausted on the touristy beaches of the Canary Islands (BBC News 2006). Particularly alarming were the large number of deaths en route of migrants not fleeing war or persecution but in search of greener pastures (Ceesay 2007). Although migration from West Africa is not a new phenomenon the means and trends of migration have changed considerably over the past years, with most notably the increase in irregular migration routes towards Europe since the early 1990's. What characterizes these relatively new irregular routes, going overland and oversea, are the high-risks attached to it, with a large proportion of migrants losing their lives en route before they reach their desired destinations. This raises questions on the decision making processes of those participating in these type of migration activities. Are they aware of the risks they might face and how does risk inform their decisions to make use of these means of migration?

In 2005 and 2006 the sea-passage from the Senegalese coast to the Canary Islands was among the most popular irregular migration routes from West Africa to Europe. In traditional wooden fishing boats, locally called *gal* or *pirogue*, migrants—the majority coming from Senegal—made attempts to enter one of the seven islands of the Spanish Archipelago from where they hoped to continue their journey to mainland Europe. The number of migrants arriving on the islands peaked in 2006 to 32,000. This figure does not include the number of migrants departing from the West African coast but never reached the islands due to premature return or death en route.

The distance between Dakar, Senegal's capital, and the Canary Islands, is 938 miles. In the flat-bottomed wooden boats of 14 to 18 meters this trip takes between five to eight days, depending on weather conditions, the navigation skills of the captain and the quality of the boat. The boats in general have no roof and hold a capacity of 50 to 80 persons, depending

on the smuggler and the size of the boat (see also Magoni, Roos, and Buda 2007; Schapendonk and van Moppes 2007a). Many of the boats used on this route are in bad condition, are overcrowded, and do not carry enough food and drinks, resulting in an estimated death rate of 10% to 40% (Gerdes 2010; Magoni et al. 2007). As a consequence, this route has become widely known to Senegalese migrants as 'Barca wala Barsakh',[1] literally 'Barcelona or death', that is, one either arrives in Europe or dies on the open sea.

Within migration-related literature explanations for population movements, in particular from the so-called global South to the North, are mainly based on research conducted on migration from Central and South America towards North America (Cohen 2004). Only recently have African migration flows towards Europe been given attention by social researchers. Understanding reasons behind migration from Africa to Europe is mainly based on quantitative data and often focus on regular migration (van Dalen, Groenewold, and Schoorl 2003; Heering, van der Erf, and Wissen 2004), while qualitative studies on West African irregular migrants have dominantly focused on transit migration in North Africa (Alioua 2005; Escoffier 2006). Studies on irregular migration in non-African geographies are mainly based on secondary resources and focus on identifying irregular migration routes, smuggling methods and numbers (De Haas 2008). Hence, to date there is a lack of qualitative studies on irregular migration flows in the African-European migration context, leaving underexplored the actual life worlds, experiences and decision-making processes of the migrants themselves. As irregular migration involves a high level of risk-taking behavior it is necessary to understand whether the decision to partake in irregular migration can be understood in the same terms as regular migration and how the risk factor influences the migration decision-making process. This necessitates an in-depth understanding of why people decide to make use of migration whereby risk seems to outweigh any expected monetary benefits. In this chapter the following questions will be addressed: What drives Senegalese men to partake in high-risk irregular migration? Who is involved in the decision-making process and how are risks dealt with? The aim is to better understand high-risk irregular migration in the West African context, which will also help to inform and improve policies addressing high-risk migration.

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[1] Mapenda Seck, one of Senegal's famous singers, launched a hit-single with this title in the fall of 2006.

Irregular Migration from Senegal to Europe

Migration from Senegal is a longstanding practice and a response to several economic, political, demographic and social pressures. Since the late 20th century Senegal has gradually moved from being one of the most important countries of immigration in the region to a transit and emigration country, making up for the third largest immigrant population from West Africa in Europe (De Haas 2008). Of the total officially registered Senegalese emigration stock, being 4.9% of Senegal's population (Ratha, Mohapatra, and Silwal 2011), nowadays 42% is residing in Europe (De Haas 2007).

During and shortly after Senegal's independence in 1960, movement from the global South to the global North was relatively easy, but since the mid-1980s stricter immigration laws in European Member States have made legal entries for long-term stays for migrants increasingly difficult. This is particularly so for those who cannot be categorized as humanitarian refugees, and high skilled or family migrants. Nevertheless, tightened migration laws and the clamping down of regular labor migration has not resulted in a decrease of immigrants. Instead, it set in motion a growing number of irregular migration routes. With an increased irregular migrant stock in Europe and fears of a massive influx of irregular migrants from the South in general, prevention of irregular migration has become one of the priorities of Europe's external migration policy since the turn of the century (Wiesbrock 2010). Fears of a massive influx increased when at the end of the 20th century a growing number of migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa tried to enter Europe by land and sea. In reality the annual inflow of this group of Sub-Saharan African immigrants has been relatively small with 25,000 to 35,000 in comparison to the total annual entries of 2 million in Europe (De Haas 2007). Irregular migration accounts for a third of the total annual inflow of Sub-Saharan African migrants in European Member States (Castles & Miller 2009; De Haas 2008).

Although land and sea crossing from West Africa to Europe started about two decades ago, the number of West African migrants making use of these alternative routes sharply increased since the end of the 1990s. Among the first popular routes was the crossing of the Street of Gibraltar from Morocco to Spain.[2] This journey of only 12 kilometers was not without risks and resulted in an estimated 10,000 deaths between 1989 and

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[2] Here only the most important routes for West African migrants along the North and West African coast are discussed. West African migrants are also present on routes in

2003 (Simon 2006). This route lost most of its popularity when at the beginning of the century an early warning system was installed, making crossings more difficult. Subsequently, the routes from Morocco to Mellila and Cueta, two Spanish enclaves in Northern Africa, gained in popularity. However, when in 2005 deadly fences were erected, prohibiting migrants from entering the enclaves, the number of attempts declined to 12,000 compared to 55,000 the year before (UNODC 2006).

Since 2005 the most popular irregular migration route among West African migrants has been the sea-crossing from the West African coast to the Canary Islands, an island group which falls under Spanish governance. At first migrants departed from the Mauritanian coast, but when European marine controls started to patrol the northern part of the West African coast, points of departure moved further south towards Senegal (Adepoju 2005). Although official statistics on the share of Senegalese involved on this route are not made public, several sources suggest that the majority arriving on the Canary Islands holds a Senegalese nationality (Interview migration consultant, Dakar, October 2007; Hallaire 2007).

Once migrants arrive on the islands they are apprehended and are given a judicial process. When after 40 days the nationality of the migrant cannot be established or there is no readmission agreement with the country of origin for repatriation, the person will be released. What follows is a life in informality with many migrants leaving for mainland Europe. Nowadays most Senegalese irregular immigrants can be found in Spain, France and Italy with an estimated 20,000 to 30,000 in each country (OECD 2006; Gerdes 2010), although with the recent economic crisis and high levels of unemployment in Southern European countries, more migrants can be expected to move further north.

MIGRATION DECISION-MAKINGS

Social Embeddedness

Within migration related literature the decision to move has for a long time been considered to be a rational economic cost-benefit calculation on the part of the individual migrant (Ravenstein 1889; Lee 1966). It was

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Central Africa and East Africa, albeit to a lesser extent. For an extensive discussion of other informal migration routes see among others De Haas (2008).

reasoned that based on expected costs and benefits of the move, in which wage differentials between country of origin and destination were most important in the case of labor migration, people make individual rational decisions whether or not to migrate (Massey et al. 2005; Todaro 1969). Although it cannot be dismissed that economic factors play a substantial role in a person's decision to migrate, an improvement in the economic situation alone cannot fully explain migration decisions when high risks are involved (Massey et al. 2005). This necessitates us to look beyond pure economic factors and include non-monetary factors, i.e., psychological, social and cultural mechanisms, in the analysis of migration decision-making (Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco 2001).

An actor-oriented perspective acknowledges that all human action is purposive and embedded in ongoing social relations. In the dialectic relationship between structure and agency, people understand for a great part their surroundings and circumstances of their actions (Giddens 1979). As human beings are rational agents they calculate the risks of the outcome of their future act in respect to the likelihood of sanctions they might face and may be prepared to submit to them as a price to be paid for achieving a particular end (Lukes 1977). This perspective leaves room for the inclusion of non-economic factors that motivate actions, e.g., power, status, and expectations. One theoretical model that provides insights in social processes in the migration decision-making process is the New Economics of Labor Migration (NELM), which has shifted the decision-making unit from the individual migrant to the household (Grasmuck and Pessar 1991). The decision to migrate is considered to be a rational cost-benefit calculation of household members, whereby migration is collectively motivated in order to minimize economic risks for the household and maximize wage-earnings (Massey et al. 2005; Curran and Saguy 2001).

Although the NELM embeds the individual migrant in his larger network, it fails to recognize intra-household dynamics as it treats the household as a single unit with all actors striving for the same economic benefits. Hence, little attention is paid to differing or conflicting interests, non-monetary factors and power structures within the household (see also Øien 2010). Households are structured according to so-called *networks of obligations*, i.e., the expectations people have of each other, depending on a person's position in the household, structured by age, sex and type of kin relation (Giddens 1984; Harbison 1981). In order to better understand migration decision-making there is therefore a need to study how different actors within the migrants' household influence the decision-making

as personal wishes and desires can clash with collective ambitions. This might be even more so in the case of high-risk migration as different actors can experience perceived risks and benefits in different ways.

Risk Assessment

Migration decision-making models have mainly been applied to regular migration. Although risks are part and parcel of any type of migration, it is likely that those involved in irregular migration face different and higher risks, including financial and psychological risks and above all, the possibility to lose one's life en route. Migrants are to be considered rational actors, aware (to a certain extent) of their decisions and of the related costs and benefits of future outcomes. This raises questions about boat-migrants' assessments of different types of expected risks especially when one considers that human security is of primary concern to every person. However, to date there is a lack of scholarly attention for the way irregular migrants conceptualize risks and assess risk-taking (Hernández-Carretero 2008; Lupton 2006).

   Within the social sciences, risk is often conceptualized as the action that can have expected positive and negative results and is assessed in relation to human experience, by asking questions on how risk is perceived and understood. Aven and Renn (2009) suggest that risk assessment is based on two dimensions, uncertainty and severity, which applies to behavior or an event as well as to its outcomes. In effect, personal and social characteristics influence how a person experiences the uncertainty and severity of the event and its consequences. This means that risk is inherently related to the person who perceives it and his/her environment. The present study will explore how Senegalese boat-migrants assess expected negative and positive outcomes of their migration action and how this influences their decision to migrate by sea.

RESEARCHING IRREGULAR MIGRATION

In order to gain a better understanding of high-risk migration decision-making processes in Senegal, a qualitative study was conducted during a seven month period in Dakar in 2007 and 2008 with non-successful boat-migrants, i.e., migrants who had left by boat from Senegal to the Canary Islands, but who had not been able to reach Europe, either as a result of premature return to Senegal or as a result of repatriation after arrival on

the Canary Islands. Qualitative research methods and an actor-oriented perspective proved most suitable for this study as they gave "methodological priority to understanding migration processes through the exploration of everyday life situations" (Long 2008: 38). This enabled the study of the migrants' experiences before, during, and after the migration event. The use of qualitative methods also allowed for the simultaneous study of normative discourses and the observation of what people actually do, thereby revealing deviance from relational norms and providing insights into the functioning of social relationships (Mazzucato 2009). Furthermore, as a result of the sensitivity of the topic, with many not willing to speak about their experiences in public, qualitative research methods proved necessary in order to build relationships of trust with the informants (see also Smith 2007). This was mainly established through return visits, participation in informal meetings and the use of snowball methods for the recruitment of respondents.

The bulk of data derives from in-depth interviews with 15 unsuccessful boat-migrants. Interviews lasted on average two hours. The majority of respondents lived in Jaraax, a neighborhood of Dakar, notorious for its involvement in the boat-migration in 2005 and 2006 (Mbow and Tamba 2006). All informants had departed by boat between May 2005 and September 2007 at least once, with two twice and one thrice. Their age at the time of departure ranged from 22 to 41 years with an average of 29. All but one were employed at the time of departure and earned between 45 euros and 175 euros a month with an average of 110 euros. In addition, 5 out of 15 were married with one to five children, while the others were single. The purpose of the interviews was to discuss the reasons to migrate by boat, which persons in their social networks both at home and abroad influenced their decision to leave, the organization of the trip and the trip itself, and the way they perceived expected risks. With the majority of the respondents multiple interviews were conducted, which proved useful to discuss more sensitive topics that were not easily discussed during the first interview, e.g., money and conflicts in family relationships. In addition to in-depth interviews, data was collected through observations, i.e., spending time with informants in their houses and participating in daily social activities. Furthermore, interviews were conducted with close family members and friends of the respondents, including several migrants who were on return visits. These additional interviews provided for triangulation of the data, i.e., verifying the stories of the respondents, while at the same time giving insights into relationship dynamics.

In the following section I will present two cases of Senegalese men who had taken part in the sea-migration from Senegal to the Canary Islands. They illustrate discourses on boat-migration, social relationships both within the nation-state as well as across borders, the organization of the boat journey, and risk assessment as well as strategies to cope with them.

<div align="center">CASE STUDIES</div>

<div align="center">*Pierre*</div>

Pierre (31) lives in Yambul, a suburb of Dakar, where he shares the house with his mother, two younger brothers and his sister. His brothers and sister work as manual laborers, but all are learning and therefore hardly earn any money. In 2005 his father died. As Pierre was the only person in the household who held a paying job he became responsible for the household bills and food and for the transport to the schools and work-places of his brothers and sister. Together with a friend Pierre opened a hair salon in 2004, where he earns around 75 euros a month. Often this is not sufficient to pay for all the bills, so regularly his mother goes out to the market to sell juice to add some extra income to the household.

Although Pierre tries to fulfill his families' expectation to provide his share of the finances, at the same time he realizes that it prevents him from realizing his own dreams:

> In Senegal you have to share everything you have with everybody. If you live in Europe and you sent a little bit of money to your family, you can keep the rest to save and to take care of yourself. Here if I have a little bit of money I have to give it to my family when there are problems and I have to pay for the familial ceremonies. This does not only count for your close family members, but also for extended family.

Not being able to keep any money for himself, he sees that some of his friends who left for Europe have been able to realize some of the young men's dreams:

> There were guys in my neighborhood who left for Europe and within two years they came back with a lot of money. They have constructed houses and got married with children. For us these things are essential.

Although he has a number of friends and relatives in "the West," he has never received any money from them, nor have they helped him to arrange a visa, something that disappoints him. Pierre considers migrating

to Europe as the only way to become successful in life, i.e., being able to financially take care of the family as well as realizing his personal goals:

> Europe is a door to success. Even if you come back with a minimum amount of money you can succeed here…We do the maximum to leave, only to take care of the family, to get a car and a nice wife…I want to be independent and do the maximum to help my mother.

In August 2006 one of his friends leaves by boat and arrives in Spain and soon after starts calling Pierre to encourage him to do the same thing, explaining that life in Europe is good and that he is able to save some money. Although Pierre was aware of the risks attached to migrating by sea, the expected negative outcome of the trip was considered as something out of his control:

> You know, death is only one time. I was not scared. Everything is in the hands of God. God decides when it is time to die. The only thing you need, is to believe in God and yourself to leave. Everything that happens is thanks to God. Everybody dies when it is your hour.

Would he die during the trip, he reasoned that his brother could take over his place in the household, find a job and take care of the family financially.

Through his friend he gets into contact with a boat owner in the South of Senegal, who is preparing a boat for departure. They negotiate the price, which is set at 760 euros. In order to get the money he needs to sell most of his furniture and for some time gets involved in trading to earn some extra money. The rest of the money he borrows from a friend.

The day he is expected to arrive at the place of departure he informs his mother about the trip. She starts crying and tells him that she does not want him to leave, afraid that he might die. As he has already set his mind he only asks her to pray for him. He tells his brother and friends that he is going to leave for Thies for one month, a city about three hours inland from Dakar, reducing the chances that somebody might have a negative influence on his trip by practicing witchcraft, e.g., out of jealousy or revenge. Late at night he arrives at Ziguinchor in the south of Senegal where he is told to wait until all passengers have arrived. Two weeks later about 150 people, including two captains and some children, enter the boat to set off for the Canary Islands. The trip lasts eight days and is not without difficulties. After five days the boat starts leaking and there is a shortage of water to drink and to wash oneself with. The salty water of the sea that enters the boat results in wounds on arms and legs and causes damage to the motor. Pierre narrates about this trip:

> I was psychologically tired from the noise [of the motor]. There were people who had hallucinations from the heat and who saw babies in the water. One time there was also a storm with a lot of rain. It was really hard to keep the water out of the boat. I could not sleep and I was very tired. A lot of people were afraid. Some were smoking herbs or drank gin to keep themselves calm. I only smoked cigarettes. One day there was a shark that swam around the boat. I thought I was going to die.

Although having seen death in the eyes, he was not afraid, still believing that it is God who decides when death comes. Nonetheless, he and others in the boat agree with the captain when he decides they have to return to Senegal just before entering the Canary Islands as more water enters the boat. The captain tells them that close to the islands they would encounter a dangerous sea-passage which the boat would not be able to make due to its bad condition. Pierre reasoned: "I didn't know how to swim nor how to control a boat."

Upon return Pierre does not tell anybody about his experience. He has lost weight and is disappointed about the result of his trip. Fearing social stigma due to his failed trip, he stays indoors for a couple of weeks to recover. After some time one of the organizers of the boat trip calls to ask if he wants to leave a second time, as the price paid is a "guarantee" to arrive at the Canary Islands. Pierre does not hesitate and decides to leave again. However, due to his bad experiences the first time he convinces two of his friends to come with him for moral support and he decides to see a *marabout* [spiritualist leader]. Before departure, the marabout is asked about the prospects of the trip and his answer weighs heavily. When the marabout tells Pierre that it is safe to leave he packs his belongings and leaves without informing anybody.

The second trip proceeds worse than the first. The boat is overloaded with people and is in bad condition, with a lot of water entering the boat. Thanks to his friends, Pierre is able to survive the trip:

> The fourth day two people fell in the water. I was tired and also had a delirium and said 'I am stepping out', but I stayed in the boat, because my friends kept me there.

After five days, just before the coast of Morocco, they run out of gasoline and the captain decides that they have to return to Senegal. On the way back, lasting four days, two other persons die. Upon return he is again discouraged, but not frustrated that he has not been able to make it to Europe, claiming that "it is a matter of luck" whether one arrives or not. Although the organizers did not call him to try a third time, when the opportunity arises he will leave again.

Ibrahima

Ibrahima (28) lives in the house of his father in Jaraax. Two of his brothers work, but do not earn enough to pay for all their expenses. Ibrahima is the only one in the family who works on a full time basis. He works as a cleaner in the city, earning around 150 euros a month. With his salary he pays for the household bills and food, and needs to financially support his retired father. The little he does not spend he adds to his savings.

Like many others, Ibrahima has had the wish to migrate to Europe for a long time, but only by regular means. His opportunities to leave in this way are zero as he does not have any contacts abroad who invite him to come on a three-month visa, nor is he able to pay the large amount that is necessary to buy a visa from a so-called businessman. In mid-2006 his older brother, witnessing the upsurge of boats leaving from Jaraax to the Canary Islands, tells Ibrahima that he wants him to take his chance. His brother reasons that it is impossible for himself to leave as he does not have the right amount of money and cannot leave behind his wife and children. According to Ibrahim, his brother was mainly motivated by social mobility for the family:

> My brother told me that everybody in the neighborhood with big houses, they are migrants. That's why he wanted me to leave.

At first Ibrahima does not agree with the idea, but unable to disobey his older brother and feeling the pressure that is put on him, he begins to consider the possibility of migrating by sea, calculating the costs and benefits of the trip:

> It was double, because on the one hand you have the possibility to die, but on the other hand you also have the possibility to help your family.

Soon after, he hears about one of his neighbors preparing a boat for departure. He is informed that previous boats from this person have arrived at the Canary Islands, increasing his trust in the organizer and he decides to contact him to make arrangements. After negotiating the price, set at 600 euros, he sells his bed and closet and adds his savings in order to pay for the trip.

Ibrahima talks to his father about the plan to leave, but his father does not agree, afraid his son might die. As Ibrahima has already paid for the trip he decides to abstain from telling his father that he will be leaving anyway, believing that his father's disagreement might result in an unsuccessful journey. Like Pierre, he does not inform his friends about his plan, afraid that this might have a negative impact on his trip:

> If you say that you are going to leave there can be people, somebody who
> doesn't like you or if you have a problem with somebody, like a woman,
> they can do something that prevents you from arriving. They can go to a
> marabout and he can make the "*giri giri*" [evil-eye ritual]. When you are on
> open sea, what are you to do if something bad happens? Nothing! There you
> only have the sea; you cannot cling to a branch of a tree if anything goes
> wrong with the boat.

Before departure he decides to see a marabout to ask him if it is a good
day to leave by boat. The marabout predicts that he will not arrive and
therefore should not leave. As his brother has put pressure on him and he
already paid for the trip, he decides to see another marabout to give him
more fortunate prospects. The second marabout is more positive and tells
him to make a sacrifice to ensure a safe trip and arrival. Ibrahima is told
to give chicken and meat to the needy on the street, and he should wash
himself with "holy water"—water which contains a prayer on a piece of
paper.

The possibility to die appears to him often, although it does not dis-
courage him from leaving:

> I did think about dying and going back [*to Senegal*]. There are a lot that
> die. Sometimes there is no food and drinks. It is good to look at people who
> have died on high sea, but it didn't discourage me from leaving. There is
> this French expression that says 'if you do not risk anything, you will never
> get anything'.

The day of departure all passengers gather in Jaraax from where they will
leave. While en route, the most difficult time on sea comes when both
motors break down at the same time: "People were even putting God's
water on the motor and asked God to repair them again." About his own
situation during this time he narrates:

> I thought about the possibility of dying before, but I kept cool, I didn't say
> anything. There was somebody next to me who wanted to talk to me, but
> I didn't want to make a conversation. But when the motors broke down,
> oehoehoe, everybody started to talk and scream, but I only thought that
> there would be a helicopter or a boat that would come to rescue us.

People in the boat had protected themselves from death by wearing
spiritual amulets, particularly meant for protection against evil. From the
belly up to the chest as well as the upper arms were covered with these
amulets. In addition, people were regularly washing themselves with "holy
water" throughout the trip.

Without too many difficulties, the boat arrives at the Canary Islands
after eight days. Here the Red Cross gives them food, drinks and clean

clothes before turning them over to the police. They are investigated and when it is discovered that they are Senegalese nationals, they are informed that they will be repatriated as the Senegalese government had signed a repatriation agreement with Spain. When he hears the news he feels deceived:

> I was desperate! I even cried when I heard the news. The morning we heard we were being sent back everybody cried. I was really worried. Wondered, what am I going to do when I get back, I do not have anything anymore, I sold everything and gave up my job . My brothers they do not work and I have to help my father.

Also for his family his return is disappointing. Nevertheless, he reasons that, "*it is the good God that wanted it this way.*" As he arrived at the Canary Islands, he loses the opportunity to leave again with the same owner without paying extra. Next time he will leave by regular means, not because of the physical dangers of the trip but to decrease the financial risks and to enhance his chances of arrival in mainland Europe.

Social Dynamics and Risk Assessment

These two cases illustrate that participating in boat-migration from Senegal to the Canary Islands involves a broad range of factors, relating to both positive as well as negative expected outcomes that do not only relate to pure economic considerations. The decision to participate in high-risk boat-migration can only be understood by looking at the social dynamics at work and balancing the positive and negative expected outcomes in the local socio-cultural context.

Family Obligations and Personal Aspirations

The most important influencing social networks in the migration decision-making process are kinship relations. In order to understand this there is a need to look at the functioning of family relationships in the Senegalese context. An intrinsic characteristic of families worldwide is that they impose obligations, rules and norms on different family members, with reciprocity being an important normative code within family structures. Reciprocity refers to "a sense of mutual dependency expressed in give and take over time. […] it involves the transmission of (material and immaterial) resources and it is imbued with assumptions about morality" (Whyte, Alber, and van der Geest 2008: 6). Although family obligations, centering around mutual solidarity, can benefit its individual members

they can also lead to frustrations and conflicts when they clash with personal aspirations (Carling 2008; Whyte, Alber, and van der Geest 2008). As shown by the case of Pierre, an important motivation for him to leave was his incompatible individual wish for social mobility and progress in life with the expectations of his family to share his revenues with them. In Senegal it is expected that working-age men take care of their elders and the rest of their dependent family members as soon as their parents retire. This financial responsibility includes both the core as well as the extended family. The obligation to share financial resources with other family members can be a burden on the personal aspirations of the migrants, which relate not only to life course events, e.g., marriage and having children, but are also influenced by a so-called "migrant consumer culture" (Riccio 2001). The middle-class luxury consumption of successful migrants back home, which is related to status and respect, has become a desire for many young men who are not able to achieve this level of consumption with the jobs they hold in Senegal and the family responsibilities they face.

Senegalese family relationships are built around certain aspects characteristic of a so-called collectivist "we-culture," with obedience, conformity and docility being important family norms (Matsumoto and Geluk 1997), organized according to age and sex. This social structure, guiding people's behavior, prescribes that family obligations need to be met at all times and stands above personal aspirations of individual household members. In the case of young Senegalese men we see a clash between personal aspirations, with the wish to partake in the migrant consumer culture in order to reach a similar level in status as successful migrant friends and community members have acquired, and the obligation to share their revenue with other family members. The guiding norms of family structures however, do not mean that individuals cannot act otherwise. For many young men, wanting to reach their individual goals, migration is considered to be the only solution towards financial independence (see Drothbohm 2009). This does not mean that they see it as a way out of the financial responsibility for the family. In fact, by moving abroad they expect to be able to both reorganize their own finances while at the same time being able to fulfill their family obligations, with the last one adding to a person's status and prestige.

Family structures can also influence the migration decision-making process on a different level as illustrated by the case of Ibrahima. Here it was not the migrant himself who decided to leave, but his older brother who had decided for him. The rules that guide Senegalese family relationships are organized according to a hierarchical ladder based on age and

sex, meaning that older family members hold power over younger ones and males over females. Therefore, when an older person decides for a younger person that it is time for him to leave for the benefits of the household, this person is obliged to do so, even when this clashes with his own wishes. Although I came across several instances in which the appointed migrant was willing to leave, the case of Ibrahima and others like him highlights that the migration decision-making taken on "the household level" is not always a unanimous decision of its different household members, but depends largely on intra-household power dynamics and can be taken by one individual. In particular when high-risks are attached to migration, the individual might protest against the idea, out of fear of the expected physical risks. His fear to die and the wish of elderly household members of status enhancement for the household or spreading financial risks, can be clashing. Depending on the relative freedom of the person being instructed to leave, e.g., when the person is not financially dependent on the elderly, the person can decide not to obey his elderly. However, expected social sanctions when disobeying the elderly are in many cases assessed as more severe than the possible chance to lose one's life, resulting in many young men participating in the boat-migration even if this is not their own desire.

The Obligation to Remit and Lack of Transnational Social Capital

The wish for elderly family members to send a younger member abroad is largely influenced by familial reciprocity, which not only applies to those living in the same nation-state, but also extends across borders. Moralities in transnational family relationships mainly involves the migrants' need to send money and providing other goods and services to family members at home, with those at home having the right to make demands on the migrant. This right to make demands on the migrant gives older family members a strong motivation to send one of their younger members abroad.

Although family obligations are not different from when family members live within the same nation-state borders, the geographical separation between migrants and non-migrants leads to an adaptation of the functioning of family relationship dynamics. First of all, for those back home it is impossible to directly witness the actual living conditions and level of wealth of the migrant due to the geographical distance, while unrealistic expectations about life in the West are created by migrants who send money home, construct houses, etc. Any talk of difficult living situations

on the part of the migrant and of inability—and not unwillingness—to share with those back home, is socially unaccepted and results in bad talk of jealousy and competition (see also Gerdes 2010). The "richness" that flows from Europe to Senegal in the form of houses, cars, and other luxury goods are not just material artifacts but signify status and success. Second, although the migrant who does not fulfill his responsibilities faces possible conflicts and social exclusion (Carling 2008; Hammond 2007), the transnational context also provides the migrant on his part more leeway to decide where and to whom to send remittances. Most obvious beneficiaries are direct household members, while many migrants decide to withdraw from financial responsibilities for extended family members. Whereas migration provides young men more freedom to save money for individual goals, it also means that non-migrants with no direct household members abroad face a lack of transnational social capital that could either assist them in increasing their social status back home through remittances, and thereby decreasing the incentive to migrate, or by helping them with a visa to come to Europe by regular means. Hence, for those with a lack of direct transnational family relations the likelihood to migrate through regular means are limited.

Expected Negative Outcomes

Although positive outcomes are mainly related to status, social mobility, family values, and the dialectic between economic independence and being able to financially take care of the family, different types of risks related to boat-migration need to be assessed by the migrant before making the decision to leave or not. The following is an analysis of various types of risk assessment. It will clarify that the expected risks are mostly related to uncertainties and to a large extend considered to be outside one's control, while at the same time strategies may be found to deal with them. This is juxtaposed against expected positive outcomes as mentioned before, which are assessed as more severe and certain. After all, it is argued that, once a person arrives in Europe, the door to success has opened.

Informal Organizing Networks

Boat-migrants have to pay enormous amounts of money to make the passage, which can be up to ten times their monthly income or more, without the guarantee to arrive at the desired destination, namely mainland Europe. Hence, great financial risks are incurred when migrating

by sea. Expected financial risks are to a certain extent decreased by the informal nature of the smuggling networks. Agreements for the move are made through personal contacts either via the boat owners, mostly local fishermen who have shifted their activities to the more profitable irregular migration market (see also Schapendonk and van Moppes 2007b), or through recruiters, i.e., those recruiting passengers in exchange for a given provision. As a result of the informal nature of this type of migration and the geographical proximity between organizers and potential migrants, who are mostly from the same community, migrants tend to regard organizers with a certain level of trust. As the cases of both Pierre and Ibrahima show, the organizers were already part of their social networks. Through direct or indirect contacts with the organizers they heard that these organizers had succeeded in bringing others to the Canary Islands, thereby increasing their expected chances of arrival and decreasing their chances to lose their money. In addition, due to the informal nature of the networks, migrants can control the organizers to a certain extent. Through a binding oral agreement, the price paid for the trip guarantees arrival to the Canary Islands. This means that if the boat would return before the islands are reached for one reason or the other, the passengers can either opt for another departure without extra payments or have their money refunded deducted by the costs the organizer had made for the trip. The inability of the organizer to do otherwise could result in returned migrants to report the organizer to the police, which could lead to imprisonment of five to ten years and a 1500 to 7600 euros fine for the owner (Di Bartolomeo, Fakhoury and Perrin 2010). In addition, the closer the migrant is to the organizer the lower is his expectation to lose his money and the higher the chances that the organizer will stick to the agreement. Probably as a result of this personal contact and informal nature of the organizing networks, boat-migration from Jaraax has become such a booming business.

Increasing the Chances of Arrival

Before departure, boat-migrants are quite aware that there is a chance that they will not arrive at the Canary Islands. In addition to coping with this uncertainty by choosing an organizer they know and trust, there are other ways in which they attempt to minimize the risks of not arriving at the desired destination. An important strategy employed by almost all respondents is to see a spiritual leader before departure, the *marabout.* For a certain amount of money, depending on his/her skills and reputation,

the *marabout* is asked whether or not the migrant will arrive at the Canary Islands the day he is planning to leave. The positive blessing by this person is weighted heavily by migrants and their family members. This is illustrated by the case of Ibrahima who after a negative advice felt the need to visit another *marabout* to give him better prospects for the trip. It is believed that when leaving with a negative advice from a *marabout*, the chances of arrival will be zero.

The same reasoning is applied to the disagreement on the part of older family members. When informing elders about the decision to leave by boat, if they disagree, the migrant is forced in theory to cancel the trip as disobedience of elders is socially unaccepted and is believed to result in a negative outcome of the trip. In practice, however, migrants who have already paid for the trip, will still continue with their plans and not inform their elderly about this. In addition, they abstain from talking about their plans to anyone outside their family. They fear that there are persons who want to do bad and can enact evil-eye, the so-called "*giri giri*," which might obstruct the migrants from arriving at their destination. The risk of not arriving is thus assessed as something that is in the hands of others, but by applying different strategies they increase their expected chances of arrival and decrease expected risks.

Coping with Emotional and Physical Risks

Potential boat-migrants are very well aware that the sea passage is emotionally difficult and might result in death. They either hear this through friends who have made the trip before or by the many stories that circulate in the communities of those who have died en route. However, the possibility of death is perceived as an uncertain one; one can either make it or die, there is no guarantee for either. For these men, there is a fifty-fifty chance to make it to the island. This chance is considered as something that one cannot foresee or control. Instead, the outcome of the trip, whether positive or negative is said to be in the hands of God. Statements like, "Death comes to you when it is your day," i.e., when God has decided that it is your day, were often mentioned in interviews. Placing one's faith in the hands of a higher power is a common way of dealing with risks in non-Western societies (Giddens 2003). Nevertheless, at the same time it is believed that risks can be decreased through sorcery, e.g., washing oneself and the boat with holy water before and during the trip and wearing protective amulets. Thus, the chance to arrive or to die is, although said to be outside one's control, at the same time believed to be amendable.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that these men do not experience fear during the trip. Although they have set their minds on arriving, the events that happen during the trip do not leave them unnoticed. One way of coping with expected psychological risks during the trip is to leave with friends. Based on his experiences of the first time, Pierre convinced two friends to make the journey with him on his next trip to provide moral support during the difficulties he would face again on open sea. For him they proved to be of utmost importance; if it was not for them, he probably would have jumped in the water when he had a delirium. Other ways to cope with fears during the trip are drinking, smoking cigarettes and herbs, reciting Koran verses and praying.

Although all respondents said to be aware of the dangers before the trip and nonetheless took their chance, part of them were discouraged after they had tried the first time as a result of their experiences on open sea. For others the journey ended as a result of the organizer leaving with the money or not providing a second attempt after the unsuccessful trip. However, many like Pierre tried their luck a second or third time when given the opportunity by the organizers; they were not discouraged by the physical dangers ahead of them.

Conclusion

Moving beyond purely economic factors in explaining migration behavior, this chapter has indicated that the decision to partake in high-risk boat-migration is complex and intertwined in culturally specific social relationships and risk assessments. For aspiring migrants, both positive as well as negative outcomes are conceptualized according to local socio-cultural standards. They are rationally thinking agents, who in their specific socio-cultural context calculate the expected outcomes, based on the knowledge they have of the situation. Although positive expected outcomes are based on monetary factors, this is more complex than just expected increase in monthly revenue. Instead this should be considered in terms of what money means for men in their local contexts, which includes non-monetary elements. For them, being able to arrive in Europe is considered a certainty to success, referring to the ability to become financially independent while at the same time financially taking care of the family back home, and with that enhancing their social status and prestige. On the other hand, this study also suggests that the idea that migration is a household decision is more complex, as the migrant himself might

not agree with the decision made by others who hold more power in the household. When it is not the free choice of the migrant himself to move to Europe by sea, but that of one of his elders, making the move is considered a way to avoid social sanctions which are perceived as severe. In addition, it is suggested that boat-migrants are quite aware of the various risks involved, which are counteracted by specific socio-cultural mechanisms which are expected to decrease the possible negative outcomes. For these boat-migrants, the expected positive outcomes are considered as more severe and certain than the expected negative outcomes, which are uncertain and can be mitigated. The outcome of this risk calculation will therefore result, at least for these men, in participation in the boat-migration. This shift towards a qualitative understanding of migration decision-making provides an explanation to how a seemingly irrational decision from a Western perspective, becomes in fact a rational one when placed in the specific local socio-cultural context.

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STRANDED IN MAURITANIA:
SUB-SAHARAN MIGRANTS IN POST-TRANSIT

Armelle Choplin and Jérôme Lombard

Introduction

"*Here, it is 'Nouadhibou-du-monde', le bout du monde, the end of the world,*" said Idrissa looking at the ocean.[1] Stranded in Nouadhibou, the second Mauritanian town. Stranded like all these ships in Nouadhibou bay. Left stranded in Mauritania. This is how one could sum up the situation of Idrissa, a young Senegalese man we met in November 2008. He arrived here in 2007, hoping to cross the Atlantic Ocean and reach the Canary Islands by canoe. Yet, arriving in Nouadhibou, he discovered "*it was too late.*" The European Union had imposed restrictions on migration and its borders had been "externalized" into "transit countries" like Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Niger or Mauritania (Bredeloup and Pliez 2005; Collyer 2007; Brachet 2009). Thus, since 2006, the European Union has been supervising the Mauritanian coast with Spanish Guardia Civil agents, a helicopter and two motor launches. Now, the international migratory route that crossed Mauritania seems to be well and truly closed.

Based on several field studies since 2004, our research outlines the reversibility of the migratory phenomenon. A study of recent migration in Mauritania should take into account the different phases and its transformations over time. Three entangled temporalities can be underlined: long standing immigration in Mauritania, the transit period (2004–2008) and the present-day post-transit situation. Historically, in this area, migratory flows are tied to job offers. Since its independence in 1960, Mauritania has offered interesting opportunities in the fishing, trading and mining sectors for the West African workforce. Mauritanian people admit readily "*foreigners have built the country.*" In 2001, the discovery of oil reinforced this historical pull effect. Yet, in 2005 and 2006, the media focused overwhelmingly on the transit phenomenon and emphasized the "illegal flows" towards Europe (Haas 2007). They presented all sub-Saharan

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people in Nouadhibou as "potential illegal migrants," even before they tried to cross or thought of doing so. Moreover, they ignored the fact that regional migrations played a central role in the national economy and that most of the sub-Saharan people had been living and working there for a long time. Thirdly, as the European Union's policies are tougher than ever, migrants are getting stuck in Nouadhibou and Nouakchott (the capital city). In these cities, they live with working immigrants who arrived a long time ago.

Obviously, the "transit phenomenon" that has drawn media attention, is the shortest of the three migratory temporalities (before, during and after the transit). As migrants get stuck in Mauritanian cities, it is currently interesting to pay attention to the spatial and social changes engendered by the arrival of migrants and their long-term settlement, especially in urban contexts. Thus, our chapter also sheds light on the social impacts of this "post-transit situation."

We will first recall the transit and post-transit phases. Secondly, we will describe and analyse migrants' everyday life in Nouadhibou and Nouakchott and their interactions with local society, highlighting how spaces and social relations are divided. Thirdly, we will stress the fact that Mauritanian migratory policies lead to the criminalisation of migrants and compound their difficulties. This "post-transit" stage gives rise to a new geopolitical order characterized by a spatial reversal (with the definition of bad places where are living migrants), increasing controls and fuels xenophobic comments from those who define themselves as "autochthons" towards the others who they consider as "foreigners." Therefore, migration is an important issue for a country characterized by identity conflicts between Arab Africans (the Moors) and black Africans (Halpulaar, Wolof, Soninké).

BECOMING A TRANSIT COUNTRY

The recent focus of European media on illegal migrants in small fishing boats has led to an over-emphasis on illegal migration, neglecting the fact that foreigners have always constituted an important part of the Mauritanian population since independence was declared in 1960. Talking about transit only makes sense if we take into account the role played by Mauritania in West African migration more generally. At independence, 70% of Mauritanians were nomads, and the country cruelly lacked skilled labour and clerks. Administrative posts were filled by workers from Western

Africa (Senegal, Mali, Guinea or Benin) who were also employed in the building trade, or in electricity, plumbing and laundry services. From 1957 onwards, the creation from scratch of the new capital, Nouakchott, offered much employment. In the north of the country, the mining of iron ore begun in 1952 with the establishment of the *Mines de fer de Mauritanie* (Miferma),[2] and a renewed interest in fishing turned Nouadhibou into a centre of attraction: the newly declared "economic capital" of the country, where fortunes could be made quickly.[3] At this time, few Moors showed any interest in the sea and its resources, which were mainly exploited by Senegalese fishermen who settled in the area (Diop and Thiam 1990; Marfaing 2005). Rather than a mere point of transit, Nouadhibou is first and foremost a city of migrants, both national and international, inasmuch as its history and its layout are directly linked to successive waves of migration (table 1). Pablo, a Canarian born in Nouadhibou recalls:

> My grandfather left The Canaries in 1938 and arrived here by canoe. He was fleeing from the Spanish civil war. He was poor, poorer than Moorish people. I am not surprised at all to see African people trying to come to The Canaries by dinghy. My grandfather did the same thing but the other way round! (Interview, Nouadhibou, November 2007)

Table 1: Components and origins of the population in Nouadhibou (1958–2007)

	Moors (bîdân, haratîn)	Negro-Mauritanians[4]	Sub-Saharan Africans	Canarians	French	Moroccans	Total inhabitants
1958	1 200		250	315	230		1995
1963	2500	2000	2000	600	2000		9100
1970		11 500	3 000	1 000	1 500		18 000
1977							22 365
1988							59 158
1999							84 000
2007		79–99 000	15–20 000	150	20	5–600	100–120 000

Source: Bonte 2001; Choplin and Lombard 2008.

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[2] Miferma (Mauritanian Iron Mining company) was nationalised in 1974 and renamed SNIM (*Société nationale industrielle et minière*).

[3] As early as 1970, the population of Nouadhibou, estimated at 18,000 inhabitants, comprised 11,500 Mauritanians, 3,000 sub-Saharan Africans, 1,800 French and 1,000 Spanish, mainly from the Canary Islands (Bonte 2001).

[4] Since 1965 it has been difficult to distinguish exactly different groups of population in Mauritania. That type of criteria has not been registered anymore in successive national census whose results have not been published. This ethnic criteria and the ethnic proportion are very sensitive.

The Western Sahara has long been marked by regional and trans-regional exchange (Bonte 2001). Labour migration has a long history in the area. Among the African migrants, Senegalese and Malians were most strongly represented. The number of Senegalese resident in Mauritania has greatly fluctuated since national independence; they numbered in the tens of thousands until they were expelled or fled during the "events of 1989,"[5] since when many have returned to Mauritania. Their number has increased over recent years, as, alongside many other sub-Saharans, they hope to benefit from the economic upturn following the recent discovery of oil. Furthermore, the democratic transition that started in 2005—interrupted in August 2008 by a military putsch led by General Abd al-ʿAziz—led people to expect a political opening, especially with the return of refugees from Senegal and Mali.[6] In 2006, a report from the Mauritanian Ministry of employment numbered about 100,000 Senegalese (nearly half of the present foreigners in Mauritania). This figure does not take into account the persons who cross the border daily or the fishermen who come from Senegal by sea. In 2009, the Middas survey[7] that we carried out on 325 Senegalese settled in the three major cities of Mauritania (Nouakchott, Nouadhibou and Rosso), confirmed the regularity of the arrivals from Senegal over more than ten years, whatever the period (before 2000, 2000–2004, 2005–2008, after 2008). Thus, Senegalese and more broadly West African migrants have long been essential to Mauritania's economic dynamism.

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[5] "The events of 1989" is the term used by Senegalese and Mauritanians to refer to the struggles that took place along the Senegal River in April 1989 (Fresia 2009; Ciavolella 2010). Fuelled by the Mauritanian government, and initially opposing Moors to black African populations, the situation degenerated into open conflict between the two countries. Senegalese residents were driven out of Mauritania, and, in retaliation, Mauritanians were evicted from Senegal.

[6] During the events of 1989, "black" Mauritanians, especially Haalpulaar'en, were stripped of their nationality and expelled to the other side of the Senegal River (Fresia 2009; Ciavolella 2010). In June 2007, the former president, Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdellahi, encouraged refugees to return, as a step towards national reconciliation. Nearly 15 000 refugees returned.

[7] This survey project was carried out by DIAL a French research unit from the Institut de Recherche pour le Développement (IRD). It was funded by Agence Nationale de la Recherche (ANR) and the Agence Française de Développement (AFD). The project called MIDDAS, and managed by Flore Gubert, tries to compare the everyday life, links with Senegal and remittances of Senegalese immigrants in France, Italia, Spain, Mauritania and Ivory Coast. We supervised the Mauritanian part of MIDDAS program in November 2009, with Jean-Noël Senne (INSEE-IRD).

The Transit Period and Its Media Coverage

Between August 2005 and May 2006, hundreds of black African migrants arrived in Nouadhibou and tried, on board fishermen's dinghies, to travel up the coastline of Western Sahara and land on the Canary Islands, on Spanish and hence European Union territory. That was merely but the latest stage of a long process. In the early 2000s, African migrants had been attempting to reach Europe via Northern Morocco, crossing the fifteen kilometres of the Strait of Gibraltar boarding tiny fishing vessels. In 2002, increased controls in the Mediterranean forced them to change route. They first tried the ports of Western Sahara, such as Laayoune, Dakhla and especially Tarfaya, situated just opposite the Canary archipelago (Map 1). When, with the events of October 2005 in Ceuta and Melilla,[8] Moroccan border controls tightened, especially restricting travel to Morocco from Western Sahara and Mauritania, migrants attempting to reach the Canaries had to move their points of departure even further south.

In this new situation, Mauritania, located 800 kilometres south of the Spanish islands, was for a time at the centre of West African migration routes (Ba and Choplin 2005). In 2005, Nouadhibou became the place from which crossing appeared most feasible. First of all, the closure of the border with Western Sahara—which was, moreover, mined—made it impossible for migrants to reach Morocco. Tougher controls on fishing boats from Mauritania bound for the Canaries or Spain made it more difficult to disembark African crews taken on at Nouakchott or who had paid the captain for their sea passage. Finally, the completion of a paved road between Nouakchott and Nouadhibou in 2005 made travel to northern Mauritania easier for those wanting to make the crossing (Antil and Choplin 2003). Thus, in late summer 2005, the first fishing boats left Nouadhibou bound for the European islands, three days' sailing distance from the coast. Listen to Abdoulaye who succeeded in reaching the Canary Islands in 2006 (Map 1):

> For five months, I had been waiting for an opportunity to cross from Noua-
> dhibou. The 15th of August, I left the town at midnight and walked as far
> as La Gouera beach, 6 kilometres from Nouadhibou, located in the West-
> ern part of the Levrier Peninsula [See Map 2]. There, we boarded a small
> canoe, which took us offshore to a larger one. There were 129 of us. We had

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[8] In October 2005, in Morocco, some black African migrants tried to cross barriers and fences of Ceuta and Melilla, the Spanish enclaves. Seventeen of them were killed by Spanish policemen for having sought to enter the European Union.

35 petrol cans, a very good captain and a GPS program. Four days later, and 800 kilometers farther North, we landed alive on the Canary Island beach. It was very easy, we didn't suffer a lot. (Interview, Nouadhibou, January 2007)

Abdoulaye had just been expulsed from the Canary Islands when he told us his story. He explained he was waiting for a new opportunity to go to Spain:

Now, it is more difficult. In 2006, people said The Canaries were facing Nouadhibou, almost linked up by a bridge! The canoes were nicknamed 'Air Madrid' he added with a smile.

Closing the Sea: Externalisation of Mauritanian Migratory Policies

Departures from Nouadhibou to Europe peaked in winter 2006—as did shipwrecks: although some Africans succeeded in landing on the Canaries, many others lost their lives at sea.[9] Paul who failed to cross the sea explained the brutal reversal in Nouadhibou:

Since the winter of 2006, the small harbour has been nicknamed 'Samba Lakra', which means in Manding: go to one's death. That is the place from where canoes took us towards death. Everybody knew we might die while crossing the sea. But we had no choice. (Interview, Nouadhibou, January 2007)

Forced by public pressure, the European Union started to intervene from April 2006 onwards, by setting up a system of surveillance as part of Frontex, the agency in charge of managing the European Union's external borders: one helicopter and several surveillance crafts were sent out, and 150 men from the Spanish Guardia Civil were dispatched to train Mauritanian police in border control. Four thousand people were arrested and repatriated to Nouadhibou where, in summer 2006, a school was turned into a detention centre. Migrants who were arrested spent two to three days in this centre, nicknamed "Guantanamito" ("Little Guantanamo"), before being taken by coach to the Senegalese border, with fifty Euros for each person. This vast system of control on the Atlantic shores seems to have paid off, as, at the end of 2009, the Spanish government had registered only 2,300 arrivals on the Canary Islands, as compared to 32,000 in 2006.

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[9] About 20,000 people are said to have attempted to reach Europe from Nouadhibou in 2006. The Catholic mission in Nouadhibou and the Mauritanian Red Crescent, respectively, estimate the deaths in route at 20% and 30% (and up to 40% in the blackest period, in February and March 2006).
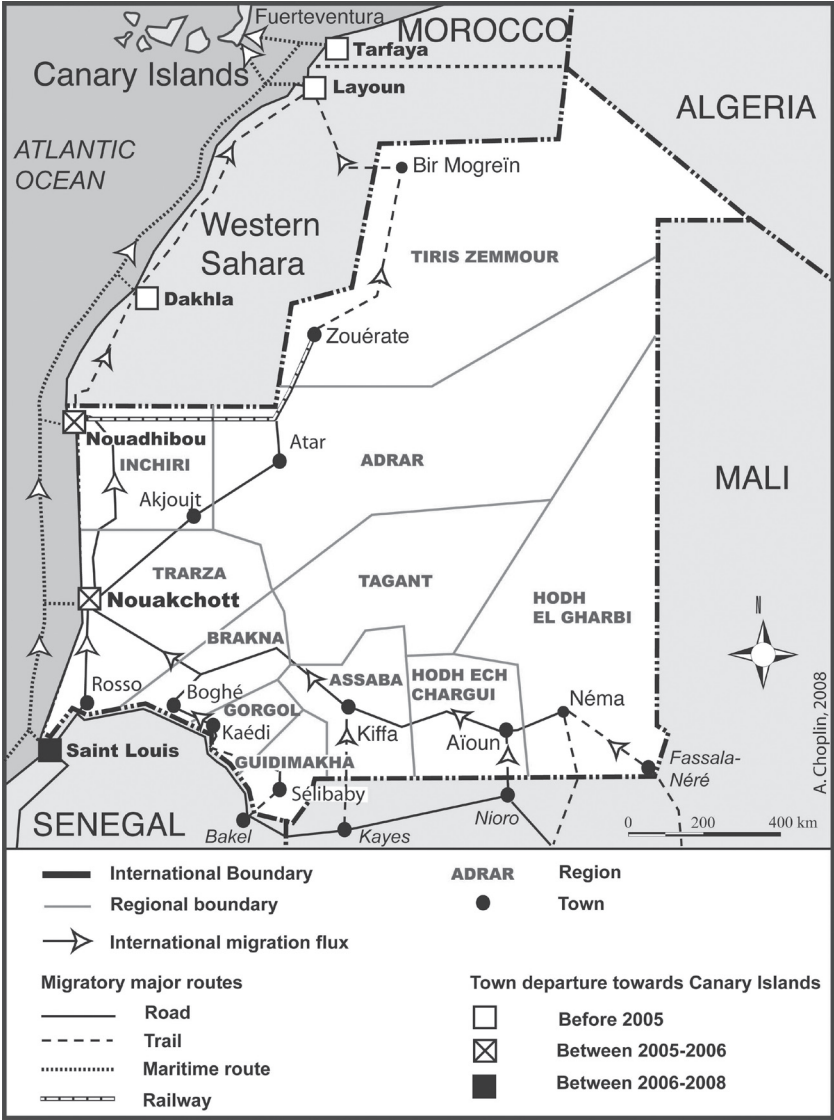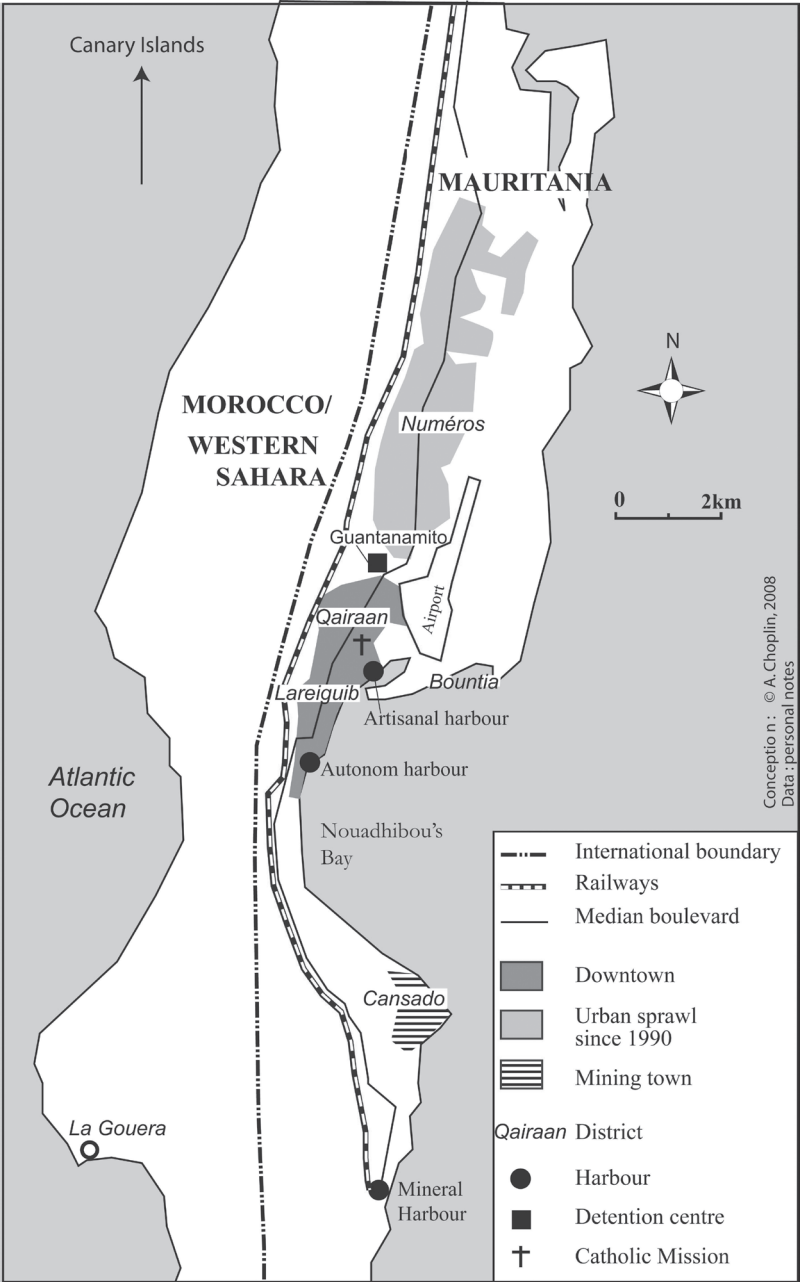
Map 1: Migration routes in Mauritania

© Armelle Choplin, 2008

The map contains the following labels:

Fuerteventura
Canary Islands
MOROCCO
Tarfaya
Layoun
ALGERIA
ATLANTIC OCEAN
Bir Mogreïn
Western Sahara
TIRIS ZEMMOUR
Dakhla
Zouérate
MALI
Nouadhibou
Atar
INCHIRI
ADRAR
Akjoujt
TRARZA
TAGANT
Nouakchott
HODH EL GHARBI
BRAKNA
Rosso
Boghé
ASSABA
HODH ECH CHARGUI
Néma
GORGOL
Kaédi
Kiffa
Aïoun
Saint Louis
GUIDIMAKHA
Fassala-Néré
SENEGAL
Sélibaby
Nioro
Bakel
Kayes

A. Choplin, 2008

Scale: 0   200   400 km

Legend:
— International Boundary
— Regional boundary
→ International migration flux
ADRAR Region
● Town

Migratory major routes
— Road
- - - Trail
········· Maritime route
░░░ Railway

Town departure towards Canary Islands
☐ Before 2005
⊠ Between 2005-2006
■ Between 2006-2008

The Frontex agency was satisfied with these results and jumped to the conclusion that trans-Saharan migrations towards Europe were finished. These figures mask hundreds of deaths and thousands of migrants who have been arrested, turned back or deported. In Nouadhibou, although stricter controls have not stopped departures altogether, they certainly act as a filter. Although some Mauritanians or foreigners boast that they know the route the helicopter will take even before it takes off, and stress that nobody will ever be able to "close the sea," the number of departures has decreased. As an immediate result of these controls, a large number of migrants find themselves stuck and eventually settle in Nouadhibou or in Nouakchott, where they join the many other immigrants who have come to look for work in Mauritania.

Migrations and Urban Changes

Spatial Boundaries, Social Divisions but Local Interactions

Among migrants hoping to reach Europe, only a very few manage to get through as soon as they arrive in Nouadhibou. Many more stay for some time, because they need to look for an opportunity to leave, have to earn enough money to pay for their journey, or because of repeated failures. They invest the city, particularly the downtown area. From the 1990s, Moors started to move away from the centre of the city, *Qairaan*, which they considered rundown and noisy because full of immigrants (Map 2). They decided to live in the North of the city, in a new, airy, less densely settled residential area called *Numerouaat* ("the Numbers"). The richest among them have built villas in "Dubai" or "Baghdad," the most recently-built residential quarters. The geographical shift of local inhabitants explains why the city has sprawled towards the North. Transit migrants settle in the centre of the city, left vacant by Moors, and in its various sub-sections with rather eloquent names ("Accra" and "Ghana-Town"), and in the areas near the old fishing port (*"Lareiguib," "SNIM city"*) (Choplin and Lombard 2008). Unlike the young vulnerable men waiting for a passage that has by now become illusory, the majority of "old migrants" in Nouadhibou reside in the *Numerouaat*, especially in the earlier developments (*Socogim, "Premier Robinet"* and *"Deuxième robinet"* [First and second water-tap]). Most of them are not here to travel North, but rather to earn money to invest back home. Thus, the city is divided into three distinctive zones: the South of the city (*Qairaan*), where young adventurers are looking for a way to get to Europe and for temporary employment to fund their travels; the North

Canary Islands

MAURITANIA

MOROCCO/
WESTERN
SAHARA

Numéros

N

0   2km

Guantanamito

Qairaan

Airport

Atlantic
Ocean

Lareiguib

Bountia

Artisanal harbour

Autonom harbour

Nouadhibou's
Bay

Conception : © A.Choplin, 2008
Data : personal notes

	International boundary
	Railways
	Median boulevard
	Downtown
	Urban sprawl since 1990
	Mining town
Qairaan	District
●	Harbour
■	Detention centre
†	Catholic Mission

Cansado

La Gouera

Mineral
Harbour

© Armelle Choplin, 2008

Map 2: Nouadhibou

(*Numerouaat*) inhabited by Mauritanians; and an intermediate zone (the older sections of the *Numerouaat*), home to migrants who have lived here for a while and who can draw on denser local social networks. The vacant space epitomizes the buffer landscape between the three areas. The main road, called "boulevard median" links them.

Because Nouakchott is much larger, migrants are more spread out there. Yet, some "old" popular quarters are known to be "immigrants' quarters" such as "*Médina*," "*Ksar*," "*Cinquième*," and "*Sixième*" (Map 3). Our Middas survey shows that 25% of Senegalese immigrants have found a place to live thanks to a family, 24% thanks to a person from the same village, and 25% through fellow countrymen. Moreover, rents in these quarters are less expensive. These areas are mainly occupied by black Mauritanian people (Halpulaar, Soninké . . .). That is why they are often considered as "black areas" (in opposition to "white areas" where Moors live). Furthermore, some Moors call them "quarters of foreigners." This vision is dangerous because it implies that black Mauritanian are foreigners; of course that is not the case. Although foreigners are numerous in "*Cinquième*" or "*Sixième*," they remain a minority. Migrants do not choose these areas because they are "black areas" but because the presence of long established migrants and strong networks help them to find accommodation easily. In both cities, spatial boundaries reproduce social divisions, linked to the date of arrival and the reasons for migration: if everybody owns his or her place in society, he also has his "place" in the city.

Yet, interactions are strong: the newly arrived migrants rely on long-time settled migrants who act as intermediaries with local society. Networks of solidarity—whose scope should not be overestimated—have developed among nationals of the same country (Streiff-Fénart, Poutignat 2006). Every national community has its own association, more or less well organised and active, led by a representative, who is in charge of receiving and helping newcomers.[10] In addition to these "official representatives," others act as *jatigi*, namely as, referees or guarantors, because they are known locally and play an important part in the local economy.[11]

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[10] In 2001, several associations of foreign nationals came together in the *Union des associations d'étrangers à Nouadhibou* (UAEN), allowing them to acquire a certain public visibility and local recognition. After some internal problems, the association disappeared. But, since December 2010, the FAMEM (Fédération des associations des migrants d'Afrique de l'Ouest) has been recognized officially by Mauritanian authorities.

[11] Fore a more detailed discussion of the role of the *jatigi* ("correspondent" in pulaar, meaning both landlord and trader), see Bredeloup (2007).

For example, in Nouakchott in the district of "*Cinquième*" since 1993 the representative of Senegalese taxi drivers has been the correspondent of the powerful National Transport Union. Due to this position, he helps most of his countrymen to work as taxi drivers in this area:

> I receive many men from Senegal who only know my name and the quarter I live in. Usually, I accommodate my compatriots for one week. Then, I introduce them to other drivers. I am a mediator. (Interview, Nouakchott, January 2007)

That is also the case of Idrissa, a Senegalese painter in his thirties, living in Nouadhibou:

> I have been living in Nouadhibou since 2000. Over the years, Mauritanian and Spanish employers have come to trust me. I am a painter on small building sites. I live in a compound at 'Numeros'. The landlord is a Mauritanian Halpulaar. I supervise his compound. I help people from my region to find a room. I offer them a room in my compound. The landlord offers me a discount on my rent if I find him tenants. I can also propose my compatriots jobs in the building site I am working for. Yes, I am such a jatigi. But I have never been involved in the crossing business. (Interview, Nouadhibou, November 2008)

It is the same logic for Mamoudou, a Senegalese tailor who owns several ready-made clothes shops in Nouadhibou and Dakar:

> I work with a Moor belonging to an influential tribe. He lets me shops and equipment. In exchange, we share the profits. Sometimes, I welcome and employ some young Senegalese when they arrive. (Interview, Nouadhibou, September 2007)

These examples shed light on the frequent interactions between these foreign businessmen and migrants. They offer a useful framework for understanding hierarchies based on work and employment. In the key sectors that attract large numbers of foreigners (fishing, transport, construction work, etc.), labour is mostly organised along similar lines: a Mauritanian contractor—frequently a Moor—dominates the sector and is backed up by local or foreign intermediaries (mostly black Mauritanians or Senegalese from the Senegal valley) who offer insecure and badly-paid jobs to recently arrived migrants. The migrants are thereby made to fit into a society that is already strongly hierarchical and dominated by (white) Moors (*bîdân*), where they find themselves at the bottom of the pile, competing for jobs with *haratîn* (black Moors, descendents of former slaves). It is very difficult to move up to a higher level, especially for those who are newly arrived. Transport is one of the rare sectors in

which foreigners can own their vehicle. But this position is not frequent: most of the taxi drivers start working for a Mauritanian boss, like Abdou in Nouadhibou. They have fragile agreements and usually work on the unprofitable routes left vacant by the Mauritanians. As they usually do not have all their papers and licence in order, they have to pay fines or bribes when they are controlled.

> I am still on the same taxi route, between downtown and the harbour. I was born in Saint-Louis and arrived for the first time in Nouadhibou in 1986. Up to now, I have been a taxi driver. In 1989, because of "the events", I went back to Senegal and was a taxi driver in Dakar. In 2001, I came back to Mauritania. I worked for a Mauritanian. In 2004, I helped my brother who owns a taxi car. (Interview, Nouakchott, January 2007)

Parallels can be drawn with fishing (Streiff-Fénart, Poutignat, 2006). In this sector, some foreigners have become essential figures in the local economy because of their detailed knowledge of local constraints and their longstanding presence in the economic and social environment of Nouadhibou:

> John is Nigerian. He has been living in Mauritania for ten years. Everyday he goes to Bountia, a shore where trawlers have been stranded. There, fish is dried. Work is distributed between immigrants: Senegalese fish, Malians and Guineans salt and dry, Nigerians and Ghanaians buy and export. "*That's labour division*" explains John with humour. He exports several containers of fish to Nigeria. He often goes to Lagos to take delivery of the containers. Mauritanians tolerate his business because he pays considerable taxes to export the goods. (Interview, Nouadhibou, September 2007)

Following the model of small trans-national enterprises (Glick-Schiller, Basch L. & Szanton Blanc 1995; Portes, Guarnizo & Landolt 1999; Waldinger 2010), some foreigners take advantage of national borders, of their ability to cross them and therefore to benefit from price differentials. Such examples of success, based on the ability to claim to belong to two or more places at once, paint an unfamiliar image: one of migrants as active entrepreneurs, rather than as dependent and insecure wage-labourers exploited by rapacious locals. But, if these entrepreneurs want to stay and do their business, they have to share the profit or pay tax to the local society. One former Malian big business man explained to us:

> I was one of the most important fish businessmen. I went to Hong Kong to do market prospection. I earned a lot of money. I built a beautiful and big house. Mauritanian people were jealous of my success. As I was not associated to a local guy, they destroyed me. Now I sell fish in the port every evening. Like everybody. (Interview, Nouadhibou, September 2007)

Connecting Places and People

The different routes and rhythms of migration have transformed the appearance of the two main Mauritanian cities and have boosted the local economy. Sub-Saharan migrants, who bring with them their own ways and ideas about urban life, increasingly put their stamp on certain parts of Nouadhibou and Nouakchott. The latter now look rather different from the rest of town, shaped, as they are, by the same type of housing, the same shops and socio-spatial practices as sub-Saharan neighbouring capitals. In *Qairaan*, foreigners manage no fewer than forty shops. The restaurants' names ("*Le fleuve*" the "*Djolof*") recall the Senegal Valley influence. Fashion shops with the photo of Youssou N'dour are frequent. Engine or woodwork shops (*Touba Boutique, Touba Menuiserie*) often refer to the owner's affiliation to the Mouride brotherhood. In Nouakchott, some toponyms ("*Mali Garage*," "*Senegal Garage*") evoke the presence of foreigners (Map 3). Migrants and immigrants have produced their own urban spaces and points of reference. But, these toponyms are more than a mere reference to the region of origin. It is a way to stress long-established connections between these areas and external places. Through its migrant population, the centre of Nouadhibou is directly linked to "*Cinquième*" and "*Médina*" districts in Nouakchott, but also to Dakar, Saint-Louis, Bamako and other towns in Guinea. In "*Qairaan*," in "*Cinquième*" and "*Sixième*," colourful shops attract many foreigners. Streets are also places of diversity. Ivorian shopkeepers sell "trendy" clothes and shoes to Mauritanian women. The "standards," that is to say the CD and DVD shops, blast out high level sound on the street. Further on, a snooker room serves as a meeting point for young people. It looks like a scene from the suburbs of Lagos rather than Mauritania. In these streets, solidarity and exchange, negotiation and conflicts, meeting and shunning take place. Social links are created in this "quotidian co-presence", as underlined by W. Berthomière and M.A. Hily (2006) in Beirut and Tel-Aviv cases. The quoted Middas survey highlights the links between migrants and their native country: 47% of those interviewed declare they go back to Senegal every year, 18% at least twice a year. Only 15% say they never return. In comparison, the Guinean storekeepers settled in Nouadhibou specify that they return home every 12 or 18 months.

Today, the presence of these migrants is changing the image of Nouakchott. Previously, the various "Arab" governments have tried to create the "capital of nomads" (implying Moorish nomads) (Choplin 2009). The current circulatory migrations enhance the city's historic cultural links
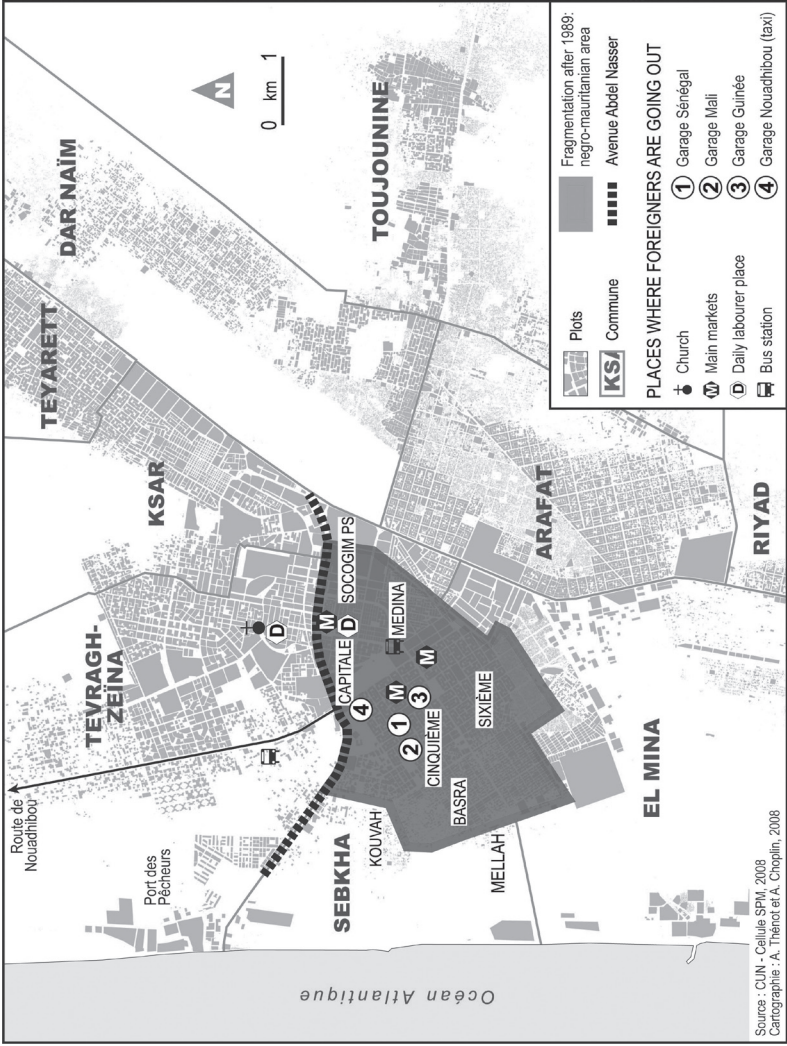
Map 3: Nouakchott

© Armelle Choplin, 2008

with the Senegal Valley. It recalls the Senegalese atmosphere that reigned here when Nouakchott was first founded, an atmosphere that the Arab governments have, over the past three decades, rather clumsily tried to hide. The "concessions" in *Cinquième* or *Sixième* give relevant evidence of these links. In these quarters, most of the landlords are Mauritanian Soninké who have emigrated to Europe or the United States (Timera 1996; Manchuelle 1997). They have invested their remittances in real estate and now have a virtual monopoly in these areas. These new urban local figures constitute essential go-betweens. They keep strong links with foreigners and transit migrants. Because of the political unrest and sporadic tensions (like in 1989 or 2000 between Mauritania and Senegal), immigrants do not risk investing in real estate. Only 4% of Senegalese say they are owners (Middas Survey, 2010). Faced with the demand for rental accommodation, most of the Soninké landowners rent rooms in their concessions. Thanks to this community, different kinds of migration are embedded in one another. During our fieldwork, we observed several times in the same concession transit migrants and long-term settled migrants. For a long time, the owners of the concessions have not been living there but in France. Clearly, long established and international Soninké networks are connected to nearby work migration and more recently to migration towards Europe. New migratory flows are not independent from pre-existing social networks but are based on them.

Nouakchott and similarly Nouadhibou stand out as cosmopolitan Saharan cities (Brachet 2009; Boesen, Marfaing 2007), clearly different from the rather austere towns of the Mauritanian desert. Both share common points with Rosso, the third city of the country, settled on the border between Mauritania and Senegal. In this town, people speak both *wolof* and *hassâniyya*.[12] Everyday, traders come from the other side of the river and buy goods imported from China via Dubai. In these localities, we are witnessing not merely exchanges between Saharans and sub-Saharan migrants, but rather the development of an original and locally specific kind of urbanity.

Important changes can be underlined in the context of religion. In the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, Muslim migrants can easily practice their religion. Senegalese migrants rely on strong Sufi brotherhood networks (Tijâniyya and Qadiriyya) on both sides of the Senegal Valley (Ould Cheikh 2004). The religious network maintains a place to live and provides refuge

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[12] Local Arab dialect.

for newly arrived migrants (Bava 2005), as is the case in the Mouride *dahira* in Nouadhibou. Most amazing is the spread of Christian influence. If the local authorities have tolerated the Catholic mission since French colonisation, it is another matter for the new evangelical churches. The arrival of English-speaking migrants wanting to work in fishing explains the development of such cults. In 2007, in Nouadhibou, we discovered two branches of Nigerian churches, managed by young pastors, sent by their hierarchies and burning supporters of proselytising as observed in all of West Africa (Fourchard, Mary, Otayek 2005). Collins, one of the young Nigerian disciples of the Christ Crusader Ministry, explains:

> I went to Nouadhibou because God told me to. Before arriving here, I travelled a lot. I crossed Benin, Burkina, Mali. Then, I flew to Nouakchott. From there, I went to Nouadhibou. Here, I couldn't find my former religion. So, I embraced another one. I am a hairdresser and I work beside the church. Sometimes, I help my church by distributing Christian brochures. I know it is dangerous. Relationships with Mauritanian people are tough. (Interview, Nouadhibou, November 2008)

Collins left Nouadhibou in 2009, after the Christ Crusader Ministry pastor stole the cash box and fled to Spain . . . Obviously, Nouadhibou is not the place to be any more.

An Economic Boost . . . Now Finished

The impact of transit migration has provided local society with important economic benefits. This can be seen in the real estate sector. In downtown Nouadhibou, the few compounds still owned by old Moorish families have been redesigned in order to increase rent. The tent (*khayma*) that used to be pitched in the middle of the courtyard has been replaced by newly built rooms, each housing four to five people, thereby reflecting the growing demand for rental accommodation caused by transit migration. In 2000, a rich Moorish businessman and descendent of an influential local tribe decided to build a "Senegalese housing estate" (*Cité des Sénégalais*). After illegally appropriating a street between *Qairaan* and *Lareiguib*, he built on either side a line of rooms of ten square metres each, rented out on a daily or monthly basis (for about 5,000 UM or 16 euros). As rents are high, migrants group together to share rooms. Malians and people from Casamance in Senegal have organised their own collective residences, called "foyers" bearing witness to the efficiency of community networks established by migrants abroad.

Since 2007 however, the almost complete halt to crossings to the Canary Islands caused by stricter controls have slowed down economic activities. Many shops in the centre have closed down, Senegalese restaurants have reduced the daily quantity of rice prepared; rooms hired out by locals stay empty, young men have returned to their home countries. Although, by the end of 2007, many Malians and Senegalese would still arrive hoping to "make it," successful crossings had become rare, as the representative of the Senegalese in Nouadhibou, interviewed in September 2007, put it: "Those who were meant to make it have done so. For those who stayed behind, it is too late now."

Migration to and through Nouadhibou seems to be running out of steam. Indeed, transit migration, which has led to a revival of the city's economy over recent years, appears to be in jeopardy. Nouadhibou no longer experiences urban and economic growth as was the case in the 1980s. It is no longer the place where fortunes are made quickly, nor a bustling harbour on the way to Europe. The city is declining, as indicated by the decrease both in employment offered and in fishing (Choplin, Lombard 2008). The situation is no longer one of transit, but rather one of post-transit and, consequently, the issue of migration is dealt with in new ways. Yet, despite our studies highlight the fact that crossings have considerably slowed down in Nouadhibou, and almost stopped, the "transit situation" is still a subject of debate in Nouakchott. Thus, a temporal discrepancy, and also a spatial discrepancy can be brought to light: the spaces where the migrants are supposed to be (Nouadhibou), and where they are accused of creating problems in the eyes of local and European authorities, are not the spaces where the migration issue is managed and where the money is arriving to do it (Nouakchott). This double spatio-temporal discrepancy is surprising: why is it said in Nouakchott that "illegal migrants" are crossing the sea in great numbers in spite of all the outstanding elements which prove that Nouadhibou's "transit function" is now called into question?

A New Geography of Migratory Governance in Post-Transit Context

Struggle against Clandestinity . . . And Terrorism

With the new "post-transit" context, the issue of migration is no longer at the top of the political agenda. As an employee of the UNHCR explained to us in January 2009, "we have more important problems to deal with.

We are no longer in 2006." Nonetheless, he continues, "by now, we have 400,000 migrants!" Such numbers are oddly incoherent: in late 2006, a report commissioned by the same UNHCR estimated that there were between 160,000 and 200,000 sub-Saharans in Mauritania.[13] Even though the number of migrants probably increased immediately after controls tightened, two years later, our fieldwork research indicated a clear reduction in overall numbers. Yet, at the end of 2009, in the terms of reference for a "technical assistance post in Mauritania for the development of a national strategy in migratory flows management and an aid program in the 10th FED framework" proposed by the European Commission, it was stipulated: "according to the authorities, migrants in Mauritania could be around 500,000 persons (unverifiable figure), i.e., 15% of overall population." These figures are manipulated all the more easily because of the absence of reliable statistical evidence. Moreover, it is impossible to distinguish between permanently settled migrants and those who are in transit (that is why the figures are unverifiable). Furthermore, numbers vary throughout the year, depending on agricultural and fishing seasons for instance, while also being affected by long-term changes sparked off by the volatile political climate in West Africa.

   The toughened controls against illegal immigration engender immediate changes for sub-Saharans settled in Mauritania. Whereas before, security forces arrested illegal migrants "caught in the act," as they were getting onto the boat, they now arrest them beforehand, at home, in the streets or even while they are making their way into the city. The arrival in the city of Nouadhibou is striking. In the North of the city, there is a compulsory entry point called "Le Bouchon." This point is in the narrow strip between the sea, the railway and the international border with Western Sahara/Morocco (photo 1). It is precisely at that point that police forces have set up their check-point. As a consequence, they consistently check all vehicles. Migrants are well aware of the "Bouchon," where they are afraid of being turned back, without any valid reason. Amnesty International (2008) has denounced these arbitrary arrests. Migrants are accused of intending to reach Spain illegally, even if police do not have any proof. Thus, in this post-transit migration situation, all "black foreigners" can be considered as "clandestine migrants", be taken in for questioning and expulsed.

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[13] See IOM, UNHCR & European Union, 2006; FNUAP, 2007 & 2008. These reports emphasise the difficulty of distinguishing transit migrants from those long settled.
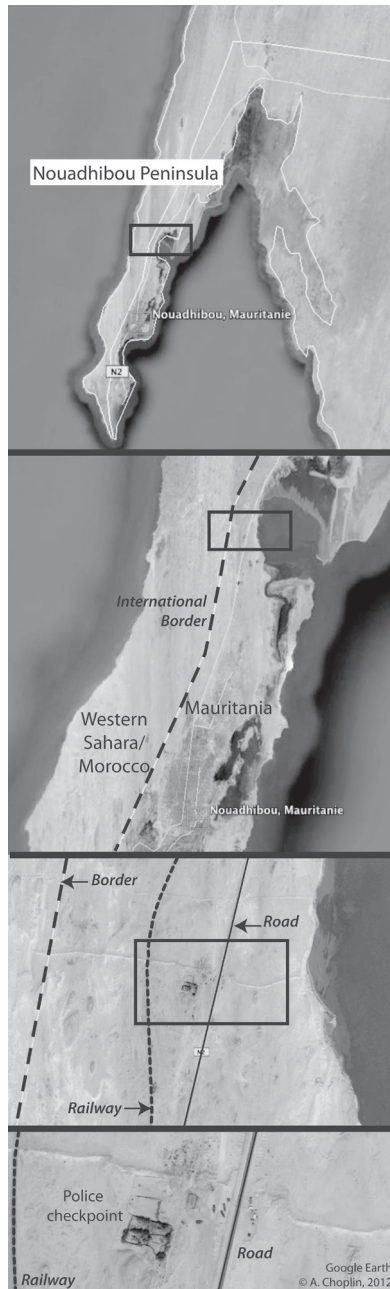
© A. Choplin, 2011; Google earth data

Photo 1: Zoom in "Le Bouchon," the compulsory checkpoint in the North of Nouadhibou

Such arrests are in fact themselves illegal: although Mauritania has, since 2000, withdrawn from ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States), the concomitant agreements on free movement between its members remain in force. Nationals of the fifteen member states, especially Senegalese and Malians, continue, to varying degrees regulated by bilateral agreements, to have privileged rights of access and residence. According to this legislation, "illegal" entries and departures from Mauritanian territory are rare: to travel around Mauritania is usually neither a crime nor an offence. Yet, controls are carried out "upstream" from Nouadhibou, on the major roads, sometimes faraway from the borders. For example, in the Maghta Lahjar police checkpoint (500 km from the Malian border), officers have decided to control the vaccination certificates of foreign bus passengers. Seydou, a Malian citizen, explains:

> There were six of us. They forced us to get off the bus. We could not show our certificates. They stopped us there. They forced us to take the bus in the opposite direction, going back towards the Malian border. We waited in Aioun police station [130 km from the Malian border] for another bus. When we went to the toilets, officers went with us! They sent us to Mali. On the border, we did as everybody does: we bought a vaccination certificate for 2 000 CFA (3 euros). We were like expulsed migrants! (Interview, Malian border, November 2009)

Northern and southern borders seem to be under European Union control whereas arbitrary and one-off checks can take place everywhere within the vast Mauritanian territory. Urban spaces where migrants are living, border towns they visit regularly to do business, roads they take to move around are changed into controlled, frightening spaces. The control stakes have been higher since there has been a "terrorism threat." This issue was debated in the presidential campaign in June 2009. The unlawful ruling government boasted about "struggling at the same time against terrorism and clandestine migration."[14] Because of this dangerous confusion, the Mauritanian government has negotiated financial agreements and partnership with Europe in exchange for the European presence inside its national territory. Since 2003, the United States of America has been interested in the struggle against Al-Qaida au Maghreb Islamique (AQMI), former Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat, and in controlling this "grey zone" and people movements (Keenan 2005; Lecocq & Schrijver

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[14] "Immigration clandestine et terrorisme: les Européens louent le rôle du Haut Conseil d'État," *Le Véridique*, 14/06/2009.

2007). Thus, in this "global geography of risks and threats" (Kraxberger 2005), the Mauritanian government takes financial advantages from the struggle against poverty, terrorism and "clandestine migration."

"We are in the path of clandestine immigration, drugs and weapons trafficking," declared the Mauritanian Defence Minister Hamadi Ould Baba Ould Hamadi in June 2010.[15] In order to enhance national territory security, a dozen additional checkpoints have been created since the summer of 2010 along the Senegalese and Malian borders in order to settle and control people. Twenty-one new mobile police squads and special anti-terrorism intervention groups have been set up. This tight surveillance, which can be observed all over the Sahara, is linked to an increasing "technologization": all these checkpoints have been kitted out with computer hardware. The aim is to create a foreigner's entry file. Moreover, the government requires a biometric system and has sold its national registry office to the French group Safran (for 17 million euros).[16] Even if we are sceptical of this biometric interest, we notice that this new security order, based on a technicization of controls (radars, biometry, computerization) (Bigo 2007; Collyer 2007), has an impact on people's regional mobility. In the context of a terrorist threat, migrants are perceived as a source of insecurity, both potential "illegal migrants" as well as terrorists.

Geopolitical Stakes: Towards a Bipolar Space

In this new context, Mauritania's geopolitical situation is redefined. International Mauritanian borders, cities, roads, airports, etc., are now places of controls, often imposed by external actors like fund providers. In those places, sometimes far from the city centre, the European Union is visible. It is now obvious that the European Union border has been externalised as a consequence of its tougher migration restrictions. Its rules seem to overwhelm those of ECOWAS. As a consequence of the readmission agreement, migrants arrested at sea or in Nouadhibou are jailed in the "Guantanamito" detention camp (Map 2). But the government appears to be embarrassed by this centre (the visible counterpart of the readmission agreement): transfers and expulsions are generally carried out at night, and out of sight of the Mauritanian public. In these peripheral areas, the

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[15] Isabelle Mandraud, "Pour contrer Al-Qaida, la Mauritanie érige des postes-frontières," *Le Monde*, 4 juin 2010.
[16] This biometric shift is also promoted by ECOWAS. An ECOWAS visa (called ECOVISA) was planned for 2012.

European Union keeps a low profile while remaining visible. At the Mali-Mauritanian border, between Nioro and Aïoun, a notice shows the intervention of the Migration Information and Management Centre (CIGEM) located in Bamako, via its PAMIREG program (Welcoming projects for unwilling return migrants and transit migrants in Gogui). Fifty meters behind the police checkpoint, two brand-new little white rooms "welcome" the illegal migrants pushed back from Mauritania (AEM, APDHA 2008). On the Senegalese border, the Spanish Red Cross flag floats in the air. It has set up another "welcome centre." Migrants are looked after for 48 hours—fed and accommodated—and then invited to go away. This European Union presence on the border hampers even more the population flow between West-African ECOWAS member countries.

Thus, new migratory governance has brought to the fore a bipolar space. "Bad spaces," stigmatized as "clandestine places," are emerging in opposition to "good spaces" where the migration issue is managed. Peripheral areas are punctuated with these bad spaces: transit towns like Nouadhibou or Nioro-du-Sahel in Mali; detention camps; migrant quarters in the crossroad-towns (*Qairaan* in Nouadhibou, *Cinquième* and *Sixième* in Nouakchott); turning back areas like on the Malian-Mauritanian border where CIGEM "welcome" migrants; Red Cross aid stations; customs; military and police checkpoints. The nicknames themselves express this stigmatisation and spatial distancing: *Kandahar* (the no man's land between Morocco and Mauritania), *Le Bouchon* (police checkpoint entry to Nouadhibou), *Guantanamito* (detention camp), *Nouadhibou-du-monde*, a city where migrants are stranded.

A distinction is made between spaces where migrants might go through or settle down and spaces where the migratory issue is managed. It is relevant that the "problem" is taken care of by exogenous actors, and not in the national territory peripheral areas but from urban centres. Nouakchott, Dakar, Bamako, Rabat are the central places where UHCR, IOM, delegations of the European Union have set up their headquarters, where experts' offices have been opened up, where the headquarters of NGOs involved in "upgrading the living conditions of migrants" have been set up. There, workshop meetings and international panels on this issue take place, drawing up national migratory policies. There is one workshop meeting after another in Nouakchott but not in Nouahdibou or in Rosso. Funds from financial backers and foreign aid arrive and are concentrated and invested in the capital city. Nouadhibou, on the other hand, has suffered a downgrading. Up to the 1980s, it was the economic centre of the country. But it has experienced an economic decline and received bad

press. Most studies have denounced the use of the "transit city" concept (Choplin, Lombard 2008; Streiff-Fénart, Poutignat 2008), largely because it has been used and twisted into "illegal migrants city" by the international media. As a result, institutions, politicians, and Mauritanian citizens are using this expression to belittle the Northern city. Nouadhibou is being marginalized whereas Nouakchott is asserting itself as the political and economic capital city.

A parallel can be drawn between this spatial dichotomy and the "good" and "bad migrants" categories formulated in the North and adopted by the South. Representatives of financial bankers, long-time settled migrants appropriate the rhetoric of illegal migration developed in Europe. The representatives of foreign national communities lobby for the recognition of their rights as "honest foreign workers" and insist on their regular movements spurred on by business. They contribute to freeze categories: they introduce themselves as "transnational entrepreneurs" in opposition to the "*adventurers*," the transit migrants who allegedly undercut salaries and are seen to be linked to illicit activities (drugs, alcohol, prostitution, etc.). They strongly condemn those who just travel through.

Therefore, the "post-transit" context involves a spatial reversal and a new migratory governance geography: a noble centre where the migration issue is managed (the capital city) and on the contrary, peripheries where the supposed stowaways and smugglers live, with the migration repression instruments (retention centre, check-points, helicopters, etc.) and the trafficking they are usually accused of. This new post-transit situation generates a hostile reception from sub-Saharans. But it reflects more general tensions inherent in internal political dynamics in Mauritania. Because for some nationalists black Mauritanians and sub-Saharan immigrants are lumped together under the category of "black foreigners," in the migration issue a great deal is at stake.

Conclusion

In summary, transit migration—and more broadly various transnational connections established by repeated return travel and by the interplay of different migratory networks—situate Mauritania at the heart of a much larger region. We have attempted to show that there is a discrepancy between the reality of the migratory issue (nowadays stopped because of the European Union rules transposed into Mauritania) and its management. Indeed, trans-Saharan migrations are not managed in peripheral

areas or in the Saharan space but outside of these zones. This new geography of migratory governance marginalizes migrants and migration spaces such as retention centres and border checkpoints. This new situation results from the asymmetrical relations between European countries, which have externalized their migratory system, and the supposed emigration and transit countries.

As a result, some migrants are now stranded in Mauritania. This post-transit situation involves the renewal of some xenophobic attitudes. It makes necessary a more subtle reading of the cosmopolitan aspect of main Mauritanian cities. In Nouadhibou and Nouakchott, foreigners and local society are living side-by-side rather than together. This rampant racism and autochthony echoes back to other African and European situations (Comaroff and Comaroff 2005; Geschiere 2009). The current "Arab revolution" has aroused European people's suspicion towards migrants coming from Africa. Some politicians do not hesitate to use rhetorical images, most of them irrelevant, such as "*biblical exodus*" as Umberto Bossi (Italian North Ligue) said, or they suggest "*putting migrants back on the boats*" as Chantal Brunel said (Former French right wing Member of Parliament). These populist comments hide the fact that migrations are quite well controlled and migrants are stranded on Southern Mediterranean shores. Moreover, they do not explain that not all African migrants want to go to Europe. Let us just remember that main migration flows are intra-African.

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UNTANGLING IMMOBILITY IN TRANSIT:
SUB-SAHARAN MIGRANTS IN ISTANBUL

Brigitte Suter

INTRODUCTION

Istanbul, the 15-million metropolis, is the biggest city of Turkey—a country situated "on the fringes of Europe" (Düvell 2006) between major political and economic regions, i.e., the European Union, Central Asia, Western Asia and Africa. Especially for people from Central Asia, the Caucasus, and Western Asia, Istanbul is perceived as a door to the European Union. The city is a major crossing point in the region for maritime and air traffic, and represents the largest and most important location of trade in the region (Pérouse 2004). As a vital location for several empires throughout history, Istanbul exhibits numerous multi-ethnic and cosmopolitan features. Next to the roughly 3,000 mosques, the city has 40 registered churches and 16 synagogues (Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality 2009), as well as a countless number of official money transfer facilities. The metropolis also provides room for a high density of social interaction; all kinds of networks—"based around ideology, politics, family, religion, nationality, trade, mafia-like practices, ethnicity, etc."—can be found in the city (Pérouse 2004). These factors contributed largely to making Istanbul the main Turkish city from which to organise further (illegal) travel westwards, which offers interesting insights into the notion of transit migration research.

The majority of the sub-Saharan migrants I have met and talked to in the transit space of Istanbul stated that they would prefer to be somewhere else.[1] A few of them indicated that they were tired of travelling, tired of being in the situation where the lack of proper documents weighs heavy, and that they wanted to go home. Most of them, however, embraced in a cocoon of hope, dreamed of life in European countries, with Greece as its entry point. The wish to leave Turkey for Greece varies in intensity, depending on the conditions at the moment and the subjective assessment

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[1] The chapter is based on fieldwork among sub-Saharan Africans in Istanbul that has been collected for my dissertation. For the final dissertation see Suter 2012b.

of it. The term *Greece* pops up every now and then in conversations. It is not only a term, a word; it has concept-like dimensions. It is an uncertain concept, but entails imaginations of success, a better life, Europe, a dream come true, of respect and safety. To reach it, to realize the concept, requires money. It is also connected to danger, to a life-threatening action, which is why courage, recklessness, the will to challenge ones fate or in the worst case, a bottom-less desperation, is required. *Greece, Greece...!* It is a (bird) call that wears people down.

The Notion of Transit in Migration Research

In migration research, the concept of transit has been ascribed many definitions. Similarly to Thomas Faist (2000:18) who defined the term migrant as a person who crosses a border *with the intention*[2] of settlement in the new country, many scholars regard the initial intention of movement of the migrant as one key ingredient for a definition of transit migration (see Düvell 2006:5). Over the course of my fieldwork, however, it has become obvious that the intention aspect neglects the role of opportunities; and one might add sheer luck, and a number of factors in the course of the migration process. The second factor that is commonly seen as crucial is the time aspect. Given that migrants "get stuck" for periods of times that vary enormously in length, it has been difficult to distinguish transit migrants from temporary or long-term migrants. Moreover, understanding migration as an open-ended process, rather than a targeted, rational move from a country of origin to a country of destination, the notion of transit seems difficult to justify.[3]

The phenomenon of transit migration is rather recent on the agenda of migration research.[4] Roughly, it has caught migration scholars' and practioners' attention since 1993, when the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) published a number of reports on countries bordering

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[2] Italics added by the author.

[3] Nevertheless, one could argue, there are some countries and regions that clearly do not figure on the list of possible destinations, and thus, have to be seen as transit countries—at least in the initial phase of stay. For sub-Saharan Africans, Turkey, for instance, has only seldom been an aspired destination country. Turkey is rather seen as a necessary evil; an obstacle for some, a stepping stone for others on the way to the planned destination area.

[4] Of course, the actual phenomenon is much older. See for example Koser Akcapar (2006) who states that Turkey has been a transit country for more than twenty years.

or closely located to the EU (such as Turkey, Ukraine, Hungary, Bulgaria, Poland, Czech Republic, and the Russian Federation). These IOM reports describe a phenomenon of countries hosting a large number of migrants that have not intended to stay and settle (immigrate) there. Instead they are transiting the country on their way from the country of origin to the country of destination (often the "West"). In the past couple of years scholars from different fields started to pay attention to the phenomenon of transit migration and a number of studies describe and analyse the phenomenon in different locations, such as Alioua (2003), Collyer (2007), Stock (2011) and Kastner (in this volume, pp. 25–44) Morocco; Pérouse (2004), Içduygu (2005), Koser Akcapar (2004), Danış et al. (2006), Danış (2010) and Suter (2012b) on Turkey; Papadopoulou (2004; 2008) on Greece; Hamood (2006) on Libya; Ivakhniouk (2004) on Russia; Brachet (2005) on Niger, and Chatelard (2002) on Jordan, to name a few.

Previous studies reveal that defining the concept of transit migration (or of a transit migrant) is a hard nut to crack. Often lieu of an involuntary stay, the transit space manifests a crucial point in a person's biography. Marked by "impermanence and uncertainty" (Düvell 2008), Istanbul as a transit space imposes itself with all its social, political and economic features to the migrants passing through it; and even more so to the ones that experience immobility. It can—gently or brutally—shutter dreams and impose reorientation. Breaking the concept down, the key question seems to be: Why do some people transit a country in a few days or weeks, while others—with the same intentions—get stuck in the transit space? Or, in other words: what causes immobility in transit?

In an attempt to avoid pressing people into a theoretically emerged definition of transit migrants that may not fit their realities adequately, this article suggests directing our attention towards the transit space in which people are located at the time of research. Hence, going beyond the notion of transit space as a purely geographical location, in this chapter it is treated as a decisive social space with its characteristics impacting on a person's further movement. Location-specific and general factors at different analytical levels of a transit space contribute to further mobility on one hand, or forced upon or accepted immobility on the other hand. Furthermore, formal and informal institutional and individual actors play a role in people's decision to move, stop or stay. By acknowledging and analysing their impact on a migrant's biography, a more complex understanding of the phenomenon of transit migration can be added to the existing field of research.

METHODOLOGY

Most people who apply for asylum in Turkey come from Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and Somalia (UNHCR 2005). It can be assumed that these nationalities also constitute the majority of transit migrants, considering that these countries are mentioned most often when the police detect illegal migrants intending to cross over to Greece, or when a boat capsized and dead bodies of migrants are washed up on the shores. Migrants from sub-Saharan Africa, on the contrary, constitute a group of transit migrants that has only recently started to grow in numbers, and is consequently fairly under-researched (Brewer and Yükseker 2006).

As the goal is to gain knowledge about migrants' perception of their realities and to comprehend their daily lives in the transit space I have come to chose an ethnographic approach consisting of (non-)participating observations, semi-structured interviews, informal conversations as well as literature studies. In the course of my fieldwork between 2007 and 2009 I have interviewed migrants with different legal statuses from Nigeria, Kenya, Eritrea and Ethiopia, as well as DR Congo, Cameroon, Sudan, Somalia, and Liberia.

In a field as politicized and marginalized from mainstream society as this, a number of factors clearly impact the applicability of methods; structural constraints on different levels, such as police behaviour, vulnerability of informants, racial aspects, as well as conflicts and distrust within the migrant population also had a great impact on the applicability and the results of the methods chosen. It was not only the outcome of the research that was impacted by these factors, but also the safety of everybody involved—including mine.[5]

Trust is a key issue in this kind of research. After the initial contact, I would usually try to proceed with a snowball system to find more informants. Theoretically, the system seems to be the most appropriate, due to the irregular (e.g., vulnerable) position of most of the interviewees (Liamputtong 2007:48–9). However, I was soon confronted with a lack of trust not only towards outsiders for understandable reasons but also—and almost more so—towards their fellow countrymen, which resulted in difficulties of communication on many occasions. I do not hold that this is exclusively valid for migrants in transit, rather I see it as a natural

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[5] For a more in-depth reflection on my methodology in effect see Suter (2009; 2012b).

outcome of a number of people struggling over limited resources (money, jobs, contacts, etc.). This condition compelled me to develop a wide network of informants and to build up trust to almost every single conversation partner from scratch. Of course, with time and with my continuous presence in the field this became easier.

The ethnographic approach I have chosen enabled me to add an additional dimension to the current body of knowledge in the field. It is the human dimension, as seen and narrated both by the informants I have met and—not avoidable—by me, as a visitor, observer and, to a small extent, participant in the field. More specifically, my methodological approach enabled me to capture the ambivalence of being in transit, and to shed light on the grueling inner process that leads to decision making on whether or not to continue moving.

Being in Transit

One of the main features of a transit space is the constant fluctuation of people, and the erratic character of the social networks located in Istanbul (and beyond) they participate in. Another typical feature is the constant discourse on the in- and out-flow of people; the fact that this is a topic of interest, a topic of discussion, a topic around which many tales, myths, and hopes are created. In other words, this is the awareness of being in transit.

Not all people in a transit space necessarily may want to move—at least not at any cost. Some have found what they have been looking for in Istanbul, some got surprised or disillusioned and thus re-defined their goal, while others simply may lack the energy, the money, the courage or the despair to continue travelling and start from scratch in yet another place, in yet another country. It becomes clear that in the transit space initial intentions become contested and probed, altered and adjusted.[6] Aspasia Papadopoulou (2004:1) notes in her study on Kurdish migrants in Greece that migrants do not necessarily arrive with a fixed plan, but come to make many decisions when in transit. From what I could gather in my meetings with irregular and regular (i.e., asylum seekers or

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[6] This counters most contemporary migration theories that depart from purely rational and logic assumptions and a straight line between country of origin and country of destination.

refugees awaiting resettlement) migrants in transit in Istanbul, goal-oriented behaviour has not always guided their moves and strategies. "There are some people here that clearly do not know what they are doing," a migrant support worker, a long-term migrant himself, stated, referring to the many migrants passing through Istanbul before embarking on the hazardous trip to Greece. An intermix of structural, geographical but also social constraints to movement can easily impose themselves in a transit space, leading and sometimes forcing migrants to alter their pursuit of the original migration trajectories.

A transit space is inhabited by different actors. Firstly, there are the very few who have found a way to obtain citizenship and settle down: the established. They open businesses and employ people from their social networks (often co-nationals or co-believers), they establish churches and by that provide an important emotional and spiritual service from which many can gain the energy, courage and confidence to continue struggling, either in Istanbul or on the onward travel. They enjoy a high status among the others, as it is their legal status that many other depend upon or are interested in; be it for opening a business, be it for marriage, or for negotiations with Turkish officials. Many of these people are frustrated and angry because of the hardships of a life in Turkey. However, these are also the people who defend their new home country if a newcomer or semi-established person complains about the conditions. It is in these moments they say they are "proud to be Turkish."

Then, there are the semi-established. They have been in the transit space for a while, a few years even—yet without the proper legal documents. Either unable or unwilling to travel further, they try to "exploit their options" in the transit space; if they have not managed to secure a (more or less) stable job, they often strive to open a small business (self-employment) or live off the newcomers. And once they manage to save up a certain amount of money, they either expand their business and stay, or they hit the road and follow the others in an onward direction. Sometimes they are satisfied and return to their country of origin, or they have found a way to migrate to Turkey circularly (and legally). Similarly, some of them find all their efforts nullified and, discouraged by that, take the first chance to leave for Greece. And finally—and most closely to a common-sense understanding of transit—the most numerous group, the ones that arrive one day and are out and on their way elsewhere the very next week or month. For many of these transitters, the stay in Istanbul, however, lasts for two, three or four months before they can continue.

All of them have been newcomers at one point. Newcomers stream into the transit space endlessly. They come, and while some stay and learn and gather experience,[7] others disappear before they can develop routines and internalise the rules of the transit space. Their scared faces give them away as the inexperienced newcomers they are, ignorant of the rules of the game of this particular location. On a few occasions one informant pointed out some newcomers to me: "See the ones over there, they just arrived via Syria. You can see it in their tired bodies and dirty clothes." And another time: "They were newcomers, didn't you see the fear in their eyes?" Newcomers have a special social position in a transit space. It is their constant inflow that keeps the system running.

Istanbul through Newcomer Eyes

One of the persons that provided me with the privilege to follow him through his experience of the transit space of Istanbul is Peter. Having travelled from Southeastern Nigeria to the Turkish megalopolis, the thirty-year old's arrival in the city has been characterized by hope and anxiety. In the beginning, Peter makes the acquaintance of a few Nigerians that have been residing in the city for a while, the "old ones" as he calls them. Through them he finds accommodation, information about Istanbul and the options for further travel. "You know, a black helps another black—at least in the beginning. They take you in and look for an available person from the same tribe. They make the contact for you and let them then take care of you," he explains. The first black man he meets on the street happens to be a Cameroonian, and Peter is happy to use his French. The man connects him with other Nigerians, and the next day he can move in into a shabby, humid and cold ground level apartment in the centrally located neighbourhood of Tarlabaşı.

From the same people, "the old ones," Peter also learns about his options: either to stay in Istanbul trying to make an honest living with petty jobs or start an import/export business—or to breach his strong moral codes and get a foot into the drug business. They also inform him that Turkey is a bad place for blacks. "People here," they would say, "do not like us." According to them, there is nothing good in this country, but

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[7] Sarah J. Mahler (1995) calls this experience "immigrant capital." In an earlier publication (Suter, 2012b) I have termed it "migrant capital" which I see as a specific form of cultural capital.

in Europe, and in Greece, things are viewed as much better. Over there, they say, there are human rights. And jobs as well. He learns the price tags for the trip: between 1,200 and 1,800 US dollars for the journey from Turkey to Greece by boat.[8] He passes his knowledge on to me: "The prices vary depending which connection you travel with, but basically the more you pay the safer the trip." The simple lack of financial resources is often a reason to prevent migrants to travel or forces them to postpone their journey. Some informants state that they had been robbed on the Syrian-Turkish border and stripped off all their belongings, while others from the beginning only managed to scrape together the amount of money to get to Istanbul.[9] Depending on the quality of the transnational or the local network these migrants are part of, many manage to get the money necessary in order to continue travelling. Not surprisingly, transnational networks are usually accessed first, and many people receive the money necessary from relatives or friends back home or abroad. Only when these networks fail, the erratic, fragile one in Istanbul are approached. Unlike many other migrants, however, Peter does not have a supportive network to fall back onto, and he feels thus forced to radically exploit his options in the Turkish metropolis. "I would do anything except stealing or killing," he says several times. His prospects look gloomy, and he is aware of that. He often touches his temples indicating his restless mind. His looking for a solution permeates his life. And like a mantra he finishes his sentences with: "I rely on God. What else can I do? If He wants it, something will come up for me."

By the time we talk for the first time over a cup of tea, it has been one month since Peter's arrival in the city. For most of this time, he was in the house, inside the apartment, alone, feeling insecure. Months later he reflects on that time:

> It is a bad system. As a newcomer you don't know anything. They put you in a house, put fear in you by telling you terrible stories about the Turkish police, so that you don't dare to leave the house. They do that only when you have money. You don't even dare to buy groceries. Then they take your money and they go and buy groceries for you for double the price. They try to make money out of you in any way they can.

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[8] To cross the land border on foot costs up to 500 US dollars and involves a lot of trekking. The safest way, in a car, amounts up to 2,500–3,000 US dollars.

[9] The trip from Nigeria to Turkey for example has been reported to cost between 6,000 and 10,000 US dollars. This sum includes the flight ticket, a transit visa, assumed bribes and the services of the informal agent.

After some additional months in Istanbul, Peter had a clear picture of why fellow nationals would like to leave Turkey as soon as possible: "It all depends on the orientation you get from your brothers. Usually the 'old ones' plant fear in you." Only seldom are newcomers introduced to the possibilities for gainful economic activities that Istanbul has to offer. Instead, they are encountered with various testimonies as to why "Istanbul is hell," and consequently a place that should be left behind as fast as possible. Insightful, Peter analyses the situation as follows: "Competition is hard in the field of [legal] economic gains, and people do everything to guard their few resources of income."

For a long time in migration research, social networks (based on nationality, ethnicity, race, etc.) have been hailed for their positive effect on immigrants' integration and well-being, and only few studies (see for example Mahler 1995; Menjívar 2000; Vásquez 2009) shed light on the darker sides of these networks. Social networks can provide (informal) benefits to their members. However, in the case of Istanbul, many people felt compelled to move on *because* of the social networks' inability to facilitate access to the city. The experience of exploitation at the hands of co-nationals (forming an immediate social network) is not unique to migrants in transit. As both Sarah J. Mahler (1995) and Cecilia Menjívar (2000) in their studies on networks of (undocumented) Salvadorians in the United States state, the qualitative aspect of social networks is pivotal. "A common background, constant contact and shared migration experiences do not automatically breed cohesive and supportive networks," Menjívar (2000: 34) points out. Rather "structural forces, such as policies of reception and dynamics of the local economy, together with the organization of the receiving community, impinge on informal networks. This occurs because, by shaping the structure of opportunities that immigrants encounter, they determine the kind of resources that immigrants will have available to help each other" (Menjívar 2000: 35).

Thus—while not necessarily inherent to a transit space—the availability of resources and the scarcity thereof respectively is pivotal for the quality of a social network. In Istanbul, many migrants have hardly enough to live let alone to continue travelling, while possibilities to work are few, customers for the business do not come in abundance, and potential marriage partners through which to get legal papers are sparse; in other words, competition over these assets (money, customers, potential marriage partners) are grim, and defended—with sometimes more sometimes less harmful cunning. In general, suspicion against others is high, and trust is fragile.

Nevertheless, there are possibilities for legal[10] economic income in Istanbul. The constellation of actors in the transit space has led to the development of several niches migrants can exploit. On what I term the "semi-ethnic"[11] labour market, Africans often find employment in the textile shops of the districts Osmanbey and Laleli. They work for Turks (or Iranians) but advise circularly migrating African salesmen and women in their native languages, guide them to the different shops against a small commission from both buyer and seller, and build up a regular "ethnic" clientele. One Kenyan informant laughed when I asked him about prior experience in the textile business: "I don't know anything about clothes or textiles, but I speak Swahili and I know the taste of Africans; that is why I was hired."

Positions on the "ethnic"[12] labour market, on the other hand, are scarce. Here migrants are employed by fellow Africans (often established co-nationals) that have obtained Turkish citizenship and opened small legally registered businesses (mostly restaurants, call shops or cargo shops). An important money generating activity that makes use of transnational networks is the trading business. Intended by many circular Africans and grasped as the last choice by some that originally planned to transit, exporting Turkish goods, such as motor spare parts and textile (clothes), to African countries, can be very lucrative. Certain prerequisites are necessary, however, namely a certain amount of start-up capital,[13] a business mind, as well as trustworthy business partners.

Finally, on the Turkish labour market, many women without proper documents find employment in Turkish or expat households in Istanbul. Some also work seasonally in tourist paradises along the Aegean Coast where they clean hotel rooms, massage tourists to relaxation or work in animation. Men usually find employment in construction, in small manufacturing workshops or in restaurants. Peter's work experience in Istanbul can be summed up to polishing and painting wooden furniture in a

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[10] The term legal refers to a position on the official labour market. Proper permits however may not necessarily be obtained.

[11] I define semi-ethnic labour market as a work relation in which the employer is a native, while the customers are co-ethnics, co-nationals or belong to the same racial group as the employees.

[12] I define ethnic labour market as a work relation where the employee is hired by a co-ethnic or co-national. Often, the customers are co-ethnics as well.

[13] One informant mentioned a sum of 2,000 US dollars. It has to be noted here that transactions in the textile business (like in the irregular travelling business) are conducted in US dollars.

small workshop, carpenting, painting walls, tearing walls down, sorting trash, and loading containers in a harbour. A couple of male informants have also travelled to the tourist spots for summer, where they could find work as animators in hotels. Higher-educated men and women from English-speaking African countries sometimes find work as English teachers, while men with football training occasionally manage to get a contract with a Turkish club. Apart from these two types of skilled jobs, it is very rare that Africans without proper documentation in Turkey find the possibility to get hired for a qualified job. In general, working conditions in Istanbul were stated as a reason to abandon Turkey for Greece. Many complain about unstable jobs, too little salaries, about being overworked, and the employer's refusal to pay their agreed salary. Most complaints come from people working on the Turkish labour market, in the manufacturing industry or in households. Informants with a university degree complain about the impossibility to get hired for a qualified job in Turkey, and say they feel compelled to move on due to that. A young Nigerian university graduate with a degree in social sciences for example tells me about his job in a small woodcraft atelier. "The job is ok," he states, "but I would never do that in Nigeria, I would be ashamed of myself! I cannot tell my parents what I do here, they would order me home directly."

Apart from the labour market, the religious landscape of Istanbul is another sphere that is shaped by the city's status as a transit space. Registered and (mostly) unregistered but tolerated African Pentecostal and catholic churches are emerging—with a longer or shorter life span—contributing to an increased religious pluralism in the city. Many important social networks circle around those congregations; and their social capital varies tremendously depending on the ethnic composition of its members and their financial, cultural and immigrant capital. The Blessing and Prosperity Church, for example, was found by a Nigerian and frequented mostly by young men; newcomers as well as semi-established Nigerians and Ghanaians whose lodging was concentrated very much to one neighbourhood.[14] Located in its vicinity, the Floating Chapel church, established by a Turkish family, managed to gather a rather different crowd, made of many semi-established and established Africans migrants of both gender with different nationalities, most of them employed on the

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[14] The church dissolved about one year later when the founder was said to have financed his trip to Greece with the money donated by the members for charity.

ethnic, semi-ethnic or Turkish labour market, as well as believers of Turk-ish, Asian and European nationality with various legal statuses. In con-sequence, African migrants that frequented the latter church had higher chances of finding either employment or a Turkish or other marriage partner; factors that clearly impact on mobility. As a Kenyan woman solemnly declared: "We people from the church are blessed with jobs!" Peter decides to attend the Blessing and Prosperity Church. It suits his religious beliefs and traditions, and moreover, is run by the Nigerian man who rents the apartment in his name, and collects money, the rent plus a one-time entrance fee, from all new tenants.

Finally, in a city where resources migrants can access do not come in abundance, official and semi-official institutions to support asylum-seekers, refugees or undocumented migrants are important. While one inter-nationally financed NGO provides legal aid in connection with asylum claims and issues related to that, other organisations offer free medical care, clothes, food and social activities—and generally an inviting place for people to gather, relax and establish ties with one another. These organisations are mostly church-based, and internationally funded. Many migrants are noticeably in need of those material donations. Nevertheless, others state that they solely frequent these places to socialize and to get updated on issues of interest, namely who arrived, who left, new connec-tions, variation in prices, and so on. Very few people—with their asylum seeker or refugee status as an entry ticket into the deeper realms of these networks—can also find limited employment with these organizations, mostly as translators or nurses.

Processes of Adaptation

Peter commences to lead a life of survival, and ultimately a life of adapta-tion. He starts to build up routines, practices. He survives, learns how to beat the system over the course of months. Every Saturday, for instance, he frequents the soup kitchen in a church near Taksim square. Usually between 15 and 30 migrants gather there to receive food portions, and by far the majority are Nigerian men. A couple of the men usually work along with the volunteers to pack the food in portions and divide it equally among the attendant crowd.

Generally, these mornings are peaceful; the men gather and wait for the meals, some sing along as they divide the food in portions. In the beginning, Peter goes there to get food. As he eats only one time a

day—"this life forces you," he says dryly—he welcomes the additional meal. In the course of the next few months, however, these Saturday mornings become more important as a meeting place, and a place where information is exchanged about the whereabouts of other Nigerians, the undertakings of acquaintances, the arrival of newcomers and the possibilities of new connections. In winter there are usually more people than during the other seasons. "People cannot travel now, it is too dangerous because of the weather conditions," the coordinator explains. The atmosphere is tense. "They are newcomers," Peter points at some guys: "They just found out that their agents back home cheated them. These guys are scared and desperate. Some of them are completely broke and see their dreams shattered." More than once he interferes in an argument that has turned aggressive and physical. And more than once the bread and oranges could not be divided evenly are fought over so that they end up as smashed pieces on the floor.

Two months after his arrival in Istanbul, Peter shares this apartment with six other migrants: the Catman, the Guy-with-the-gloves, the Prince-of-Belarus, Pastor Isaiah and the Albino. The last to arrive is Victor, eager to continue to Greece as soon as possible. The day before Christmas, they attempt to cross the land border into Greece together. In the meanwhile, the Guy-with-the-gloves, the Albino and the Prince-of-Belarus have gotten money from the families back home; Pastor Isaiah had his own money. As Victor had some money with him, he paid the Catman's and Peter's trip as well. "I like the guy (Catman), you know," Victor explains his action later, "I saw him at the phone crying, because his family couldn't send him money and told him not to come back empty-handed. I felt pity," he explained. "And Peter, I just paid for him as well."

Their attempt to reach Greece failed, and Peter and Victor come back to Istanbul. Victor soon leaves for a tourist spot along the Aegean coast in late spring. He has been trying to get some petty jobs, but abstained from most of them due to health reasons. "It is crazy, in these workshops you work 10 hours a day, and all the time you breathe in paint or lacquer. It is very unhealthy." He has been accepted to work at a hotel in the south, and so he leaves for the tourist city with his small bag of belongings. Peter, on the other hand, survives with petty jobs, and eventually moves into his own place. Located in the same neighbourhood, Tarlabaşı, Peter's "ghetto" is a simple room in the basement of a run-down apartment building. "I just needed some privacy, I cannot be with the others all the time," he says and puts is fingertips on his temples to indicate the stress connected

with staying in an over-crowded place. A "ghetto," as he calls it, is a room or small apartment that people share because they cannot afford anything on their own. The room is simply decorated. One big mattress on the floor, some hangers covered with clothes, some pots, plates, glasses and cutlery, a chair. One electric hotplate is used to cook and to heat up water for soup and coffee.

Providing Shelter

Peter uses his place not only for privacy; he also provides a shelter for some of the newcomers—mostly for guys that originate from the same area in Nigeria. Peter runs all kinds of errands for the newcomers; shows them the churches, the place of the food distribution on Saturdays, and tries to get a job for them and takes his passport to collect the money their families send via a Western Union. When I ask, how much they have to pay him for all his services, he waves me off: "Just a little bit if they have, otherwise it is ok. I don't do it for money." First, he simply says that he helps because they are his "younger ones," meaning that they come from the same village and are younger in age, and this—coupled with his amount of experience of life in Istanbul—gives him an automatic authority over them. Later, however, he explains in more detail that his support system is not based on money and repeats that he detests "the system here," meaning the way in which Nigerians with a longer stay in Istanbul support/exploit newcomers for money. "It is a stupid system that tries to make money out of people that are already on the bottom. We squeeze the ones that do not have anything anyway." His move to another place is also based on his dislike for this system, and it is an attempt to make some distance, both physically and mentally. His system rather is based on gratitude. "When they are in Greece or Spain or even back in Nigeria, they will be grateful to me all their life because without me they would not be what they are now." Sometimes, he confesses, he even gives them money to go to Greece, not much, just 200 or 300 Dollars. For him, this is well invested money. "Have they ever paid you back?" I ask. "Not yet," he admits, "but they call regularly." There is an additional component to the system that Peter lets me in on. When the tales of Peter's good deeds in Istanbul travel back to the village where he and his protégées are originating from, this will have beneficial effects for his mother. "The families of the other guys will go by my mother's house, and pay her respect," Peter reveals with a smile on his face, "maybe they bring flowers or food or other small things."

Another possibility is to sponsor Nigerians that would like to come to Turkey. "That has the advantage," he adds, "that I would always be their master." Investing in humans is the term Peter uses. During spring he works in a trash sorting place. He initiated the contact with the owner in (very) broken Turkish, and always takes along his old and new protégées. Some of them travel, and new ones arrive. Peter seems to quite enjoy his position as a "chairman" over his "younger ones."

Some of the interviewees point out that the position an individual takes on in a network is of crucial importance for future (im)mobility. "To have built up something" or "to be someone" has clearly been identified by some informants as reasons to stay in Istanbul. Research on social networks has shown that individuals occupy different social positions in these local networks which directly corresponds with what they can expect from these networks; i.e., which resources they can access (Menjívar 2000,). Two Congolese students analyze the immobility of some of their fellow nationals in the following way: "People that stay in Istanbul do so because they manage to build up something, because that gives them the power to rule over other people. If they go to France, for example, they would lose it. There they have to start all over again." Another informant I met has been able to build up an impressive and well working small scale business. Only due to his irregular status, he cannot move between countries but is stuck in Istanbul. Applying for asylum in a European country is out of the question, he says, because: "I don't want to live in a camp for years." Nevertheless, if the (legal) possibility of obtaining a European passport came up, he hints several times during our meetings, he would not hesitate to take it. Finally, during a phone conversation a Nigerian informant directly addressed his hesitation when faced with his prospects of future mobility. While his original intention was to enter Greece as fast as possible, he found that he quite enjoyed his work as an animator in a tourist resort. He says, he likes the contact to tourists, and has a good relationship both with his boss and his co-workers. "People like me here, they respect me. It is such relief after Istanbul. Here they respect you for being black!" One month before he finally makes his initial plan come true and embarks on a rubber boat in the middle of the night to a nearby Greek island, he is indecisive. In light of the distressing uncertainty that Greece and the EU yield, he came to value high the familiar—and therefore soothing—routines of his working life in the tourist resort.

Nevertheless, despite the improvement of Peter's situation, seven months after his arrival in the city, the wish to go to Europe becomes dominant again. Peter laments the fact that he can survive, but that there

is nothing left at the end of the month. He pays for rent, electricity and water. Only on the weekends he allows himself a couple of beers: "After all, a man has to be a man," he smiles with twinkling eyes. He is looking for a way to travel, but finds it difficult. "You cannot earn anything here. Here in Istanbul," he says, "the only way to make big money is in drugs." Apparently, his roommates travelled to Greece shortly after the first failed attempt (Pastor Isaiah, the Catman, the Prince-of-Belarus, the Guy-with-the-gloves and the Albino) and they already make money. "One of the guys already bought four plots[15] of land back home for 12,000 Dollars. They sell CDs for 25 Euros a day.[16] Greece is better!" It is the first time since he failed to cross in December that he speaks about Europe. After a few additional months here, he does not hold any hope of making ends meet in Istanbul. In addition to that, his friends tell him stories of financial success in Athens. Mentally, Greece moves to the forefront again. Shortly thereafter, he undertakes another attempt to leave Turkey for Greece, this time by boat. But the big safe boat never comes and he refuses to set a foot on a small rubber boat. Once again, he returns to Istanbul.

Modification of Aspirations

Peter is not the only one that returned back to Istanbul in light of the dangerous border crossing with a small rubber boat. One Liberian woman, a mother of a small daughter, confessed that she already set foot on the rubber boat off the coast of Izmir that was supposed to bring her to Greece, when she panicked: "I say, no, I cannot do that with my baby (…), I can't!" The trip across the water is no option with a child, she justifies her decision—I suspect justifying it both for herself and me. Had she been alone, she would not have hesitated, she assures me. Having crossed the Syrian-Turkish border illegally with her children, a Nigerian woman similarly states that initially Istanbul was just supposed to be a short stop on the way to Europe. Coming from war-torn Lebanon where she worked in the cleaning sector, stories about a better life in Spain, in Germany, and other countries came to her ear, and nested in her consciousness until the family was ready to leave. However, crossing the border into Turkey proved to be an utterly traumatising experience, and she gets obviously distressed when talking about it, with tears running down her cheeks. Her

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[15] According to Peter's estimations a plot is about 100×50 meters.
[16] A CD is sold for 5 Euros.

little two-year old boy whom she carried on her back just a few months ago across the mountain range looks at her anxiously. She pulls herself together, patching his head reassuringly. "I am not crossing any border anymore like that," she says, "I cannot do that with my children."

The impact of the transit space on individual migrants' aspirations manifests itself prominently when children are involved. The concern for the well-being of a child establishes itself as an overarching driving force in the search for a better life which ambiguously prompts some parents to move at the same time as other parents deem the risk of moving as too high. Above all, the ambiguity of the migration project moves to the forefront in many a parent's mind. Another woman, mother of a three-year old boy, left Lebanon driven by the violent unrest in 2006 and the promise of better-paid jobs in Western Europe. Since a couple of years back she finds herself stuck in Istanbul, unable to move in any direction. She expresses the wish to leave for Greece but reflects upon the uncertainty and potential risks with great lucidity: "So if I find a job here [in Istanbul] to make all the money I don't need to go to Greece, because Greece is the same." "So then you can save the troubles of risking the trip," I asked. "Yes, it is very risky. And you see also, from Lebanon to Turkey, from Turkey to Greece, maybe also they say that they have a good job in Italy, why don't you go there. Enough!! How long will you be on this journey? You know, you have to sit down, because the time is going and you are getting old, nothing but older and older and older. You have to sit down also. It is not like you are going from place to place, your children also have to do the same trip, you have to at least sit down and start saving, even if it is only 1 Dollar you are saving, before he [the child] is growing up to be somebody."

While children present an obvious factor impacting a person's risk perception tremendously, there are many other human dimensions that may alter the initial intention of movement in the course of staying in a transit space. Some people fall in love, they wish for a relationship, they wish to marry and to establish a family—and some do so. Others get overwhelmed by greediness and rivalry, or they start to spend money on items that exceed purely survival functions (food), such as status-enhancing items (clothes, jewellery, watches) or alcohol, entrance fees for a visit to a club, and so on.

The original mindset, thus, may be changed in the course of transit, and result in an immobility that can be described as "accepted." A Kenyan man describes his change of mind as a spiritual one, and expresses criticism towards his fellow nationals' quest for all things material. The soft-spoken

thirty year-old man that initially planned to continue to Europe but was not willing to take the risks involved in the journey has made his own analysis: "It has to do with the mindset of the people. People have the mindset of chasing something, a better life. But I truly wonder whether they will recognize the better life when they see it. Also: what happens to the mindset when they reach the goal? What happens when the goal is gone because it is reached, what is next then? People just chase and chase and chase." He laments the fact that people only seem to chase material goals. In his opinion they would benefit from looking inside themselves, explore their spiritual sides and through that "find to God." He reports that he changed his aspirations, oriented himself towards the possibilities that Istanbul had to offer—admits that this was very hard—and has now (after a few years) regained his mobility: he has started in the export business and travels regularly between Istanbul and Nairobi.

Due to several constraints, Peter has been forced to change his initial plan, his mindset, a few times already. When I meet him after his second return to Istanbul, he seems much more relaxed than in the months before. Instead of painting Istanbul as a hostile environment, he praises the advantages of being in this city. "Istanbul is OK, it is better to be here without papers than in Europe. It is even safer without papers here than in many African cities." Also, even though in Greece money can be made with apparent ease, "Istanbul is better for people with a business mind," he concludes. And so he invests the money intended to bring him to a greener pasture on the other side of the Aegean Sea into a small-scale trading business; he gathers a few people around him to whom he dares to extend his trust, starts to buy textile items, and sends them back home. And money is coming in, "slowly-slowly." The concept of "Greece" is still haunting him—but for the time being it lost much of its intensity. Rather, it has transformed itself from the relentless meaning of paradise to the notion of last resort.

Even though Peter can report small successes on his export business, he is still not relaxed about his financial situation. "Money comes in," he says, "but very little." In the one year since his arrival in the city, he has built up a small yet fragile network consisting of fellow migrants, and Turkish as well as foreign employers. He continues with petty jobs, but has a new strategy to avoid exploitation: "I don't have a steady job, but I always insist that I get paid the same day, otherwise I don't come back the next day." The employers call him when they need him. The process of migrating, and the time in the transit space in particular, involves constant learning,

similar in fact to an apprenticeship.[17] I use the term apprenticeship for situations where migrants have adapted to the structural and relational system in the new locality for them to avoid exploitative situations. Turkish language skills, and the knowledge of how to get along with co-migrants, natives and other foreigners, how and where to access needed resources, as well as how to handle the police, employers, real estate agents and the neighbours, is all part of that. It is the craft of being in transit, and the adaptation of a lifestyle of disposition and non-belonging. "Istanbul is OK," Peter, by now a graduate of his craft, repeats, "but you only notice this after you have been here a while."

Epilogue

Out of the seven men who shared a room in December 2007—Peter, Victor, the Catman, the Prince-of-Belarus, the Guy-with-the-gloves, the Albino, and Pastor Isaiah—three are in Greece, two in Norway and one in Belgium. Peter is the only one of them that has not (yet) travelled from Istanbul. Since autumn 2009 he has been impossible to reach. Common acquaintances report that he is missing. Nobody knows his whereabouts.

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[17] The journey as an apprenticeship has also been observed and discussed by Alioua (2003).

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MARABOUTS AND MIGRATIONS:
SENEGALESE BETWEEN DAKAR AND DIASPORA

Amber Gemmeke

INTRODUCTION

Within the fast growing body of literature on migration from West Africa to Europe, considerable attention is given to the importance of religious networks, particularly to Pentecostal (a.o. Van Dijk 2002, Westerlund 2009) and Sufi brotherhood networks (a.o. Salzbrunn 2002, Riccio 2004). West African marabouts (Sufi experts) are indeed prominent in a globalizing field of religious services (cf. Dilley 2004, Graw 2005, 2006, and Sanneh 1989, 1997). Their esoteric services, among them the preparation of amulets and potions, are much demanded by would-be migrants, expatriates, and the families left behind by migrants. Marabouts' products such as amulets are, for example, produced in vast amounts in Senegal and exported to Saudi Arabia, where the Senegalese amulets seem to enjoy great popularity among the Muslim masses (Loimeier 2003: 245). Marabouts themselves migrate back and forth to these areas, catering to West African expatriates, their families left in the country of origin, and increasingly to a non-Muslim and non-African clientele in the diaspora as well. Migrating Senegalese marabouts, as other religious actors, are thus as much creating migratory movements as they are influenced by them, re-configuring religious ideas, symbolisms, and practices in the settings of transcontinental relations and their local embeddedness (cf. Hüwelmeier & Krause 2009).

This chapter focuses on imaginary belonging as emphasized and acted out in marabouts' transnational religious activities. Examples from Senegal and the Netherlands will illustrate these multifaceted dimensions of transnational religious services. After an overview of migratory patterns within Senegal and between Senegal and Europe (which are often circular), I will focus on the influence of migration—from, to, and within Senegal—on the interplay between marabouts and their clients, especially in how migration shapes their notions of locality, authenticity, and "home."[1]

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[1] This chapter is based on thirteen months of fieldwork in the region of Tambacounda and in Dakar, Senegal, as well as on media-research and conversations with two Senegalese residing in the Netherlands.

MARABOUTS AND MIGRATION

In West Africa marabout and its equivalents—such as *serigne* (Wolof),
thierno (Fulfulde) or *mooroo* (Mandinka)—are mainly used as an hon-
orific title, for both men and women, and in a bewildering variety of
situations. The term marabout derives from the Arabic *al-murâbit*, pl.
al-murâbitûn, the monk-soldiers who Islamized Berbers in the Western
Sahara in the eleventh and twelfth century (Mommersteeg 1996: 26). It is
a deformation of the Portuguese pronunciation (*marbuto*) of the Arabic
word (Dilley 2005: 222 fn10). The term, often used by francophone West
Africans and by western scholars, can equally refer to imams or prayer
leaders, teachers, scholars, preachers, saints, religious ceremony leaders
and leaders of Muslim brotherhoods, as well as to any type of specialist
in esoteric knowledge such as confectionists of amulets and diviners (see
also Graw 2005: 28–29). In fact, several scholars believe that the magic of
writing and manipulating Qur'anic verses is the main reason that Islam
was easily accepted by many people in Africa (Abdalla 1997: 144; Sanneh
1997: 26; Trimingham 1962: 44). To this day, for many people in Senegal,
the act of writing Qur'anic verses is in itself magical. The letters in which
God wrote the Holy Qur'an are "vessels of revelation" (Schimmel 1975: 411).
Marabouts manipulate the holy Arabic letters of the Qur'an, which can be
dissected, divided, re-arranged, written forwards, backwards, straight or
upside down, and mixed with other signs and symbols.[2]

As one of the marabouts I met in Senegal put it, marabouts travel "to
spread Islam but it is a trade as well." Their trade, in fact, consists of the
use of Qur'anic verses and *turabu* or *khatim* [magical quadrants] in amu-
lets and in *eaux bénites* [potions], Arabic geomancy (*ramalu*), astrology,
and numerology, *khatt ar-raml* divination sessions, dream interpretation
(*istikhira*), and prayer sessions (*khalwah*). Following Soares (2005) and
Brenner (2000), I use the encompassing term esoteric knowledge to cover
all these Islamic practices of divination, prayer, dream interpretation,
instructions on alms-giving, healing, protecting and the casting of spells—
whatever technique is used to offer them.

Marabouts' esoteric activities are, obviously, intertwined with migrants'
needs. Marabouts provide services for aspirant migrants, helping them to
magically manipulate officials, protecting them against danger on the

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[2] For a recent study on the importance of writing in African Christianity, see Kirsch
2008.

journey, and protecting them from jealous or greedy family members at home. It is common for aspirant migrants, who often enough risk their lives to reach Europe or the United States (as outlined here in other contributions), to follow extensive treatments with several marabouts in preparation of their depart. Usually, marabouts give them several potions and amulets in a series of consults before departure. For the family left behind by migrants, marabouts' services are equally of great importance. They solicit marabouts to help their migrant relative, to join him abroad, to make him send money, or to get him back in Senegal for holidays. Wives of emigrants are drawn to marabouts because of the specific problems they face. Whatever the nature of her problems with her husband—such as him marrying other wives, not sending money, or not returning so she cannot be pregnant—a woman married to a migrant has a weaker position than a woman living with her husband. She has less access to information about her husband, social pressure on her husband from her relatives is less effective, and she cannot use her sexuality as a weapon in negotiations. Obligations towards her in-laws often keep her from joining her husband abroad. For a woman married to a "ghost," marabouts' services remain one of the few options to influence her husband.

Migrants who succeed in settling in Europe or the United States commonly continue to consult their marabouts in Senegal by phone, mail, or in person during holidays. Often, they ask family members to perform the requested rituals and to bring offers in Senegal. Furthermore, marabouts traveling to Europe and the United States are invited by clients emigrated abroad or traveling on their own initiative, setting up new clienteles upon arrival, some touring in Europe like "saintly superstars" as Soares (2004) called them. Their clients, who also pay their tickets and transport, typically accommodate them. Some marabouts visiting the diaspora amass hundreds of followers to preach, others focus solely on offering esoteric services. In both cases, however, a main reason for followers of marabouts to visit them is one of the key notions of marabout leadership and esoteric knowledge: baraka, divine grace and/or blessing. It encompasses, for example, the capacity to give blessings that protect against a wide variety of misfortunes (Bop 2005: 1113). Baraka is obtained trough kinship, teachers, and exemplary behaviour. It is associated with wealth, power, knowledge, and a strong personality (cf. Cruise O'Brien 1988 and Soares 2005).

At the end of the 19th century, Senegal became a "paradise of brotherhoods," led by marabout families (Cruise O'Brien 1988: 30). An Islamic brotherhood, also called Sufi order or *tariqah* (Arabic: path), is an organization of mystical and spiritual Islam. The four main brotherhoods in

Senegal are Qadiriyya, Tijaniyya, Muridiyya, and Layenne. Initially the leaders of the brotherhoods were opponents of the violence, indoctrination, and humiliation perpetrated by French colonials, but soon the relationship between the leaders of the brotherhoods and the French government came to be characterized by pragmatism and cooperation. The Murid brotherhood in particular controlled—and still controls—many political and economic domains. Marabouts controlled the French-introduced groundnut production, still Senegal's most important export product. After independence in 1960, Senegalese politicians have continued to seek public support from marabouts, both to legitimate their positions and to reach the rural voting population. In return, marabouts are given land, technical equipment, bank loans, and other favors.

Senegal's brotherhood structure comprises some 90 percent of the population. It is built on the organization of disciples (*talibé*) into associations tied to religious centers such as Touba, Kaolack, and Tivaouane, led by family dynasties that developed after the deaths of a generation of founding fathers. The associations (*daaira*) are reinforced and celebrated in numerous ceremonies and pilgrimages (Villalón 2004: 63).

Transnational migration patterns of, notably, the Senegalese Murid brotherhood have received considerable scholarly attention (Cruise O'Brien & Coulon 1988, Diouf 2000, Copans 2000, Ross 2002, Bava 2003, Marfaing 2003, Riccio 2003). Indeed their highly structured networks were prominent abroad in the 1980s and 1990s. Other groups in Senegal were, however, much earlier in their international orientation and nowadays, Senegalese of all backgrounds migrate (cf. Riccio 2005). Already in the 1930s, Senegalese from the Casamance and from the Fouta Toro, especially Manjak, Serakhole, and Soninké, were meeting labor-shortages in France and in African countries such as Ivory Coast and Gabon (cf. Manchuelle 2004, Soares 2004). From the 1970s onwards continuing droughts, the economic crises of the 1980s, and the 50% devaluation of the FCFA in 1994 devastated household economies and caused massive migration to urban areas and diasporas. This unprecedented economic crisis was exacerbated by the vicious effects of structural adjustment programs: high unemployment among people with skills and education, and increasing poverty in the cities as well as in the countryside fuelled social discontent and Casamance separatist movements (Hesseling 2002: 1425).

In 1981, under President Abdou Diouf, an aggressive structural adjustment program pushed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund resulted in "disastrous" impoverishment and the loss of social services (Diouf 1992: 49, Rabine 2002: 33). The government removed

subsidies on food, gas, utilities and transport, eliminated 20,000 public sector jobs, sold public enterprises, cut per capita spending on health by 20%, installed user fees on services that had previously been free, reduced teaching staff and spending on education, and raised matriculation fees (Augis 2002: 80). The purchasing power of the average Senegalese diminished by a third in the 1990s. Prices for agricultural products dropped dramatically. As a result, people left their villages and flocked to the urban centers, especially Dakar, and the diaspora in search of work to help their families back in the villages to survive. While economic crises left rural areas deserted, Dakar became an overcrowded cosmopolitan city. With the instauration of a visa for the entry into France in 1985, emigration to the diaspora diversified. Not only did other groups than the Soninké and Hal Pulaar now start to emigrate, they also went to countries that had no historical ties with Senegal. After 1985, 79% of the Senegalese emigrants moved to the USA and to southern Europe, creating new, circulatory movements (Riccio 2001, Stoller 2002). The international emigration has deeply affected social and economic processes in Senegal. As a result, the activities of marabouts cater now to a new migrating clientèle—migrating to Dakar and to the diaspora.

According to marabouts and clients I spoke to in Dakar, the need for marabouts is increasing since the 1980s due to the growing number of people migrating abroad. "Before, people were at ease in Dakar," a thirty-five year old Dakarois said. "And if they migrated, it was to Gabon or Ivory Coast, for which they did not need a visa. Now people are queuing up in marabouts' houses to try to go to Europe or the United States." The Dakarois spoke out of experience: he had left for Morocco to study economics: "When I was younger, none of my friends consulted marabouts. But today, everyone wants to go abroad, so everyone consults a marabout," he added. The example of another Senegalese man, Modou, a middle-aged former resident of the rural region of Tambacounda, might serve as an illustration for the relation between marabouts and migration of Senegalese to the diaspora, a relationship that is often continuing after emigration has taken place.[3] I had known Modou already for years, as I was working on several research projects in Senegal, when I saw him change from an equable man to a nervous shadow of himself.

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[3] A pseudonym.

Rendering Invisible

The weeks preceding his emigration to the Netherlands, Modou suffered from extremely frightening nightmares and sleepless nights. His Dutch girlfriend, whom he had met in Senegal, invited him to come to Europe. The application procedure of a passport and visa took, however, a long time. During this time he felt wretched, his head exploding with head-ache, his mind dizzy, his nights tormented. He visited several marabouts in order to ease his discomfort, mixing the potions he got from them "to make them stronger," as he said. The nightmares continued, however. Although Modou had not told his family about his upcoming travel for fear of them being jealous, he suspected that they had gotten word of it. He blamed them to have caused his bad state of mind out of jealousy for his good fortune. He stopped eating at his family house for fear of his food being poisoned. His tortures continuing, he finally went away to stay in Maka Kolibantan, a large village in eastern Senegal, with its famous marabout family, the Diaby. Here, as the guest of one of the Diaby marabouts, his nightmares disappeared and his agitated mind settled down.[4]

When I traveled to this village, for one and a half hour in the back of a pick-up truck, together with about twenty other travelers on a wooden bench, I arrived in what felt as the end of the world. The road leading to Maka Kolibantan is not asphalted, and the pick-up truck travels there only once a week. Covered in red sand I stepped out of the car. To my surprise I saw a village and a family wealthier than many others for miles around. In this far away corner of Senegal, the Diaby family had built a big, beauti-ful mosque and arranged electricity and street lighting long before other

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[4] The Diaby are of Jakhanke origin, coming from Guinea Conakry. The Jakhanke rose into prominence from the missionary activities of El Hadj Salim Suware sometime around the year 1200. This marabout led the Jakhanke to Diakha-Bambukhu. From this time on they spread widely in Senegambia and beyond, where they gained a distinct identity as religious specialists involved in Qur'anic education as well as in prayer sessions, healing, dream interpretation, and amulet making (Van Hoven 2003; Sanneh 1989). An important branch under the leadership of El Hadj Salim Gassama settled in northern Guinea, where Gassama founded the religious community of Touba somewhere around 1815. Under Touré's leadership, Guinea became the only colony to vote against the constitution of the French Community proposed by Charles de Gaulle in 1958 and to opt for complete inde-pendence, which was achieved on October 2, 1958. France retaliated by severing relations and withdrawing all financial and technical aid. The hostile attitude towards the Jakhanke religious establishment of Sékou Touré's militant Parti Démocratique de Guinée, fighting French colonisation, caused many Jakhanke families to move to the Senegambia region in the late 1950s and the 1960s.

villages in the region had such facilities. The Diaby family hosted me as well. They possessed at the time several televisions, refrigerators, and two Mercedes. One of the sons of the house told me that already that year, he had been in Spain, Germany, and France. Expatriate clients had invited him. He worked there for his clients and friends of his clients.

For one month Modou stayed there, and left from this marabout families' home directly for Europe. After he reached the Netherlands he sent money to pay for his services as soon as he had raised money there. Modou now lives for eight years in the Netherlands and continues to consult his marabout. He has not been back in Senegal since, because, as he says, he would like to save first to give money to his family. On two occasions he paid his marabouts' travel expenses to visit him in the Netherlands, accommodating him for a few weeks. Also, he telephones his marabout sometimes to ask him for potion-material. When his marabout visits him, he brings a jar filled with coal-powder (scraped from a cooking pot) with which the marabout writes Qur'anic verses. The material for potions he sends by mail consist of pieces of cotton, soaked in water, mixed with texts of the Qur'an and then dried. Once he receives the cotton, Modou puts the pieces of cotton in water and drinks the potion.

The story of Modou, leaving without telling his family and consulting marabouts to escape their alleged jealousy, is by no means unique. Islamic esoteric practices are by default surrounded by mystery. Marabouts work to render their clients invisible, and work in invisible ways. People visit marabouts with delicate problems: to divorce, to have a co-wife removed from the house, to prepare for a journey that is kept secret. Usually, the marabout retreats with his or her client to a separate room, closed behind a door or a curtain. Even the family members of the marabout often do not know which clients get which treatments, let alone their issues.

Privacy is an important aspect of faith in the relationship between marabout and client; marabouts told me often at our first meeting that they would not tell me anything about their clients to protect their clients' privacy, and their own reliability. One middle-aged, university-educated Dakaroise told me: "Here in Senegal, we live with masks on our faces. We are so used to pretending for the outside world that our family is perfect while we live with our biggest rivals. We live with our co-wives, with our half-brothers. Even of our husbands, who sleep in our beds, we know nothing. We do not know what they earn, and they do not know how much we earn. That's why marabouts are indispensable for us. They comfort us. They take away our fears so that we can become our normal, calm selves again." Another middle-aged woman in Dakar, discussing two co-wives

secretly visiting marabouts to make their co-wife leave the house, used the term "invisible war."

Marabouts, therefore, work in invisible ways to manipulate their clients' adversaries: charms are hidden in food, in washing water, or in the house. The clients, on their part, also go to great lengths to conceal their visits to marabouts by hiding amulets in their clothing or hair, and by using non-smelling potions to wash themselves with. Furthermore, marabouts emphasize their ability to send insects, winds and spirits (or *jinne*, from the Arabic jinn) everywhere immediately to bring fortune or misfortune to the intended recipient—unseen and unnoticed.

Marabouts not only offer services that are invisible, but also services that rend their clients invisible—not only in war-torn Casamance, but also to hide would-be migrants from the attention of police, army, and other government employees. They also provide a number of services to protect their clients from jealous or greedy family members left in the country of origin. Indeed it was one of the most offered services for expatriates in Europe that I encountered while visiting marabouts in Dakar: to solve problems caused to the migrant by stay-at-home family members.

Remittances are a cornerstone of the national Senegalese economy and a base of subsistence for thousands of families (Tall 2002). They are also a fundamental symbol of migrant's loyalty towards their non-migrant family and their country beyond their immediate economic significance (Riccio 2004). Requests for money and goods can therefore be perceived as choking on the part of emigrants, as well as clashing with their own aspirations to marry, start a family, and acquire material wealth. Geschiere described witchcraft in Cameroon as the dark side of kinship, the "frightening realization that there is jealousy and aggression within the intimate circle of the family where only solidarity and trust should reign" (1998: 5). In Senegal, marabouts are consulted by family members who suspect their migrant is disobliging, but also to protect him or her from other, aggressively jealous family members who are suspected to cause the migrant harm through their marabout consulting. Clients living in Europe also call marabouts in Senegal if misfortune befalls them, often blaming some of their family members.

Transnational Religious Practices

The esoteric work of marabouts thus thrives on invisibility and secrecy. Regarding it as peripheral, unimportant or even non-Islamic, however,

would be underestimating its centrality in the every day life of Muslims in West Africa, as well as its importance in (international) politics and economics. Esoteric Islam, also called the mystical or Sufi aspect of Islam, is all the more important since it is certainly not a purely local form of Islam, confined to West Africa, but documented in virtually every region of Africa (and Europe and the Arabian Peninsula) that Muslims have penetrated. Its invisibility and its participants' reluctance to discuss its intimacies contribute to its obscurity. Coulon made, already in 1988, an observation on the participation of Senegalese women in Islam: "They are active Muslims, even if their practices are informal, hidden, parallel or heterodox; hence it is wrong to relegate the female Muslim universe to this twilight zone where it only appears to belong because of our inability to study it" (1988: 115). Arguably, this observation equally applies to marabouts and their esoteric practices. Part of their unpopularity as a research topic seems to stem from the difficulty to study them and their seemingly being informal, hidden, parallel, or heterodox. I would furthermore argue that these practices are not by definition parallel or heterodox but only considered so by specific groups in specific circumstances. The fact that skepticism towards this topic is not only part of Islamist and academic groups, but also of marabouts' and clients' discourses, makes this phenomenon all the more interesting.

In Senegal, discourses on "good" and "bad" marabouts (both morally and in terms of abilities) are not confined to the private domain, but play a significant role in the public arena of media, politics, and policy. In contrast to the highly invisible workings of marabouts, public culture in Senegal abounds with references to their practices. As such, Dakar is a "boldly visual city" (Roberts & Nooter Roberts 2003: 21). Marabouts are virtually everywhere. The (alleged) use of the services of marabouts by government officials is widely covered in the media—in newspapers, on the radio, and on the internet. Journalists both entertain and warn their readers by filling state-owned and other newspapers with stories of charlatans posing as marabouts. The national government supports theater and television productions in which marabouts are regularly unmasked as frauds. Furthermore, the Ministry of Health is trying to regulate the informal health care sector—including marabouts—in order to "differentiate the real marabout from the charlatan," as a representative of the Ministry of Health told me.

In Senegal, as elsewhere in Africa and beyond, people fear malicious experts in the supernatural who live off the misery of others. In Senegal, however, one of the most frightening aspects of these experts is that they

pose as honorable marabouts. As noted, marabout is an honorific title, associated with piety, wisdom and modesty. The image of the greedy and malicious charlatan, profiting from other peoples' misery in order to gain money is the exact opposite of the image of the pious, humble marabout, thus exemplifying a current global concern with the hunger for fast money that prevails over every moral value (Comaroff & Comaroff 2001).

Global Islam

A considerable number of studies of religion in relation to migration and globalization focuses on the phenomenon of fundamentalism. Fundamentalism has been depicted as the response of discontented groups to the processes of secularization, urbanization and de-traditionalization that are grouped under the broad umbrella of "modernization" (Bauman 1997, Turner 1994). Islam is often cited as the example par excellence of such religious fundamentalism: in terms of its conservative or reactionary interpretation of the Islamic religious message, or, in extreme cases, for its sectarian usage and recourse to violence. One of the problems with this preoccupation with fundamentalist Islam is that it tends to overlook other important aspects of Islam, such as esoteric knowledge and practices. The influence of Islamic-oriented interest groups, significantly, contributes to this neglect. In Africa as elsewhere these groups define themselves not only against European and secular influences but also against Sufism, which they often castigate as a deviation from true Islam (Brenner 2000: 10). In Senegal, Islamic reform movements are not a new phenomenon but have been active in waves of intensity. In 1957, Cheikh Touré, founder of the Ittihad ath-Thaqafi al-Islami (ITI), raised considerable unrest and protest among marabouts by severely attacking a number of practices supported by marabouts, especially the production of and the belief in the power of amulets (Loimeier 2000: 175). As of the 1980s, the Jamâ'atu 'Ibâdu Rahmân (JIR) continued the reformist discourse of the ITI with respect to the so-called "un-Islamic" practices, among them the wearing of amulets. In the late 1980s, however, the JIR realized that the struggle against marabouts was counter-productive on account of their ongoing popularity (Loimeier 2003: 245).

In fact, Islamic esoteric practices and knowledge, also called *falakiyyat*, were an accepted discipline well into the 19th century and still are in some parts of the Islamic world, at least among Sufi scholars (Brenner 2001, Hamès 2001, Tamari 1996, Loimeier 2009, Makdisi 1981). In (West)

Africa, despite ongoing debates of Muslim scholars and reformists, both practitioners and consultants of esoteric services such as Arabic divination, astrology, and numerology, identify these services as being Muslim activities (cf. Brenner 2000: 155). Phenomena such as the globalization of mysticism and Islam's hybridization with various cultures point to alternative forms, other than fundamentalism, of encounter with modernity. Rather than considering the various forms of contemporary Islam as a mere reaction to globalization, then, these forms should be treated as an integral part of cultural globalization itself, including such forms in their reactionary or fundamentalist manifestations (Cesari 2008: 153–154, see also Roy 1999: 2002). Both the proliferation of Islamic esoteric services and fundamentalist reactions to it are part of the same processes. Considering the journalistic attention these activities receive in Europe, and considering the interest of Europeans in esoteric healing services (Vellenga 2008), including those of West African marabouts, this neglect is remarkable (cf. Schulz 2005: 50).

Providing a Sense of Home

The increased activities of marabouts in European countries other than France follow the general pattern of Senegalese emigration: since the economic crises of the 1980s, Senegalese increasingly focus on Europe (and the United States) for their livelihood. Whereas in the past the labor force and resources of marabout families' students provided for their income, today resources mostly come from overseas family members and clients (cf. Van Hoven 2003: 301). These Senegalese marabouts have highly fluid itineraries and certainly do not confine themselves to one European market. Due to illegality, competition among marabouts, and frequent travels back and forth to Senegal, many marabouts temporarily rent accommodation or are lodged by family members in various European cities and countries. While some more or less settle permanently in one area, many others stay for only a few months. Due to historical and colonial ties, France has already been a target country for centuries. Other countries, like The Netherlands, Spain, and Italy, only since the end of the 1980s have been discovered as a new market by West African marabouts. Typically, marabout families send their younger male family members from their rural villages to Dakar, from where some try to reach Europe to sustain their own and their families' livelihoods. Marabouts often operate in a network of uncles, brothers, and cousins who pass each other clients,

organize travel abroad, provide accommodation, information, and share advertising costs. Surplus income is typically first back to the family members in the village and subsequently invested in real estate in the outskirts of Dakar, a highly profitable market that attracts especially the wealthier Senegalese expatriates (Tall 2002: 566; 2004).

Traveling as such, however, is not new to West African marabouts. From the "grand marabouts," the politically and religiously influential leaders of Senegalese brotherhoods at the French colonial era, to the "*petits marabouts besogneux*" (Triaud 1997: 11), all marabouts consider traveling an absolute necessity. The Prophet Mohamed himself, of course, is frequently quoted as an example. To this day, Mourides tell legends of Amadou Bamba's exile with great excitement and firm belief. Similarly, the journeys of all other grand marabouts emerging in French colonial time, such as al-Hajj Malick Sy, Seydou Nourou Tall, and Sidiya Baba, are emphasized by their disciples. On the other hand, a "shrine" or home base is equally important for a marabout. Amadou Bamba had a vision in the wilderness, inspiring him to found Touba in this place, the capital of the Mouride brotherhood. For the Tijianiyya brotherhood, Malick Sy and Ibrahima Niass founded religious centers in respectively Tivaouane and Kaolack. Every year, these places attract thousands of disciples, especially during religious festivities. Despite their highly international orientation, Touba, Tivaoune, Kaolack and other religious sites are viewed by both marabouts and disciples as an anchor, a homeland, and a source of personal identity (cf. Gueye, 2003: 614). As I described elsewhere, marabouts of lower prestige and income than the elite of the Sufi brotherhoods equally emphasize an international outlook as well as a strong relationship with a rural "home." The Jakhanke Diaby family in Maka Kolibantan is an example of such an international marabout family with a remote, rural basis.

In the highly precarious circumstances (illegal) Senegalese migrants in Europe live, not only concerning income, accommodation, and health, but also due to the hostile environment to migrants in general and to Muslims in particular, rural areas represent a home away from home (cf. Soares 2004). It is important to note, however, that this "home" is not necessarily the actual natal village of the migrated marabouts and/or their clients. Modou pointed out that in his village in eastern Senegal, he does not consult any marabout at all. As he pointed out: "The marabouts here [in the Netherlands] are just here for the money and want to enter Europe. They are all here illegally and can't treat people. Real healers don't have to go to Europe to stay. Their patients will pay their ticket for them. They then stay a while (say a few months) and go back. They wouldn't even want to stay

in Europe. In Africa there are thousands of people who need them. They can't just leave them" (Kusch 2008: 85). In his village, the relationship between his family members and the local marabouts obstruct the guarantee of his privacy and Modou does not consult a marabout in Europe either. Instead, he calls and invites a marabout from his region. In this way, Modou turns to his homeland, but not his home village, for his peace of mind. Modou stayed for a few months in Dakar prior to his departure for the Netherlands. Many other rural migrants stay longer in Dakar, trying first to make a living there before embarking on a trip to Europe.

The contrast between rural villages and Dakar is dramatic. My neighbours in Dakar often nostalgically recalled the joys of the countryside when discussing life in Dakar, where life is peaceful, spacious, and cheap. In Dakar, the noise, traffic, and the enormous number of people and buildings bewilder the recently arrived migrant. In the overcrowded outskirts of Dakar people compete for houses, jobs, spouses, and even airspace. At night, great numbers of people gather in religious ceremonies, dance parties, weddings and baptisms to pray, preach, sing, and dance, often competing each other with the use of microphones and speakers. Fights in the overcrowded apartment complexes disrupt nights as well. The smell of the sea along with a pervasive abundance of other smells accompanies the residents of the outskirts: burning trash, goats, laundry, roasted peanuts and corn, concrete mixers. Most outskirts resemble a gigantic excavation site. People are surrounded by mushrooming entrepreneurial activities—from the retail of vegetables to hairdressers and car repair shops, with their colorful signs—and half-built apartment complexes with iron poles sticking out of their ceilings. Several immigrants from the rural areas told me they felt anxious in Dakar because of the noise, the urban Wolof language that they only partly understood, and the traffic.

One afternoon at sunset, when I had just arrived from Paris where I was living at the time, I was sitting in front of a house in a popular outskirt of Dakar when I met Modou, who also lived in Europe. As I watched goats searching for food and boys playing football in the sand, I told him how different the place looked compared to hectic Paris. He replied: "When I first came here from my village I was overwhelmed by all the noise and traffic and people. I was tired the whole day. All those taxis and *cars rapides* [buses]! But now that I have been in Paris, this neighborhood is like a hamlet."

A third of Dakar's residents—and much more in the sprawling and overcrowded outskirts—are first generation rural migrants. They are typified in various comic characters, including T.T. Fons immensely popular

comic and televised character of Goorgoorlou (meaning *débrouillard*).
Most new migrants from the countryside have to get by in the informal
"*système D*"—D for *débrouillard* "savvy" or "a savvy person"—which
requires a different pace, language, attitude and dress from those of the
countryside.[5] Language, both in the literal sense (urban Wolof) as in the
metaphoric sense (language as a means of pretence or of false impressions),
is an important feature for successful integration into urban life, dressing
well being another important characteristic. Both men and women take
the art of dressing well, called *sañse* in Wolof, extremely seriously, even
(or perhaps especially) by those not having any means of buying fashion.[6]
Thus the new rural immigrant in Dakar tries to blend in Dakarois life by
adapting to language and dress as fast as possible.

   All the more remarkable are therefore marabout migrants, who do just
the opposite. Even marabouts who are born in Dakar or live there for
decennia, present themselves as having recently arrived from the country-
side. They employ artifacts such as calabashes, kauri shells, alcohol, as well
as dress and behavior, which are strongly associated with the countryside.
They underline the intensive contacts they maintain, by phone and by
frequent travels, with the countryside. They speak Wolof, Dakar's lingua
franca, poorly or not at all, and they wear *grand boubous* mostly in cotton-
based fabrics, so emphasizing their disinterest for Dakar's fast changing
fashion rules. Where other Dakarois would be, in this case, demeaningly
called *kaw kaw*, such behavior is, in fact, expected of marabouts. The
decorations in the offices of marabouts, their dress and behavior, serve
to bring clients back (if only mentally) to the countryside. Not all behav-
ior of marabouts in Dakar, however, emphasises their connection with
rural areas. Marabouts skillfully mix elements associated with both urban
and rural contexts. Some operate in "modern," "western-style" offices with
opening hours, waiting rooms, secretaries, and an appointment system.
All use an urban terminology that appeals to both Muslims and Catholics
of different backgrounds, a striking example being that of "jinnification":
the use of the term *jinn* not only for ailments elsewhere attributed to, for
example witchcraft, but also for a wide range of spiritual beings of which
the Arabic *jinn* is not necessarily the equivalent. Jinnification is not that
remarkable as such. In fact, the incorporation of traditional elements into

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   [5] See also McLauhlin 2001. *Système D* is a French slang, widely used in France, and, to
a lesser extent, in the Senegalese media.
   [6] The word *sañse* may be used either as a noun, "finery" or "the act of dressing up," or
as a verb, "to dress up" (Heath 1992: 19).

an Islamic idiom is quite common in West Africa (Bravmann 1974: 32). It is, however, exemplary of the adaptation of marabouts to their diverse Dakarois clientèle. Marabouts thus create a rural urban space (or an urban rural space): they urbanize the rural and ruralize the urban. What is more, they connect the rural sites of the Senegambia region not only with Dakar, but also with the rest of the world through telephone, Western Union, their own travels, as well as through the travels of their *jinne*, insects, and winds traveling without boundaries anywhere immediately (cf. Gemmeke 2008).

For marabouts in Dakar, the rural areas form a point of reference in a foreign environment, which unites them with their clients. Marabouts refer to the knowledgeability of their older relatives in the countryside and on their *jinne* residing in the rural areas. Marabouts use parts of plants and trees to solve their clients' problems, plants and trees they believe are more powerful in the countryside than in Dakar. In the example I related to earlier, the marabout visiting Modou brought a jar with coal from Senegal, instead of using ink bought in Europe. The cotton he sent was not only a convenient medium for dried Qur'anic verses, but also significant because of it being locally produced on the fields of the marabout. Equally meaningful is the fact that the Diaby marabout family live in a village that even by Senegalese standards is extremely remote, barely connected by road to the rest of the country. Magical powers, is the general consensus in Dakar, are most needed in urban environments, but are to be found in rural areas. In Dakar, I was frequently told that Dakar is the worst place to do research among marabouts: real, powerful marabouts are to be found in the remote countryside. Obviously, when I did visit these rural areas, people told me real, powerful marabouts live further away in Mali, Guinea Conakry, or Guinea Bissau.

BETWEEN DAKAR AND DIASPORA

Research of journalistic articles on marabouts in the Netherlands indicates that, in a European context, marabouts use the same strategies to approach and interact with their non-Muslim, non-African clientèle. Senegalese offer a link to a powerful Africa, presenting themselves in Dutch as "real African mediums." They stress the value of their work by referring to the advice they receive from their elder families and marabouts who stayed behind in West Africa. For example, journalist Sander Donkers writes:

Mr. Mazo comes from Senegal and refers to himself on his card as 'clair-voyant, medium, astrologist'. [...] His grandfather was a famous saint, he said. [...] As proof he gives me an old page from a French magazine with an unclear picture. The article is about Cheikh Amadou Bamba, 'marabout' and founder of the Murid brotherhood. [...] But if I really am interested, Mr. Mazo says, I will have to come to Africa. He himself goes regularly, to consult his father." (Vrij Nederland, 31 July 2004: 58 translation AG)

The legitimization of a real and authentically African power is elaborated in treatments and consults, as research of journalistic articles points out. Marabouts in The Netherlands use, for example, amply lit rooms, African clothing, and objects they deem Dutch clients will associate with Africa, such as (alleged) crocodile blood. That these objects are not, in fact, typical for West Africa, shows how much marabouts try to adapt to their receivers countries' clientèle.

Senegalese marabouts' activities in Europe could be seen as exemplary of globalization processes interplaying with a growing market of "religious commodities." Marabouts offer their services in a commercial setting, as many other new "religious commodities," offered on the market of world-views, broadcast by growing international mobility and by the influence of the media (Wohlrab-Sahr, 2006: 71). American sociologists, especially, advocate since the end of the 1980s theories of a religious market in which a pluralistic supply of religious commodities guarantees robust demand (Stark & Iannaccone 1994, Stark & Finke 2000, Stark & Bainbridge 1987). While sensitive to the commercial aspects of marabouts' services, I, as many others, feel uncomfortable with the rational-choice-approach of the religious market theories and propose a focus on concepts of trust, faith, and skepticism as essential in marabouts' activities (cf. Gemmeke 2009). As said above, faith as well as skepticism plays a central role in the relationship between marabout and client—as expressed both privately and publicly. Just as religious and secular are interrelated in concepts and practices, trust and skepticism cannot be separated (Asad 2003, Taussig 2003: 272, Kirsch 2004).

Senegalese marabouts' activities, in relation to West-African expatriates, and especially in relation to their non-African, non-Muslim clientèle, are not solely fee-for-service interactions, but also invert thought patterns. European thought was exported to West Africa (Ellis & Ter Haar 2004), but the reverse is equally true. Marabouts bring development aid, as several proudly told me, from "rural" Africa to "urbanized" Europe. If in the capital of Senegal the need for their services is high, in urbanized Europe it would be enormous, they say, thus providing a market for rural

marabouts from West Africa. In this way globalization and urbanization appear to stimulate religious needs and initiatives, instead of eroding them, not only among Africans, but also among Europeans.

The activities of migrating Islamic esoteric experts targeting a non-Muslim population are all the more interesting since in political rhetoric and policy making in the Netherlands categories of "immigrant" and "Muslim" overlap and are increasingly associated with terrorism (Cesari 2009: 5). The changing political stance toward terrorism is far-reaching in the whole of Europe, but perhaps the most dramatic change has been in the political culture of the Netherlands, where violence and death threats have become increasingly common in an acrimonious debate. Ideas surfacing in the public debate now have called for the deportation of second generation Moroccans, a ban on gender-segregated mosques and even the prohibition of Islam itself.

Unlike the much-studied African Pentecostal and other charismatic Christian movements in Europe, inversion of thought patterns by Islamic esoteric experts in Europe is not (primarily) proselytizing. Rather than focusing on mass-conversion, as some Christian movements do, Islamic esoteric experts concentrate, both in Africa and in Europe, specifically on an individual approach. Although treatments might at times include family members of the client, one of the key aspects of treatments is private, secluded attention of the marabout for his or her client. In this respect, Islamic esoteric influence in Western Europe seems to relate to the local individualistic, non-institutionalized stance towards "esoterism" in this region.[7]

Conclusion

Religious rejection of esoteric services by Islamist (and, for that matter, charismatic and Pentecostal Christian) groups might have increased since the 1980s. As well as a crusade against their work, however, experts in esoteric services also seem to experience an expanding market of migrants

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[7] It is important to note, however, that the term esoteric has different connotations in European contexts. Both in (West African) Islam and in Western European settings the esoteric is associated with a hidden, secret knowledge. However, in the Anglo-Saxon tradition, to which the Netherlands—to a certain extent—can be included, the term also refers to an anti-dogmatic, eclectic and individualistic pursue of the spiritual (Hanegraaff, Faivre, Van den Broek & Brach 2006). The terms esoterism or esotericism are now increasingly replaced with the term spirituality in European contexts.

and locals in the diaspora since the 1980s. Instead of declining and/
or becoming a private matter of individuals, then, marabouts' religious
practices thrive precisely because globalization provides useful tools for
these religious actors, namely, fluid transnational networks, helping them
project their messages from a local to a global audience. As such, pro-
cesses of modernization create and sustain Senegalese marabouts' eso-
teric knowledge.

Even though marabouts, especially the lower-income-class ones, can
be aggressive entrepreneurs, feverishly looking for publicity (cf. Geschiere
2003: 167), their trade remains more complex than a fee-for-service
market.[8] Clients are well aware of the fact that the marabout they visit,
just as they themselves, came to Dakar or joined the diaspora in search of
a livelihood. As the expatriate Senegalese quoted in this article expressed,
they know that marabouts have to gain money for themselves and their
extended family left behind in the villages. They therefore ask at times
outrageous sums of money, promise fortune they cannot realize, resort
to manipulation or even use outright abuse. Suspicion, however, is not
only based upon the fear of being ripped of, but also upon the fear of
encountering an actually powerful marabout, who may use his power to
the detriment of his client. Scepticism, moreover, is certainly not the pre-
rogative of the client. Marabouts sometimes fear their clients could be
liars, defaulters, or even malicious spirits or witches. Connecting them-
selves with rural Senegambian areas by consulting with family members,
using rural plants, or performing ceremonies for spirits living there, not
only increases his or her reliability, but also throws new trust in his or her
own abilities.

Rural areas form a point of reference in a foreign environment, which
unites marabouts with their clients (cf. Gemmeke 2007). Whether mak-
ing money in Dakar's système D, or living in challenging circumstances
abroad, most migrants (both marabouts and clients) have families for
whom they must support. In the urban contexts most migrants live in,
with its high expectancies, fierce competition, and relentless commercial-
ism, rural areas are regarded as being associated with spiritual power as
well as with purity. Modou, for example, preferred the service of a Diaby
marabout from a rural Senegelase area to the service of a marabout based

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[8] Urban marabouts are increasingly paid in cash (rather than in services or goods),
esoteric services being more often than not their main sources of income. They approach
their profession as a business and not as a side activity, as is more frequently the case in
the rural areas.

in the Netherlands, associating Diaby's activities with honest support not motivated by materialism.

Marabouts provide expatriate fellow countrymen a connection to a homeland, however broad its location is defined, with its associated *baraka* and powerful bush spirits. They offer Senegalese who do not (yet) migrate a connection with the diaspora, with its associated wealth and prestige. And interestingly, some marabouts also cater to non-African, non-Muslim clients in the diaspora, with its associated Sufi mysticism and African authenticity. Migrating marabouts are thus crossing political, economic, and religious boundaries, offering and adapting discourses, practices, knowledge and performances to their clientèle, translating worldviews from one setting to another in the process.

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"TODAY, I WOULD NEVER GO TO EUROPE": MOBILITY FOR RESOURCES AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT IN WEST AFRICA

Laurence Marfaing

As everyone else, I came here about fifteen years ago,
thinking I could go to Europe.
Today I would not go to Europe
for anything in the world.
Interview no. 9, 22.4.2008, Nouakchott

Mobility with the aim of creating new economic opportunities and resources is a central aspect of survival strategies of families and larger social groups in Sahara-Sahel.[1] Circular migration is a crucial component of the behavioural and socio-economic habits and is deeply rooted in the historical-cultural practices of various peoples in the region. The term "resources" is used here to broadly include financial, economic and/ or technical matters, as well as social relations and specific know-how of certain social groups.

In West Africa, where borders are porous and circular migration is a fundamental survival strategy, some seven and a half million people— almost 3% of mobile people in the world[2]—are "on the move" and live outside their countries of origin.[3] For this reason mobility has been declared an objective of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in 2007, a regional agreement concerning common migration policies among the West African states. Also the free movement of people in the region is considered a precondition for development and as such, potentially able to reduce the intercontinental flow of migration (ECOWAS 2007: 4). Yet despite its size and importance on both the micro and macro level, West African migration represents a salient lacuna within the corpus of literature on African migration. Based on long-term research

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[1] I am grateful to Henning Goranson Sandberg and Anna Leidreiter for their help in preparing the English version of this text.

[2] See Withol de Wenden 2010: 50.

[3] ECOWAS Population is estimated at 260.6 millions, UNO 2005 in Atlas Régional de la CEDEAO, 7 (http://www.mistowa.org/files/cropoutlook2/Atlas_regional_CEDEAO_transport_ et_telecom_fr_part1.pdf). See also Van Dijk, Foeken and Van Til in De Bruijn and Van Dijk, 2001: 10–26.

in Mauritania and Mali between 2006 and 2010, this paper seeks to redress this lacuna by exploring the economic survival strategies of migrants "in transit" within West Africa.

During fieldwork in Mauritania between 2007 and 2009, I found that most "migrants" had stayed at their new locations for long periods of time, often between two and five years. A 2007 survey carried out in Mauritania among foreign workers confirmed that so-called economic migrants are in fact less mobile than expected, as 60% of the respondents had been there since 2000. Thus the question arises whether it is still possible to talk about migrants being "in transit" or "on the move." Consequently, during the course of the research, I redefined the conceptual framework and accompanying questions to look more closely at the individual decisions of the migrants. In doing so, I became increasingly preoccupied with the same problems facing the migrants, namely what kinds of work is available? Where can such work be found? And how does one go about finding it? In asking these questions I discovered that migrants were considering not only economic survival strategies (the original focus of my research), but were equally concerned about the living conditions in the place where they reside as foreigners. Stated differently, migrants were concerned about many issues, including their money generating activities, their family life, their relations with the local population—both professional and private—and meeting their short-term objectives. In this regard, in the field interviews, we discussed what was the impact of their journeying on local development, as well as in the place of their origin.

Fifty-nine semi-structured interviews were conducted with sub-regional migrants in Mauritania[4] (Nouakchott, Rosso and Nouadhibou) and thirty-nine in Bamako and Gao.[5] Thus, in total ninety-eight interviews constitute the findings for this paper. Taking these qualitative interviews as the starting point, the findings indicate a complex interplay between sub-regional mobilization strategies, local development, and increasingly restrictive migration policies of the European Union. The latter point fundamentally influences West African governments and their policies regarding regional migration as well as influences and shapes the behavior of migrants

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[4] I integrated 7 interviews from a study among fishermen in Mauritania in 2004 (Marfaing 2005).

[5] The interviews in Gao were made in 2006. When I wanted to verify the hypotheses that were derived from these interviews and wanted to return in 2010, the foreign Embassies did no longer allow travel there on the North of Niger River. Additional 26 interviews were conducted in Mauritania and 28 in Mali with administration members, ministers, NGOs and association of migrants; the result of these however is not included here.

themselves. Taking the example of circular migration between Senegal, Mauritania and Mali, I will highlight the connection between mobility and the utilization of resources. I will show how the migrants develop their circular migration strategies based on the availability and compatibility of resources, such as agriculture and fisheries, and the exchange of goods and services. These strategies are integrated into flexible and interconnected networks through which new areas and modes of mobility emerge. These are assimilated by the migrants, who utilize these networks to develop new economic survival strategies as well as aiding the economic developments of migrants in their societies of origin as well as in their current location.

Lastly, I attempt to show that the migration policies of the ECOWAS-countries, aiming to hinder the so called "irregular" migration to Europe, is indeed linked to the principle that the free movement of people is aiding regional development in West Africa. The focus here is how the immigration policy of the European Union influences the precarious equilibrium between mobility, uncertain resources, and migrant investments in the countries of circular migration, thus favoring the common interests of the West African States that are affected by migration.

CIRCULAR MIGRATION IN WEST AFRICA

Mauritania is not officially a member of ECOWAS, but in practice the country is closely connected with the community through bilateral agreements, signed with neighboring countries Mali and Senegal. For example Mauritania is present at the inter-ministerial meetings concerning free movement of workers in the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) region, along with Guinea-Bissau, neither country a member of the CFA.[6] The sub-Saharan migrants of this region do not seem to be hindered by Mauritania's independence from ECOWAS. In fact migrants incorporate Mauritania in their mobile strategies to maximize access to resources. Contrary to refugees, people migrate primarily to the economic hubs of the region, where they expect to find better paid or more secure work than in their places of origin. If they assess an opportunity as worthwhile, they take the route.

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[6] Conférence des Ministres en charge de l'Emploi et de la Formation professionnelle de l'UEMO Bamako 26–28th of April 2010.

ECOWAS promotes a common migration policy among West African states that suits the circular migration habits of migrant populations. The policy facilitates sub-regional migration as well as the free movement of people as one of the stated precondition for regional development. At the same time, it aims to mitigate human exploitation, clandestine exchange networks, and the so-called "illegal" or "irregular" migration, in line with the migration policies of the European Union.

The link between migration and development has produced a considerable amount of research focusing on the transfer of money towards home-countries exclusively from the North. Thus, it often neglects South-South transfers which have not been quantified or explored in terms of their socio-economic impact. In this essay I wish to address this academic shortcoming by analyzing migration at local level and discuss its potential for development.

The agreements that are concluded in the framework of ECOWAS and the Community of Sahel-States (COMESSA), coupled with those connecting Mauritania with its neighbors to the North and South,[7] facilitate the free movement of people and goods. Furthermore, there exists an implicit reciprocal agreement between the states of the sub-region, e.g., each country receives labor from the sub-region by participating in the common migration circulation.

Numbers

World Bank estimates of migrants staying in the ECOWAS and Mauritania regions give some indication of the number of migrants in the area. Around 70% of migrants that originate from Senegal, Mauritania and Mali seem to circulate in Africa whereas barely 28% go to Europe and only 2% go to the US.[8] The majority of those who stay in Africa seem to circulate within neighboring countries. This means that they can either be seasonal migrants, commuter migrants, or workers who decide to stay in their host country.

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[7] Such as the agreements with the Union of Arabic Maghreb (UMA) and the Organisation pour la Mise en Valeur du Fleuve Senegal (OMVS).

[8] World Bank 2006. These numbers give only information about recorded numbers. Therefore illegal migration is not incorporated. Concerning the numbers, we all know about the gap of knowledge and the following discussion that arises. However, these data do not account for all migrants. They only constitute the necessary parameter for this proposal and allow us to draw inferences.

In Mauritania, there are reportedly 105,000 foreigners and migrants and 65% of them—totaling around 68,000—originate from sub-Saharan Africa, representing 2.5% of the total Mauritanian population of 2.7 Million habitants.[9] The majority lives in the major Mauritanian cities of Nouakchott, Nouadhibou or Rosso. Leaving the Senegalese migrants for later, 15,500 are estimated to originate from Nigeria, almost 7,000 from the Gambia and 2,500 from the RDC. People from Guinea Bissau, Central Africa and Sierra Leone only amount to a couple of hundred migrants respectively.

It is estimated that about 66,000 Mauritanians live outside their own borders. About 50,000 of them or 76.5% circulate in sub-Saharan Africa; however, barely 2,500 or about 5% are in the Maghreb countries. Seventy-two percent of these migrants are in Senegal and 15% in Mali.

In colonial times, traders settled mainly in the areas stretching from Bagadaji to the centre of Bamako, owning about 500 to 600 small boutiques.[10] Since the 1970s, about 30,000 nomadic people and farmers who are either more or less sedentary, businesspeople, or big conveyors are permanently on a "seesaw" between their two countries (Interview no. 19, 22.4.2010, Bamako). Today the migrant community in Mali is quite substantial, which is why the Mauritanian state opened a Mauritanian school in the most populated areas in 2006, where 13 Mauritanian teachers and other staff members work.

In Mauritania the number of Senegalese in Nouakchott and Nouadhibou has not changed significantly since colonial times when the first colonial administration officials arrived (Marfaing 2009). Later decisions to migrate has coincided with the independence and the urbanization of Mauritania (Bonte 2001; Choplin 2008; Marfaing 2005 and 2008).

In Mali there is no official study on the number of foreigners residing within its borders. Studies by the Federation of African Communities (FECAM) and by embassies estimate the number of foreigners to about 2 million. These figures, presented in a paper by Kassibo et al. (2010), indicate that Guineans and Nigerians make up the largest numbers with more than one million. The number of Nigerian and Senegalese citizens is estimated at 60,000 people, with people from Ivory Coast and Benin total about 5,000, followed by about 2,200 Togolese and 1,000 Congolese citizens.

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[9] World Bank 2006.
[10] The competition with Malian traders is rather difficult in Mali as there are no larger or semi-large boutiques like in Abidjan or in Senegal for example.

The number of Malians in foreign countries is estimated at about 250,000 people, where 150,000, representing about 60% of them, circulate in Africa, mainly in the neighboring countries such as the Ivory Coast and to a smaller extent in Nigeria. In Mauritania, the Malian embassy estimates the number of citizens in the country to be 30,000.

Of the Senegalese migrants it is estimated that around 300,000 of the total 500,000 live in Africa, the majority in neighboring countries. In the Gambia it is estimated that about 122,000 people or around 41%; in Mauritania there are about 43,000, around 14%; and 60,000 people are registered at the Senegalese embassy in Mali.

Our target group confirms that regional migrants voluntarily choose to travel to their neighboring countries. The major communities are the Guineans, the Malians and the Senegalese.[11] Sixty of the ninety-eight respondents are younger than 40 years and therefore in their most active working years. The significant number of young people in Mauritania is due to the many seasonal migrants in the transformation process of fisheries during the dry season from November to June. Thus, they can be at home working in agriculture, where one of the most intensive periods is during May-June when the rainy season begins in Senegal and Mali. The comparably large number of women, in the 30–40 age group, can be explained by the fact that they follow their husbands. In our target group of 23 females, 15, thus more than half, declared that they migrated to join their husbands. It is important to recognize that in the Muslim communities in the societies of Senegal, Mauritania and Mali, women are in general only allowed to migrate after being married and having children. This may exclude the young women from migration.

Mobility for Resources

Akin to nomadic pastorals and agro-pastorals, who travel the Sahara-Sahel zone extensively search for and use pastoral resources (such as grazing-land and fresh water), economic migrants benefit from the complementarities of economic activities and opportunities for seasonal migration in the whole area. Over time they accumulate and combine pastoral activities, agriculture, urban professions, trade and services. In studies about

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[11] The low number of Mauritanian citizens in the sample can be explained by the fact that there are many nomadic Mauritanian people in the North of the Niger River where I was not able to go to.

migration this fact is usually neglected. Probably this is linked to colonial policies concealing the difference between settlers and nomads, aiming instead to fix social groups and ethnicities in specific territories for political-administrative reasons in order to control them. Studies focusing on the movement of peoples at the end of the 19th century show that these people were very mobile and that the complementarities of different activities enabled some to develop economic survival strategies, such as pastoral, agricultural and commercial activities, but also searching for employment in the colonial towns.[12] These early activities created family and commercial networks to facilitate bridge-heads. The role of women in these movements and the socio-economic possibilities they created was badly neglected in two ways. Firstly because it turned out that they were in fact active participants and secondly because the access of women to resources allowed for the consolidation of family networks (Rodet 2009).

Even today, marital strategies play an important role in the decision-making process for migration. It is not uncommon for Malian men who are sub-regional migrants to take a wife in the country where they do their businesses. During the course of research I encountered several cases of women going to Mali as their husbands decided to go back home. In many cases they had problems integrating into the large Malian families, where polygamy is common. In the case of divorce or being widowed, these women are often rejected from the extended family, regardless of whether they are with or without their children. Since they often do not speak the language and will be stigmatized if they return home they are left without any alternatives. Foreigners who are successful entrepreneurs are generally considered to be "a good catch" for local women, but the migrants that we met in Mali and Mauritania often warn about marrying women from their new country of residence: "You have to marry someone from your own place, if not, coming home will be complicated. A foreign woman is too expensive: the airplane ticket for the parents […]" (Interview nr. 47, 4.11.08, Nouakchott). Another research participant stated: "Often a foreigner, who is rich, is just married because of his money. If the woman leaves him there will be problems, he will lose everything" (Interview nr. 17, 20.4.2010, Bamako).[13]

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[12] Mainly Manchuelle, Cordell (1996) for the migration of agricultural work, Marfaing (2003) for commercial activities or Kane (1996) for pilgrimage or finally Rodet (2009) for the mobility of females.

[13] This question is rather complex and would go beyond the scope of this article.

Decidedly, the circulation is in most cases the product of family and ethnic strategies creating spatial translocal, transregional and transnational units that are facilitated by religious and commercial networks. The ecologic turnover with less rainfall and more droughts since the 1970s and the increasing influence of globalization have forced mobility on many households in order to improve their socio-economic conditions. Overlapping with old forms of migration, the so-called "irregular" migration to Europe evolved. Furthermore, the number of migrants on illegal tracks increased, indicating that the behavior, the aims, and the migrants' routes have changed considerably (de Haas 2008: 15). Several studies have focused on illegal migration to Europe: as was shown earlier, probably not more than around 15% of migrants from the Sahara-Sahel area aim to migrate to Europe and the rate of success is even less.[14] Migrants are apparently aware of the difficulties of the so-called "illegal" migration. As one migrant stated: "Out of hundred people who leave Cameroon and say that they will go to Europe, there are only four or five who really go." (Interview nr. 33, Bamako, 1.5.2010). In Nouadhibou, in the heyday of migration to Europe in 2006, it was pointed out that there were "about 30% foreigners in the region out of a total population of about 160,000 people: 66% work and are probably there with their families, and the last third is waiting to migrate illegally.[15] However, it is not possible to verify this as long as they are employed in the informal sector." However, it was during that time that the town started to appear in the media (Choplin and Lombard 2007, Willems 2008). Since then the situation has calmed down, partly due to increased police efforts to control illegal migration.

It must be noted that departures for Europe from this town always took place "but it was never to that extent" (Interview with the regional governor, 24.10.2008, Nouadhibou). The direct departures from Nouadhibou to Europe were rather rare, one interviewee said that "during the 8 years that I have been here, I can't recall more than 20 people who actually left among all the thousands who kept saying that they would" (Interview no. 4, 4.8.2004, Nouadhibou). Another one however disputed that the

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[14] The International Organization of Migration (IOM) in Geneva estimates the number of illegal migrants towards Europe, meaning those who aim to enter Europe starting from Sub-Saharan Africa and going through North Africa, at about 35,000 per year. Similarly Lahlou (2007) assesses that only 5% of the illegal migrants in Europe came through illegal tracks.

[15] That represents about 5,000 suitable people.

number was that low by saying: "Every month we hear that some have left" (Interview no. 43, 4.8.2004, Nouadhibou). Many migrants went over Nouadhibou in order to continue the journey along the coast, aiming to go all the way to Morocco, but this access route has been blocked since by the European Union migration policy (Barros, Lahlou et al. 2002).

A large number of those who fail to get to Europe join the regional migration network. However it is always difficult to determine if a migrant has decided to stay in this regional network or still aims for Europe. The migrants are generally not waiting for a definite solution but adapt according to the situation and decide to wait or continue their journey in order to find opportunities. They often describe themselves therefore as being "in migration" or "on transit" because this is objectively the case and also because it is not impossible that they are skilled in the language of migration politics. Some studies presume that they hope for support from NGOs that help "illegal" migrants or "displaced persons," who are barred from going to a country (Bensaâd 2008: 2).

In our target group, 28 migrants admitted that they had the wish to go to Europe; among these people one tenth stated that they would migrate at the first opportunity. For example, one 25-years-old Ghanaian man already made two unsuccessful attempts at migrating to Europe, but was caught and fended off both times. Currently in Nouadhibou, he makes a living by driving a taxi that belongs to a Mauritanian: "Here, I have nothing behind me, nothing in front of me, [...]. I am all alone in this life. Yes, I want to hit the road again" (Interview no. 41, 28.10.2008, Nouadhibou).

In some cases, the migrants keep the rhetoric of Europe as the main objective because of pressure from the family. One interviewee told us that "It is the success of others that provoke the desire to leave. Overall the families put the pressure up. The families with polygamy are the worst; if the son of one wife has succeeded, the other women put an immense pressure on their children. They have to succeed in order to keep the pride of their mother when facing the other wives" (Interview no. 9, 28.7.2006, Bamako).

Furthermore, it is considered more valuable to have a family member who migrated in the Western world than in the region: "In Cameroon, if I stay in Mali, I am considered as if I failed in life" [...] In Africa, only maybe South Africa has a good reputation as a migration objective" (Interview no. 21, 22.04.2010, Bamako). Staying in Mali since 1998 after 10 years on "adventure" one interviewee explained that "if I don't go to Europe, people will say that I am incapable" (Interview no. 33, 01.5.2010, Bamako).

However, as the signs of successful migration become evident even in the region, the perceptions of people change: "The people in Louga[16] see what I have, they do not judge anymore" (Interview no. 15, 26.4.2008, Nouakchott). The studies on the consequences of migration to Western countries show the damage done to families living in towns where migrants either live too far away to be able to return regularly, do not have the means to do so, or have rebuilt their lives elsewhere: women alone, with or without children, after being abandoned by the families of the migrant, children without a father, etc. The sub-regional migrants state that they can return regularly as an advantage for keeping the family together: "Those who are in Europe succeed in their migration objective but fail in their family life. An African in Africa will earn less money but succeed in his life" (Interview no. 11, 15.4.2010, Bamako). The proximity of the country of origin therefore plays a major role in the choice of the destination as well as the transit countries.

Eighteen migrants of our target group, who claimed to be waiting to leave for Europe, stayed in West Africa and rejoined the regional circulation network: "The adventure lets you go turn, the money finishes in between […] you are tired, you stay there, where you are" (Interview no. 33, 1.5.2010, Bamako). Looking back, many migrants believe that they might have failed finding a meaningful work had they gone to Europe, "because [in Mauritania] the one who wants to work, finds work" (Interview no. 9, 6.5.2008, Nouakchott). "In Africa, there are opportunities to get a good market that you do not have in Europe" (Interview no. 33, 1.5.2008, Bamako). "It was not until I left Cameroon that it struck me that there are possibilities elsewhere in Africa" (Interview no. 21, 22.4.2010, Bamako). Some claim that stability offers a chance to succeed: "The longer you stay in one place, the more you are known and the more chances you have to get access to the market or to the good offers" (Interview no. 33, 1.5.2010, Bamako).

The recent economic crisis in Europe indicates that they are right. The regional migrants we interviewed who had contacts in Europe stated that in contrast to their friends and relatives who are in Europe, they have an advantage: "My brothers who are in Spain do not send any more money, my parents do not count on anyone else than me" (Interview no. 82, 8.5.2009). Having been in Mauritania since 1992 one respondent affirms:

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[16] In the North of Senegal, Louga is a one of the towns where the migration to Europe is the strongest.

"I have built a house in Togo. My brother, who has been in France during the same time, does not have the means to construct one" (Interview no. 41, 1.8.2004, Nouakchott). "I believe that I am happier here than in France. On the television, I see the situation: You have to be very desperate to go there" (Interview no. 11, 15.4.2010, Bamako).

Meanwhile, interviews with the migrants show that the majority of them do not aim for Europe: "Going to Europe! Never! Here I am calm. Over there you run after the papers, for work, you work in the black market, you are not paid as much as you should be. If you contest that, you are fired. Here, they pay you what you deserve. Here you earn and eat that" (Interview no. 10, 23.4.2008, Nouakchott). Among the 98 interviewees, 49 aimed to go to the country in which they were currently living; 30 came directly, 5 were recruited because of contacts in their home countries, and 14 among the 19 women in our sample group came because of family consolidation.

PRIORITIES AND STRATEGIES OF MIGRANTS: WHY LEAVE?

Migrants' search for working opportunities outside their own countries are complex and varied, as are the multiple ways of searching for such opportunities. Looking for a job can be temporary, as is the case for seasonal migrants, or it can be considered a phase in life. In some cases decisions to migrate may be dependent on political crises, daily violence, or the lack of liberty or economic opportunities. For example, the citizens of Togo, Cameroun, Ivory Coast, the Central African Republic, Guinea Conakry and the RDC have vivid memories of recent difficult times. In trying to escape violence and insecurity, Mali has been a popular choice because of its reputation for democracy and freedom. One interviewee stated, "Since the end of the 1990s, many people from the Ivory Coast came to Mali because of the conflict and the drop in economic activities [...] Waiting to go back, many awaited the elections. A lot of people are here because of the war" (Interview no. 15, 18.04.2010, Bamako). "I am a painter," the interviewee continued, "but in the Ivory Coast, there is no one who can buy my work. People are starting to come back but do not buy. How can I communicate my creations? There is no more material. I have done everything; I transported palm oil on my head. Here [in Mali] by doing calligraphy, I can survive. Even though it is only a little bit in the beginning, after people know you, it will be more: You have to bring the know-how in order to get paid one day."

In the words of another migrant: "In Cameroon, there are not all these possibilities to work. Here, in Mali, it is easier, […] here it is good to stay, in Cameroon you also find a lot of criminality" (Interview no. 21, 22.4.2010, Bamako). Others claimed that they "are ready to go back if the country changes" but another group stated that "they want to go further [to Europe]." The heterogeneity of ideas and desires among migrants are magnified during heated discussions between those wishing to go to Europe and those wanting to return home.

For example, one migrant stated, "if the situation changes in Guinea, we have to go back and help the country. It will need every possible helping hand" (Interview no. 25, 26.4.2010, Bamako). In contrast to Mali, the foreigners in Mauritania feel less secure: "If there are any problems in Mauritania, it often falls back on the Blacks" (Interview no. 7, 22.4.2008, Nouakchott). An interview with a Togolese man who used to live in Mauritania before coming to Mali highlights this: "There are no problems with the Malians. The only conflicting discussion is about football. In Mauritania, you do not risk any confrontations because the police will never let you go again. You are forced to go into hiding. The life in Mali is free" (Interview no. 2, 10.4.2010, Bamako).

MONEY

In Mauritania, salaries are comparatively higher than in other countries in the sub-region. In Mali, they are lower but they are often more stable, relative to the average salary in more volatile countries such as Togo, Ivory Coast or Cameroun. In Mali, the average monthly salary ranges from 80,000 to 100,000 FCA,[17] whereas in Togo for the same work, the average salary is just 30,000 FCFA [122 to 153 euros against about 50 euros in Togo] (Interview no. 13, 17.4.2010, Bamako). There are also substantial differences in standards of living depending on how much money one earns. The homemakers in Senegal for example, where the salary is comparatively low, often live in the same house with the families they are working for. That is not the case in Mauritania, where the salary is comparatively

[17] The minimum salary in Mali is 24,000 FCA. The unions failed to negotiate it on 70,000 FCA until today. In Senegal, the minimum salary is 36,245 FCFA, at the Ivory about 60,000; In Burkina Faso it is about 30,684 and 28,000 FCFA in Togo. However, taking into account that economies in states like Mali and Mauritania are about 80% informal, these criteria do not actually give orientation.

higher: "A homemaker may earn minimum 20,000 to 25,000 UM but she could get about 60,000 [UM] by climbing the ladder" [from about 55 to 69 euros up to 166 euros against 30 to 50 euros in Senegal] (Interview no. 7, 22.4.2008, Nouakchott). Even though some professions, such as people working as hairdressers[18] or those involved in construction are better paid in Mauritania. In general the Senegalese "are not particularly better paid than in Senegal, but there is more work here [in Mauritania]" (Conversation no. 39, 8.8.2004, Nouakchott).

Working Opportunities

The criteria for the choice where to migrate are often linked to the expected working opportunities, particularly for those who have professional know-how. The situations in Mali and Mauritania are in this respect similar, but for different reasons. One study shows that Mauritanian is attractive to sub-regional[19] migrants. The Mauritanian population urbanized slowly after independence in 1958, and it was not until recently that major cities were formed, primarily Nouakchott and Nouadhibou, where port and railway infrastructure was constructed and linked to the creation of the MIFERMA[20] in 1952. This development attracted the Mauritanian population as well as the workers of the whole sub-region to move to the coast (Bonte 2001; Marfaing 2005, 2008; Choplin 2008). The lack of manpower in Mauritania is evident[21] as the country has a large need for qualified labor in the small urban profession sectors, mechanics or fisheries.

The recognized availability of jobs in Mauritania explains why qualified sub-Saharans risk the seasonal sub-regional migration. "In Senegal there is too much competition. Here, everything is new so there is still a lot to do" (Interview no. 7, 22.4.2008, Nouakchott). In Mali the circumstances

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[18] Here you earn more: 30,000 UM/ month, in Dakar it is about 20,000 FCFA/ month (Interview nr. 10, Nouakchott 23.04.2008) (20,000 Ouguiyas = 81 euros again 20,000 FCFA = 30,50 euros).

[19] Mohamed-Saleh, Sidna Ndah 2009: see also Horizons of 30.04.2009.

[20] Acronym for Société Anonyme des Mines de Fer de Mauritanie, an iron ore mining consortium set up by French, British, Italian and German steel capital, established when Mauritania was being integrated into the world economy. Cf. Bonte 2001.

[21] Since 2002, there are professional schools but there are not much frequented. "It is difficult to understand that we should go to school in order to learn a profession—artisan on top of that—in such an informal society and also with an impregnated mentality as nomads." (conversation no. 31 at the Institut National d'Aptitude Professionnelle in Nouakchott, 10.5.2008).

are different. The authoritarian regime of Modibo Keita repressed the intelligentsia, and the policies of structural adjustments in the beginning of the 1990s were detrimental to the development of the country. According to one interviewee, "in 1991 the state fell into disrepair and education was neglected. People only took care of the professional education when there was an employment crisis. The adjustment politics provoked a deterioration of public functions that was never adjusted" (Interview with the Ministry of Employment 30.04.2010, Bamako). Communist countries, implicated in the financing of professional education, disengaged at the end of the cold war and "the Malian state never took it back" (Interview with labor union, 3.5.2010, Bamako). Even though a national policy for employment was put in place by the Malian government in 2000, labor only increased slowly. The foreigners of the sub-region with a professional education also have the chance to find work. One interviewee stated: "In Mali there is not too much competition. Those who have certain competences can come" (Interview no. 11, 15.4.2010, Bamako). Along these lines, another interviewee said "I would not advise someone to come here without a profession: in Mali there are enough people who do not have a professional education" (Interview no. 16, 19.4.2010, Bamako).

<center>LEVEL AND STYLE OF LIFE</center>

Migrants are often attracted by better ways of life and/or opportunities in new countries which are not available at home. Those who do return home regularly, like homemakers for example, buy staple products with their local salary—purchased at a cheaper price—to bring home either for consumption or resale at a profit (Interviews no. 7, 27.4.2008, and 14, 26.4.2008, Nouakchott). A fisherman claims that "after one year of living here and sending money back to the family, I still have about 400,000 FCFA saved. I therefore am able to buy mobile phones and TVs that I resale in Saint-Louis: One mobile phone that costs me about 25,000 UM, I can sell for about 75 or 80,000 FCFA"[22] (Interview no. 43, 4.3.2004, Nouadhibou).

The stricter and more ascetic life the migrants face in their new countries can actually be seen as an advantage for foreigners in Mali and Mauritania. One interviewee stated that "Here in Nouakchott life is rather

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[22] One mobile costs about 70 euros and can be sold for between 114 and 121 euros. That represents a profit of 100%.

ambitious, you can do business" (Interview no. 10, 23.4.2008, Nouakchott). Another said that "In Mali, there is not a lot of money but there are possibilities to save it. You go out less. In Cameroon, social customs implicate that you spend money. One beer is about 800 FCFA, you drink two, you invite your friends, that quickly adds up to 5000 FCFA per day" (Interview no. 11, 15.4.2010, Bamako).

Finally, migrants are willing to accept work that they cannot or would not do at home. For example, one interviewee stated that "here, we accept work that we would not accept in Senegal, like working in the house of other people, because my society does not accept that" (Interview no. 39, 2.8.2004, Nouakchott). Another migrant stated, "All these little activities, I could never do in Togo" (Interview no. 2, 10.4.2010, Bamako).

Searching for Job Opportunities

The diversity of different circulation strategies in the region is based on the opportunities and the availability of productive resources in agriculture, breeding or fisheries. These are in turn linked to commercial opportunities since many activities are seasonal or complementary. During the period between harvests, or especially favorable seasons for fishing, people are able to be involved in several jobs and can be selective when it comes to migration. Among the 98 interviewed migrants, 44 (of whom 6 were female) declared that they frequently[23] go back and forth between their home and their country of residence. Apart from the traders at the border, whom we did not target, migrants are on permanent seesaw migration during the dry season. The decision to migrate is driven by the desire to find work in an urban area in between two harvest seasons, pastoral or fishery activities. In Mauritania most migrants are involved in fisheries. The fishermen, generally Senegalese, come without a contract during the fishing season, followed by migrants, mainly Malians and Ghanaians,[24] who work in the conservation process of drying and salting fish. Many also get involved in trade activities. Furthermore, Senegalese farmers from Podor in the region of the river Senegal come to buy dry fish in Mauritania during the rainy season. According to one migrant, "the fish is cheaper than in Senegal and better quality because of the climate. However, the

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[23] Once or several times a year.
[24] See Marfaing 2005 and in Boulay (2011) Malians who work in the transformation process.

[climate in] Banc d'Arguin is for drying more favorable. That allows me to accumulate a little bit of money and buy seeds for onions in October for my fields." (Interview no. 48, 6.8.2004, Ten Alloul).

Many migrants are in search of a good job or place where they can develop their economic activities. In our target group, 20 migrants claim that they are ready to continue their journey if the situation worsens in the country where they stay at the moment (7 in Mauritania and 13 in Mali). Because of the risk of violence, lack of work and general insecurity, they believe they have to be free to move and work without border controls and restrictive migration policies. Among those who are on seesaw, there are those who have a business in their country of residence, but their family remains in the country of origin. Many of them, coming from Congo Brazzaville, Cameroon or Ghana, do not hesitate to define themselves on seesaw. Often it is the husband who stays in the foreign country in order to run the business, while the wife manages the supply of containers and the running of boutiques in the place of origin. The wife of one Congolese man told us she settled in Mali to work in the textile sector in order to take the material from Bamako to Congo up to three times per month (Interview no. 38, 5.5.2010, Bamako). A Ghanaian interviewee living in Nouakchott, owning shops in Adema and Banjul, told us that his wife traveled every month to the boutiques to receive the incoming containers (Interview no. 46, 3.11.2008, Nouakchott).

Finally, some trading strategies in the informal sector are well-suited with this mobility. The fact that products are accompanied by the business owner throughout the delivery process does allow not only control over the delivery and negotiation with customs officials or on the road with the police, but also a quicker way of getting the money. One migrant stated, "I prefer to accompany the fish myself. Sometimes my client has money and gives me the cash immediately. Sometimes not, and then I stay in Nouakchott for 3–5 days which is the time he needs for selling and for me to collect my money" (Interview no. 82, 13.5.2009, Nouakchott). Another migrant stated, "If I am not at the same place, I might have to wait four or five month until I get my money!" (Interview no. 38, 5.5.2010, Bamako).

Among the 98 people interviewed, 43 (29 in Mauritania and 14 in Mali) hope that the business activities across the border develop and allow them to invest so that they can manage everything by see-saw activities. Along these lines, one migrant stated "I save my cash money. Then I have money that I can invest. My aim is to progress. If my business develops, I could trust it somebody here and do everything by see-saw with Cameroon"

(Interview no. 11, 15.4.2010, Bamako). Another person claimed, "I invested in a property to let, and some livestock in the village of my father. I always go to that place to buy livestock. Even though my employee has prepared everything, it is me who buys and decides" (Interview no. 27, 29.4.2010, Bamako). One expected aim is to dominate a whole sector of production and at the same time develop and differentiate it vertically so that, in a world of informality, activities are more predictable. That is mainly the case for the Malian and Ghanaian fishermen, who are active from the transformation process in Mauritania to the transport towards Mali and Ghana and in the retail distribution.[25]

From the point of view of school enrollment of the interviewed migrants, and their economic activities in the countries of residence, it is interesting to note that the number of migrants who had no formal schooling is clearly lower in Mauritania than in Mali. That can be explained by the number of migrants in Mauritania who are active in the fishery profession. The know-how required to perform the activities in this sector can be learnt informally from family members both in Mali and Mauritania. The number of women who attended high school may come as a surprise. Among the target group of foreigners in Mali, 5 women were brought by Malians who married them after they graduated from high school. Approximately half of our target group had a solid education. This can be explained by the fact that the majority of migrants, predominantly in Mali, are involved in the service sector where education, mainly in French, is essential. Increasingly, Mali and Mauritania search for professionals who speak French. Girls are generally more concerned by their deficit of French speaking[26] in Mauritania because of the growing importance of the hassaniya language[27] there; also, in Mali, the education in French is of bad quality. In Mauritania the need for house staff is great, and foreigners, mainly the Senegalese and to a lesser extent the Malians, have a good reputation for being a nanny or homemaker. Otherwise, it is said that on the level of commercial activity all enterprises of a certain importance are in Mali. Therefore the commercial activities are generally equalized in the

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[25] These two groups are not interested in the same fish. Therefore they are not in competition. The Ghanaians are in the transformation process of sharks whereas the Malians are rather involved in the one of catfish.

[26] School enrollment rate of girls: 35% (see Opheim 2000: 153). Only 5 to 10% of the population in Mali knows French even though it is declared as the official language. That may explain the 4 foreigners who are excellent francophone and employed as secretaries in Mali.

[27] National language beside French in Mauritania. Hassaniya is an Arabic dialect.

two countries. Most migrants in Mauritania and Mali apparently have a professional know-how and a solid education.

Development and Migration

Migration is a coping strategy and a unique possibility, if successful, to help one's family who remain in the migrant's country of origin. The decision to migrate can possibly break a cycle of poverty in which the migrant was put in by circumstances beyond his/her control; by migrating the person has the potential of ensuring that his/her children will have a better station in life (Tarrius 1996: 110).

This highlights the link between migration and local development, showing that it is in fact the migrant who is the local actor. This link becomes evident when one considers the investments and money transfers, the diversifications in the regional economies, and finally the improvement of quality of life in the place of origin.

"Successful Migration"

Migrants regularly send money to their families. Among the migrants in our sample, 31 send money every month or every second month, and 15 "when they can," which means at least once every 3 months. While it is difficult to estimate the exact amount of the remittances because many migrants are reluctant to reveal numbers but express what they send back in percentage of their monthly wages, some migrants declared that they send between 20,000 and 30,000 FCFA, which is comparable to one month salary in their home countries (see also Fall & Bekkar-Lacoste 2007: 22). The sums that are sent generally correspond from 50% up to 80% of the earnings. According to one interviewee, "I provide regularly for about ten people. If I earn 100, 80 is for the family [...]" (Interview no. 82, 8.5.2009). Another migrant stated that "I give 50% of what I earn to the family and 30% is for my own expenses. The rest I either save or invest" (Interview no. 27, 29.4.2010, Bamako). Along these lines, another migrant reported that "Every month, I send about 200,000 FCFA, that is about 50% of my earnings" (Interview no. 38, 5.5.2010, Bamako).

Additionally, most migrants bring or send goods that are sold or consumed in their countries of origin. This results in the improvement of everyday life, especially in bringing employment and increased entrepreneurial and dynamic initiatives to the home community. Since 1990 the

behavior of migrants has changed. Studies have shown that they invest about 25% of their earnings in productive units (IFAD 2009). Some invest in collective goods in their villages, which was previously only done by migrants staying in Europe or US. However, such investments are not a priority for most sub-regional migrants. Apart from the construction of a mosque, only 8 interviewees from our target group stated that they contribute to public goods in their home community. Yet, twenty-two individuals stated to aim for a productive investment or local businesses at their place of origin. As migrants in the sub-region have the possibility to go back, they are able to provide for the needs of their local community, mainly on the occasion of their return. "In the past year when I arrived, there were three problems: the pedal for the pump of the borehole was broken, that cost me [124 euros]. There were no more nurses in the village, therefore I pay the salary of one nurse and helped her set up [248 euros]. The school did not have any benches or windows because someone had broken them. The reconstruction cost [435 euros]. Every year there is something. In the past year I paid taxes for the last three years" (Interview no. 17, 20.4.2010, Bamako).

Finally, circular migrants regularly spend the holidays with their families, going back to their home communities to attend religious ceremonies and to bring presents. Thirty-seven individuals in our target group stated that they had built, or were in the process of building, houses for their families. In sum, migrants are seen as successful when they are able to provide a better life for their kin, for their home communities, and for helping to develop their village.

Transfers and Benefits in the Places of Origin

Many studies focus on the remittances sent home by migrants. The numbers published by the World Bank (2006) concern the official financial transfers, i.e., the formal transfers via banks. There are only a few studies about South-South transfers, but these transfers are becoming quite important as they increase more than North-South transfers (Ratha & Shaw 2007: 11; Newfarmer 2008). However, estimating the size of these transfers in West Africa is no easy task, since the majority of the transfers are simply delivered from hand to hand via the cash that migrants bring home. It is said that these transfers help decrease differences in life standards between the countries of emigration and those of immigration (Tall 2006, Schmitz 2005–2006; Schlemmer-Schulte 2006, Daffé 2008). Many studies however

criticize this point alleging that such transfer of money that is utilized for daily family consumption is detrimental to village life as it tends to disregard local production, as it is often less lucrative. Such studies argue that these transfers make families dependent (Azam and Gubert 2005). Furthermore, they emphasize that the emigration of qualified and productive people, the so-called "brain-drain," throughout Africa, becomes even more severe when it is part of a long-term migration strategy. Such conclusions do not take into account that the countries of origin cannot afford to pay the same salaries that are paid in the North. Furthermore, such studies disregard the value of remittances for the migrants' families, financing the costs for health and education, and for providing a better way of life (UNDP 2009: 59; 117; see also Sawadogo 2007: 15).

Increasingly, local politicians have begun to see such transfers as a resource rather than as a problem (Tall 2008). The correlation between migration and development due to migrants' remittances is now a key issue of economic studies and political interest.[28] Countries experiencing high levels of emigration have begun to enact policies making it easier for migrants to send remittances, as well as facilitating investments made by migrants in their home communities. Studies have shown that such investments cause positive effects on the social and economic development in these countries (Pliez 2002: 16; Baldwin-Edwards 2006: 214, de Haas 2008: 1269; see also Skelton 2002: 76).

Circular migrants consider themselves as important actors in the development of their villages or of their area of origin, something which is rarely taken into account in the international debates about migration (Marfaing 2009, Barro 2008, Daffe 2008, Sawadogo 2007). Investments in education, health care, and infrastructure—including roads, informatics and telephone lines for example—improve the possibilities of interpersonal communication. Such initiatives facilitate the emergence of direct services and are perceived as private investments, rather than development projects (Ambrosius, Fritz & Stiegler 2008; Fall & Bekkar-Lacoste 2007: 25). Moreover, migrants bring back their experiences to those who stayed home. Therefore interpersonal relations, professional qualification and general knowledge may be improved in the places of origin. Thus, the socio-economic impacts of migration go far beyond the quantification of remittances.

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[28] See International Migration and Development, Development Research Group/Weltbank; UN-Instraw 2008, Collett 2007.

Economic Benefits of Employment and Investments

Local and foreign traders and entrepreneurs often provide working opportunities and are keen to employ migrants, reinvesting their profits in the economic cycle of the region. Workers who are professionally educated in their own countries of origin are often the source of education in a company.[29] In the words of one migrant:

> For the young people here, it is like in Senegal: You come in on time and you work as long as there are things to do. If you come at 9am, you can go home straight away…I teach them things like tax receipts as well, I educate them in business management and not only in workshop. Before I hire a young person, I talk to his parents. As for children, I have to check before. I know if I can work with a child or not" (Interview no. 16, 19.4.2010, Bamako).

Migrants often invest in micro-enterprises in which they assign the management to members of their own family or social group. Investments in local communities that cannot be controlled by the migrants because of distance are often a failure. With policies facilitating sub-regional migration this problem disappears. The management of businesses that migrants build up stay in the hands of the investors in the see-saw migration process between the country of origin and the country of residence: Along these lines, one migrant stated, "In general I am three weeks in Bamako and one week in Dakar: that is the advantage of being on sub-regional migration, we can manage the investments locally" (Interview no. 27, 29.4.2010, Bamako).

Being *Local* and *Foreign*

The lifestyle and social behaviour in foreign towns are linked to the origins of the migrants, each group identifying itself in a given situation. Most often the criteria on which belonging is based is the country or region of origin, but it can also be ethnically and religiously linked. In most cases the migrants keep their ties to their home community and very seldom do they integrate into the town of residence, regardless of how long they live there. The heterogeneity and complementarities of population groups from different origins characterize their living together, that is, they live

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[29] An offset printer (Interview no. 5, 21.4.2008, Nouakchott), a fisher man (Interview no. 66, 3.5.2009, a camp in Manghar).

close to each other but do not integrate. The fundamental question is whether the migrants develop their own social dynamic, different from both the country of origin and the country of residence.[30] It is not a question of inclusion or exclusion, but rather how migrants are able to find an equilibrium between their lifestyle and that of communities they live in a sort of "third way," akin to the "new-cosmopolitism" described by Tarrius (2000).

As previously mentioned, the complementarities of seasonal activities in the sub-regional countries allow the migratory groups to live, work, invest and be innovative during the mobility. The strategies they develop to survive facilitate the emergence of "social micro-innovations" (Tarrius 2007: 12) highlighting the ability of migrants to adapt in their search to "find money." The hunt for a "successful" migration means daily pressure to find entrepreneurial opportunities and leave the blind alley: "If you do not find anything where you go, you return to the place you came from."[31]

In places where there is little or no transfer of technologies or any lucrative conditions for socio-economic development, migrants adapt taking up certain component elements that often benefit a true development strategy. Thus migrants mobilize financial resources and utilize their innovative capacities for the development of their places of origin. As actors of development they adapt their ideas and capital to the dynamics of globalization *and* to local conditions. The resulting internal dynamic may therefore be assimilated to a "social movement" (Abdelkhah and Bayard 2007).

Effects of the Externalization of European Migration Politics

The fundamental position on migration of ECOWAS, that the free mobility of people is correlated with regional development in West Africa, is confirmed by several studies. However, the creation of "transit countries" in the region, and the extraterritorial policies of the EU, question these findings.

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[30] Dealing more extensively with the reactions of the migrants among themselves and with the local population would go beyond the scope of this article. For an analysis of everyday life of the migrants see Marfaing, in McDougall (2012).

[31] A wolof proverb: "boo xama tul foo djem nga delu fanga djoge woon" (Interview no. 82, 8.5.2009, Nouadhibou).

Creating a framework for the enforcement of international protection policies, the Euro-African Conference of Migration in Rabat (2006) created "countries of transit" in which cooperation between Europe and these countries would initiate tighter control to detect and hinder migrants to aim at Europe. Since then, Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia, Senegal, Mali, Libya and Algeria—the so-called "countries of transit"—have been actively engaged in guarding their borders and fighting illegal migration. Through the Rabat conference of 2006, these countries have been integrated into the "global approach to migration" which classifies countries into country of origin, of transit, and of destination. However, as this article has shown, this categorization does not correspond to the reality and lives of migrants in the sub-region, which are based on mobility for access to regional resources and opportunities. Further, this categorization underestimates the complex question of circulation migration.

The states in the sub-region, including Mauritania, never had homogenous migration policies. While each government has departments dealing with "migration" or "foreign citizens," there is no direct coordination between the various state authorities. Pressured by Europe, these countries are adopting migration policies designed to combat irregular migration to EU countries. This policy also controls the rights and the responsibilities of foreigners in their territory.

The Mauritanian text is already operative while the one in Mali is being prepared for parliament. These texts regulate and determine the status of "irregular foreigners,"[32] protecting the free circulation of foreign citizens of the UMA and the ECOWAS in several of the West African countries. States see migration as a positive and even necessary social and economic phenomenon, and are therefore keen to protect migrants passing through their territory and their citizens going through other countries in the sub-region. The explicit goal is to allow:

> the "use [of] immigration to its maximum social, cultural and economic advantage; to enrich and reinforce the national social and cultural network in respect to the Islamic, Arabic republican and Mauritanian character; to favor economic development and prosperity of Mauritania and to arrange the settings in a way that wilayas can benefit from the economic advantages that derive from immigration."

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[32] "An irregular person is someone who has a passport but not the necessary stamp to enter the country" (Interview no. 1, 10.11.2006, the Ministry of Interior in Nouakchott).

The Malian text explicitly declares migration a common concern for all countries and point out the necessity for more integration policies in the sub-region. Such guidelines regulating migration are compatible with the praised integration policies of ECOWAS, outlined in the three-year program 2009–2011; to combat irregular supra-regional migration by favoring sub-regional migration for development (ECOWAS 2007: 8–9).

However, the question remains why some countries suddenly adopted legislation regulating the regional migration that so far regulated itself in such a satisfying way. While the official discourse of these countries has always been "We need migrants," these new policies make it harder for migrants to cross borders, to settle and to find work. Most importantly, the new laws give the authorities the right to investigate any migrant, regardless of whether they are aiming to Europe or not. In the words of one interviewee, "the problem of migration became more important since 2005–2006 […] All the foreigners were suspect. No one was safe. The police can find you on the roads, in the town; everywhere along the coasts are the gendarmes" (Interview no. 40, 25.10.2008, Nouadhibou). According to other interviewees, it is in fact such abusive policies "that cause the proliferation of irregular migration in the first place […] and further, the increased controls create diplomatic problems in the sub-region when they are carried out badly" (Interview with Ministry of foreign affairs, 14.4.2010, Bamako). Disputes arise between the countries in the sub-region "that ask us to let their children earn money or work there" (Interview with Ministry of Interior, 16.12.2007, Nouakchott).

Generally in Europe migration is viewed from a narrow perspective, namely that "migration" equals "invasion," hence the fever pitch concern about the control of foreigners and their documents. The European discourse of migration has been imported to West Africa despite the absence of hostile feelings against migrants in the region, and despite the openly-stated ECOWAS integration policy. One interviewee noted, "Concerning the issue of migration, we say that Europe rows against the stream" (Interview no. 6, 12.4.2010, Bamako).

Despite giving in to some EU demands, West African states have resisted many pressures from the European countries. The General Delegation of African Integration, set up on the initiative of Mali in 2000, strongly holds that countries are prepared to give up some sovereignty for the benefit of regional integration and that there is no way to go back to traditional borders. Mali defends the integration policies of ECOWAS, and stands fully behind the idea of regional "border states," integration zones, and circulation leading to development. The sub-regional efforts

go in the same direction, currently concerned with the establishment of an autonomous port of Dakar in Bamako and the establishment of a "corridor Dakar-Bamako" with a railway connecting the two cities, which was recently inaugurated. Further efforts include the passing of legislation allowing for the free circulation of labor in the region of UMOA (Monetary Union of West Africa), including a delegation from the Mauritanian Ministry of employment (26–28th of April 2010 in Bamako). The migrants are able to adapt their migration strategies vis-à-vis state policies, and in some cases are so well organized that they are capable of representing themselves on state level.

Spokespersons at state level deny that the recommended migration policies of the EU are repressive and that the regulation of the migration they proscribe suits the needs of the labor market (Interview no. 42, 26.10.2008, Nouadhibou). European technical aid to Africa exclusively implies Europeans coming to the South to "educate" the population, but does not adequately take into account the travel of Africans to Europe to gain experience and know-how.[33] In the words of a Malian businessman: "When the machines come, a technician comes from Europe to give the instructions. But until today, I have not found a single opportunity to send someone of my staff to go to Europe to learn how to work with the machines" (Interview no. 16, 19.4.2010, Bamako).[34] The discourse accompanying the international pressures regarding "illegal" migration promote xenophobic policies, such as national legislations allowing for the favoring of locals above foreign laborers. These policies also support brutal and corrupt behavior of the police, often badly paid, or the behavior of mafia-like businessmen who take advantage of right-less foreigners. Migrants become stigmatized in their country of residence, and are often the target of scapegoat campaigns. One of the proposed policies that have provoked most apprehension from migrant groups is the requirement of carrying an identity chip card designed to keep track and restrict migrants to professional quotas. This would severely limit migrants' rights to freedom of movement, professional freedom, and freedom of settlement.

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[33] Except the policy named "circular migration." But this is for the interests of the north.

[34] The creation of CIGEM in 2008 in Bamako or the establishment of "circular migration" may be the first steps solve this.

Conclusion

This article has exposed several migration strategies of Mauritanian and Malian migrants, representing a microcosm of various coping strategies and circulation patterns in West Africa. There is much evidence to suggest that there is a correlation between the system of mobility and the different types of resource utilization. Even though the whole system of migration and mobility in West Africa is currently undergoing tremendous change, there is a scarcity of resources and opportunities. The existing economic and social relations between the migrants in the countries of origin and the places of residence, in the North as well as in the South, represent a guaranty against the crisis of subsistence and are a response towards new environmental transformations, including the very multitude of insecurities which made people to migrate in the first place (Tacoli 2009).

Since 1990 the regional integration policies have tended to utilize the potential of development linked to sub-regional mobility by keeping sub-regional integration alive at bottom level. Today these are the policies of development that tend to keep the Manna, representing the transfers of money of the migrants and the innovative behavior that they are introducing in the region (UNDP 2009). Migrants have no interest in having states implicated in their own aims or strategies. These politics are here as elsewhere, creating mistrust of migrants and their informality.

It becomes urgent to "reconsider migration in terms of see-saw circulation, meaning above and beyond 'nation-states'" (Fall & Bekkar-Lacoste 2007: 20) to allow the often-invoked "mobile Africa" of the twenty-first century (de Bruijn et al. 2001). Time will come for recognizing the benefits of regional circular migrations for local development.

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MIGRATION, CLASS AND SYMBOLIC STATUS: NIGERIANS IN THE NETHERLANDS AND GREECE

Apostolos Andrikopoulos

INTRODUCTION

In migration scholarship class has been the focus of analysis mainly for issues of migrants' incorporation into host societies and economies. When migration scholars use class as an analytical concept, this is to explore the inequalities that immigrants experience in the West and the class dimensions of their ethno-racial categorisation and exclusion. The emphasis to social networks, ethnicity and cultural aspects of migration has distracted the attention of scholars away from the importance of class and capital for the migration process and the implementation of migration goals. Today a growing number of scholars (Van Hear, 2004; McGregor, 2008; Colic-Peisker, 2008; Amit, 2007) call for attention to the impact of class and money on international human mobility. Nicholas Van Hear (2004), while recognizing the importance role of social networks in the migration process, suggests that the currently stringent migration policies of western states have increased the cost of migration and thus the significance of money for the realisation of migration projects. By analyzing cases of forced migration, he comes to the conclusion that money is today, more than ever before, important in the migration process, and determines the migration routes used, the means of migration employed and the destinations chosen.

The restrictive policies of European states on low-skilled labour migration from non-western countries, on the one hand, and the promotion of specific types of migration, such as the professional migration, on the other hand, have designated the possession of money and class as determinant factors for the migration process. The first objective of this chapter is to illustrate with ethnographic material the impact of class and money in the migration process and the increasingly closer relation between migrants' legality in Europe with their socio-economic background in their countries of origin. The second aim is to document, by using insights of Nigerian diasporic communities in Greece and Holland, how inequalities that have been generated by the exclusionary policies toward low-skilled labour migration have affected intra-group hierarchies

within migrant communities and intensified the dependency relations between documented and undocumented migrants.

The arguments developed in this chapter are supported with ethnographic material on Nigerian Diaspora that I collected in my fieldwork in Thessaloniki, Greece and Amsterdam. In Thessaloniki, fieldwork was conducted from October 2004 to August 2005, which examined the formation of social relationships among the residents of a neighbourhood in which many Nigerians live and in which several Nigerian owned shops are located (Andrikopoulos, 2005). Additionally, from July to November 2006 I participated in a research project about immigrant entrepreneurship in Thessaloniki (see Labrianidis and Hatziprokopiou, 2010), interviewing almost all the Nigerian shopkeepers of the city, among others. In Amsterdam, fieldwork about Nigerian migrants of the city was conducted from March to August 2008 (Andrikopoulos, 2009).

Nigerian Diaspora and Migration Patterns

In the last few decades Nigerian diasporic networks expanded to almost all countries of the western world in significant numbers. The most popular destinations in the Global North for Nigerian migrants have been English speaking countries such as the USA (160,000 Nigerians in 2004), the UK (88,380 in 2001), Canada (10,425 in 2001) and Ireland (9,225 in 2002) (de Haas 2006: 9). Other western countries that host today a considerable number of Nigerians are Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, Austria, Greece, Australia, Belgium, Spain and France. The patterns of international mobility originating from Nigeria vary, and these may include, among others: professional migration, student migration, low-skilled labour migration, asylum, human trafficking and family migration. All the above migration patterns are, however, simply categories used by bureaucrats and scholars, and can hardly capture the complexities of migrants' trajectories. For many migrants different patterns can be combined at the same time, or precede one another.

In many western states, well-educated and highly-qualified Nigerians have responded to the call for highly-skilled "chosen" migration. In order to further their careers and achieve professional opportunities, many promising young professionals leave Nigeria to work in European or North-American states. Often their academic background is very high and their economic situation better than the average person in Nigeria (Healy and Oikelome 2007; Reynolds 2002; 2009; Komolafe 2008). The main destinations of Nigerian "professional migration" are the US and the UK.

Professional migrants are not undocumented but as successful migrants they often assist family members who migrate through irregular ways. For example, Michael, a Nigerian migrant I interviewed in Amsterdam in 2008, was assisted in his (irregular) migration to Europe by his brother who was a high-rank officer in an international organisation in Geneva. Prior to his trip to Europe Michael studied Biology in Nigeria and worked as an importer of food products from Ghana, Cameroon and Gambia. "*In terms of welfare, I was comfortable*" he said, but his primary motive for migrating to Europe was to study at a European university. In the beginning, his brother accommodated Michael in Switzerland and gave him some money to set up his own informal business that would allow him to generate some income. When I met him in Amsterdam, Michael earned his living from transnational second-hand car trade, and he had accumulated money to apply for a Bachelor programme at a Dutch university. By 2011 Michael had made enough money for his tuition fees (around 10,000 EUR), and managed to be admitted in a university programme in Amsterdam. He returned to Nigeria and re-entered the Netherlands regularly on a student visa.

In the last few decades, a considerable number of Nigerians have moved to the Netherlands to study. The Netherlands is, however, not a very popular study destination for Nigerians, since most of them prefer the UK or USA (Reynolds 2002). Broadly speaking, there are two types of Nigerian student migration: The elite Nigerians who can afford the costs of their studies abroad or whose studies are funded by their wealthy families in Nigeria. This was the case of Nelson, who worked as Quality Manager in one of the largest food companies in Nigeria before coming to the Netherlands for his studies. His high status position and the large salary he earned allowed him first to fund the migration project of his younger brother to the UK and later his own studies in the Netherlands.

> I was the guy…I was the one who supported him (i.e., his brother) in everything…When he was going to the UK…I did everything for him…When I was working in the food company…It is a very big company and it has influence…So, I used my power for him to travel through the company.…

After sending his brother to the UK, he quit his job in Lagos and came to Holland to continue his education. His company offered to increase his salary in order for him to stay:

> Even when I wanted to leave the company…they never wanted that…The managing director said that if I stayed they would increase the salary…So, they increased the salary double…But I really wanted to work in a community of people; that's why I came to study this course (i.e., International Business Management) that will bring me out to the society, not one that will keep me in the laboratory.

Secondly, there are students, like Michael, who support their studies with their own savings from previous migration experiences. Often, those Nigerians are employed as unskilled labour workers in order to gather a sufficient amount of money and pay the tuition fees for a university programme in Europe. This is one of the strategies that migrants with irregular status follow to get residence permit in European countries.

Student and professional migration is encouraged by European states, in contrast to unskilled or low-skilled labour migration which is indeed severely constrained (Peers, 2009). Due to the restrictive measures of many European states for low-skilled labour migration from non-western countries, it is increasingly difficult for most Nigerian citizens to come to Europe "legally" for employment purposes. Some Nigerians, unable to get a visa, travel to Europe using the passport of other Africans (Carling, 2006: 23–24; Okojie et al., 2003). Potential migrants use also the services of migration brokers to travel to Europe. It seems that the restrictive migration policies of the last decades, which intended to decrease the number of migrants, have only resulted in the decrease in the number of documented migrants while forcing untold numbers of aspiring migrants to seek the assistance of intermediaries. Consequently, the role of smugglers has become particularly important in the migration of many migrants today, a fact that affects the destinations and the cost of migration. For instance, Evelyn refused to use the services of an intermediary to go to Italy because she was aware that Italy was at that time the main destination for trafficked sex workers from Nigeria (see Okojie et al., 2003; Prina, 2003). She asked him to assist her to travel to the UK or the US, but together they finally agreed that he would assist her with a Schengen visa for the Netherlands.

> The reason why I came here was because things were very difficult back home. So, I promised myself that, a lot people go to Europe, you know, to look for money, and the currency is very different, Euro is more high than the Nigerian money currency. So, I said to myself 'If I had one hundred euro, in my country is not a hundred euro' You understand. It's a lot of money. Then I can help my mother, because I was really, I want to finish secondary school, and my younger one's still coming. So, I thought that ... Ok, I will go to Europe to see what I can do. And she (*i.e., her mother*) told me 'If you are going to Europe for prostitute, what other girl does, better stay home'. So, there was somebody I was dating whom I explained everything to him. I really want to go to Europe, you know. So, people ... any commercial I see they always say Italy. But you know, in Italy there is a different story. I said no, I don't want to go. I want to go either to America or England. Then I can

> do my education. These things are good. So I got the opportunity. Somebody
> gave me a visa. Because I was just trying to know people, to try to be connec-
> ted to the right people that nobody is going to steal my money or so.

Depending on the amount of money migrants can afford to spend and
their social contacts that lead them to a good broker, Nigerians select the
type of smuggling service and the destination country from a hierarchy
of destinations. At the head of this hierarchy is the assistance with travel
documents for the US, the UK and Canada and it is followed by the same
service for a Schengen visa. The next less costly service of smugglers is
the assistance with travel documents for a country out of the Schengen
area but close to the EU borders. Turkey and East European countries
fall under this category. Nigerians who are assisted with this kind of ser-
vice migrate to these countries and stay there for a short or long time.
In these countries they work informally and once they make the neces-
sary money and find a smuggler, they try to cross the EU borders. Usually,
they pay the services of smugglers with money that relatives send them
as remittances.

John, a Nigerian migrant who entered Greece from Turkey, explained
how he managed to do it: *"I don't have no papers. Coming from Tur-
key to Greece I don't have no paper. My sister* (in the US) *sent me some
money . . . because . . . when I told them that I was having a difficult life in
Turkey . . . so they sent me money from America . . . so you have to pay to
somebody* (i.e., to assist you to cross the Greek-Turkish border)." Those
who cannot afford either of the previously documented strategies must
travel over land in a country of North Africa, try to cross the Mediter-
ranean and enter into the Schengen area. The most common routes are
from Morocco to Spain and from Tunisia and Libya to Italy and Malta
(Carling 2006; De Haas 2008; Kastner 2010). Nigerians with very limited
funds can only migrate for work either internally in large urban centres
(e.g., Lagos, Abuja) or to other visa-free African countries with better
employment opportunities (e.g., Ghana, Botswana, Gabon).

One of the few options for Nigerian and other non-western citizens
to come to Europe regularly is through family re-unification/formation
provisions. Documented migrants, under some conditions, are able to
arrange for the migration of family members through legal and regular
procedures. One of these conditions in the Netherlands is that the appli-
cant who invites his/her marriage partner to the Netherlands must earn
more than the 120% of the minimum salary, which in 2011 was 1,425 euros
per month. In 2003 the migration motives of newly arrived Nigerian migrants

in the Netherlands were: establishing a family (33%), asylum application (25%), labour (17%), family reunion (9%), studies (8%), family member (5%), and other (4%) (van Heelsum and Hessels, 2006: 79). These figures indicate that almost one out of two registered Nigerians came to the Netherlands claiming family purposes.

Last, there are several Nigerian young women who are trafficked into Europe and are forced to work in the sex industry. These young women are recruited by family members, friends or acquaintances who sponsor their trip to Europe. In return, these women agree to work for them in Europe until they pay back the amount, which varies from €30.000 to €60.000.

In this section I presented the different patterns of migration from Nigeria and how they are related to migrants' socio-economic backgrounds and possession of money. In what follows, I focus on two different destinations of Nigerian immigration and explain why the composition of Nigerian populations in Amsterdam and Thessaloniki is different despite the fact that migrants in both locations originate from the same regions of Nigeria.

Nigerians in Thessaloniki and Amsterdam: One People in Two Destinations?

Amsterdam and Thessaloniki are two cities of similar size.[1] In both cities there is a considerable number of Nigerians that has been increasing from the 1990s on. According to official statistics the number of Nigerians is 1136 people in Amsterdam (O+S, 2007) and 224 people in Thessaloniki (census data, 2001). For different reasons in each country[2] the official statistics cannot depict the real demographic characteristics of Nigerians migrants. The composition of the Nigerian population in both cities is quite different in terms of professions, economic and educational backgrounds, and sex.

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[1] Amsterdam has 756.347 residents (O+S, 2007) and Thessaloniki has 800.764 residents (census data, 2001).

[2] In the Netherlands only registered residents are depicted in official statistics and undocumented migrants are thus officially invisible. In Greece the official statistics calculate all those who were at home on the day of the census.

In Thessaloniki, Nigerians and very few other West Africans were, until recently the only black migrants in the city.[3] Many of Thessaloniki's Nigerians came from what western scholars would call lower middle-class families. However, almost all of Nigerian migrants in Thessaloniki, as in the rest Greece, ended up working as street vendors of pirated CDs and DVDs. This kind of economic activity was an "ethnic niche," in which exclusively black migrants were employed. For example, some Nigerians opened their own shops in Thessaloniki, in total 14 shops in 2006, that traded products and services targeting the African migrants of the city. Some of those who opened their own shops in Thessaloniki had initially come to Greece to study. Based on an inter-state agreement, Greece provided scholarships to Nigerian citizens to study in Greek academic institutions in Athens and Thessaloniki. In fact, those who came to Thessaloniki for university studies in the mid 1980s were the first Nigerians in the city and formed the base for the migration flows that followed.

The lack of employment opportunities in xenophobic Greece (especially for non-Greek speaking black migrants) and the "temporary" stay in Thessaloniki limited Nigerian newcomers to the street vending as a working survival strategy. This kind of irregular employment was, in turn, a serious obstacle for their perspective legalisation. Even for those who initially had residence and work permits, it was difficult to get them renewed because the main requirement for renewing has been the stable, of course "legal," employment.

Due to its difficulties and dangers CD street vending was understood by Nigerian migrants as a male profession. Thus, CD street vending was not only practiced exclusively by black migrants but indeed by male black migrants. Since this was almost the only employment opportunity for Nigerians in Thessaloniki, it had a direct impact on their migration flows. Most of Nigerian migrants in Thessaloniki were males, and only very few were women. Those Nigerian women were mainly wives who followed their husbands to Greece.[4] Obviously, this imbalance of sexes created several issues whose analysis goes beyond the scope of this chapter.

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[3] There is a rapid change in the last few years with a growing number of newly arrived Sub-Saharan African migrants mainly from Senegal.

[4] According to the 2001 census data, the proportion of Nigerian female migrants in Thessaloniki was 25%.

The situation in Amsterdam, on the other hand, was quite different. While Nigerian migrants in Amsterdam originated from the same regions in Nigeria as those in Thessaloniki, the population of Nigerians in Amsterdam was more diverse. Amsterdam had also many other black migrants from other African countries as well as from the former Dutch colonies of Suriname and the Dutch Antilles. Nigerians developed social relations with other black migrants that often took the form of cooperation, solidarity and dependency.

The Nigerian population in Amsterdam was very diverse in terms of economic background and patterns of migration. The variety in Amsterdam includes: well paid professional migrants who worked for international companies; students at Dutch universities; documented and undocumented Nigerians who invested all their savings and had support from others to gain entry in the Netherlands; and trafficked women who came from very poor families in Nigeria. Highly skilled migrants enter the Netherlands invited by Dutch international companies. This was the case for many Nigerians who worked at the headquarters of the Royal Dutch Shell Oil Company. Many of them were already working at the local branch of Shell in Nigeria, and they were relocated to the Netherlands. Nigerian Shell employees and other highly skilled migrants were a vivid part of the Nigerian community in the Netherlands, particularly in The Hague.

There were also several Nigerian students at the Dutch universities following their English-speaking programmes. Both highly-skilled professional migrants and students had a privileged status in the Netherlands compared to the other non-western migrants, and they could avoid most of the bureaucratic procedures that were required for entering the country. In addition, their prospective companies and educational institutions supported them in submitting their applications, finding accommodation and in other issues related to their arrival.

Although professional migrants had an important role in the community life of Nigerians in Amsterdam, they were numerically fewer than those Nigerians who worked in lower-skilled or unskilled jobs, either regularly or irregularly. Most of the Nigerians I spoke with came to Amsterdam with a valid visa that they overstayed. Many of them had well paid jobs in Nigeria or came from families with good socio-economic position. Their expectations of better perspectives in the Netherlands did not come true for all of them, and they had to work in the informal sector as manual workers or in the formal sector using papers (work permit, passport, social-fiscal number, etc.) that they rent from other look-alike documented migrants.

In general, the common characteristic of Nigerian migrants in Amsterdam and Thessaloniki was that prior their migration they were not among the poorest in Nigeria.[5] Those who were poor in Nigeria either did not fulfil the criteria to regularly enter Europe or they could not afford the cost of irregular migration. Furthermore, from the perspective of non-migrants in Nigeria and Nigerian migrants in non-western countries, those who managed to enter Europe and end up either in Greece or in the Netherlands were considered successful. Being in Europe was automatically seen as success, no matter the legal status of the migrant, the working conditions or the migration purposes. For those who left Nigeria to search for jobs, Europe was considered as a place where people could achieve their dreams, advance themselves and contribute to the development and prosperity of their people and hometowns.[6]

Between the two destinations, Amsterdam was considered as more "successful" than Thessaloniki. Nevertheless, the Netherlands was not perceived as successful a destination country as the UK, USA or Canada. This hierarchy of "success" is indicated by the life histories of my informants and their migration routes. Nigerians in Thessaloniki I spoke with desired to move to West European countries, such as the Netherlands, and when they had the opportunity they did so. In a couple of cases in the Netherlands, when Nigerian migrants obtained legal documents or Dutch citizenship,[7] they moved to the UK or North America. The perception of success was primarily, but not exclusively, linked to the labour opportunities in each destination and the perspectives of finding a well-paid job

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[5] With the exception of the trafficked women.

[6] The symbolic status of migrants abroad is well depicted in one of the most popular Nigerian movies 'Osuofia in London' (2003), in which the teacher of the school said about Osuofia's daughter: *"As you may have heard one of our big uncles in this village is going to London...to do the community proud. And it is my singular honour and privilege to announce to you that he is the father of one of my students here in this class. Now, can you come out in front of the class for them to see you? She is the daughter of Osuofia Mkirie, the man who is going to London. As you may have known, not many indigents of our community have gone to London. So, it is one of the best things that has happened to this village this year. And I have no doubt in my mind that by the time he will come back he will bring a lot of development to community. Now, class, clap for her!"*

[7] Quite ironically, naturalisation that is considered by the Dutch state as the end stage of migrants' integration into the Dutch life and culture, instead of resulting in binding people to the soil, it enables them with the right of international mobility which Nigerians take advantage of. Characteristically, the process of naturalisation was rarely described to me as a process of obtaining the Dutch citizenship but instead as a process of obtaining a *"Dutch passport."*

that will enable them to support themselves and their families either in Nigeria or elsewhere.

But why were the Nigerian populations in Amsterdam and Thessaloniki so different? While migrants in both cities came from the same regions in Nigeria, why did so many differences in terms of socio-economic background, education and sex exist?

The differences of migration flows to both cities are related to the needs of the local labour markets. The global character of Amsterdam's economy creates a polarised labour demand: on the one hand for high-wage jobs in international companies (such as Shell), finance, corporate management, and the global service sector, and on the other hand for low-wage jobs in services, the catering sector, cleaning, manufacture and the whole informal economy (see Sassen, 2001). Migration flows from Nigeria responded to these needs, and thus Nigerian migrants with different educational and socio-economic backgrounds ended up in Amsterdam working as skilled or unskilled employees, doing either high-wage or low-wage jobs in the formal or informal sector.

The far less global character of Thessaloniki and the lack of labour opportunities for non-Greek speaking migrants attracted only a few highly-skilled Nigerians to work and live there. Prospective migrants were aware through their transnational social networks that the main employment opportunity for black migrants in Thessaloniki was the street vending, which discouraged many of them, especially females, from migrating there. When I asked a Nigerian migrant in Thessaloniki why there were no Nigerian female migrants in CD street vending, he laughed and explained to me that *"women migrate for studies or work in a shop, not in the street."*

However, under these conditions why did Nigerians migrate to Thessaloniki? Why did they not migrate to destinations with better opportunities?

Surely, the demands of local labour markets influenced the destination preferences of perspective migrants. The realisation of migration plans, however, heavily relied on the money they had to fund the migration process, the support of social networks, the smuggling networks and the migration policies. Most of my informants in Thessaloniki and Amsterdam already had a relative or a friend in Thessaloniki or Amsterdam, respectively. This fact, from the viewpoint of the migrant network approach, could be explanatory for the migration flows to these cities. As it appears however in the kinship diagrams and the narratives of my informants all

of them had more than one relative and friend abroad, not exclusively in Greece and the Netherlands. Obi, a Nigerian migrant who lived in Thessaloniki for years and later moved to Amsterdam, had first applied for a visa for Ireland and was rejected. He said that he had 50 euros in his bank account less than the amount that was required by Irish authorities as a proof of sufficient funds to support his stay in Ireland. In fact, he would prefer to migrate to the UK but he did not fulfil the requirements for a British visa, and did not attempt to apply. He decided instead to come to Amsterdam, to where some other Nigerians from Thessaloniki had moved. When I asked him why he would prefer the UK or Ireland and if this was related to the presence of friends there, he responded: "*I know people everywhere!*" For those with limited finances, their destination options were fewer no matter where their relatives and friends stayed. The cost of smuggling from Nigeria to Greece, for instance, was cheaper than to other West European or North American destinations and this made it more easily accessible and available to people with less funds. There was also the alternative of taking a visa for a non-Schengen country and afterwards crossing the EU borders. This was the case for plenty Nigerians in Thessaloniki who initially travelled to Turkey and then crossed the Greek-Turkish border. Thus, the lower cost of migrating to Greece, in comparison to other western destinations, was more important rather than the existence of social networks there. Before many Nigerians migrated to Thessaloniki they already had friends and relatives in a couple of western countries (including Greece), but they ended up in Greece because it was the more easily accessible and affordable destination.

Social Hierarchies among Nigerians in Amsterdam and Thessaloniki

The research findings from Amsterdam and Thessaloniki presented above support the argument of Van Hear (2004) that the possession of money determines for migrants the routes taken, the means of migration and their destinations. I argue here that the legal status of Nigerian migrants in Greece and the Netherlands, which is up to a degree correlated to their socio-economic position in Nigeria and the money they invested in their migration projects, eventually affected their intra-group categorizations and the dependency relations among Nigerian migrants themselves.

Escaping Deportability and Entering Economic Irrationality:
Shopkeepers in Thessaloniki

Street vending, apart from its difficulty in physical terms, was a kind of employment that exposed the undocumented Nigerians who practiced it to the maximum. West African migrants walked around the city trying to sell products (pirated CDs and DVDs) that, due to copyright laws, were not allowed to be sold by them. Sometimes the police arrested some of them, but in many cases they were released afterwards instead of being deported. Even though a few of them were deported, it seemed that the police were somehow "tolerant" of their trade activities. One of my informants explained to me that if a Nigerian in Thessaloniki was involved in any kind of criminal activity he would first be punished by other Nigerians in Thessaloniki, because his actions would harm the reputation of the entire community. For similar reasons, he continued, Nigerians were not in contact with other migrants, because they did not want their name to be associated with other stigmatised migrant communities (e.g., Albanians, ex-USSR migrants). Nevertheless, the fear of deportation was a condition that affected their everyday life (De Genova, 2002). Their type of employment, which demanded many hours of public exposure, and their visibility as the only black migrant community in Thessaloniki affected the way that they used the public space of the city. In August of 2007, one Nigerian street vendor was killed when he jumped from the terrace of a café trying to escape from two people who were following him. His brother explained to the newspapers:

> *My brother was arrested by policemen four days before he was killed. They beat him and they took his bag with all the CDs. It was not the first time he was persecuted. He was earning his living with the fear of being arrested as many other young Africans in Thessaloniki and other Greek cities* (Ta Nea, 21/8/07).

No matter whether Nigerians considered their stay in Thessaloniki as permanent or temporary, they tried to find ways out of street vending and the condition of irregularity. Some of them had started trading non-copyrighted products, such as cosmetics, sun-glasses and watches, in order to attract less attention from the police. Nonetheless, their inability to speak Greek and their limited social networks with non-African migrants remained serious obstacles for finding employment opportunities outside of the "ethnic niche" of street vending.

It was not only the street vending that intensified their fears of deportation. It did, however, reproduced the condition of illegality upon which this fear was based because the legal status of migrants was directly linked

to regular employment. Even for those who held residence and work permits (mainly after the regularization of 2005),[8] it was difficult to get them renewed due to their irregular employment.

In the beginning of the 2000s, a few of the Nigerian migrants in Thessaloniki who had made some money from street vending decided to invest in opening a small shop that would let them to obtain a legal status. A law (2910/01) that was enacted in 2001 gave the option of obtaining a residence permit to those engaged in independent business activity for the first time in the short immigration history of Greece. The conditions for this type of residence permit, as very vaguely described in the legislation, were: first, the migrant must possess "*sufficient funds*"[9] and second, the proposed business activity should "*contribute to the development of the national economy.*" In 2004, 10.4% of the residence permits that had been issued to Nigerians in Greece were for independent business activities.

Most of these shops in Thessaloniki traded similar products and services (cosmetics for hair and skin, pre-paid calling cards for African countries, renting of Nigerian movies, African food products, money-transfer services and so on) and almost exclusively addressed the African migrants of the city. From an economic perspective these shops, which shared the same clientele of 500–1000 people, were not successful businesses. For some of these shops, as their shopkeepers told me, it was even difficult to cover their monthly expenses. Indeed, a few of the shopkeepers continued street vending to support their income.

Except for the role of these shops for the acquisition of legal status for their owners, there was one more reason, equally important, for the desire of Nigerians to run a small business, even if it was not economically profitable. Nigerian shopkeepers were among the Nigerian migrants in Thessaloniki that had a stable regular status, and this privilege placed them in the elite of their community. Characteristically, the administration of their "Nigerian Community of Thessaloniki" (NCT) was composed by shopkeepers and other documented Nigerians. This organization is

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[8] In 2005 a regularisation programme gave the chance to several undocumented Nigerians, as to other migrants, to get "legalised." However, the regular entry in Greece (even if the visa expired) was one of the main conditions for submitting an application. This disqualified many Nigerians who entered the country irregularly by crossing the Greek-Turkish borders.

[9] In 2005 a new legislation (3386/05) defined the meaning of "sufficient funds" as "*at least 60.000 euros.*" This change marked the end of the development of formal entrepreneurial activities for Thessaloniki's Nigerians.

the biggest Nigerian organization in Thessaloniki with 480[10] registered members in 2006. At the time of my fieldwork, the chairman of NCT was a PhD holder and shopkeeper who represented Nigerians to public authorities and to media when this was needed. Ben, a former chairman of NCT and shopkeeper, explained to me that it is important for those who deal with the Greek authorities to be documented and have their own businesses because their claims are more seriously considered. Through the representation of NCT Nigerian migrants could express the problems they face which were mostly related to their legal status and the social discrimination.

Furthermore, shopkeepers had a high prestige among Nigerians not only because of their participation in the administration of NCT but also because their shops played a significant role for the community life. In fact these shops functioned more as meeting points rather than as commercial sites. In the evenings, these shops were full of Nigerian migrants who visited them not necessarily to buy something but to socialise with other people there and relax. There newcomers could meet other migrants and learn crucial information about their new life in Thessaloniki with the shopkeepers having a facilitating role in this process.

The regular status of shopkeepers and their employment attributed them with a higher symbolic status among the Nigerians migrants of the city. Irregular migrants were dependent on the shopkeepers, who were in the privileged position of legality, and gave them authority to represent Nigerian migrants in public. This relation of dependency was more complex in the diverse Nigerian community of Amsterdam.

Encounters in the Church: A Place in Amsterdam
Where All Meet Each Other

In 2008 I attended two Pentecostal church congregations in Amsterdam as part of my fieldwork. The majority of members in both the "International Lord's House" and the "Family of Faith House"[11] came from Nigeria. The composition of the people attended the church depicted the mosaic of

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[10] This number is just indicative of the significance of this organisation and it does not depict the real number of its members, because: first, among those 480 members there were many who had already departed from Thessaloniki, and second, there were many Nigerians who regularly attended the meetings of the Nigerian community without being registered members.

[11] Pseudonyms were used for the names of the churches.

the Nigerian population in Amsterdam: documented and undocumented migrants, professional migrants, students, and trafficked women with their madams. Apart from Nigerians, migrants from other African countries, Surinamese, Dutch Antilleans and Dutch people attended the church services as well.

Ethnographically these churches were very interesting fields for the study of intra-group relations among Nigerians, since they were sites where people of different backgrounds, professions, legal statuses and levels of education come into interaction. Professional migrants and other successful documented migrants were among the appreciated members of the church. Pastors often referred to them during the service, either to mention their donations to the church and philanthropic activities or to give some information about their involvement in the organisation of the fellowships within the church (e.g., Fellowship for Men, Fellowship for Women, Fellowship for Singles). Undocumented migrants, while they were welcome in the church,[12] were often reminded that their cases damaged the collective representations of Nigerians in the public discourse. A pastor at the International Lord's House gave a sermon about migrants' integration, formulating four principles that migrants should follow in order to integrate successfully in Amsterdam's society. One of them was about the avoidance of "illegality" and he warned them that when they do something "*illegal*" this affects "*the generation after you,*" while for the person who "*works in righteousness, his children are blessed after him.*" In regard to this aspect, trafficked women in prostitution were in the worst position, because they had attracted considerable media attention and harmed the image that professional and successful migrants were trying to promote about Nigerians in Diaspora. This was one of the reasons that professional migrants were suspicious about my own research, and they accepted to help me only when they realised that my research did not exclusively focus on trafficking, irregular migration, email fraud and other aspects that media often related to Nigerians.

The pastors of both churches tried to cultivate a sense of solidarity and unity among the members of their churches.

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[12] This was especially the case in the 'Family of Faith House', which actively supported victims of trafficking and undocumented migrants.

> The church is the family. It is a place that provides support and solidarity. The church provides the missing link of family and kinship, said Pastor Usman. So we are brothers and sisters. There is a sense of belonging to each-other. There is a sense of brotherliness … sisterliness. No one person can take care of himself. But as a community, as a family we can help one another. So when someone has a need, the whole community come together.

The notion of "brotherhood" in the church was based on the belief in the same God, and it was most of all an outcome of the mutual support and care among the members of the church. In order for someone to be considered as a "brother" or "sister," he/she needed to participate in the worship of God and participate in the "*network of support*," as Pastor Usman called it, within the church. In this "*network of support*" the providers were usually the documented migrants, while the recipients were the undocumented ones. The asymmetrical exchanges between undocumented and documented migrants created a dependency of the first on the second, and maintained their unequal status.

Within this "*network of support*," undocumented migrants got help from the church and its members to find accommodation, jobs and information about the possibilities of legalisation. In the church, undocumented migrants could find a look-alike person from whom they could rent his/her papers to work in formal labour market or travel. The search for and the selection of a document provider were based on two main criteria: to look like the undocumented migrant and to be a trustworthy and reliable person. The first qualification limited their search to documented African and Afro-Caribbean migrants, while the second condition guided their search among people from their social networks, like their "brothers" and "sisters" from the church. Those who provided their documents were paid in most cases, and for work permits they often took around 30% (or more) of the salary earned by the migrants who used the documents (see also Garces-Mascarenas and Doomernik, 2007; Vasta, 2011).

The church was sometimes directly involved in finding jobs for the migrants. For instance, International Lord's House run a project with the characteristic name KITH that is the abbreviation of 'Keep It in The House'. Pastor Usman informed the members of congregations who had their own businesses and employed people that "*whatever you are going out to do … before you go out to do it, look first inside to see if there is anyone who is doing it and patronise the person*." In that way members of the church when they needed to hire an employee, first tried to find a suitable person in the church, by either asking the pastor to mediate or by directly proposing to a "brother or sister" from the church.

Even in searching for a partner, the church had a facilitating role. People often tried to find their partners within the "family" of the church. The International Lord's House has indeed created an association for the single members of church. The "Single's Fellowship" had the goal of bringing all the single members of the church in contact to facilitate the formation of relationships. Finding a marriage partner was very important for the social life of migrants and for undocumented migrants in particular, as it was one of the very few ways to obtain regular status (in case of marriage with documented migrants or Dutch/EU-citizens). In a couple of cases, undocumented Nigerians paid between 6000 to 15000 EUR for a marriage with someone who would assist them to get "legalised."

All these interactions stressed the dependence of undocumented migrants on documented migrants. The difficulties of their irregular status in the Netherlands attached them to the documented migrants who assisted them: 1) in finding jobs in either the informal sector (by patronising them or advising them for job opportunities) or in the formal labour market by using their identity documents; 2) in obtaining regular status through marriage; 3) in providing information and advices on many other issues. The inability of undocumented migrants to reciprocate the gift of support placed them in an inferior position to the documented migrants. This inferiority escalated the vulnerability of irregular migrants and strengthened the dependency of undocumented migrants on the documented ones. There were many cases in which document providers kept more than the agreed amount of the salary earned by the undocumented migrants who used their documents, that undocumented migrants worked under very bad conditions and with little money for their migrant employers, or that Nigerians who got married with the main motive of obtaining a regular status were abused by their marriage partners.

Conclusion

By examining the case of the Nigerian Diaspora, this paper analysed the importance of class and money for those who want to migrate today. This is a result of the restrictive migration policies that have increased the cost of both regular and irregular migration. As Van Hear (2004) has argued, the possession of capital today determines more than ever for migrants the means of migration, the routes taken, and their destinations. Most Nigerians who live in Amsterdam and Thessaloniki today used to belong to what Western scholars would call "middle class" or at least they were not among the poorest in Nigeria.

Class determines not only who can migrate but also how he/she can migrate. Upper class Nigerians are able to migrate as students or as highly-skilled migrants to North America and England or less preferably to other European countries, such as the Netherlands. Many Nigerians who cannot afford the cost of migration to Europe depend on their social networks that provide them with money, support and crucial information (e.g., about trusted smugglers, the job market, asylum procedures, etc.) in order to enter Europe (irregularly). Usually, in their journey to Europe, those migrants pass through several countries. In a lot of cases, they stay in one country before moving to another for a couple of years because they fail to cross European borders (or to move within the EU). Those who are deprived of both money and social networks depend exclusively on what they have in order to migrate. In the case of several poor young women, the only capital they had was their body, which they used to gain entry through European borders (see also Kastner, 2010).

The various means of migration ultimately have an effect on the legal status and the employment opportunities for those who cross the European borders. Those who are invited as highly-skilled migrants or students enjoy a privileged legal status and better employment perspectives. On the contrary, for the migrants who enter Europe irregularly, it is very difficult to obtain residence permits and their employment opportunities are thus limited in the informal sector or in the formal sector using the papers of other documented migrants. Victims of trafficking are in the worst position, because their extremely vulnerable condition forces them to work for their traffickers in the sex industry.

Upon migrants' entry, their legal status and employment affect not only how they are treated by European states and economies but their position within their communities, as well. The students and professional migrants are welcome by the European states and international companies and enjoy a prestigious status within the various diasporic communities of Nigerians. Elite Nigerians are often selected to serve their communities through participating in the administration of their organisations. On the contrary, irregular migrants, and especially trafficked women, are stigmatised and regarded as a "problem" in public discourse; they are often marginalised even within their own communities. The irregular status of undocumented migrants attaches them to the successful regular migrants, who assist them in various ways.

The lives of undocumented Nigerians in Europe are extensively dependent on the relations they have with other documented migrants. For

them, and especially for those who entered Europe using someone else's passport, the crossing of international borders marks the beginning of a life in which the access to various resources cannot be achieved autonomously but only through the reliance on someone else. Undocumented Nigerians depend on other documented migrants (mainly Nigerians) from whom they rent or borrow their identity documents in order to work in the formal labour market and travel abroad. They can obtain a legal status through marriage with high-income legal residents (often of Nigerian background). Highly-skilled and documented Nigerian migrants, apart from representing Nigerians in public through their organisations as successful and established migrants, also provide Nigerian migrants with information and advice for their new life in Europe. All these types of support from documented Nigerians to undocumented ones create obligations of reciprocation that undocumented migrants are often unable to meet. The inability of returning the gift of support, apart from the tensions it sometimes leads, reproduces the inequality between regular and irregular migrants. The dependency of undocumented migrants on the documented ones is perpetuated through gift giving practices that cannot be reciprocated. It is worth mentioning that many of the resources that are exchanged (identity documents, information, advice, etc.) have an inalienable character. This means that documented migrants, as givers, never lose what they offer, but at the same time the act of giving creates expectations of return or at least recognition of their support and consequently admittance of inferiority by the recipients (see Eriksen, 2007). This paradox of "keeping-while-giving" (Weiner, 1992) reproduces structural inequalities that are based on the civic status that, as was shown in this paper, is nowadays increasingly related to the possession of money and the socio-economic background of migrants.

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Statistical Data

Dienst Onderzoek en Statistiek, Gemeente Amsterdam (O+S), Research and Statistics, City of Amsterdam

Elliniki Statistiki Arxi (ELSTAT), Hellenic Statistical Authority

LESSONS FOR LIFE:
TWO MIGRATORY PORTRAITS FROM ERITREA

Magnus Treiber

> The captain of the fishing boat described what he said was a terrifying scene. "What we saw was incredible: heads were coming in and out [of the water] and people were screaming," Francesco Rifiorito told Italy's Ansa news agency. "We did all we could" (BBC-News, 06.04.2011).[1]

> "I feel really sorry, among those victims I know someone named Andeberhan" (Daniel, E-Mail, 10.4.2011).

Introduction

After more than 200 migrants drowned in Maltese waters some 70km from the small Italian island Lampedusa in early April 2011, the European parliament held a minute's silence. The death toll, including mothers and children, was too high to be ignored or reacted upon with the usual calls to upgrade the European border-security agency Frontex. According to BBC the overcrowded boat apparently started its unlucky journey from Zuwara in Western Libya. It was carrying people from Chad, Ivory Coast and Sudan, and even some people from Bangladesh, but most passengers originated from Eritrea and Somalia. Since the beginning of revolutionary turmoil in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya more than 23,000 boat-people had already reached the Italian island Lampedusa and Malta by sea and thus renewed irregular migration via the Mediterranean. Since the signing of the scandalous Libyan-Italian "Treaty of Friendship" in June 2009 and the coming of intensified cooperation between the EU and its North-African neighbours, this route had been disrupted to secure the Schengen-borders. The inhuman conditions of Libyan prisons were well-known (the country has neither signed the 1951 Geneva Convention, nor its amending 1967 Protocol), but the principle of *non-refoulement* was obviously and repeatedly

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[1] BBC News: Scores of migrants missing as boat capsizes off Italy. 06.04.2011 (www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-12982923).

violated in the last years. However, after NATO started to attack Kaddafi's troops, the Libyan leader re-opened the Mediterranean route to migrants. Already a mere few days after this latest maritime catastrophe, the political discussions in Italy, France and Germany came back to normal: the focus was once again on how to deal with these "economic migrants" from Africa, their allocation, possible deportation and costs.[2] Refugees from the war in Libya and from Eritrea and Somalia, eligible for protection, already disappeared from the headlines—probably to prevent further arrivals.

This chapter seeks to provide a deeper understanding of migration from Eritrea, a small country at the shores of the Red Sea, by following two young men, Biniam and Daniel, through parts of their difficult journey and giving an insight into their migration's context. Since 2007 I have met them and their respective friends and co-migrants in Khartoum and Addis Ababa or Cairo and Jerusalem respectively. The outmigration from Eritrea in the last decade has reached figures of several hundred thousand people. The latest UNHCR statistical yearbook gives a figure of 236,059 unsettled cases in the category "total population of concern."[3] So Biniam's and Daniel's experiences can be taken as examples for many, many people in similar situations. Field research has been done *in situ*, in different migratory stages in various places, hubs and intersections of their trajectories—following concepts of multi-sited, transnational research (cf. Marcus 1995; Hannerz 1998).

As part of a research network on migration and knowledge (ForMig),[4] I will pay special attention to the acquisition and transformation of knowledge during migration. The sociology of knowledge—in the tradition of Schütz, Berger and Luckmann (e.g., 1972)—considers knowledge as a dynamic process constituting human and therefore meaningful action (Knoblauch 2005: 142). Concerning migration from Africa it has been shown that the journey to Europe (or Northern America) may demand constant re-navigation, considerable detours, informal solutions and

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[2] Deutschlandfunk: EU flüchtet vor Massenexodus aus Afrika. 11.04.2011; Human Rights Watch: Pushed Back, Pushed Around. Italy's Forced Return of Boat Migrants and Asylum Seekers, Libya's Mistreatment of Migrants and Asylum Seekers. 09/2009.

[3] UNHCR: Statistical Yearbook 2010. Annex. Table 2 (www.unhcr.org/statistics).

[4] Since 09/2009 the research project is located at the Chair of Anthropology, University of Bayreuth, and part of the "ForMig" research network on "Migration and Knowledge", funded by the Bavarian State Ministry of Science, Research and the Arts, Germany ("Dynamic Worlds of Imagination—Learning processes, knowledge and communication among young urban migrants from Eritrea and Ethiopia", Kurt Beck, Magnus Treiber, Délia Nicoué; www.formig.net). The project evolved from a doctoral thesis on young urbanites' dreams and life-worlds in Asmara/Eritrea (Treiber 2005).

dangerous risks to be taken (cf. Vigh 2009; van Liempt 2007). Lisa Schuster (2005), Michael Collyer (2005) and Bruno Riccio (2001) stress creation and use of agency among Africans migrants to Europe in order to strategically advance—of course within the frame given (cf. Essed et al. 2004). Despite the tremendous death toll in the Sahara desert and the Mediterranean Sea, migration should not be exclusively understood as a mere odyssey, as a chaotic journey solely subjecting to powerlessness and heteronomy. It seems also to be a—however thorny—learning process, involving risks and danger, but also permitting the acquisition of knowledge in new situations and environments.

Within certain cultural milieus knowledge can be imparted, taught, learned and reshaped without being necessarily logical and consequent in the eyes of outsiders. In his essay "The Stranger" Alfred Schütz describes how newcomers to an unknown social environment—other than those who grew up in there—lack the mostly unquestioned self-evidence of cultural patterns and traditions: "Seen from the […] approached group, he [the newcomer] is a man without a history" (1944: 502). To Schütz's understanding, immigrants resemble more the sociologist, trying to figure out rules and patterns of the explored society than competent, but accustomed and unaware actors in the cultural and social field. Newcomers will see fragmentations and contradictions. Their original cultural knowledge is devaluated; their routine is broken and has to be re-established according to the new surroundings. Biniam and Daniel have entered and left such new environments repeatedly, heading for survival and security. To quickly learn how to adapt and behave surely is an important competence to cope with risk and heteronomy—while success is never guaranteed.

If knowledge, however, is inherently connected to action and thus is constantly reshaped, also the idea of "success" (of actions) has to be seen as a dynamic concept, constantly transforming in and by the different and changing environments, stages and situations of migration. Risks, deprivation and discrimination have to be temporarily accepted in the present as future might bring a more decent life (Schiffauer 1991: 172). Daniel and Biniam repeatedly expressed their surprise about new and unexpected difficulties to find new individual or collective answers, to learn and develop helpful competences, to create and test new contents of knowledge. Daniel's and Biniam's individual learning processes have been jointly documented and interpreted within the context of respective location and situation, but also within the context of the migrants' geographically dispersed, but nonetheless well-connected and shared milieu.

Biniam and Daniel: Two Parallel Trajectories

Biniam and Daniel have expert knowledge of their own migration from Eritrea, and are ready to share their experiences and thoughts. Risking life and health, both of them have passed through several typical stages of migration since leaving the Eritrean capital Asmara. Their situation in Israel and in Ethiopia was of course precarious and make-shift, but they established themselves as well as possible, and definitely it could have been much worse. Why have they been ready to again risk their lives, when they eventually could lose more than win? Biniam seemed consternated when I asked him on the phone. After a short break he said incredulous: "Do you want me to live like this? Without my rights?" In one of my interviews with Daniel in Addis Ababa in early 2010 he insisted that further migration to Europe or the USA at least offers the chance for improvement.

> I tell you, I will never be afraid to try something which would risk you the life. If you cross the Sahara and meet with the Libyans and or cross Egypt and get the Israeli way to be a cleaner in someone's office is at least something. I am quite sure [as an] asylum seeker you'll be treated like a shit, I know it. You would never complain for your salary, I know it still, but it's quite different, it's not like what we find here. Here you're nobody, but there at least you could be somebody—within a time. That's the difference. So I would love to take the risk if it comes. [. . .] I know that I am limited enough, but there are things that I could do [. . .].

Daniel is a young man in his early twenties; Biniam is in his mid thirties. Both of them are personal friends since my doctoral fieldwork in the Eritrean capital Asmara 2001–2005 and both are from working-class backgrounds, so they could neither rely on family-granted seed capital nor have they kinship bonds into the established Eritrean Diaspora. While both would call Asmara their hometown, they ironically represent the complex relationship of the disproportionate, but interdependent neighbouring states and rivals Eritrea and Ethiopia.

Biniam had grown up in Addis Ababa, where his father came to as a labour migrant in the 1960s. After finishing high-school he expected good job opportunities in newly independent Eritrea and moved to Asmara on his own to pursue his education and make his living. After a vocational training in nursery and an assignment as teacher he managed to enrol at Asmara University—a privilege the working-class child was very proud of. After finishing his studies he was drafted again, and assigned as

a high school teacher to several locations in the country—a duty which not only confined him to the countryside, but also disabled him to secure his now two little children's survival. Although he first felt frowned upon for his socialisation in urban Ethiopia and his Amharic accent, his personal woebegone integration into newer Eritrean history—the war, the penal deportation of the students to the coastal desert, his conscription into national service and his desperate efforts to nourish his kids—finally left no doubt about his Eritrean nationality and citizenship. One night in late 2007, when stationed at Warsay-Yikealo-school in Sawa military camp in the country's Western lowlands, he disappeared from the camp and started walking westward with a small group of deserters. Although they could hear Eritrean border guards speaking, they were not detected. After three days and nights and a hold-up by Sudanese locals just across the border they reached Kassala and Wad Sherifa refugee camp, where Biniam met lots of familiar faces again—national service-deserters, students from Sawa School and numerous age-mates from Asmara, friends from the university, but also from the capital's bars and cafés. After being registered by the Sudanese Commissioner for Refugees (COR) and handed a refugee ID, the so-called "yellow card," Biniam instantly looked for a seat in a minibus, going to Khartoum. A friend from Asmara cordially invited him into a bus. "For you, it is already paid," he said and smiled. Being used to having to gain respect in Asmara, Biniam accepted, pleasantly surprised. Arriving in Khartoum the driver asked him to pay USD 100 a fare Biniam would have never been ready to pay. For the first time he had made acquaintance with a local-migrant business joint-venture, typical of the informal migration economy.

Daniel—on the other hand—is a real *wedi Asmara*, a "son" of the city, in which he was born and raised. Yet he is the son of rural Tigrayan parents, originating from Ethiopia's Northern province, who had come before independence as migrant labourers. During colonial times Italian investors had developed Asmara as a regional industrial centre. The existing infrastructure survived the Ethiopian revolutionary *Derg* regime, and the Eritrean liberation struggle, and was prospering after independence—until the Ethiopian-Eritrean border war (1998–2000) and the consequent closure of the border lead to economic degradation and mass lay-off of workers. Since this war and its venomous propaganda, citizens of the respective enemy state have suffered from exclusion and discrimination. Whoever was not able to hide—often under the protection of neighbours or relatives—was either deported, pushed to leave "voluntarily," or tightly

controlled. Daniel's parents chose to stay. Having to feed five children they considered a complete start from scratch in a foreign place harder than the usual bureaucratic reprisal and latent danger. Growing up, Daniel found an elegant way to dodge the inevitable call for military conscription, which few years earlier would have been considered unfavourable at best: he claimed Ethiopian citizenship. That meant his exclusion from a college career, but also saved him from disappearing in a remote military camp, its arbitrary commanders and humiliating rules and prisons.

Although a private scholarship allowed him to briefly attend a Catholic school, when his father died unexpectedly in early 2009 Daniel decided to sally out, in order to guarantee the family's survival. As a foreign national he officially applied for expatriation, which was finally granted, but without the usual involvement of the International Red Cross and only via Sudan. He accepted and was put into a group of nine people in the same situation. Accompanied by officials of Eritrea's immigration authority they bordered a bus to Tessenei in the country's Western lowlands, where their papers were confiscated. The next days they were pushed through different check points to finally find themselves debarked from a military pickup in the no-man's-land bordering Sudan. Detected by a solitary Sudanese border post, they secured their onward passage to the Sudanese Commissioner for Refugees' (COR) screening centre in Shegerab camp by bribery—the first of many still to be demanded. The alternative to walk back through heat and dust, but without documents, food and water towards the highly militarized border—hoping to reach the Ethiopian side without being shot—was considered suicidal. After the Sudanese immigration officer in charge at Shegerab camp brutally hit the exhausted migrants with a stick during interrogation, after seeing the inmates' desperate fight for a piece of bread and a cup of water for supper and a night in the dirt, the group decided not to wait for a refugee identity card ("yellow card"), but to take the next opportunity to get to Khartoum. A smuggler was easily found who organized their irregular onward journey to the Sudanese capital.

Leaving Eritrea—Migrants' Routes and Crossroads

Today's Eritrea is a country in agony, suffering under brutal military supremacy and overall economic poverty (Hepner, O'Kane 2009). Only corruption and worst human rights abuses flourish. Forced into a grossly unpaid and never-ending national service in the military or state administration, young people are unable to properly follow their own life-plans and

meet social expectations and responsibilities (Kibreab 2009). Unforesee-able arrests and imprisonments without charges, torture and killings have become a common narrative and shared knowledge; if not experienced or witnessed first-hand, one will know someone who has. Informants who have escaped from the country, as well as recent ethnographic literature, draw the picture of a country torn apart in hopelessness, mistrust and fear—a Sartresque "huis-clos," if ever there was one, to be escaped only by the—however risky—exit option (Schmidt 2010; Bozzini, Deambrosi 2010; Treiber 2009, 2005).

For the present generation of Eritrean refugees, most of them desert-ers of the national service, there are two main routes out of Eritrea. The border to Sudan is usually crossed somewhere north of Tessenei through the hills of the Western lowlands or alongside the Red Sea coast. The border to Ethiopia may be crossed between Senafe and Adi Qwala in the South. The routes to Sudan seem to be less risky, the border posts easier to avoid. Since 2002, a well-oiled border economy has grown here, smuggling, but also threatening and robbing the regularly crossing refu-gees. Corrupt military staff from Eritrea and Sudan seems to be as much involved as Rashaida smugglers[5] and clever *warsay* (national service con-scripts) or migrants with good connections inside Eritrea and beyond the border. From the former military training centre and today's central 12th grade school-camp Sawa, small groups of deserters walk westwards dur-ing night-time—which is the main reason why the main military training camp has been transferred to Kiloma near Assab and the more fortified Danakil frontier to Ethiopia. Nevertheless the Sudanese Kassala region is considered unsafe, as the regional government allows the Eritrean mili-tary to deport deserters back to Eritrea.[6]

The way south to Ethiopia is far more risky with dense military pres-ence on both sides of the border. It is only suitable for individuals, who know the region. After UN troops have been withdrawn in 2008, it is no longer possible to find corrupt UN-soldiers who used to hide refugees in their armoured vehicles for money. Irregular persons stopped nearby the

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[5] The Rashaida are a largely non-sedentary ethnic group, living in Eritrea and Sudan. Being involved in smuggling goods and commodities in the region since long, Rashaida families are now illegally transporting Eritreans to Sudan. Certainly this has become a booming business, however they act on demand and are confidentially booked via brokers. They are not identical with the so-called "Sinai-Bedouins."

[6] Gedab News: Forcefully Returned Refugees. 1 Dead, 2 Wounded. 07. 12. 2008 (www.awate.com).

border are likely to be executed on the spot. Whoever arrives safely is picked up by Ethiopian security for screening before being transferred to Shimelba, and now Mai-Ayni refugee camp in Tigray province. However 300 to 600 newcomers arrive monthly. In Shimelba camp, which is progressively emptied, most people have stayed for years, hoping for resettlement to a third country. Others disappear to Addis Ababa or move on to Khartoum. According to the UNHCR's Statistical Yearbook 2010 more than 10,000 new refugees have been registered in Sudan and more than 18,000 in Ethiopia throughout the year. The total number of registered Eritrean refugees has reached more than 44,000 in Ethiopia, 10,000 in Italy, 9,000 in the United Kingdom and almost 17,000 in Israel by the end of 2010. The more than 100,000 Eritrean refugees who are still in Sudan include a large refugee population from the Eritrean liberation struggle (1961–1991); due to Sudan's function as a transit country the number is, however, constantly changing.[7]

Khartoum is a main crossroads for migrants from East as well as West Africa; here too migrants have become a major economic factor. Khartoum opens up airways to destinations all over the planet, if one is able to pay and get the necessary documents. The options range from Senegal and South Africa to Bolivia and Ecuador or the Far East. By land the Libya route was chosen when other alternatives were missing, but became less popular after news of the Italo-Libyan cooperation in refusal and deportation of irregular boat people spread through informal networks and the work of human rights groups. Thus the Libya route lost importance—at least temporarily. Whoever managed to leave the country towards Europe during the Libyan war had usually arrived before its outbreak. Before 2009 the Libya route led through the Sahara desert to the Mediterranean Sea and further to Lampedusa or Malta. Eritrean migrants ironically called it *mengedi haqin fetehen* in Tigrinya, "the road of truth and justice." The ones who try to cross the Mediterranean Sea by boat are called *nay testi*, literally "by wash tub"—*testi* is the tub, the Eritrean mothers use for laundry. Today routes mainly to the South are chosen, to Nairobi in Kenya, Kampala in Uganda, Luanda in Angola and Juba in South Sudan.

Also the former route to Cairo has become difficult since Israel closed its borders, Egypt deported migrants to Eritrea, and smugglers from the Sinai keep migrants from Eritrea and other African countries as hostages.

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[7] UNHCR: Statistical Yearbook 2010. Annex. Table 5 (www.unhcr.org/statistics).

The migrants' need to find alternative routes and possible detours to bridge geographical distances, and cross national borders and administrative barriers, has not only attracted Frontex, but mafias and traffickers as well.

Going through Khartoum

Almost none of the numerous Eritrean migrants in Khartoum stay legally in the Sudanese capital, as their "yellow card" assigns them to one of the country's refugee camps. However, Khartoum divides the Eritrean refugees not only by further routes to be taken, but also into newcomers and somehow established migrants. Newcomers, especially if they come from the Eritrean highlands and have no knowledge of Arabic language and Sudanese life-style, have already experienced situations of exploitation and rip-off. They tend to act cautiously at first, live secluded and leave the city as soon as possible. In many cases however the onward journey is postponed till it becomes less and less likely. While some refuse to learn more than essentials to master a provisional daily life in Khartoum, as Biniam did, others, such as Daniel, will get more and more acquainted with language, city life, dangers and chances. It is absolutely necessary to speak Arabic in Khartoum, if you want to move relatively freely, without being subjected to constant harassment and deceit by Sudanese police, businessmen, landlords as well as fellow Eritreans, who have well integrated into the local migration economy and became *semsari* (contact persons), brokers and ethnic entrepreneurs. Abraham, Biniam's former roommate in Asmara's university dormitory, responded to an ethnic niche in Khartoum's "urban opportunity structure" (Hannerz 1974) and opened up his own teahouse, where new arrivals from Eritrea and Ethiopia are offered information, food and a place to sleep—usually a straw mat on the floor for USD 2–3 per night. An unlicensed guesthouse is of course as illegal as the clandestine sale of alcohol, (e.g., whiskey and ouzo) smuggled in from neighbouring countries. Seed capital is provided by credulous relatives and contacts in the Western or the Gulf Diaspora. Communication technology enables email communication and phone calls easily these days, but does not allow a deeper insight into the other's life world—as Cindy Horst has described for the Somali Diaspora (Horst 2007). In Eritrea the young generation was bound together in the ordered homogeneity of the national service and shared the same fate in school, army unit or meeting place in the urban context. Outside the country everyone is

heading for the first world. Limited resources fuel the competition to get ahead. Formerly shared life-worlds in Eritrea or Ethiopia offer a necessary social proximity to create and exploit trust. The traffickers' need to contact potential customers helped to create the position of middlemen and brokers as much as the refugees' need for this infrastructure. The exploitation remains ambivalent, as the unprivileged position of being a refugee forced on them irregular status and practices in order to bypass national authorities and international agencies.

During his stay in Khartoum, Biniam belonged to the group of "prolonged newcomers." He did not learn Arabic, nor did he look for a job. Instead he tried to avoid social contacts and even started to eat his simple meals alone and behind closed doors, fearing parasitic guests. Disappointed from lacking solidarity among his own countrymen he additionally experienced urban Sudan—a predominantly and self-confident Muslim society—as selfish, hypocritical, discriminating and unjustifiably arrogant. "People there ask you first for your religion, then your name." Feeling under pressure Biniam, who has been raised in Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity, but never really practiced religion, revaluated his own cultural past. When leaving Khartoum after only 3 months in February 2008, he felt relieved.

> I've been jealous with the people in Khartoum, about being first-class citizens, having fun, without being afraid of things, without being afraid of police, they celebrate as they wish, [...] go around as they wish, enjoy as they wish ... I want to have these things, going home, being respected, working, helping your family, your citizens, thinking only progress.

In a teahouse in Diem, where Eritreans and Ethiopians meet and information and rumours are exchanged, he got into contact with Eritrean middlemen of Libyan and Egyptian smugglers, asked around for potential co-travellers to form a group and set out for an exhausting 6-day tour through the desert to Aswan. From there the illegal immigrants took the train to Cairo, Ramses Station. Biniam reports:

> The guy who was with me, he couldn't control his emotions and then he was tired of these things, you know, also he got alternative to go through the legal way, he got an option, but two, three times they rejected him at the embassy of Egypt in Khartoum, so he came with me and he was so regretting [...] and the night was so cold, no food and then we cannot hold our hands and our faces have changed. And when I see my friend's face it becomes whiter and whiter ... I couldn't see mine, but I can see all the people. First day they've got some charisma, but fifth day everything was ended up. So for sure I looked the same, so this time I thought like if these days

anything happens, if police catches us, we all gonna die. We did not have enough food for 6 days, not enough water, all the things are very dirty, a lot of dust in our hairs, faces, clothes, and then you are sitting in an uncomfortable, very small place on top of a Hillux car, Toyota. There is 5 big barrels of oil on it, this benzine, and your luggage on it and all your body is outside the Toyota and all you body and clothes is stinking [...]. Fifth day is the worst. I haven't had such a bad experience in my life.

Daniel's story was different. When he and his group arrived in Khartoum on an early morning in a seemingly regular minibus in March 2009, he thought he had gone through the biggest adventure in his life. The informal transport chain between refugee camp and capital is split up into several sections, meaning that drivers and cars have to be changed. The group felt threatened, when realising that the smugglers had guns or when one driver started to molest one of the women. They felt exhausted after sun burning hours in the open desert. When the Toyota pickup rushed through hidden tracks, the hedges' thorny tendrils slashed the passengers' bodies and faces, leaving painful injuries. They also enjoyed unexpected hospitality during rests in nomads' tents, but of course they encountered what Khartoum is renowned for among migrants: exploitation and rip-off. So they once had to eat and rest in an over-priced guest-house and sometimes new drivers unexpectedly demanded additional fares. Finally they were locked up after arrival in a private house in Khartoum—until they could procure the rest of the fare, which was suddenly increased from 80 to 150 Sudanese Pounds.[8]

Although the nine travellers were inexperienced at first, they learned fast and managed all problems well. So they never showed all of their money and even in tense situations, where Sudanese officials or smugglers threatened to stop their journey indefinitely, they pretended to have no more than what was already on the table, guessing somehow, that from now on such situations would occur frequently. Also, through sharing the same fate, they showed solidarity when needed. The remaining hostages in Khartoum were freed and the exploitative bills of their involuntarily chosen pension were settled as soon as enough money was gathered through a relative or friend. Consequently the whole group rented a first house together. However they soon had to look for a second one, after the Sudanese landlord complained about their loud music, the women's

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[8] In 2009/10 1 Sudanese Pound (SDG) equalled 0.33 Euro.

inappropriate clothes and their insufficient segregation of the sexes. Also
the relationships among themselves did not remain conflict-free.

Daniel soon realised that he had to adapt. After initially spending time
with Abraham, who was mentoring newcomers and used them at the same
time as free labour in his café, he felt the need to earn money, to support
his family back home. Through active job search and networking he ended
up as a cleaner for the European Union's representative. To young male
Eritreans and Ethiopians the Khartoum labour market offers predomi-
nantly precarious jobs in cleaning, construction and as waiters, mostly on
a daily basis, women have a good chance to be employed as waitresses or
in-living housemaids. The usual monthly income in such jobs is about 300
SDG. Working in an international institution did not only provide better
working conditions, but enabled Daniel to establish important contacts
with European staff and officials, gaining potential support for the future.
Being pressured and motivated at the same time to support his needy
family and to save money for his own onward migration, he also tried to
bring his mates into jobs. Some of these however where reluctant to take
up work or they left it, complaining about hard work and low pay—an
attitude that Daniel, the impecunious boy from Asmara's former native
quarters who started selling chewing-gum to UN-officials and tourists at
the age of 10, could simply not understand. From his perspective this atti-
tude looked like "living on my shoulders." Adaptation to urban Sudan and
his underprivileged role in it, also for him, who knew no other places than
Asmara and Massawa, proved to be challenging.

The pressure for further personal development, the precarious eco-
nomic and political situation, and the repeated experience of harassment
and disrespect by Sudanese police and employers made Daniel think of
taking further steps. Official applications for an Ethiopian passport did
not bear fruit, as he lacked papers and relatives who could give evidence
of his Ethiopian nationality. International Red Cross, UNHCR and all the
international NGOs, concerned with refugees, enjoy little respect in the
migrants' milieu. "We legitimate their work and income, but they never
do anything else for us [other] than give advises," Daniel complains. While
others of his group illegally immigrated into Ethiopia, he opted for a smug-
gler's offer to get to Dubai in autumn 2009, hoping for work and income
in the construction sector. With the help of his network he could pay for
a false Eritrean passport (USD 1,700), get a Dubai tourist visa and finally
board an aircraft for the first time in his life—a wish he would have never
believed to come true one day.

Muddling through in Cairo

Eritrean migrants in Khartoum who pursue a legal visa and immigration process and contact the US or the Australian embassy, as well as migrants who head for Israel, are likely to take the Cairo turn-off. Cairo as a historical centre of international trade, diplomacy and administration has a long tradition of irregular immigration, the biggest refugee community evolving from the Sudanese civil wars since 1983 (Golia 2004: 130). One of Eritrea's first refugees here has been the intellectual trade unionist Wolde-Ab Woldemariam, who arrived already in 1953 and tried to use the international infrastructure to support the nationalist Eritrean case (Killion 1997). In more recent years Eritrean, Ethiopian and Somali refugees gather—among other places—in the neighbourhood Ard al-Liwa, near Sudan Street, in Giza. As in Khartoum, smugglers use to lock up their customers for some days in an apartment after arrival, but here it is more to avoid denunciation by business rivals than to prevent police action. However, Egypt too—still under Mubarak's rule—gradually became a more and more uncertain terrain. Shortly before my arrival in Cairo in February 2008, a café, known as meeting place for Eritreans and Somalis, was raided by the Egyptian police, and a group of Eritreans caught on their way to the Sinai was imprisoned for a whole year. Smugglers, originating from the Sinai desert, brought the migrants to the border at night time, where they had to overcome barbwire and fences. There, irregular border crossers to Israel were repeatedly and purposely shot and killed by Egyptian border guards.[9]

As in Sudan, Egypt transferred general refugee administration to the UNHCR, but kept its national sovereignty in all fields. In contrast to self- and media-representation in the West, the UNHCR remains a widely

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[9] Israel deported migrants back from the Red Sea resort Elat to Egypt; Mubarak's Egypt then organised mass deportations from Aswan in July 2008. Several hundred people have been turned over to the Eritrean military and brought to the ill-famed prisons in Eritrea's coastal desert. One of my informants managed to escape from Wia prison and fled Eritrea a second time. According to him, some tens of Ethiopian migrants were deported from Aswan to Massawa Airport. Their whereabouts are unknown. The UNHCR, based few kilometres outside Giza, was only allowed to contact and register a small batch of the arrested refugees in Shalal detention centre in the South and could do little more than complain. See Amnesty International: Egypt. Deadly Journeys through the Desert. 08/2008 (MDE 12/015/2008); Amnesty International: Eritrean asylum seekers face deportation. 19.12.2008 (www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/news/eritrean-asylum-seekers-face-deportation-egypt-20081219).

powerless and overburdened administrative agency. Consequently the refugees' high expectations for protection, substantial help or even resettlement are often turned down.[10] Once again refugees have to take matters into their own hands. Biniam pragmatically used, what he was offered. While considering the refugee ID cards to be useless in most cases, he followed the advice of two Eritrean UNHCR-employed translators, refugees themselves, who urged their fellow countrymen to keep appointments and to prepare well for their interviews. The "yellow card" is not only a prerequisite for UNHCR initiated resettlement processes; it may also reduce prison sentences in case of arrest, so Biniam registered himself.

Differently from Khartoum, there are few jobs available in Cairo, so people have a lot of spare time. Biniam and his companions slept long, watched TV for hours and drank coffee or tea—to kill time—before gathering in Ard al-Liwa during late evening hours. The neighbourhood, dusty and sleepy during the day, became lively and loud after sunset. Here information, news and rumours were once again shared and discussed, evaluated and sometimes concealed. In and around Ard al-Liwa's central café apartments to share were brokered as well smuggling options; a nearby internet café allowed global electronic communication to family members and friends at home or in different stages of migration. Some migrants offered services as informal travel agent or small-scale telecommunication entrepreneur, selling cheap internet phone connections abroad. On the other hand life is a lot cheaper and also safer than in Khartoum. For "legal cases" it is relatively easy to wait in Cairo for their visa procedure to slowly yield fruit—especially if they get support from relatives abroad. Like many others Biniam lacked perspectives, documents and money and was under considerable strain. He dreamt of "*neishto addi*," the "small country"—still in 2008 it was not advisable in Cairo to speak in public about the former enemy Israel. With the increasing lock-up of Europe, Israel has since become Europe's most Southern country, but reports soon spread that Israel too does not meet the migrants' expectations.

Biniam experienced unexpectedly friendly treatment by smugglers in the Sinai desert on his way to Israel; migrants who followed ran into more than one catastrophe. By the end of 2010, 250 migrants were reported to

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[10]   Additionally the UNHCR's work in Egypt as well as in Africa since long faces criticism from international scholars, especially from Cairo's American University (Kagan 2006; Harrell-Bond, Verdirame 2005; cf. Malkki 1995).

have been abducted there. Ransom of up to USD 15,000 were demanded.[11] In March 2011 a friend of Daniel in Khartoum reported that his elder sister accepted an offer by a group of Sudanese Rashaida smugglers to join a transport directly from Shegerab refugee camp in Eastern Sudan to Egypt without prepayment. Unable to pay after arrival she was sold to a criminal group. Like other prisoners she was urged to contact relatives via satellite phone to make them pay a ransom of USD 5,000 out of reach sum for her. Rumours are increasing that mutilation and the sale of human organs for transplantation are no longer mere threats, but indeed happen to those who cannot pay.

   Biniam crossed the border together with a small group at night time in April 2008. While jumping over fences and several lines of barbed wire, his jeans and shirt tore apart. Everyone was panicking when Egyptian border guards approached. Mothers were assisted by throwing their children over the fences. The group had already been located and expected by Israeli border guards, supplied with water and food and gathered near Beer Sheva in Ketziot prison camp, where they got their first interview.

Biniam: Fighting for Refugee Rights in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv

Israel has been surprised to find itself a new destination of African migrants who not only seek a European standard of living, but a democratic state and the rule of law. However, like everyone else I asked in early 2009, Biniam considered the refugee process in Israel simply as unprofessional—being well-experienced by former UNHCR interviews.[12] The Israeli interviewer did not ask for the refugees' reasons and routes and technically—as Amnesty International in Tel Aviv has reported—did not initiate an asylum process. After three months in Ketziot prison camp as illegal border-crosser, Biniam was issued a document of "conditional release," valid 1 to 3 months, restricting his stay to the rural areas north of Hadera and south of Gedera, where cheap labour is always needed in agricultural plantations. The urban centres Tel Aviv and Jerusalem have been excluded; however it is the large cities which offer the NGO infrastructure needed by refugees, including free medical care and legal assistance.

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[11] BBC News: UNHCR fear for Eritrea migrants 'held hostage' in Egypt. 08.12.2010 (www .bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-11950058).
[12] One question to identify Eritrean nationality was for example: How many wives does the Eritrean president Isayas Afeworki have?

Other than the first batch of Eritreans arriving in 2006, later newcomers since then receive neither work permits nor other assistance. Daily life remained precarious, although standards of living easily rose with regular income. Biniam found two friends, a young ex-soldier from Asmara and a political refugee from Addis Ababa, to share flat and life in Jerusalem's Talpiyot district. Apartment buildings here are mostly inhabited by Jewish immigrants from Ethiopia, the *Beta Israel* (cf. Anteby 1997). All three have found a job as cleaners in *yeshivot* religious schools. In contrast to Egypt, African migrants in Israel have a chance to access wage labour, but job opportunities decreased following the past Gaza war and the subsequent economic crisis. In Israel migrants are seen first of all as cheap labour, paid less, but also feared less than Palestinian workers who are substituted whenever possible (Ellman, Lacher 2003).[13] It is not by accident that most migrant workers do not get a work permit. Entrepreneurs profit from their amenability and dependence. For migrants this system of exploitation offers some opportunities however (cf. Hannerz 1974). Biniam and his friends used their time in Israel to earn money and finance further migration steps. If you work 12 hours a day, you can save some, support family members at home or in migration and pay a regular rent at the same time. Additionally Biniam was not tempted to spend his daily income in one of the Ethiopian bars run by *Beta Israel*. Urban wages ranged between 12 and 25 New Israeli Sheqalim per hour, equalling 2.50 to 5 Euro. A monthly income of 1000 Euro was therefore possible. Cleaning supplies and food—if one works in a kitchen—can be organised for free. Maximising his social security despite restricted means, Biniam took part in three different local self-help-groups: He has become member of an *iqub-* as well as an *adir*-group, the former a saving-community, the latter a mutual burial insurance. Both institutions are well-known social institutions in Ethiopia and Eritrea, and date back to the beginnings of modern urbanisation (Bustorf, Schaefer 2005). Under the specific conditions of migration regular income and trusted friends are required to participate. The third self-help-group was the shared household itself. Biniam and his flatmates agreed to guarantee the monthly rent if any of them should lose his job—but individual responsibility was limited to one month only. Sharing the necessary work and transforming gendered understandings of roles and

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[13] Jerusalem's new tramway has been the most recent public construction site to which Eritrean migrant workers contributed considerably.

assignments was forcefully learned by Eritrean youths in military training
and national service. However, this social network meant a lot. Numerous
immigrants in Israel are still sleeping in the park, where they are constant
subject to robbery, police raids and arrests.

> There seems to be no clear policy for refugees in Israel. This only fosters con-
> fusion and instability. We were imprisoned in different detention centres for
> certain periods. Even after our release a number of people are being detained
> and the threat and decision for imprisonment to everyone is always in the
> box because the decision of the government is whimsical. [. . .]
>   [It] has been said that in the near future all asylum seekers will be per-
> mitted to stay in the country but not work. How will we eat, where will we
> sleep? Does anyone know or care? Why this is the case no one can explain.
> It seems that the Ministry of Interior has decided to make us crazy. It is dif-
> ficult to sleep at night when you are not sure what the future holds.[14]

Bureaucratic arbitrariness and bullying, political reluctance and worse
xenophobia were reasons enough for the growing Eritrean community in
Israel to initiate a public meeting in Tel Aviv in November 2008. Conse-
quently the group *"Eritrean Asylum Seekers in Israel"* has been founded,
an executive committee elected and a demonstration in Tel Aviv was
organised the following December. Around 150 people attended; Biniam
and his friends were among them, wearing campaign T-Shirts and white
masks to keep their anonymity.[15] African immigrants are legally labelled
as "infiltrators" by Israeli administration, and plans of deportation are
being discussed. However 2012's violent xenophobic protests against Afri-
can migrants in Tel Aviv came as a surprise to most.[16]

   The formation of political associations results from the claims for polit-
ical participation in a democratic state. Experience has taught that the
right for participation is not granted *per se* but has to be actively fought for
(cf. Hepner 2007). Contacts with Israeli NGOs fighting for migrants' rights
proved essential. The organisation of *Eritrean Asylum Seekers in Israel* has
been supported by a group of national and international NGO's, among
them *Ha'Moked* (Hotline for Foreign Workers) and the *International*

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[14] [Eritrean Asylum Seekers in Israel]: The Plight of Eritrean Refugee Seekers in Israel.
Leaflet. 16.12.2008.
[15] ETV: Eritreans refugees in Israel demand recognition as refugees. 16.12.2008 [www
.youtube.com/watch?v=sPuxjAbwnhU].
[16] United States Department of State: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2011:
Israel. [www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2011/nea/186429.htm]. The Guardian: Israelis attack
African migrants during protest against refugees. 24.05.2012.

Federation for Human Rights (FIDH). Self-confidently the executive committee and active members of the *Eritrean Asylum Seekers* have demanded individual interviews to start the process titled "refugee status determination" (RSD) as developed by the UNHCR.[17] In early 2009 especially, severe complaints were led against the State of Israel chaotic and migrant-unfriendly administration. Senait, one of the elected speakers, symbolically equated democracy with refugee protection and human rights. In a formal meeting of the *Eritrean Asylum Seekers* with NGO-representatives, which Biniam and I attended together, she stated disappointedly: "Sorry, but I didn't come [here] for work." During the meeting the refugee activists had learnt some important lessons from the Human Rights lobby: the UNHCR, once again object of complaints and disappointment, is subject to national policy. Even if the UNHCR issued refugee-IDs—which is not yet the case—the refugees' status would not change. Referring to the Geneva Convention and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights does not lead to immediate improvements even in a democracy. Issues like visa-extensions and status determination remain beyond the refugees' possibilities as much as the urgently needed health care and social insurance.

Last but not least there is the education dilemma. Besides Hebrew classes for refugees, Israel has not that much to offer for young people from urban middle class, looking for vocational or academic education. Working hard for tomorrows' benefit Biniam tried to save some capital, but did neither have time nor energy to seriously prepare access to the education he dreamt of. Yet education might be the only way to leave his precarious state of unprotected migrant labourer, not only in Israel, but also in North America or Europe.

In February 2009, Biniam took me to the meeting of his *adir*-group in Negesti-Ethiopia-Bar in Jerusalem. The group comes together, whenever a member's close relative has died, to support the mourning family. Money for the funeral will be collected and help offered for the funeral feast lasting several days. Eritrean migrants—in this case eight men between 25 and 40 years—re-established the time-old tradition of their country in their temporary homes abroad. While they forgo the common cooking and other funeral preparations necessary "back home," bank notes are generously presented to the mourning relatives to cover the funeral costs back home. In this February meeting two members had lost a close

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[17] UNHCR: Procedural Standards for Refugee Status Determination under UNHCR's Mandate. 2003 [http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/42d66dd84.pdf].

relative. Dawit's younger sister in Asmara had fallen ill and had died still in her twenties, and Tsegai's brother had died in Shimelba refugee camp in Tigray, Ethiopia, probably of Malaria. The week before Tsegai had got a phone call from Shimelba and had promised to send money to buy medicaments upon receiving his next salary. In both countries, Eritrea and Ethiopia, medical care is often less than basic, especially if one cannot afford to import adequate medicaments from abroad. Life is precarious where these migrants come from and it remains fragile throughout their way towards an imagined better place in the so-called first world. Four months later the *adir*-group had to meet again. Biniam's own brother— a polite and open-minded young man in his early twenties, second to last of seven children and next in line to set out for migration—was shot by a drunken Federal policeman in Addis Ababa.

Daniel: Failing to Move North—Dubai, Nairobi and Addis Ababa

Meanwhile Daniel's three-month visa for Dubai had run out. A planned further migration to Ecuador and from there northbound remained an unfulfilled dream. As soon as Daniel had arrived in Dubai, the smuggler, who received him there, disclosed his demand for another USD 8,000—an appropriate price according to Biniam, but out of reach for Daniel. After few days, on the first occasion he clandestinely left the smuggler's home and moved to a hotel recommended by Eritrean countrymen he had met in the street. Confidently he stepped into an electronics shop in a glamorous mall and left a printout of his CV. Immediately after he received the manager's call on his mobile he moved to a workers' dormitory together with hundreds of men, mostly from Southern Asia. From now on he had become a worker in Dubai's international labour reserve, who construct and clean and sell for Dubai's fame. What is nothing more than the proverbial breadcrumbs in Dubai is a respected and needed income in the workers' countries of origin and keeps the migrants going.

> To be honest the first five days I was just crying, I was just crying. I've never dreamed my life would be like this, never dreamed [...]. You will smell the stuffy Indians' shoes in the accommodation place. It's not clean. I know that I am from the poor background, but let's say thanks to God that I am just trying to be clean with what I have. [...] Even though you don't have the time, you have to find the time to clean yourself at least. These guys, you'll find them sleeping as they are, so the whole night you die of suffocation. You might have heard this; the air temperature is quite high at the day time; at night time it doesn't get colder early. So you have to face all these things,

> but this is life of course. I know I would never make this if I was from the
> elite class [...], but it was my life in Geza Berhanu [a poor Asmara neigh-
> bourhood] keeping me forward. So there is always the motif, watching for
> the better world and of course you have to think for yourself. Who would
> afford your meal if you don't, if you don't just struggle to find a job and just
> do what you can, that's it. So...

Daniel took pride and motivation from his poor, but 'clean' life in one
of Asmara's poor former natives' quarters (cf. Treiber 2010). He adapted
quickly and pragmatically, hiding his lack of experience to protect himself
during the rough life of a labour migrant in Dubai.

> We were just rushing to eat as there was half an hour to do whatever. So,
> I have to deal how to have my cheap meal at least for a day. So you have
> to prepare this already from home, this was my own thought, buying some
> chips [...] in one packet for one Dirham of course and some bread or the
> other day raw eggs. You can cook them, put them on bread. If you're lucky,
> you can have one Pepsi with it, usually it's [a] plastic [bottle], so you can
> take this [from] home to the work. You can have it at the work, so at least
> you could sit ten minutes or something like this.

Work visas in Dubai are only prolonged if a local employer applies offi-
cially and in time. It is common to recruit staff in their South Asian home
countries. A visa application for a worker who is already in the country
contains a certain risk, as he might leave his job for a higher wage else-
where as soon as the visa is granted. That is why, Daniel explained later
on, his employers only promised to support his demand for a visa exten-
sion, without really doing so. Three times he changed his employer, sell-
ing microwaves, sportswear and finally tuxedos to Russian tourists and
Arab businesspeople. When he started to doubt the promised support, he
left the job. Time ran out, however and Daniel, proud to send almost all
his pay home, faced the date of visa expiry unprepared and impecunious.
Finally only the smuggler could help. Daniel contacted him. The estab-
lished way to regain legal entry to Dubai is to fly out to Iran and reapply
for a three-month-visa—but life is costly there and Daniel was bankrupt.
Already the flight ticket had to be advanced by the smuggler to avoid
potential arrest for over-staying and subsequent deportation. The alterna-
tive was a flight to Nairobi, from where Daniel planned to travel north to
Addis Ababa. With his false passport he did not have difficulties to obtain
legal stay for one month in Kenya. Still, strolling through Nairobi and car-
rying just a few belongings in a plastic bag, he was hungry, tired and lost.
So he approached a church, hoping for advice and Christian charity. By
chance he found a Catholic nun of Eritrean origin, who of course knew

about the plight of her countrymen and felt pity. She invited him to have lunch and rest in a church compound. Finally he managed to receive some money from abroad and meet his only contact in Nairobi, the brother of a Dubai work colleague and a broker in the migration business. This man organized an official document for a small remuneration, stating that the bearer is an Ethiopian citizen, who had lost his passport, as Daniel did not want to approach Ethiopia's southern border with an Eritrean passport. Daniel narrated, with consternation, how naturally the immigration official had accepted his bribe (some Kenyan Shillings and a mobile phone), sitting right below an anti-corruption-campaign-poster. Until his trip to the border, lasting several days and nights, with a lorry driver and another migrant, again exhausting and uncomfortable, he stayed in a cheap pension in a Somali neighbourhood of Nairobi.

> So I decided crossing from Nairobi to Addis, this is still very risky, very risky. You know the Kenyan authorities and officials and security guards, but [...] there was already something existing in my mind. I have to [get] my papers and at least look for the next step. [...] Here I will try to [pursue] my former studies and I will try as soon as I can [to get a] scholarship. If this fails for sure I will run to Sudan and try the Egypt way, that's it. [...] Nobody will dare to support you his whole life, nobody! You depend from your own efforts and resources of course. So what I feel is like if I have something which could help me for my way I have to use it, that's it. I would never allow my little brothers to stop their school and walk around Harnet street [in Asmara's city centre] and sell soft [paper tissues]. I have experienced it enough [...]. This time I'm their hope.

Being at the mercy of rude drivers, greedy smugglers and corrupt officials again made him feel powerless and impotent, clearly understanding the limited worth of his life and dignity. At the same time he felt under increasing pressure to reach the border before its closure for the weekend and to put an end to his migration and re-establish his own well-being. Unfortunately he had not eaten for two full days, as he had not taken the advice seriously to take enough food and water with him. Kenyan policemen took him from his lorry and pressured him for a bribe. After his release another driver demanded a far too high fare for the remaining kilometres and also stole some of the few clothes he had brought from Dubai. Crossing the border to Ethiopia at Moyale finally turned out to be relatively easy, as he was guided on foot around the last Kenyan check points and the Ethiopian border guards were only interested in contraband. Proudly he changed his last USD 100 in a bank, paid out the last crooked lorry driver, had dinner and a long sleep. Just when his bus reached Addis Ababa without further

incidents, Daniel remembered in our interview, "Addis Ababa", a recent dancehall-style song by the Ethiopian band "Lafontain", was played in the radio—and filled him with joy, relief and self-confidence. He called the family of a friend he had met in Khartoum. They live in a simple but nice house in a poorer neighbourhood in the city's South, where he was warmly received from a near-by bus stop.

Since then Daniel has impatiently been waiting for a chance to study. A legal passport—with his real name—has been issued without delay after he organized a supporting letter confirming his Ethiopian citizenship. Meeting his former travel companions from Khartoum again—most of them had come directly via the Sudanese border—he could use their local contacts and successful practices. When the breaking news arrived that one of the nine had successfully left for Frankfurt, everyone felt elated and happy for him, but of course also a bit jealous, for a moment dreaming to be in his position—leaving me the only one to remain skeptical.[18] The recent deportation of another friend from Moscow remained concealed however. His projected travel to Ecuador and the USA ended abruptly, blasting the immense family credit his parents had organised. The little hut in the outskirts of Addis Ababa where Simon and his girl-friend Ruta now live and where we met in March 2010, does not contain a lot more than their room in Khartoum, a thin mattress, one small stool, a little kerosene oven, some clothes and hygienic articles, a red rose in a Coke bottle and two jerry cans containing water and cooking oil. A few months after his arrival in Addis Ababa Daniel also started to think about leaving again—back to Khartoum, where migrants find work more easily. Pressured to support his family in the short run, he did not want to rely only on the goodwill of friends abroad. Universities and colleges of course are slowly working bureaucratic machines, demanding official papers and formal recommendations—for Daniel not a promising enough future.

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[18] In 2008 Germany deported two asylum seekers to Eritrea, where torture and unlawful detention are guaranteed (ProAsyl: Eritreische Deserteure abgeschoben und Haft und Foltergefahr ausgeliefert. Presseerklärung. 30.05.2008).

Lessons for Life

In describing uncertainty in crisis-ridden Guinea Bissau and subsequent migration projects to Europe, Henrik Vigh coins the concept of 'social navigation', which does not only focus on action and movement in consistent uncertainty, but also on landscapes in motion and social environments rendered unpredictable (2009). Though uncertainty and exclusion are daily companions during their indeed long journeys, knowledge is acquired and transformed through communication within the fluid and geographically dispersed transnational milieu of Eritrean migrants and continuous comparison of success and failures. This is a world that can be mapped and constituted beyond the immediate. Knowledge can be objectified, imparted and internalized despite its dynamic transformation and its imperfect, sometimes contradictory, character as it gives meaning and orientation to the migrants' ever-changing life-worlds.

Investing long years to leave one's home country should result in arriving "somewhere"—that is, arriving somewhere to fill one's individual existence with some sense of contentedness, to help needy children, siblings and parents, and to develop and lead a "normal" life. For Eritrean youths, these simple wishes could still prove to be far too ambitious, as the tragedy in the Mediterranean Sea of early April 2011 has shown.

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"LIKE A PLATE OF SPAGHETTI"
MIGRANT NARRATIVES FROM THE LIBYA-LAMPEDUSA ROUTE

Alessandro Triulzi

Introduction

In October 2003, the discovery of a boat drifting off the coast of Sicily with "13 corpses and 15 barely alive survivors" (Coluccello & Massey 2007: 77) captured and magnified in Europe the "desperate journeys" undertaken by increasing numbers of refugees and poor migrants, mainly coming from the African continent, who were being smuggled via the Mediterranean by illegal transnational networks.[1] The alarming reports in the media gave way to a series of police investigations in Italy culminating in a country-wide operation called *Harig*, which showed the extent of the transnational connections of the Libyan-Italian human trade. At the end of a four-year judicial enquiry led by Luigi de Magistris, an Italian magistrate operating from the southern region of Calabria, over 33 people of different nationalities were charged with trafficking no less than 2,500 persons and reducing them "to slavery." The enquiry revealed that the transnational networks involved were not "Mafia-like" hierarchical organisations, but rather "smaller, more complex and fluid." The investigators found out that transnational trafficking in humans was not so easily disrupted as "fluid networks are intrinsically resilient to decapitation" and tend to act like "a plate of spaghetti." Every piece seems to touch each other, but you are never sure where it all leads (Coluccello & Massey 2007: 85–88; quotation at p. 88 is drawn from Green 1969).

Many of the smuggled migrants and refugees came to Italy through the Libya-Lampedusa (L-L) route, which involved the crossing of some 2000 km of sun-scorched Libyan desert, followed by approximately 200 miles across the Mediterranean sea to reach the small island of Lampedusa south of

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[1] Since then, increasing numbers of pack-full "cathedral boats" coming from Libya have been registered in the Mediterranean. Irregular crossings diminished following the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between Italy and Libya, but resumed en masse since the start of NATO bombings over Tripoli in March 2011. The narratives reported in this chapter have been recorded prior to the Libyan war.

Sicily. While the 2003 police investigation went on, the number of irregular migrants and refugees landing in Lampedusa or rescued from drifting off the Sicilian Channel increased sharply.[2] By 2006, 19,000 irregular migrants and refugees had arrived on the island; they had almost doubled by the end of 2008, when their landing on Italian soil was labeled for the first time by Italian authorities as "clandestine" and pursued indiscriminately by Italian law as a severe criminal offence (Del Grande 2010; Morone 2009; Rastello 2010).

It is significant to note that the wide-reaching investigation was given the code name *Harig*, from the Arabic "*harg*," "to burn" (also *Harrag*, see Del Grande 2007: 109), a common term employed throughout North Africa to denote those who "burn" (i.e., cross illegally, but also ignore or challenge) a traffic light, a state border or a public ban. The term further applies to migrants who destroy their identity papers upon departure, or at times burn their own fingertips to avoid being identified by immigration officers at the border.[3] By the time the *Harig* investigation was over, in April 2007, it was increasingly clear to police authorities and legislators in Italy that there was no other way to handle irregular, i.e, "clandestine" migration, but to crush it. Although there was ample evidence indicating that the number of irregular migrants arriving in Italy by sea was small (only about 12% as compared to the vast majority of persons "overstaying" their legally authorized travel period), the very fact that the majority of sea-borne irregular migration was arriving via Lampedusa allowed the Italian government to invest in the symbolic importance of the "clandestine invasion" by sea as the source of all evils concerning the defense of national identity and the maintenance of security.

Henceforth, all irregular migrants were classified by law as "clandestini," i.e., strangers illegally residing on Italian soil; their landing in Italy or crossing it without authorization was declared a criminal offence to be punished with 4 years of prison followed by expulsion from the Italian

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[2] Pastore et al. (2006) differentiate irregular entry in Italy by maritime vessels into "clandestine landings" in which migrants are set ashore along unpatrolled strips of coastline, and "open landings" in which the boats are left to drift off in Italian territorial waters till they are rescued by the Italian Coastal Guard (see Coluccello & Massey, 80). By July 2002, the Bossi-Fini Law, from the name of its two initiators in the Italian Parliament (the head of the northern League, Umberto Bossi, and the leader of the neo-fascist "National Alliance" Party, Gianfranco Fini) made all irregular entry into Italian territory a criminal offence.

[3] Uncertainty of origin allows irregular migrants to have better chances in claiming refugee status for oppressed groups or nationalities. The increasing use of DNA for identification has made fingerprints somewhat irrelevant nowadays.

territory (Borgna 2011: 22). Further, between 2002 and 2009 migration laws and controls were severely tightened by the Italian Parliament and differential legislation was passed not merely to keep out the "uninvited" (Harding 2000) but to make their "clandestine" life simply unsustainable by denying them basic rights in integration processes such as education, health or political representation (Mezzadra 2006; Borgna 2011; Rastello 2010). The L-L route soon suffered the same constrictions. By August 2008, following Italian pressures on the EU to lift its ban on Libyan trade, the signing of a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between the Italian and Libyan Governments ended a long-standing dispute over Italy's colonial responsibilities when the Italian Government agreed to pay reparations amounting to 5 bn. dollars in exchange for oil and a concerted effort to stop irregular migrants departing from Libyan soil. By the first anniversary of the Libyan-Italian Treaty, solemnly celebrated in Benghazi by the two leaders on August 2009, the L-L route had been effectively blocked and the Italian Minister of Interior Roberto Maroni extolled the virtues of the Italian and Libyan cooperation on irregular migration as a model for the whole of Europe. From May 2009 to March 2011, when Italian forces joined in the NATO-led "humanitarian" war against the Libyan Government, joint patrols of Italian and Libyan naval forces in the southern Mediterranean achieved systematic refoulement of all migrant boats heading north towards the Italian shores.[4]

The chapter argues that the eastern Sahara migrant route, briefly disrupted by the Libyan war, is in fact "resilient to decapitation" and reacts to outside pressure, like all trading networks, depending on the readjustment of supply and demand. All migrant routes are ready to give way to safer or more profitable alternative routes only to open again once basic security and network conditions have been reestablished. In fact, every "closure" of a migrant route simply means the opening of an alternative one, usually more costly in terms of financial transactions and human lives, as recent examples of both Mediterranean and Canary Island crossings have shown.[5] As the opening and closing of the L-L route appears to be emblematic of most irregular migrant trajectories in Africa, and reflects

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[4] The Italian policy of open refoulement in the Mediterranean was severely questioned by the European Commission of Human Rights in July 2010, and was condemned by the European High Court in February 2012.

[5] See the increasingly-distant crossings to the Canary Islands from the African coast, the new Hannaba-Cagliari route connecting Algeria to Sardinia, or the recent Egypt-Gaza crossings of migrants from Eritrea and Sudan.

European reactions to control as well as local attempts to exploit them, it is important in my view to gather and document migrants' testimonies and their narratives in order to understand what exactly the L-L route meant to traveling migrants and how local trade and smuggling networks operate on the ground.

The following narratives are based on migrant testimonies and travel accounts of the L-L route which have been collected in Rome among recent arrivals from the Horn between 2006 and 2009. Narrative sources are, of course, highly interpretive and selective in as much as they reflect individual stories and the ability of those who tell them to recall traumatic events of their lives. Most migrants and asylum-seekers shy away from being interviewed since the migratory process already involves too many awkward questions being asked or forced on them in their uneasy attempt to fit into western categories of a bona fide migrant or refugee. So migrant narratives are often flawed and secretive (Ranger 2005). As such, they may have little to offer to the security, development or migration officer. As a historian however, I have been fascinated by the amount of information these narratives reveal and from the very beginning I have felt the need to create a healthier context for their utterance and survival. Involving migrants in the research process, and helping mobilize their voice and agency to widen awareness of their condition in Italy, resulted in the creation of a migrant memory project in Rome which provided a sympathetic listening context for migrants willing to speak out and to have their voice used both as an archival source and as a live testimony in public occasions and debates.[6] We soon found out that "unspeakable truths" could be shared together with fellow migrants within a joint, participatory context which assured both confidence and empathic listening. Richer and longer narratives soon followed aimed not just at acquiring refugee status

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[6] Beginning in 2007, with the help of migrants who had recently arrived from the Horn, a group of researchers, volunteers and social activists started an informal "Archive of migrant memories" (AMM-*Archivio delle memorie migranti*) at the Asinitas School for migrants in Rome (see www.asinitas.org). Around the school activities, narrative circles and audio-visual seminars were organized to record, translate, and store migrant narratives which were then printed, filmed and broadcasted through civic medias and social networks. The result was a series of interviews in the form of written, audio and visual testimonies extracts of which will be reported here. The films *Come un uomo sulla terra* ('Like a Man on earth' 2009) and *Soltanto il mare* ('Nothing but the Sea' 2011), both co-directed by Dagmawi Yimer, a refugee from Ethiopia, were the first multimedia results of this work. AMM has since become a nation-wide no-profit association (see www.archiviomemori emigranti.net).

or humanitarian protection (which was promoted elsewhere) but at producing an articulate body of self-reflexive accounts of the so-called "exit-option" and its human toll. The L-L route amounted to a long journey the cost of which we jointly agreed should be made known to the Italian public as well as to the migrants' relatives and friends back home.

BACKGROUND TO THE L-L ROUTE

According to several observers (Marfaing & Wippel 2003, Bredeloup & Pliez 2005; Bensaâd 2005, 2007), the Sahara has become in recent times not only "the preferred route" for migrants heading to Europe but also a densely populated area of forced residence for many undocumented African migrants. The restrictive anti-migrant policies being implemented by Governments on both sides of the Mediterranean from the mid-1990s onward forced many Sub-Saharan migrants to remain stranded in the wider Sahara macro-region, transforming countries such as Libya, Morocco or Algeria into both transit and destination countries, confirming the fluid nature of transnational mobility and its impact on target countries (Hamood 2006). This development affected Libya in particular following the pan-African open door policy adopted by Kaddafi's government since the mid-1990s (Pliez 2004). As the Schengen countries gradually closed their gates to migrants roughly in the same period, and linked their containment policies to those of the North African states (De Haas 2006), the Sahara and coastal regions of Libya became increasingly inhabited by Sub-Saharan migrants who found in the informal economy of the Sahara a precarious yet available source of living and working (CARIM 2010).

The Sahara has always been an area of mixed transhumance and migrancy. Mobility flows, however, were accentuated in the last forty years by the worsening environmental and economic conditions and multiple conflicts flaring up throughout the Sahelian region. Starting with pastoral nomads from Niger and Mali moving north in the mid 1970s to escape drought and war, the early migrants were followed by increasing numbers of central and west African agriculturalist and urbanized youth seeking better working conditions, and by refugees and asylum-seekers escaping the excesses and pitfalls of the failed states of the Horn. The opening of oil fields and construction sites in the middle of the desert encouraged the new economic and political migrants to enter the wider Sahara macro-region, while the increasing migratory flows fed a profit-based economy for transport and services geared towards migrants (De

Haas 2006; Pliez 1999, 2004). Thus original inhabitants and established migrants became increasingly connected with the new arrivals, and the informal economy was soon embedded in government policies and an increasing number of ventures for private profit that led to systematic abuse and greed. The new "villes-carrefour" of the Sahara, like Sebha, Agadez, or Kufra (Pliez 2000, 2006), with their flourishing transport and transit economy, depended on the exploitation of migrant labour forces and their *hawala* credit network.[7] With markets and streets named after the migrants' place of origins,[8] these desert cities soon became a living testimony of the transformative role played by migrants in the very making of the Saharan economy.

According to the Algerian geographer Ali Bensaâd (2005, 2007), it was during this period of high human mobility that the Sahara reverted to a lively place of cohabitation for North African groups of various origin (Berber, Arab or Afro-Arab descent) who increasingly mixed with the Sub-Saharan migrants and their kin reviving old links and memories of a complex and often tense past. It is in this context that the Sahara rediscovered both its ancient vitality (including new inroads of cosmopolitanism due to the new languages, religions and social values introduced by the migrants) and new exclusionist trends going back to the old trans-Saharan slave trade and long-maintained feelings of "white" superiority vis-a-vis their "black" neighbours. The larger Mediterranean area soon experienced all the contrasts and challenges of the new economic dynamism typical of all "globalization at the margins," involving high mobility, strong communication networks and brutal profit-making. Thus the Sahara was transformed into "a major terrain of confrontation and of violence" (Bensaâd 2007: 55–57). Because of this, "Trans-Saharan corridors now directly link black Africa and the Mediterranean" and the Sahara "is more than ever a Mediterranean outpost. As such it is also a periphery, a "suburb" increasingly close to Europe," both a "taking-off point" and a "holding zone," or "vanguard barrier" to control unwanted movements of its southern neighbours (Ibid.: 51–52). It is in this context that an informal economy of transport has arisen, transit States often acting as first

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[7] The *hawala* is an informal credit system based on mutual trust and compliance. It is through this system that families sustain the travel of their members on the road, and they in turn, once arrived and self-established, sustain their families with remittances that avoid official channels and fees.

[8] Such as Rue Quarante in Sebha, from N'Djamena in Chad, or sūq Sudan in Kufra, or sūq Africa in Tripoli. See Pliez 2000, 2006. Interview with Damallash, *passim*.

organizers and beneficiaries of this trade, whereas nomadic groups and newly-born intermediaries play the traditional "double role of conveyor/ robber: they earn money by guiding and by robbing, robbery reinforcing their necessary functions as guides." Thus a slave economy is gradually being built across the Sahara, having at its base "a mix of local notables and entrepreneurs, local and south-Saharan mafias, and agents of the State" (Id., 62–63).

For migrants coming from the Horn, and aiming to reach the Mediterranean shore, the L-L route has been the most heavily travelled track and a source of very brisk human traffic. From the early 2000s, reaching the Libyan coast was a mirage and a nightmare, but also a challenge and an initiation to adulthood for young migrants journeying through smugglers' stop-and-go form of travel and traffickers' delays. Along the rough 2000-mile route, migrants coming from the region of the Horn encountered all sorts of obstacles—cultural, racial and political—yet the urge to come out of the "regimes of violence" and the continuous state of disarray at home made them push through both the Sahara and the Mediterranean, whose informal "economy of violence" attracted and wearied them out as they strove to forge ahead and gather resources for continuing their travelling.

In fact, both regions offered physical as well as economic and social challenges to migrants. In the Libyan Sahara, the strong economic revival was due to the arrival of next to 1.5 million workers and migrants attracted by the open door policy inaugurated by Kaddafi in the mid-1990s to sustain the economic growth of the country.[9] The new Saharan economy that soon emerged was based on vital productive sectors such as constructions of road, housing and public infrastructure, coupled with agriculture and transport services produced by, and anchored to, an abundant supply of cheap manpower and labour supply mainly extracted at the expense of Sub-Saharan migrants whether in transit or in temporary residence. The flowering Sahara economy soon came in contact and converged with the southern regions of Mediterranean Europe (mainly Spain, Italy, and Greece) where, quite in parallel, increasing numbers of African, Asian and Eastern European migrants were competing in the long-established informal economy of agriculture, construction and domestic services.

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[9] The open door policy was stopped by the Libyan government in the early 2000s after serious racial riots took place and a series of brutal expulsions of illegal migrants opened the way to repressive anti-migrant measures long-advocated by Europe and encoded in the Libyan Italian treaty of August 2008 (Hamood 2006; De Haas 2006).

In southern Italy, particularly, the illegal migrants were to be easily absorbed by differentiated horticultural picking seasons, the construction sector, and domestic work benefitting, here too, a profit-based structure of easy-won power and wealth (Leogrande 2008). In spite of the increasing anti-foreign rhetoric publicly announced and sustained by the respective states on both sides of the Mediterranean, and by the repressive anti-migrant policies the Schengen countries imposed on their North African allies, the strong migratory flows crossing both regions were in fact tolerated, or selectively complied with, to allow the informal economies of private profit to continue.

Thus, although they reflected different geo-political, cultural and social settings, the Sahara and the Mediterranean macro-regions share some strikingly common characteristics for migrants who run in both cases along parallel paths of constrictive, albeit transgressive, behaviour. Each macro-region is in fact both the springboard and the terminal venue of a growing informal economy, which fuels cheap labour and economic resources to its respective networks of smugglers, traders and colluded state authorities. These in turn liaise with political and economic actors operating across the national markets on both shores of the Mediterranean, each rivalling to compete within the local economy and with the world's global markets.

Within these different economic and social settings, two small localities stand out in the imagination and memories of Sub-Saharan migrants who crossed or stumbled on them: the small oasis of Kufra in the southeast section of Libya, and the small island of Lampedusa, south of Sicily, in the Mediterranean. The former is surrounded by a vast and unforgiving desert, the latter by a deep and formidable sea. As the testimonies collected for the Archive of Migrant Memories were mainly coming from Ethiopian and Eritrean migrants who had crossed or been stopped in these two localities, I will try here to describe the "traveling pains" of the long journey across desert and sea through the voices and memories of a group of young Ethiopian men and women coming from Qirqos, one of the poorest districts of Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa.

The Qirqos Youths

Between the Fall of 2005 and the Summer of 2007 a group of disaffected youths mainly coming from the Addis Ababa district of Qirqos decided to leave Ethiopia in the wake of repressive government policies following

contested 2005 national election results.[10] The stifling of the opposition and the slow growth of Ethiopian democracy was only one of the reasons pushing the Qirqos youths to leave the country. As Dagmawi Yimer states at the beginning of the film *Like a Man on Earth*, people like him and his friends were tired of living in "a country where judges are put to prison for their judging." In addition, the opportunities for work and social advancement were scant, and an increasing number of young people felt they simply had no future if they stayed behind. A crowded and mostly poor community with a high rate of unemployment and prostitution, Qirqos is somewhat typical of the social marginalization and destitution that pushes many urbanized youth of sub-Saharan Africa to leave friends and family in search of a brighter future (Howana and Boeck 2005). Although the travelling youths came from different corners of town, the core group was from this district, and it is under this name that their memories have been recorded.[11]

> My name is Adam (…). I am the fifth child (out of eight) in my family. I was born in 1989 E.C. in Addis Ababa, in the Qirqos area (…). At [school] I was able to score sufficient points to go for higher education but at that time many kids of the younger generation were leaving the country in different directions, for different reasons. Some went out to Kenya and then to South Africa. Others went to Yemen via Somalia, the rest went to Sudan and Libya. I was restless at the time. I was only 17 then. My brother, who is still living in London, used to call me and insisted on my leaving the country as everyone was doing then (Interview Adam, May 2008: 1).

> My name is Negga (…). I am 19 years' old and am a tenth grader. I came here because I heard a lot from other youngsters in Qirqos about people who had come over to Europe, London, Italy, also by watching western movies and TV. We knew nothing about the problems of how to get to these places, we only heard that life in Europe was beautiful; we were encouraged by all these rumors and tales to make the journey (Interview Negga, February 2008: 1).

Of the Addis Ababan youths who left at about the same time and arrived in Italy between 2006 and 2007, some were high school students who could not continue their studies, one was a 1st year law student enrolled

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[10] The repression of political protest in the country led to 193 people dead, several hundred wounded and 30,000 imprisoned. See Smith 2007: 7.

[11] The recorded memories to follow are drawn from the Archive of Migrant Memories (AMM) in Rome and from the backstage production of the film *Like a man on Earth*—For an account of how the film came about; see Carsetti & Triulzi 2009: 97–132.

in a private University, two were police officers who had left in disagreement with the government order to crush the post-election protest, one was an English teacher who had been imprisoned for translating opposition leaflets to foreign correspondents, two were young women looking for better job opportunities. Of the others who joined the group later on, three youngsters would die during the fateful crossing of the desert and sea, two would eventually give up and return home. The rest would arrive to Lampedusa after several stop-and-go's involving various forms of confinement and release imposed alternatively by police, smugglers and/or intermediaries along the way.[12] They knew from the start that the journey through Sudan and Libya would be long and difficult:

> At that time I heard that some of my friends were ready to go out of the country. I talked to my sister, and she said she would find some money to help me go with them. She sent me the money. Together with my friends, we made preparations (…) We were eleven youngsters from the same *safar* who had started the journey together and travelled through the Sahara for 21 days. We chose the route thorough Sudan and Libya because we thought it would be easier there to travel without documents (…) We did not want anyone to know about our intentions. We prepared our trip secretly. (Interview Dawit, February 2008: 1).

The youths left Addis Ababa in small groups, at different times, not all knowing each other, or the others' decision to move out. Families were involved only rarely as a decision-making group, as in Dagmawi's case, who left without telling his father. Brothers and sisters were informed before parents. Of the unwritten "rules of travel" that were recorded after arrival, the first three ran as follows:

> 1. Never travel with brothers, wives, fiancées, parents. 2. Share with closest friends only, no more than one or two persons, your intention to leave. 3. The day of departure do not say farewell to your dear ones as it may prove to be hard, if not impossible, to leave after that (Carsetti & Triulzi, 44).

Information about the travel and its difficulties were scant, basic instructions were reported in rumours or letter extracts by previous migrants and were circulated among the departing group and their families. Most travellers started their own individual odyssey with no idea of what the journey would be like. Factual information came only later, often too late. Families learned of their children's fate from an unexpected phone call

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[12] Throughout, the European "confinement logic" appears to have dominated both transit and destination countries (Perrin 2005: 67).

informing them of a road accident, a renewed smugglers' hold-up, or a repeated request for more *hawala* money. The migrants themselves were somewhat reticent to give their families or outsiders a true account of their travel hazards, as its human cost was often too high and traumatic, and could only be divulged to a small circle of "arrivants" (Derrida 1998). For those who arrived, to have made it did not necessarily mean success. The individual experience of violence—forced on them by others and perpetuated by them on others—recalls Primo Levi's description of camp survivors, either "saved" or "submerged" by their own process of salvation (Levi 1986).

> I would not advise anyone to make this trip the way I did. If there were another way of coming, it would have been much better. I would like no one to experience what I had to go through during this journey. First of all no one should sacrifice his own life [to migrate] (…) Let alone my friends, I would not advise even my enemy to come this way. One should experience this only to go to Paradise, not for worldly matters. If it is for this life, I would advise this experience to no one (Interview Negga, 11–12).

Crossing the Sahara

The crossing of the Sahara desert is no easy matter even for well-equipped travellers. For migrants barely able to care for themselves, endowed with no rights or entitlements in a foreign land, the journey was riddled with traps and obstacles, some of which were beyond imagination. The first part of the trip, the odd 1000 km separating the Ethiopian highlands from Khartoum, were easily covered mostly by bus, the Ethiopian youths being directed through a network of local protectors and mediators (*dallala*) to the *Habesha* (i.e., Ethiopian) district of Diem in the Sudanese capital (Le Houerou 2004). Here, the migrants were taken to "hospitable" guest houses run by co-religionists who only "mildly taxed" them for food, lodging and urban services. The *dallala* system of "guiding/robbing" started in fact from Khartoum onwards, where migrants were welcomed by other kinds of "relatives" more profitably involved in the busy traffic of humans. Ato Mesfin,[13] a man from Gondar, was the first of a long series of smugglers, service intermediaries and money-brokers who would accompany

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[13] See Dagmawi Yimer, *Our Journey: A Narrative, passim.*

the different members of the migrant group through their diversified itin-
eraries to the coast:[14]

> We called Mesfin. He told us that on Monday there would be an arranged
> trip. The trip was supposed to take place on Monday night, but on Monday
> morning we heard from a friend that another group was coming from Qirqos
> and we thought we should wait for them. This group arrived on Wednesday.
> They were three. We stayed there for six days. Then on Friday night we were
> taken out from Mama's house and early morning on Saturday we started our
> trip. On Saturday we were taken outside Omdurman: Mesfin had warned us
> that this would not be an entertaining trip, and that we should not com-
> plain. When we saw the open Land Rovers which were supposed to take
> us through the desert we thought they were too small. But we managed to
> get in it, even with all our belongings. We paid 200 dollars. The sitting was
> arranged by Mesfin. We were 45. Water, food, etc., was distributed by group;
> our group had nine people. We were basically all from Qirqos but there were
> youngsters from Megganegna and Liddeta *safar*. There were 5 Sudanese,
> and some Eritreans. At first we could not endure the orders given us by the
> Sudanese. We didn't understand their language, they beat us whenever they
> wanted. And slowly, day after day, even the closeness and friendship within
> our group started to falter (Interview Tsegai 'piccolo', February 2008: 3).

Thus, the initial Ethiopian group split several times, adapting to the vaga-
ries of the trip and to individual reactions to it. As noted earlier, not all the
members reached the planned or imagined destination: some will give up
and return home, some will be imprisoned or otherwise stopped for indef-
inite periods during their journey; some will die on the way. Throughout,
the migrants' resilience was encouraged and supported by half-guiding
half-robbing intermediaries known as *dallala*, themselves former migrants
who had been prevented from going any further and had turned into road
mediators to make a living. Their identity and social positioning changed
or alternated following the fluid rules of need and greed. The long journey,
in fact, was broken into continually negotiated tracts, travelling migrants
being retained and freed alternatively by different "captors" and "saviours"
under the changeable guise of guide, mediator or policeman.

It was in the middle of the desert, near the Sudanese border, that the
Ethiopian group was handed to the Libyan smugglers by the Khartoum
brokers so that they would continue "guiding" their travel into the new
country. Here, several hundred miles away from Khartoum, just off the
Libyan border, began the "no man's land" where every migrant was on
her/his own with no individual right, and without kin or state protection.

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[14] On *Ato* Mesfin see Dagmawi Yimer, Ibid.

It is here that the hard and fast rules of the profitable business of guiding and robbing were strictly implemented:

> After three days of journey from Omdurman we reached a place near a very high mountain where we were to meet the Libyans (…) It was very hot at that time, and dusty. When the Libyans arrived, we were happy to see white men in the desert (…) The Sudanese and the Libyans exchanged petrol barrels, we were rounded up to meet [them]. Then the Libyans said we should pay 500 dollars each, and all of us were disturbed by this news. Those who came from Addis did not have that amount of money. Two of the Libyans were white and one was black. The nine of us who came from Addis were separated from the rest of the group. Then the Libyans said we should pay four hundred each. The Eritreans were the first to agree to settle with that amount, they were followed by the Oromo for whom even 350 would do. We from Addis said we were going to pay 200 only from there to Tripoli. Some of us did not even have that much money, we only had 150. But the Libyans said 'al hamdelillahi', you can stay here for the rest of your life' (Interview Negga, 4).

The hard lesson of desert crossing was soon learned; illegal migrants were due to follow circular rather than straight trajectories as they were forced to go back time and again to the starting off point by the predatory rules of the smuggling economy: each new start provided ways and means to tax, abuse, or otherwise impose new levies in kind or nature, migrants being squeezed to the end before they were allowed to continue to the next stop. There is no ready evidence of this erratic stop-and-go system, and of the imbued violence inherent in the crossing and re-crossing of entire stretches of desert and sea, except in the memory of old enslavement practices across the Sahara with their strict "logic of confinement" applied equally by smugglers, traffickers and corrupt police authorities:

> We were stopped, imprisoned, and sold time and again. I did not think we would be treated like donkeys, we were being sold just like objects. It reminded me of the past when we were sold [like slaves]. In Libya it is the same [today]. I could not believe it (…) After the fifth [arrest] I called my mother and told her crying that I could not bear it any longer and wanted to return. I thought the journey would simply be from Sudan to Kufra, from Kufra to the Libyan coast, and from Libya to Italy. What I did not expect was all that in between (Interview John, backstage of *Like a Man on Earth*, March–May 2008: 10–11).

Daily violence accompanied 'all that in between': conditions of imprisonment were intolerable for both men and women, but were especially degrading and dangerous for children and women. Men were regularly beaten on the soles of their feet, or kept in solitary confinement for

any independent reaction or expression of protest against the bad quality of food or prison conditions. Women were raped in retaliation, admonishment or as mere expression of male power, children being abused as routine of an unquestioned show of force. Far-away prisons such as Kufra or Sebha in the Libyan desert were particularly inhospitable. In the words of Tighist, one of the three women interviewed during the making of the film *Like a Man on Earth*:

> At Sebha we were severely beaten, men especially, on the soles of their feet. We were left aside, because we screamed, and because we were only a few. They called us *Iudii*, they snatched the crosses from our necks, and beat our heads against the wall. We tried to resist, and did not want to give our crosses away because of our religion, so they beat our heads against the wall. Some of us, men and women, had our arms and legs tied together (Interview Tighist, backstage *Like a Man in Earth*, March–May 2008: 8–9).

It was here that the informal economy of transport and violence first merged with the "slave economy" of the globalised Sahara and its innumerable forms of forced impositions. After crossing the Libyan border, the physical conditions of travel worsened considerably: the Horn migrants were joined by several other groups coming from nearby regions and squeezed into overcrowded pick-ups in a state of total helplessness. People fainted, at times falling off the fast moving vehicles from exhaustion. The smugglers' fees for the transport services—consisting of food, water, lodging or further movement—were continuously and erratically raised. Arrest by police on the road was often a practice agreed with the smugglers themselves, and was used both as a threat and a control practice to ensure obedience and subordination. It was followed by detention and at times deportation to the southern border areas and their thriving commercial hubs. There, arrested migrants were handed over to local entrepreneurs or colluding *dallala* who kept them at their service till they earned enough money to be able to start the journey again:

> There was a Libyan mediator, called Ibrahim, who led us into the house. He told us he was expecting us, that he had bought water and food. He told us to get rest, washed, after which we could go anywhere we wanted. He told us this in a very gentle way. Then we agreed. But his look was rather suspicious. And we told him before we took our shower 'let us reach an agreement'. He said we should pay 300 [dollars] to reach Trabulus [Tripoli], and 200 for Benghazi. We said we had already paid 200. We were very angry and we said we would not pay any money. He changed dramatically when he heard this. He slammed the door on us and said 'If you don't agree with what I said I will call the police and you will be sent to prison' (Interview Negga, 3–4).

In this way, the crossing of the desert could take from 15 days to 6 month or more depending on circuitous events, network connections, and good luck. Its human and financial cost changed accordingly. Rarely was the crossing done only once: migrants were squeezed to the last penny they had or were able to receive from their families. The final indebtedness of migrants and their external supporters—whether they arrived or not—was out of proportion with the possibility of paying back. The only ones who surely profited were those involved in the informal transport and slave economy thriving on forced cheap labour from persons stripped of all basic rights.

The oasis of Kufra, situated at the border of the Great Sand Desert, 300 km away from any water well (Gandini 2004: 384) was the starting point and the dead end of every eastern desert crossing until the Libyan Italian Treaty of Cooperation of 2008 started having its effects. The area of Kufra was well connected to the coast by a road of about 900 km and a yet unfinished water pipe leading straight to the coast (Gandini 2004: 48–9), but the smuggling of irregular migrants was mostly done at night through the old caravan and slave routes along the Great Sand desert, a much longer, harder and safer route for the traffickers' overcharged pick-ups and their networks of contact and support bases.

Most migrants crossing Kufra for the first time were unaware that the desert journey would be repeated several times. Many of them would soon return, trapped in the transport and slave economy of the Sahara desert: brought up north by "helpful" guides, they were taken back to Kufra more than once in a vicious circle of exploitation and robbery. Guided and robbed alternatively by unscrupulous smugglers and zealous *dallala*, the various members of the Ethiopian group were stopped, arrested, freed and sold back time and again. The smugglers and their local connections employed them in manual work and held them in closed housing till they paid their debt and managed to gather more *hawala* money to start the journey again. Thus the Qirqos youths, like thousand others like them, were shuttled back and forth between Kufra and the coast until they were coerced out of their remaining savings or usable contacts. From the "prison-market" of Kufra, where migrants were supposed to be expelled to neighbouring countries, they were "sold" instead to covetous *dallala*. When asked how he was "sold" at Kufra, Dawit gave the following answer to Dagmawi:

> Usually we were sold for thirty dinars. It was a Sudanese who did it. His profit derived from the Libyans who would take you back to Tripoli. This is

why you normally don't stay in Kufra for long. For instance, if you go around in town, they may come and tell you that the police is on its way and you'd better hide in one of their houses. Then you have to spend 200 dollars to get out of there. The intermediary (*dallala*) has a cell phone he will lend you so that you can call home. You do so and ask your relatives to send the money to Mesfin in Sudan. Then you call Mesfin and tell him the name of the *dallala* you are staying with. He has someone in Sudan, often a relative, who can get the money to Mesfin. When the transaction is done, the intermediary will take you 30 km away from Kufra, and drop you in some abandoned *misrah* or agricultural set up run by a Libyan he is in touch with. There you wait for the car that will take you again to the coast (Interview Dawit 2, backstage of *Like a Man on Earth*, March–May 2008: 4).

Mediterranean Crossings

Once the shuttling back and forth was over, and the desert crossing by the exhausted migrants came to an end, those who managed to reach the Libyan coast joined the others who had preceded them and squatted in groups in rented shacks around Tripoli's outskirts or in *dallala* houses waiting till the first boat sailed out to Italy. According to oral reports, to live in a pre-war Libyan coastal town as an illegal migrant required inordinate skills and contacts. Fear of arrest dominated the daily routine of *Habesha* migrants and was a constant source of uneasiness and insecurity: one could be betrayed by a suspicious neighbour or taxi driver, or by a simple gesture, a casual dress, a foreign accent. As soon as one got to Tripoli, the search started for a trusted intermediary in touch with reliable sea smugglers to start the lengthy negotiations for the next step of the L-L route, the risky and much-feared sea crossing:

> After three trials, I reached Tripoli for the first time and went directly to Krimea where the *Habesha* used to work and live quietly. I was tired of being in and out of prison and decided to stay there for a while (…). I started working as a porter by the day. We used to take bananas and apples from a depot to a small lorry. We were given one Libyan dinar for every box of apples or other fruit that we carried. One could get about 10 dinars every hundred boxes we carried, but seven dinars went straight to the intermediaries. As I was working in this way, the time for the sea crossing arrived. I had received 1200 dollars from my family to do it. I knew it was hard for them to be asked all that money but I had no choice. So I started asking around among the local mediators whom I could trust (Interview Negga, 7).

By this time, migrants usually had no money left, so they survived by taking little-paid, unstable and temporary small jobs in the local economy,

or were recruited for odd jobs at Sūq Africa, the central market and main meeting point for all contacts and negotiations in Tripoli. Here, in order to raise the money which was needed to pay for the sea trip, one was forced to engage in highly profitable, but often illegal activities or try again for a renewed *hawala* call for additional money from home. Sub-Saharan migrants—contrary to Maghreb or East Europeans—had to pay their fare in advance and were not given their money back in case of accident or seizure of the boat by the police.

> The payment for the sea crossing is 1,200 dollars. It is to be paid in advance without any real guarantee of success. You cannot pay just before leaving, but you have to pay weeks in advance. Once you take the money out of your pockets, you can only pray that the money is not lost. But there is no way for you to make sure of it. Actually the boat owners are rumored to be allied with the policemen themselves. If you don't pay what they ask you to pay, you will end up in prison (Interview Dawit1, February 2008: 4).

Boats used to leave the coast when there was an adequate number of paying passengers, ranging any number between 30 and 300 according to the size of the boat. The rundown boats were often entrusted to self-made captains who were appointed on the spot in exchange of a free ride or a lower fare, and were given last minute instructions for the improvised job. Because of this, many boats never reached their destination. Some were stopped before they left, some were seized in the open sea and were taken back to the port of departure, others were rescued in Italian or Maltese waters and taken respectively to one of these two countries. In his oral memoir, Negga vividly recollects the agony of a long-awaited departure:

> In the meantime the summer had arrived. There was one Sudanese media-tor (…) with whom I made an arrangement that if I could get 15 people who would pay full price I could get a free crossing. I managed to find 15 people. We were taken to the departing area called *misrah* (abandoned house) near the sea. Here there were 400 people from different mediators waiting to go. In this *misrah* the only meal we could get was one bread and a little cheese. We slept on the floor, it was very close to the sea, we were very worried the police would catch us. We stayed [there] for 15 days. After that, one night, they came and said that the weather conditions were convenient. So they gathered us. There were so many mediators, some *Habesha*, some Sudanese, but the owners of the *barka* (boats) were all Libyans. We were taken to the port with a container. We travelled for a long time from the *misrah* to the port. It was a mafia-like operation. At the port there were three big outboard *gommoni* (rubber boats) on the beach. They were inflated. They said the weather was good but when we reached there the sea was rough. We prayed and were very afraid, but we could not go back after all that. We were ten from Ethiopia; the others were Sudanese, 60 people in all with our mediator.

> We carried the boat to the sea. Then the captain took the command and we pushed the boat into the sea. When the boat was well into the sea we jumped into it. By this time we were 72 people, and everyone was trying to embark first. There were fights to get in. The boat was for 50 people, but we were 72, so after the engine went on we saw it could not go very fast (Interview Negga, 9).

Negga eventually managed to arrive safely in Lampedusa, but it is no wonder that many did not, including three boys from the old Qirqos group. Since then, many more men, women and children have lost their lives during the fateful sea crossing, particularly after the opening of the military operations over Libya in March 2011. Here again, the closing of a migratory route usually means the opening of a more costly and risky diversion for migrants wanting to go through. Yet the logic of violence and forced confinement remains unaffected. It is this system that, today, is the cause of the increasing casualties in both desert and sea:

> Both the crossing of the desert and the sea are tough. The difference is that while you are in the desert, if something happens, you can stop and wait for help. But this is impossible at sea. There are so many people who died in the sea, many more so than in the desert. People see their relatives die in front of their eyes. This is why it is better that my brother and I did the crossing in separate journeys. It would have been unbearable otherwise (Interview Dawit 1, February 2008: 5).

During the 1911 NATO operations over Libya, the L-L route has been temporarily blocked and made inactive. As the conflict raged however over the Libyan skies and on the ground, the number of migrant as well as civilian losses dramatically increased, as did the number of dead bodies surfacing in the Mediterranean.[15] The worsening sea and transport conditions were only partly responsible for the rise of the death toll. This was also due to Kaddafi's decision to hurriedly drive into the sea several thousand harmless Sub-Saharan migrants stranded in Tripoli as a retaliation to the war, and to the guarded efforts by the NATO contingents at sea to avoid "interfering" with irregular migrants crossings the Sicilian

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[15] In the first six months of 2011, recorded losses in the Sicilian Channel went over 1600, bringing the total amount of registered losses in the Mediterranean in the last fifteen years at about 15,000. The percentage of deaths among irregular migrants attempting to reach Lampedusa has been calculated at 11%. See http://fortreesseurope.blogspot.com accessed 3 June 2011. Major shipwrecks on the Sicilian Channel occurred on 14 March (601 dead), 22 March (335), 6 April (250), 6 May (600), and 3 June (250). During the same period, 25,000 refugees from Tunisia and 15,000 more from Libya landed in Lampedusa. See *la Repubblica* 3.06.2011, 19.

Channel. It is a sad irony that, while NATO forces daily bombed Kaddafi's headquarters and military installations in Tripolitania, thousands of new irregular migrants were hurriedly driven to Italy in an attempt to counteract the international "humanitarian" intervention and punish the old Italian ally. The L-L route may have been temporarily disrupted, first by the Italian-Libyan containment policies, and later by the side-effects of the NATO war, but there is no doubt that its deadly effects will continue in the years to come.

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Interviews:
All interviews are from AMM, *Archivio delle Memorie Migranti*, Rome.

OUR JOURNEY

Dagmawi Yimer

EDITORS' NOTE

The following narrative was recorded shortly before its author, Dagmawi
Yimer, started his training as a filmmaker in one of the audiovisual sem-
inars of the Archive of Migrant Memories (AMM) in Rome, Italy. Dag-
mawi's narrative is drawn from a series of interviews held in December
2007–January 2008 at the Asinitas School for migrants in Rome.[1] As Dag-
mawi explained, "I wanted to be a lawyer in Ethiopia; I ended up making
videos in Italy. When I decided to leave my country, I would never have
imagined this ending, but perhaps there is a sense in all this, I don't know.
With my camera I try to give back some humanity and justice to the 'clan-
destines'; that's how you call us, right?" Since 2007, Dagmawi has directed
or co-directed several documentary films and shorts on the issue of migra-
tion to Italy, most notably *C.A.R.A. Italia* ('Dear Italy', 2009), *Soltanto il
mare* ('Nothing but the Sea', 2010), and *Benvenuti in Italia* (Welcome to
Italy, 2011). Come un uomo sulla terra ('Like a Man on Earth', 2008), his
most important film to date, has won numerous awards and has been
screened more than 500 times throughout Europe and North America.

The collective ethos that inspired Dagmawi and the AMM to document
and share his and other migrants' harrowing journeys has continued and
taken new shape in the participatory methodology of the Archive's col-
lection and production of migrants' narratives. Dagmawi's testimony,
including this narrative (and that of others), is much needed today, not
merely because of the immediacy of first-hand accounts, which bring us
closer to nearly incomprehensible experiences of forced migration, but

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[1] Dagmawi's narrative was the first of a series of in-depth interviews held with recently-
arrived Ethiopian migrants in Rome. Brief extracts from these interviews are in M. Carsetti
and A. Triulzi (eds), *Come un uomo sulla terra*, Rome: Infinito Ed. 2008, pp. 37–81. The
Italian version of Dagmawi's narrative has appeared in Uoldelul Chelati Dirar, Silvana
Palma, Alessandro Triulzi, Alessandro Volterra (eds), *Colonia e postcolonia come spazi
diasporici. Attraversamenti di memorie, identità e confini nel Corno d'Africa*, Rome: Carocci,
2011, pp. 339–56 (Italian transl. by Jehanne Marchesi, editing by Maaza Mengiste; see *www
.archiviomemoriemigranti.net*).

also because these narratives offer an important window into the untold stories of countless migrants making long and seemingly impossible journeys to Europe. Dagmawi shares the Archive's view that scholars have a collective responsibility, perhaps even a moral obligation, to listen to, document, and critically understand migrants' journeys and experiences. Unless they are documented, these narratives would be lost in the march of time and so, too, would any possibility for justice.

To be sure, listening to migrant voices, memories and silences—including their hopes, aspirations, and creativities, as well as their tremendous 'traveling pains'—restitutes to all of us a less incomplete sense of humanity and justice. As Dagmawi told one of the co-authors of his film, 'Nothing but the Sea' (www.soltantoilmare.eu), "During my journey to Italy I kept a travel diary. I took notes whenever I could, I often wrote at night, before sleeping, with the help of a small torch tied up to my lighter. I wanted to leave some trace of this absurd adventure, and often thought a film should be made of our experience. When you arrive at the end of such a journey, exhausted and empty inside, fearing everything, and surrounded by indifference and carelessness, you'd rather forget what you went through and mind your own problems. But I could not, and something inside me kept saying that I should do something about it. To work together with other migrants on my documentary at the Asinitas school in Rome helped me to get rid of a big weight. When the film was finished and started showing around I suddenly felt free and innocent, like a man on earth."

A Narrative

I was born and grew up in the neighborhood of Qirqos in Addis Ababa. Like all of Addis Ababa's neighborhoods, Qirqos is divided into *kebelè* that divide the city into administrative and population control units. It has been this way since the time of the Derg. I was born and grew up in n° 12, the railway men's *kebelè*. Yes, because in Qirqos, one of the poorest neighborhoods of the city, there's *La gare*, the train station of the only Ethiopian railroad built by the French at the time of Menelik II, to link Addis to the sea in Djibouti. For thirty years, my father worked as an engine-driver in the *Chemin de Fer Ethio-Djibouti* company until Melles Zenawi's government decided to abandon and close the railway line.

I told no one when I decided to leave my country, especially not my father. He would never have accepted my decision because he would have considered it an escape from my responsibilities as a law student,

a betrayal of all his sacrifices so that I might study in the best schools in
Addis. However I did tell my mother and sister who had been living for
some years in the United States and would have to help me with money
during the various stages of my journey. I phoned my father only after
I arrived in Sudan. Only then did I tell him that I was going to Europe.
According to the Gregorian calendar it was the year 2005 when I decided
to leave Ethiopia, while for the Ethiopian [Julian] calendar it was 1998.
The night before we left, my friend Mekdem and I spent the night at the
Omedia Hotel: we did this in order not to arouse suspicion in the neighbor-
hood. After the night in the hotel, early in the morning we took the bus for
Metemma, arriving after about two days. I had planned to meet Daniel, a
friend from Qirqos, in Khartoum. He was to leave two days after me.

    We spent the first night in Dongola and crossed Bahr Dar and Gondar
on the second day, reaching Metemma late that night. The next day we
changed our *birr* into Sudanese dinars. It was easy to find people who
changed money along the way. After crossing the Sudanese frontier at
Gallabat we suddenly realized that everything was out of our control, par-
ticularly because of the change in language, which had switched to Arabic.
Because of this we lost the ability to negotiate or defend ourselves. When
I first thought of leaving Addis I had started learning a little Arabic, a few
words, but it wasn't enough. Luckily there were twelve other youngsters
from Addis with us, and some of them could speak Arabic.

    Everyone who sets out on this journey brings a copy of a letter sent by
the first one from Qirqos to arrive in Italy. A letter containing all the nec-
essary information and warnings, in particular the costs, for the journey
to Libya. We too had this letter, but unfortunately, it wasn't much help
because things had changed since the first Qirqos guys had made the trip
five years earlier. The name of one of them who wrote the letter is Escis-
ciu; he is now in the United States.

    At Gallabat we hired a Land Cruiser driven by a Sudanese man to take
us to Gedaref. There, we spent the night. There were 15 of us in the van.
We slept in a compound in the open along with four women who were
on their way back to Ethiopia from Khartoum. They hadn't been able to
raise the money to continue their journey. Inside the compound was an
old Ethiopian gentleman, a strange figure, who spent his time sitting in a
chair. I wondered what he was doing there. I thought he was a spy until
someone told me that the house belonged to a certain Mulugeta, a strong
opponent of the Weyane [Tigrean] regime that rules Ethiopia. When we
were about to fall asleep, a Sudanese man who spoke Amharic came to
sell us tickets for the bus to Khartoum. It was at that point that my friend,

Mekdem, suddenly said: "Enough, my journey ends here." He didn't feel like to continuing.

Mekdem and I had been schoolmates at the French school and, after his diploma, he started working with the French at the Alliance Française library. He also earned good pay as a tourist guide, up to 1500 *birr* a month. Before we left Ethiopia together, he had already tried to go to the United States. He had flown to Dubai, then Moscow, and from there to Cuba, but he couldn't make it to the States, so he had returned to Ethiopia. At Gedaref, we had tried to phone our intermediary (*dallala*) in Khartoum, a man called Mesfin, but we hadn't been able to find him. We were told he had been arrested by the Sudanese police. This news discouraged Mekdem. In addition to that, everyone we met who was returning to Ethiopia told us terrible stories about the journey we were about to make. But my mind was made up: I was in the thick of it and I didn't quite believe the stories we were hearing. They weren't coming from people I knew and so, I didn't trust them. This was the idea I started out with: don't trust anyone. Those who returned spoke mostly of the difficulties along the way, rather than the dishonest intermediaries. They didn't mention Mesfin, the one whom we were advised to get in touch with in Khartoum. I was convinced that I should not turn back without first trying or verifying.

The next day, Mekdem returned to Addis, and I think he did well, because he wasn't suited for the kind of journey we were about to face. He was too frightened and agitated, always tense. For this journey, besides good luck, one has to have a lot of self-control. And possibly the reason for his journey was not deeply rooted inside him and would not have sustained him in the face of difficulties. That night in Gedaref, I managed to convince him to come as far as Khartoum. So he, too, had bought his ticket but then, at the last moment when he was already on the bus, he got down and didn't want to go. The other Ethiopian boys who were with us on the bus were very surprised to see someone from Qirqos renouncing the journey because they are known for their courage.

In the meantime, Daniel, my other friend, had left Addis two days after us and he reached Gedaref after I had already left for Khartoum and Mekdem had turned back. In Gedaref, he met the women with whom we had talked who told him that they had met us: "One was tall, the other short. The short one who was covered in tattoos done in Cuba turned back." So Daniel was sure that I at least had reached Khartoum because he and I had agreed to meet in Khartoum and I was determined not to turn back. Also, Daniel didn't have enough money and I would have ruined the journey for someone who counted on me. The bus that took us to Khartoum

was a fine one, with air-conditioning, and food and drinks served. It was on that bus that I felt for the first time that I had really changed countries, and that I was only at the beginning of my journey.

I arrived in Khartoum at 3 p.m. At the station I found a boy who was one of Mesfin's employees. He was there to receive the travelers and take them to Diem, the *Habesha* district of Khartoum. I told him that I heard Mesfin had been arrested; he answered that it wasn't true, that it was a rumor spread by the Eritrean intermediaries to increase their own business: "If you want, I can have you speak directly to him so that you can be sure," he said. I spoke to Mesfin on the phone but I couldn't be sure that it was really him because I had never heard his voice. So I mentioned the name of Fuad, another Qirqos friend whom we had arranged to meet in Khartoum. Luckily, Fuad was right there with Mesfin. He handed him the phone and I spoke to him, so now I was sure that I had fallen into the right hands.

I was taken to a house in Diem where I was able to have a shower and change my clothes. Later I was told that a *rickshaw* was waiting to take me to Mesfin. When I arrived there were six others boys talking to him about the journey in the desert. I was introduced. He was very silent, tall, about thirty-five years old, from Gondar. He was confident and sure of what he was doing. "It's not only for money," he said, "but also to help Ethiopian boys leave their own country." This was part of his policy, he said, but he also did this work because he had a long history in Khartoum as an opponent of the Ethiopian government, the Weyane regime. And this was true. Mesfin is a professional man who earns a living through this activity but he tries to do it in the best way possible, and if someone who hasn't any money needs help, he's always ready. Many Ethiopian boys left Khartoum without paying the 250 dollars needed to reach the Libyan border. Over time, and through his way of doing things, Mesfin has become a haven and a guarantee for all the Ethiopians who arrive in Khartoum. He has a large warehouse in which he puts water, food and everything that's needed for the journey. His work is that of an intermediary. He collects those who arrive, finds them lodgings and organizes their transport to the Libyan border. Many people work for him, but he is a modest, reserved person, a man of few words. Nobody knows where he lives or what protections he has in order to carry out this activity or how he started.

I phoned Addis Ababa from Khartoum when I arrived in the city, looking for Daniel. I was told that he had left. I counted the days that he would need to arrive. Then I went to the bus station to pick him up at about the same time that I had arrived. Daniel came with another Qirqos friend of

ours, Tullu, so the group that had arranged to leave Addis together was now reunited. We were myself, Fuad, Daniel and Tullu. We would be meeting the others in Libya—in Benghazi or Tripoli. During the November 2005 protests in Addis Ababa against the rigged parliamentary elections and the crackdown of the opposition, we had hidden in Daniel and Jonas' house. Jonas, Daniel's brother, had left before us. When we got to Khartoum, he was already in Libya. Daniel had been a policeman in Addis and had a small piece of land in the country that he wanted to sell to pay for the journey. He hadn't had enough time to find a buyer since we had to get out quickly after the protests and couldn't wait. So, Daniel didn't have enough money to leave then.

When Mekdem and I had decided to leave I had the money ready, but Mekdem had told me that if I wanted, he could lend me almost 800 dollars. I took his money and used mine to give to Daniel. It would hopefully get him at least as far as Tripoli. Daniel and Jonas have another brother who lives in Germany who had paid for Jonas' journey. This was why no one could help Daniel for the second part of the journey from Libya to Italy. The agreement between Daniel and Jonas was that Jonas would leave a few months ahead in order to allow the brother in Germany to accumulate more money to send to Daniel after Jonas' arrival in Italy. So, instead of waiting for us in Khartoum, Jonas had left earlier for Libya and was about to embark for Italy.

We stayed for two weeks in the house of an Ethiopian woman who worked in Khartoum. She wasn't good to us; she was bad-tempered and brusque and, above all, she made us pay for everything. Since this wasn't a very welcoming house, when we got to know other Ethiopian women we went to eat and rest in their home. We told Mesfin that this house wasn't suitable and he answered that he knew what the woman was like and would move us as soon as possible. The new house belonged to an old lady who welcomed the people Mesfin sent her and also gave them beds. Mesfin sent us breakfast there every morning. After a few days, we organized our departure for Libya. He told us to be ready to leave at any moment because we would have to go as soon as he called us. We were warned three times to be ready but nothing happened. The fourth time, at night, a minibus was waiting for us. It took us to Omdurman where we found a lot of people, including those who had left with us from Addis Ababa. Daniel and I separated from Tullu and Fuad, who went on ahead of us, because I was still waiting for part of the money.

This is one of the many laws of flight: one tries to stay with friends and help one another as much as possible, but then in the end one can only

react to events as an individual. So Tullu and Fuad left. We spent the night in a camp and Mesfin distributed all the essentials for the journey: blankets, sunglasses, water, jam, biscuits, glucose, powdered milk, sugar.

The next morning, before dawn, we loaded the vans. First we put the water in, then our bags and then the blankets. We were twenty in our van. We crossed the Sudanese desert for a day and a half until we came to a valley where the Libyans were waiting for us. This was the first "handover" of the trip from the Sudanese to the Libyans, though we were still in Sudanese territory. We paid them 300 dollars and they said that they would take us as far as Benghazi. Half an hour after we left we stopped again, this time at a place where there were some abandoned huts. The Libyans settled down in a hut that was further away. We waited in the desert for three days until some nomads who owned the huts arrived and made us move under two small trees. We built a shelter with the blankets because the wind blew the sand into our faces. We gathered wood for cooking. Daniel tried to cook spaghetti but it was difficult because the wind blew sand into the pot. Mesfin phoned us and asked how we were managing. During one of these phone calls he told the Libyans to kill two sheep for us to eat. The Libyans told him to send more people because twenty were too few to enter Libya.

On the second day, while we were waiting in the huts before moving under the two small trees, the Libyans told us to go with them to the well to fill our water cans. So almost all the guys went, while the three girls stayed with the other two boys one of whom was the fiancé and the other the brother of one of the girls. The Libyans who had remained told the two boys to go for wood, but they refused because they understood that the Libyans wanted to take advantage of the girls. They quarreled and when we returned they told us what the Libyans had tried to do. And so that evening, we held a meeting and decided to go to the Libyans. Some in our group spoke Arabic well because they had been in Khartoum for some time. We all went together and told the Libyans very firmly that they must never approach the girls again. As we talked we surrounded them, and the girl's fiancé took a burning stick and wanted to hurl it at the Libyan who had tried to abuse her but he pulled out a pistol. Everyone was shouting and Daniel cried out: "None of us will come out of this alive." Then the Libyan leader called one of us over and they came to an agreement and the situation finally calmed down. The next day, we had finished our cigarettes and the man with the pistol was smoking Marlboros. When one of us asked him for one he answered: "You call the girl and I'll give you a Marlboro."

We stayed in this desert valley in Sudanese territory for seven days. Up to this point, the journey had been an adventure for me, I wasn't worried. I enjoyed what I was experiencing: the desert, campfires, cooking, sipping tea with my friends, the stars at night, our being together. But this feeling left me as soon as we crossed the Libyan border. There, the journey changed and the Libyans showed that there was no limit to what they could do. Mesfin couldn't help us any more. On the seventh day, before leaving for Kufrah, 22 other Ethiopians arrived. Mesfin gave them more food and water for us, as he had done when we left. They also brought cigarettes from Omdurman. We left with three vans, and a fourth carrying two small camels. The Sudanese van was the most crowded because they paid less. We traveled through the desert for five or six days until we reached Kufra. In Kufra, they threw out all the bottled water and everything Mesfin had given us and reduced the vans from three to two. Now the water was in petrol cans and the Libyans distributed it once a day. They made us get out of the vans and line up and gave us a glass each once a day. It was their way of weakening us and making us obey their orders.

When we arrived in Kufra the Libyans became merciless. They treated us like animals. They insulted us and beat us whenever they could. When we were standing in line, if anyone slowed down or came out of step they beat him. We no longer had the strength to react and couldn't oppose them. In Libya the power was in their hands. Those of us who spoke Arabic were beaten more than the others. In Kufra we left the vans and were loaded into an old pick-up with a covered trailer. 18 of us got into it; we sat with our legs pulled up to our chins, we couldn't move an inch, people were crying and moaning. We longed for times when the tires sank into the sand so that we could get out to free them and breathe for a few minutes. We soon learnt the commands 'Get in!' and 'Get out!' because if we didn't understand, they'd beat us. They said: 'Animals, get out', 'Animals, get in'. I also remember a guy who made brilliant quips during the journey. He was a born comedian: he made us laugh and for a while we forgot the pain and the heat.

Meanwhile, Mesfin was still in contact with us. Before reaching Ijdabia [Ajdabiya] we stopped at a place that grew very cold at night. It was damp and we couldn't sleep. Mesfin phoned and he told us to ask for water, to tell the Libyans that we only wanted water, but the water was undrinkable because they kept it in oilcans and it was hot. The Libyans had a 'fridge' and their water was fresh and one day I managed to drink a drop. Another migrant saw me and he, too, tried to drink it, but they saw him and beat him on the back of the neck with a stick. At Ijdabia they

hid us in a house, one room for the Ethiopians and one for the Sudanese. We took showers and changed our clothes. Next door there was another house that belonged to the people who would be taking us to Tripoli or Benghazi. With our money, we sent out for cans of broad beans, tomatoes and onions and then we rested. I saw that there was Amharic writing on the walls left by the people who had come through before us. The Libyans had tried to cover it up with white paint, but one could read through it. The writing warned us: "Don't believe them."

After we had showered, other guides arrived and told us through an interpreter that they would take us to Tripoli for three hundred dollars. Daniel and I knew this wasn't true. We had only one hundred dollars so we told the Libyans to take us to Benghazi, while all the others paid for Tripoli. After about two hours travel in a closed pick-up they transferred us into a taxi that took us to Funduk, the center of Benghazi. At this point in the journey, the group consisted of Daniel, two others from Qirqos and myself. There was also someone else who had already made the journey the year before. He had been arrested by the police and deported to the desert, where they abandoned him with other people on the Sudanese border. The survivors had been found in the desert by other traveling vans and brought back to Kufra.

We asked the driver to take us to the part of the city where the *Habesha* lived. We went into a house where there were some Eritreans. We slept on mattresses on the floor and paid one dinar a day. The Libyan owner behaved very badly towards us: he shouted, smoked hashish, struck people, and we were afraid that he would report us to the police. We were coming to the end of our money and didn't have enough even to phone our families to ask them to send more.

In this neighborhood we met some Ethiopians who acted as intermediaries between Benghazi and Tripoli. They lodged us in an empty house that was used specifically for people like us, those just coming through. After we had assured them that the money would arrive very soon, they told us not to go out because they didn't want us to meet other intermediaries. They intimidated and frightened us, forcing us to stay cooped up indoors. After waiting there for ten days, the police arrived. They arrived precisely after three of us, myself included, had given our code numbers to the intermediaries to draw the money from Addis at the Benghazi Western Union. The police arrived the next morning: the first policeman who came into the house clapped his hands in joy at having found us. He was glad because he hadn't expected to find so many people; actually they weren't looking for us but for another Eritrean who had escaped from

prison. This Eritrean was very famous in Benghazi because of his work as an intermediary; they told us that he escaped from prison by cutting through the bars of his cell. He is in Italy now. That morning Daniel and some others managed to escape from the police. I couldn't, I didn't have shoes on and we were taken by surprise. Those who had shoes on were made to take them off. I was wearing a comfortable pair of military pants I had used during the journey through the desert; when they arrested me without shoes and with these pants on I looked like a captured soldier.

When they arrested us in Benghazi we were cleaning the room and I was writing a sentence on the wall: "If you don't die in the process, this period . . . .," and I wasn't able to finish. I wanted to write: ". . . will blow over." One of us managed to escape and a neighbor, a Libyan, tripped him up as he was running so the police caught him too. (I have also been told that if you tried to escape down the street, Libyan drivers would suddenly open their car door to knock into you so that the police can catch up with you.) They shouted 'Jews' at us as an insult. I had with me only my wallet, a necklace and a small compass I had bought in Addis. I lost the photos of my family, my clothes and a few music cassettes when they arrested me. The police made us get into a small covered metal van. One could see the street through some small holes. There were fourteen of us and the siren was blaring. They took us to a local prison and took our fingerprints on a block of yellow paper that would be used to prove to the European and particularly the Italian authorities that the Libyan government was engaged in checking clandestine immigration. They would receive money for each one of our names.

It was a good thing that I didn't understand Arabic because in prison the police insulted, threatened and tried to force a reaction from you in order to beat you. I didn't understand them and acted dumb. One police-man kept coming up to me and saying that this was the second time he saw me. He would say I would never get out of prison. This was what the others told me when he moved away. The women were more easily released from these clearing and transit prisons than the men. For this reason, fictitious engagements and marriages occurred so that the men might follow the women to their new destination, and thus, avoid spending too many months in these clearing camps. Through the servers who brought food and were prisoners themselves, men and women sent letters from one area of the prison to another to introduce themselves and offer friendship and agree on these fictitious marriages. In the end, some of them discovered that they really liked one another and got engaged and

stayed together even after getting out of prison. This was also why many women became pregnant during the journey.

I didn't have time to get to know any of the women because right after my arrest, the truck was already waiting to take us back to the Kufra prison. With us were a four-year old boy and his mother. During the whole trip, I watched this little boy and kept asking myself how it was possible that he was traveling with a hundred other people packed like animals in a container, like those used for fruit, without air to breathe or space to move. It was a 21-hour journey, where people urinated where they stood because the toilet door was blocked by the people in front of it. We traveled from four in the afternoon to 1 p.m. the following day. During the day, when the driver stopped to eat we were left shut up in the trailer under the sun; it was airless and everyone got up, panic-stricken, because we couldn't breathe and wanted to get out. It was even harder for those at the back. Looking at the child gave us courage and every time the truck stopped we put him by the small window. His name was Adam.

With us there were Eritreans, Ethiopians, Somalis, a few Sudanese and Nigerians and also a man from Cameroon with a Bible in his pocket who prayed out loud. He didn't want to go to Europe but had immigrated to Libya from Chad for work. I used the French I had learned in school in Ethiopia to talk with him, and he told me about his incredible journey from Chad to Libya. The truck stopped at least three times in the desert for the drivers to eat and pray. Towards one o'clock we reached Kufra. The truck stopped for thirty or forty minutes and we shouted and prayed in Arabic for him to let us out in the name of Allah. We had had nothing to eat throughout the journey. There were 110 of us, including six women, four-year-old Adam and his mother. As we were about to enter the Kufra prison, the driver had someone translate that if, when going in, we banged on the metal sides of the container he would wait even longer before letting us out.

Policemen don't know how to count. They line you up under the sun and the minute you move they lose count and start again. They insult you and the counting goes on forever. Four of the Libyan police would count mentally, then the head man came and asked them how many we were, and the counting would start again. The Libyan policemen had no common sense. They treated us like animals. After counting us and separating us as if this were a complicated job, they put the Eritreans and Ethiopians together in a large room with a broken, waterless toilet that stank horribly. The heat in the room took our breath away. They chose two of us

and two men from Chad to cook. They served white rice with nothing but salt and a few scraps of tomato skin which one discovered every now and then. They brought the rice in a pan and before serving it told us to sit down 'Six, Six', and if you didn't, they didn't serve you and you had nothing to eat until the next day. The first days, we didn't understand what they wanted and so only three or four of us sat down. When you're hungry you want to eat right away so you pick up the rice in your hands and get burned because it's scalding. During those days I got mad at myself because I didn't understand that the rice was boiling hot and that I had to wait. One is ashamed of being there and having to put up with things like that. You ask yourself why. It was one of the many ongoing humiliations. There was also that smell coming from the latrine. They did it on purpose to make you feel ashamed. And then in the Kufra prison there's a sickness called *asasia*. It's a prison sickness, a skin disease that makes you scratch until you injure yourself. The rumor went around that Kaddafi used the prisons to deposit chemical substances in them. Almost all refugees get sick in the Libyan prisons.

We had mattresses to sleep on, a tee-shirt and shorts, but we had no shoes. There were lice in prison and the fleas were everywhere, in the mattresses, in our clothes, in our hair. It was better to sleep on the floor than on the mattresses, it was more hygienic. In prison they put a Cameroonian in the same room as a sorcerer, a Chadian who was alone in his cell and had many personal items with him. The Libyans wanted him to work for them, they asked him to foretell the future and tell them about remedies and healings. The Cameroonian had his Bible in his pocket and the sorcerer didn't want to be near him.

We remained in prison for several days until the Sudanese intermediaries came to buy us from the police. They, at least, were better at counting! They bought us for thirty dinars. I couldn't ignore the symbolism of the price. Thirty dinars was also the price at which Judas sold Christ to the rabbis. They led us into a police pick-up truck and took us to a camp where the Sudanese who were to buy us came and took us to another place where there were many people. The Sudanese intermediary who bought us sold us in turn to another Libyan intermediary, who chose us according to which people he thought would be able to get more money from their families. Then he transported us to an oasis in the desert where there were trees and water. There were no houses but huts made with palm branches. Here there were two Ethiopian female prisoners whom the Libyans wouldn't release and kept as prostitutes. They were sisters

and one could see that the older one prostituted herself, trying to protect her younger sister.

We stayed in this oasis for fifteen days. There were almost sixty of us. We contacted Mesfin again in Khartoum. It was he who had received money from our families. I was able to call on a satellite phone the Libyans gave me. They thought I was calling for money and instead I phoned Mesfin and explained all that had happened to us. I couldn't receive money in the desert and therefore needed Mesfin so that my family could send him the money in Khartoum, which he would give to the Sudanese and they to the Libyans. I asked my family for 400 euros, but I didn't want to pay all this money out immediately. So Mesfin told me, "When we speak again I'll tell you how much they have sent and you, in Amharic, will tell me how much money you want and how much I should keep to send you when you get to Tripoli." And this is what we did because I trusted Mesfin completely. He sent me the rest of the money when I got to Tripoli without retaining the transfer expenses.

When one phones one's family from abroad nobody really understands the situation. There's a funny story going around which explains how the families simply can't imagine what Libya is like, a kind of joke which tells of a person who phoned his mother and said: "Mother, send me the code number to receive the money" and she thought he needed it in order to send her money, the first money earned thanks to his migration. The day after they have you phone your family, a Sudanese calls together all the people in the camp who have phoned and orders them to get in line. A Sudanese with a cell phone calls Mesfin in front of everyone, who gives him the name corresponding to the code he has received. I was the first to be called. The man wanted 400 dollars for my stay in the oasis and the journey to Tripoli. So I told Mesfin to send me 350 dollars and then the rest when I got to Tripoli.

While we were waiting in that oasis, another small group arrived who had been saved at sea by the Tunisian Port Authorities. The authorities had then handed them over to the Libyan police, who in turn had sent them back to Kufra. They had been sold again through intermediaries and brought to the camp. Some of them told us that a number of people had died at sea during the rescue. Another group arrived after having been bought in the Tripoli prison. They moved those of us who had paid to another camp, handing us over to the Libyans and profiting from the transaction. This was also a way of frightening those who were still there and didn't have money, pressuring them to pay as soon as possible. We

spent three days in this new place and then set out on our new journey from Kufra to Tripoli, again with Libyan drivers.

We left in the afternoon and changed vans four times during the trip. We stopped at Ijdabia because one of the vans had a problem and they divided the passengers between the others so that it was very crowded and we had to stand. During one stop, I tried to hide and move into another less crowded van but a Libyan saw me. I started running but he caught me and beat me with a stick. The Libyans don't only have sticks, they also carry daggers and swords and they sometimes threatened us with these weapons. After Ijdabia, during the last part of the trip, we were transferred from the vans to a tarpaulin-covered truck. In all, there were sixty of us. They put the women in front of a small window and made us stand so that everyone would fit in. Then, using the word *'gams'*, they shouted at us to sit down, because if we had all sat down as we climbed in we wouldn't have fitted in. I didn't have room and remained standing. They started hitting those on the head who remained standing to force them to sit down. After they beat me the first time, I thought they couldn't see me so I got up again. But they saw my head against the tarpaulin from the outside and I got another whack on the back of my head.

There was great tension in the truck. I couldn't breathe and felt as if I was going to die. I had a pen with me and started making holes in the tarpaulin until it tore. A little air came in and everyone wanted to come to where I was. At the end of the journey, I looked at the tarpaulin and saw that it was full of holes. We breathed one at a time, you got some air and then made room for someone else and so on for the whole trip. One guy felt ill and wanted to get out, to tear the tarpaulin. He started shouting so we made a bigger hole and placed him under it so he could breathe better.

Everyone was pushing because there wasn't enough room. I made the whole trip bent double with the tarpaulin pressing on my back. In times like that, you didn't want anyone to touch you; everyone was on edge. A man kept pinching my thighs to make me move and the potholes made us lurch against one another. When I touched him, he got angry so we started punching each other. At the end of the journey, we both apologized. During the trip we drank warm water mixed with petrol. During a stop to drink, the Libyans saw the holes in the tarpaulin and started beating us. There was an elderly Ethiopian in the truck named Mandela. Two days after our arrival in Tripoli he was arrested for the third time and sent back to Kufra. When I met him months later in Tripoli he said: "You know, I made this last trip like you did, standing up: standing with my

back bent down by the tarpaulin." Mandela died during the sea journey. He died when I was already in Trapani.

On the third day, towards evening, we arrived outside Tripoli and they locked us in a small house. They gave us water and we put a little on our faces, hands and feet. I found some clothes to change into, out of my military pants that drew too much attention once we were in Tripoli. They made us pay ten dinars for the taxi and we went to the Gurji neighborhood where all the Ethiopians live. Some of us knew where to go because they had already been to Tripoli. For some, like me, though, it was the first time. We got out of the taxi near a café run by Ethiopians and went in and explained that we had no money with us. They were good to us. They fed us and let us call our families to ask for more money. The next day, in this same café, I met a woman with whom I had traveled in Sudan. She was glad to see me again. She welcomed us and looked for a house for us to rent when our money arrived. In Tripoli, you live in constant fear of being arrested and taken back to Kufra or some other prison. As time passes this fear becomes a real obsession. Many spend months indoors, terrified of going out and always afraid that the police will come. To escape from the police one man threw himself out of the window of a house in the very poor Krimea neighborhood of Tripoli, where only immigrants live. He died. The police found 3000 dollars in his pockets and some of the men were saying: "Today not one but three people died." 3000 dollars means the cost of travel by sea for about three people.

After about a month Daniel arrived in Tripoli from Benghazi and another of our friends, Hailu, went to pick him up. Hailu, an ex-police officer in Addis, also from Qirqos, was living in a house with another of our friends, Sintayehu (Sinti). I wasn't staying with them but with others in another neighborhood. From where I lived, I often went to Abu Selim, a big market for black Africans where there were Ethiopians, Eritreans, Nigerians, men from Niger and Chad, Sudanese, but also some Maghrebians. For the Ethiopians and Eritreans there were *Habesha* women who ran cafeterias, and these places were very important meeting points. I felt safer in this neighborhood because the police kept out of it, but the big problem was getting home by taxi. Almost all of the Tripoli taxi drivers are policemen. They say they'll take you home and instead they call a friend who arrives in a police car and steals your money. Luckily, this never happened to me. Before getting into a taxi, I spent about ten minutes choosing a person who didn't look like a policeman, and if he asked me where I came from I said that I was Somali. Because unlike the Somalis, the Ethiopians and Eritreans were there to leave for Italy and therefore had more money

with them. The Somalis are also treated better in Libya because of their religion. I started learning a few words in Arabic to be able to converse a little. I told them what I knew about the situation in Somalia and spoke disparagingly of the United States. This made the drivers relax so I could hope that he wouldn't report me to the police. If you want to survive in Libya you have to anticipate every move, everything has to be done with circumspection and care, you can never relax, you must never lose your concentration. Before leaving the house you had to check whether there were people in the street and coming home, too, we never moved in a group but one at a time. We spoke quietly on the street and tried not to look anyone in the eye, not even children.

Daniel lived in the Gurji neighborhood with Hailu and Sinti. There, the children and young people you meet sitting by the shops on the street shout: 'Police, Police', and then '*Gib ruba*' which is an order that means: "Come and give me a quarter of a dinar", and if you don't, they throw stones at you. When I went to Daniel and Hailu's house I met many Ethiopians and Eritreans. The owner lived on the ground floor with his family; he had divided the house into many small rooms in which seven or eight people slept. He was an elderly man who had been a lawyer and so was on good terms with the police. If he didn't like you, he had you arrested. Everyone called him 'Baba' and when his daughter got married and needed the house, he had everyone arrested even though they had already paid the rent. But this happened after we had left, they told us about it when we were already in Italy.

I didn't want to negotiate with intermediaries for a boat because I was sick of hearing all those stories of swindling, lies and falsehood. So I left it all to Hailu who knew what moves to make. My sister sent me money from the United States to survive in Tripoli. When I had to collect it, I asked an Ethiopian to lend me his passport. It didn't matter that the photo didn't look like me because nobody worries about things like that. I used to go to the MoneyGram to collect it. The most dangerous moment was coming out of the bank. Western Union and MoneyGram are on the same street, and the police and drivers are well aware that we go there for our money. They wait outside and rob you as you come out. It happens constantly.

Through the women who work in the cafeterias, I had met a Libyan who had a car that wasn't a proper taxi, though he transported people, Ethiopians in particular, in it. So I used to call him when we needed to go out, and especially when we went to pick up money. He, too, was afraid to wait for me in front of the bank, telling me to give him a ring when I was through. He would wait for me a short distance away to bring me back to

Abu Selim, the market district. Hailu was looking into the matter of boats. I still did not want to be involved.

When I arrived in Tripoli, Daniel was still in Benghazi. A few days after my arrival someone with whom we had traveled through the desert but who had arrived before me, came to fetch me and take me to his house. On the way he told me that Daniel's brother Jonas and two other Qirqos boys had died at sea. When I met Tullu and Fuad they confirmed this news. There was no Ethiopian consulate in Tripoli, only an Eritrean one, so after the bodies had been recovered and buried, the Libyan police sent all the documents and photos of the deceased to the Eritrean consulate. The Eritrean consulate had been given Jonas' wallet, in which there were family photos including one of him. The wallet had been recovered because it was attached to his pants with a chain. The Eritrean consulate couldn't trace Jonas' identity and had had leaflets printed and pasted up in Gurji asking whether anyone knew this person. Now all the Qirqos boys in Gurji knew that Jonas was dead. They said that the sea was very rough when Jonas' boat sailed. The intermediary for his journey was an Ethiopian woman, she shouldn't have made the boat leave without checking the weather conditions and the force of the wind, which should never blow more than 10/15 km an hour.

Hailu took down all the leaflets in Gurji before Daniel arrived in Tripoli. When he arrived, we didn't have the courage to tell him right away that his brother had drowned, but he already suspected something because he had had no further news of him. I remember once, when we were in the market, a boy said that he had heard that three Qirqos youths had died and Daniel asked him insistently whether one of them was called Jonas. I signaled to the boy to make him understand that he must hold his tongue. Hailu, Sinti and I decided to tell him the news together. Hailu would have liked to keep it a secret because he was afraid Daniel would return to Ethiopia. But Daniel had become insistent, constantly asking other people for news of his brother, so Hailu decided one day to tell him because he didn't want him to find out from others. After telling him, Daniel and Hailu went to the Eritrean consulate to verify his brother's death. There they gave him Jonas' personal belongings.

At the time Daniel didn't have the money to leave because his brother in Germany, who didn't yet know about Jonas, didn't want to send more money before knowing for certain that Jonas had arrived in Italy. We had to tell him the truth. So we went to Tullu and Fuad's house in another neighborhood of Tripoli and phoned him from there. Daniel started speaking but he simply couldn't tell his brother, so Hailu took the phone

and told him that Jonas had died and how he had verified this. Daniel's brother disappeared for many days, he didn't phone and we couldn't trace him. Then he called back and spoke with Daniel, asking him to return to Addis and not take the risk. He would send him the money, but only to go back, not to continue. Daniel said no, he would continue because turning back was as complicated and dangerous as going ahead.

Finally, Hailu came to an agreement for the sea journey with a Sudanese intermediary who spoke English. We told him Daniel's story and finally convinced him to take him on board without money. Many months had passed since we arrived in Tripoli. One day, we went to the Sudanese intermediary's house to make arrangements. We were all there: Tullu, Fuad, Sinti, Hailu, Mamush Jamal and me, as well as other boys from Addis who lived with Sinti and Hailu. The next day, around ten in the evening, they brought us to the sea where there were already other Eritreans and Ethiopians. Our captain was Ethiopian. We had agreed that the boat must not carry more than twenty-five people but we were more than forty waiting to board, including a ten-year-old boy with his Eritrean uncle and a boy suffering from polio.

On our way down to the sea the Libyans pointed to a large spotlight at us and we thought it was the police. In my hurry I fell on a rock and hurt my knee. "Oh God, I won't be able to leave," I said to myself but then, plucking up my courage, I said "No, I can't stay here." I forgot the pain and walked on. People said that usually, the first to get to the boats were the ones to leave, but it wasn't so this time. They stopped us and chose who got on. The Sudanese wanted to send us all together, but there was a Libyan with him who said this wasn't possible, there were too many of us for the boat. After quarreling, they moved away and we saw them smoke hashish together and then agree on 32 people.

It was dark and the Sudanese chose the people who were to leave. We had agreed that Daniel would be the first to board and instead, he was the last. When the number of people chosen reached 33, the Sudanese took hold of Daniel. Just then, a police car arrived and we were all suddenly afraid of returning to Kufra. I begged the Sudanese to take Daniel on board. I implored him and he answered: "You have to go now. Run. Don't worry, I'll keep him at home with me and send him for free with the next trip." I tried to keep a hold of Daniel's hand but the Libyan separated us, and I had to leave without him.

In moments like that, you think of prison and returning to Kufra, and the only thing in your mind is that you mustn't lose the money you've spent. My sister in the United States was good with me because she said:

"Don't think about the money. If you don't feel up to it, if you don't think it's a good idea or that it isn't safe to leave, forget about it." She had no idea what a journey of this kind required. Before the boat arrived to pick us up, there had been a problem with the captain who was to pilot it because the intermediary had promised him some money which he hadn't given him. So we told him that we would pay him on arrival, and he accepted. At the last moment they told us: "Run!" My thoughts were with Daniel, and Tullu, too, wanted to go back to him, but the Libyan pushed us towards the sea. I walked slowly towards the boat, in despair for Daniel, whom we had left in the dark. There were rocks in the sea and walking was difficult. The boy with polio couldn't manage so, thinking of Daniel, I helped him while his cousin and uncle who had abandoned him were ahead.

They loaded bread, water and petrol on the boat. There wasn't a torch. There were no tools, not even a pair of pliers. They had confiscated our lighters because it's dangerous to have them on board with the petrol cans. I had a lighter with a tiny torch inside it and before handing it over I had dismantled it and kept the torch. When my friends saw me they started laughing, but I was sure that it would be useful. I also had the compass I had brought from Addis and always kept it in my pocket. A Libyan got into the boat and came with us for three hundred meters; he indicated the direction with his arm, told us to keep the compass always pointed between zero and ten degrees North-West, then jumped into the sea and swam back.

The first day and night at sea were calm. The second night, the sea grew very rough. Tullu and Fuad were resigned. They sat, motionless, and kept asking me: "Is the water as it was yesterday? The water isn't rough, there aren't problems are there?" and I answered telling them not to worry, that the sea wasn't very rough. The water was coming into the boat and Jamal bailed it out and threw it back into the sea. On the second day we caught up with a petrol extraction platform and were happy because they say that if you get beyond it, you're in international waters. The sea was calm during the day but grew rougher at night. On the second day, while the captain was resting, someone else, inexperienced, took the helm and made the boat compass swivel around and the compass seemed to go crazy. It had demagnetized and lost its direction. Luckily I still had my compass with me and we were able to get back on course.

On the second night, the sea was rough again. An Eritrean orthodox deacon prayed, singing. I had the impression that there were trees and hills all around. On the morning of the third day the sea was still rough and we sighted a military ship. It seemed to us that it was moving away,

but instead, it was maneuvering to approach. When we looked at the flag, it was dirty and we thought it might be Portuguese or Spanish. We didn't recognize the Italian flag, but the important thing was that we were sure that it wasn't the flag of an African country. We thanked God and climbed on board where they searched us one by one and made us hand over our belongings. Then they called the Coast Guard, which picked us up and took us to Lampedusa. After saving us, the Italians let our boat go adrift, only taking the motor. When I saw our boat from the ship fear seized me: it was like a fragile eggshell in the middle of the sea.

When we arrived in Lampedusa, there were many tourists sea bathing who looked up at us in surprise. I was ashamed that they should see me without shoes and so thin, but I was also happy. A new phase of my life was starting. But one thought was always in my mind: that of Daniel, who had remained in Libya. After we landed on the island they took our fingerprints and gave us clothes. We showered and they gave us a three Euro phone card to call home. I didn't know where to call because my father was in Addis Ababa and my mother in the United States. I called my mother first but she was out, so I spoke to a woman who knew that I was making this journey, and I said: "I'm Dagwami, tell my mother that I've arrived in Italy," and she started shouting: "God be praised, God be praised." They thought I was still in Libya. Then I called my sister, but she too was out, then my brother in Addis and he was very happy. In the end, with the money left over, I called a girl in Libya whom I always went to see at the café she worked and with whom I had left my diary. She too was very happy. Soon after I arrived in Italy, I heard that she had also managed to come. In the camp at Lampedusa, I met a terribly thin boy from Ivory Coast who told me that his group had been at sea for fifteen days and all had died except for him and a few others. We spoke in French and he had good feelings for us because a boat of Ethiopians had stopped and given them a can of petrol, even if this wasn't enough to save them all.

If I could go back in time, I wouldn't set out on this journey again, at least I don't think so. At every step, I cursed my government for having thrown away the lives of so many young people and forced them into flight. I was ashamed of belonging to a generation with no other option but to flee from their country. This journey isn't comparable to the imprisonment one would suffer in my country for manifesting dissent against the present government. If I compare this journey to being in prison, I think that if you survive prison, people consider you as a witness to the history of your country. Whereas if you survive this journey, you're

nothing except to yourself. You're just one of those who left. This jour-
ney is a worse punishment than prison. And yet we leave because there's
nothing else to do. In Ethiopia there isn't even the privilege of sacrificing
oneself or dying for one's country in the hope of real change. At present,
the death of one of us in Ethiopia would be a useless sacrifice.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

APOSTOLOS ANDRIKOPOULOS is a PhD candidate in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the University of Amsterdam. He completed a Bachelor of Arts in East European and Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Macedonia, and a Master of Arts in Migration and Ethnic Studies at the University of Amsterdam.

ARMELLE CHOPLIN is Associate Professor of Geography at Paris-Est Marne-la-Vallée University. Her research looks at urban development in the Arab world and sub-Saharan Africa, with particular emphasis on the evolution of Saharan-Sahelian cities. She also studies population movements in West Africa and the impact of international migrations in the region.

KEVIN EZE is a Nigerian writer based in Dakar. His non-fiction work includes *Nigeria After Fifty* (2009), which is part of the collection entitled *Writers, Writing on Conflict and Wars in Africa*. He also teaches music at the National School of Arts of the University of Dakar.

AMBER GEMMEKE is a researcher at the Anthropology Department of Bayreuth University in Germany. Her research interests include religious authority, media, African migration to Europe, transnational religious networks, and religious change. She has published on Senegalese female marabouts in several journals and is currently researching West African religious experts in the Netherlands, with special reference to their use of media.

KRISTIN KASTNER is a research assistant at the Goethe-University Frankfurt am Main in Germany. She has recently completed her doctoral thesis on Nigerian migrants on their way to Europe. Her research interests include the anthropology of the body, anthropology of borders, and mobility and migration.

JEROME LOMBARD is a geographer at the French Research Institute for Development in Paris. His recent publications include the special issue of *Echo*Géo *Journal on Transport and Mobility in Western Africa* and another special issue of *Space Populations Societies* Journal on New Mobility in Southern Worlds.

LAURENCE MARFAING is a Senior Research Fellow at the German Institute of Global and Area Studies in Hamburg. She has long-term research experience in urban mobility, trans-local spaces, religious sociability, migration and informal trade in West Africa. Her current research project is entitled "Entrepreneurial Chinese migrants and petty African entrepreneurs: Local impacts of interaction in Urban West Africa."

ROBERT LAWRENCE MCKENZIE is an expert on governance, politics, and regional security in North Africa and the Middle East. He works for the U.S. Department of State, and he previously served as an advisor to the United Arab Emirates Ministry of Foreign Affairs. As both a researcher and consultant he has conducted extensive field research on forced migration, African urban refugees, and international aid in the Middle East. Robert is a doctoral candidate at the School of Oriental and African Studies. His doctoral thesis examines the lives of sub-Saharan refugees in Cairo, Egypt.

MIRANDA POEZE is a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Arts and Social Science at Maastricht University, The Netherlands. She acquired a Master of Science degree from the Research Master Program in Social Sciences at the Free University of Amsterdam. For her Master thesis she explored undocumented migration from Senegal to the Canary Islands. Her current research explores Ghanaian transnational child raising arrangements from the perspectives of migrant parents in The Netherlands as well as non-migrant children in Ghana.

JORIS SCHAPENDONK is a lecturer at the International Development Studies of Utrecht University. He obtained his PhD at Radboud University Nijmegen in 2011. His thesis focused on the dynamic journeys of African migrants heading for the EU. He has published in the fields of migration and development, transit migration, mobilities studies and border studies.

WARSAN SHIRE is a Kenya-born Somali poet and writer based in London. She uses her work to document the lives and stories of migration and trauma. Her poems have been translated into Italian, Spanish and Portuguese. She has published a collection of poems entitled *Teaching my mother how to give birth* (2011) and a digital album entitled *Warsan vs. Melancholy* (2012).

Brigitte Suter is a PhD candidate at the Malmö Institute for Studies of Migration, Welfare and Diversity at Linköping University in Sweden. Based on ethnographic fieldwork, her dissertation explores trajectories of mobility and social network dynamics of sub-Saharan migrants in transit in Istanbul.

Magnus Treiber is a Lecturer in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Bayreuth, Germany. He received his doctorate in Social Anthropology from the University of Munich in 2005. Currently he is co-chairing a research project entitled "Dynamic worlds of imagination. Learning processes, knowledge and communication among urban young migrants from Eritrea and Ethiopia." He has published on Eritrea's younger generation in Asmara as well as on their lives and experiences abroad.

Alessandro Triulzi is Professor of sub-Saharan African History at the University of Naples 'L'Orientale', Italy. He has published extensively on twentieth-century Ethiopian history, colonial memory and postcolonial violence. Since 2007 he has been involved in recording migrant testimonies and narratives. In 2012 he established an Archive of Migrant Memories in Rome to support migrants' rights and agency through audio-visual productions.

Dagmawi Yimer is an Ethiopian refugee and filmmaker based in Italy. He has co-directed several films, including *Like a Man on Earth* (2008), *C.A.R.A. Italia* (2009), and *Soltanto il mare* (2011). He has also helped coordinate the collective migrant film project, *Welcome to Italy* (2012), produced by the Archive of Migrant Memories in Rome. He is currently preparing a film on racism and anti-migrant violence in Florence.

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