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Editorial

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This issue consists of a book review and four articles. The review was made by **Daniel Tevera** of a book entitled "Expanding Boundaries: Borders, Mobilities and the Future of Europe–Africa Relations", edited by Jussi P. Laine, Inocent Moyo and Christopher Changwe Nshimbe (2021). The reviewer made a critical and scholarly evaluation of the entire book. According to Tevera, the book, which is organized into three parts, provides an interesting perspective on various issues. The reviewer concludes that this book is an important contribution to the literature on borders, mobilities and the future of Europe–Africa relations, despite the fact that a few chapters would have benefitted from a more in-depth discussion of the relevant issues.

The first article by **Meron Zeleke** is entitled "The Complex Transit Trajectories of Ethiopian Female Migrants". Using a qualitative method of research, which involved the collection and analysis of non-numerical data, the author explored opinions and experiences of the complex transit trajectories of Ethiopian female migrants. The author's data collection method defies the commonly recognized trend of "methodological nationalism" in migration research. This empirical study suggests that such an approach fails to grasp the essence of the complex nature of transitioning by moving beyond such an orientation. The author underlines the need of taking a diachronic approach when studying transit migration paths, given that the transit experience is not always tied to a certain location and time, as evidenced by the experiences of Ethiopian female migrants reported in this research. The findings of this study shed light on Ethiopian female migrants' complex transit experiences in two different transit locations, as well as their agency in determining their mobility/immobility, redefining their destinations and transit pathways, and settling, a theme that has escaped attention in prior works on female migration from Ethiopia.

The second article by **Leander Kandilige, Thomas Yeboah and Theophilus Kwabena Abutima** is entitled "Citizenship, Belonging and Crisis-Induced Returns of Ghanaian Migrants from Côte d'Ivoire". The research employed a qualitative research design involving semi-structured interviews conducted with six categories of participants in Ghana and examines the experiences of returned Ghanaian migrants who were victimized and trapped in a conflict situation in Côte d'Ivoire in 2002–2003 and 2010–2011. Despite their passive role as perpetrators of violence, Ghanaian migrants were subjected to harassment, intimidation, and physical attacks, which contributed to painful feelings long after the crisis ended. Overall, this work

makes a significant contribution to the literature on the vulnerabilities of migrants caught up in crisis situations, as well as policies and emergency actions to address migrants caught up in crisis situations. These findings have significant implications for emergency responses to migrant crisis situations.

The third article by **Johannes Machinya** is entitled "Migration and Politics in South Africa: Mainstreaming Anti-Immigrant Populist Discourse". Methodologically, this paper is based on an analysis of selected political actors' mediated performances like press statements, public speeches, interviews, or other statements posted on social media platforms like Twitter and YouTube, and how these politicians presented their messages with a conspicuous anti-immigrant populist appeal. The author examined several political players and conducted a critical discourse analysis in terms of anti-immigrant rhetoric, identifying crucial trends in how political actors mediated immigration discourse. This paper underscores that what feeds and bestows social legitimacy to xenophobia is the foregrounding of an anti-immigrant populist discourse in the mainstream political discourse with the participation of political leaders from across the political spectrum. In general, the paper provides an in-depth analysis of the status quo of the anti-immigrant populist political discourse being entrenched and normalized in the mainstream political discourse and highlights areas for improvement.

The fourth article by **Samson Olaoluwa Faboye** is entitled "Examining Nigeria's Digital Identity Project as a Tool for Economic Inclusion and Regional Integration". A qualitative research methodology and secondary data analysis – mainly documentary reviews – were applied to explore the core themes of the topic. The study claims that African countries should invest in and develop their own digital database management infrastructure in order to reduce their reliance on the European Union (EU) and China. Furthermore, the study recommends that, similar to Frontex's work in the Schengen area, a central regional and continental border control agency based on an AU-managed database may assist with the coordination of digital identification throughout the continent for immigration and customs reasons. The outcomes of this study suggest that digital technology is pervasive in all aspects of human life and serves as a means of navigating the globalized digital world.

With effective academic writing and presentations, good organization, and critical argumentation, the authors produced an outstanding research output. I am confident that African Human Mobility Review, Volume 8, Number 1, 2022 provides a significant resource for scholars, practitioners, and students.

Scalabrini Network

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Journal: Migrations Société
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Journal: International Migration Review (IMR)
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Book review

The book is an edited volume consisting of fifteen chapters, excluding the introduction and concluding remarks. It provides interesting perspectives on various policy-making initiatives whose purpose is to manage Africa–European Union (EU) migration. This volume is organized into three parts – Part 1 focuses on critical perspectives on border regimes. In chapter one Calvin Minfegue argues that policies and actions aimed at the "externalisation of European borders into Africa" have failed to achieve the intended goal of controlling African migrant streams to Europe and might have resulted in increased migrant flows to Europe that have intensified the refugee crisis. In chapter two Anna Moraczewska contends that the externalization of EU border management is essentially an attempt to broaden the spatial reach of the Union beyond its territory in order to manage African migration flows to the EU. Okechukwu Oji argues in chapter three that migration challenges in West Africa are largely caused by weak border security management and poor intelligence gathering. In chapter four Rodrigo Lacy and Henk van Houtum show that the "authoritarian turn" in the EU's bordering policies has resulted in many deaths of African migrants along the Mediterranean frontier. In chapter five Anna Casaglia maintains that the humanitarian corridors on the Mediterranean frontier of the Euro-African border have created hierarchies of migrant rights that are based on the categorization of migrants based on their "deservingness" to enter the EU. She argues that the categorization is essentially a filtering process that places migrants in various categories, based on whether they are "welcomed" or "unwanted". Casaglia shows how such approaches have exposed the "entangled relationship" between the various humanitarian actions to assist the "welcomed" migrants, on the one hand and the deep security concerns to keep out the "unwanted" migrants at all costs.

The five chapters in Part 2 explore the EU's political transnationalism project and its policy impact. In chapter six, Tomasz Milej asserts that an Afro-European integration scheme needs to be in place in order to break the current identity narratives that unfortunately stigmatize African migrants. He cautions that such a scheme would necessitate a policy shift from perceiving the various forms of

EU-Africa migration through a narrow security–risks prism to a much broader and balanced view that appreciates both the risks and opportunities created by particular migration processes. Chapter seven by Leon Tshimpaka on "Solidarite en mouvement" against homeland authoritarianism presents a close analysis of the transnational political activities of Europe-based African migrants. Tshimpaka concludes by calling for a rethink of "the relations between Africa and Europe around migration" (p.130). In chapter eight Quivine Ndomo presents the findings of an empirical study that explored the daily lived experiences of twenty-three African student migrants from Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, and Zambia who chose to remain in Finland on completion of their studies. In this chapter Ndomo presents a powerful narrative that highlights the "systematic, extensive and institutionally executed exclusion of the group" from the various spaces of society they occupied (p.139). Ndomo argues that despite the "pervasive internal bordering", the end result for many African migrants in Finland has been "longer and even permanent stays" in the country. In chapter nine, which is titled "Untying the migration knot through trade: A case study of Nigeria", Omotomilola Ikotun and Juliet Ogbodo observe that the promotion of agribusiness and trade-related activities would diminish the emigration push factors that are driving Nigerian migration to Europe. In chapter ten Mika Raunio and Disney Andreas assess whether the governance of EU-Africa relations, especially in the areas of migration and development processes, have had beneficial or harmful impacts. Based on their case study of Finland and Namibia, Raunio and Andreas conclude that "the Finland–Namibia experiences suggest that the sustainable and mutually beneficial eco-system development" is feasible (p.182).

Part 3 focuses on alternative framings for Europe–Africa relations and it consists of five chapters. In chapter eleven Lena Englund examines how African writers present migration in contemporary texts and shows that migrants are often presented in literary texts as either victims of oppression and injustice or as opportunists hoping to ensure a better life elsewhere. She argues that "rethinking the representation of migration in celebrated novels … is necessary to enable new perspectives on migration itself and the multifaceted experiences that emerge from it" (p.188). In chapter twelve Laura Sumari cautions that Europe's security measures pertaining to sub-Saharan African refugees and migrants produce multiple forms of suffering, fear, and hate. These measures invariably lead to intensified uncertainty and insecurity in the targeted groups, adversely affecting their everyday lives and inevitably shaping how sub-Saharan African migrants understand and perceive Europe. In chapter thirteen Jussi Laine draws on the literature on bordering processes, migration, mobility, regional integration, and psychology to make the case for shifting "the discussion of migration as a phenomenon in its own right and with its own dynamics to its broader societal implications". He further argues that it is the colliding visions over migration rather than the immigrants that present challenges to the EU and European societies. In chapter fourteen Felix Donkor and Kevin Mearns argue that the time has come to rethink the widely misrepresented Euro–African

relations. They assert that good governance, communal resilience and robust conflict resolution mechanisms are needed in order to effectively address climate-induced migration. In chapter fifteen Olukayode Faleye examines migration as an engine of interregional mutual development within the framework of EU–Africa relations. In the concluding section, Laine, Nshimbi and Moyo posit that European–African relations cannot be reduced to migration matters alone and suggest that migration should not be isolated from the broader challenges and phenomena to which it is inherently linked.

The volume "Expanding Boundaries" is an important contribution to the literature on borders, mobilities and the future of Europe–Africa relations, despite the fact that a few chapters – notably chapters 3 and 9, although quite interesting, would have benefitted from more in-depth discussion of the issues at hand.

Prof Daniel Tevera, University of the Western Cape, South Africa

'Metema became my Istanbul' The Complex Transit Trajectories of Ethiopian Female Migrants

Meron Zeleke[1]

Discussions on transit migration have for long focused on presenting the experiences of migrants transiting through a given place at a specific time in a linear manner. Accordingly, most prior research adopts a snapshot approach to examine the lived experiences of transit migrants. This paper argues that such an approach fails to aptly capture the gist of the complex nature of transiting and the dynamics of change in the migration trajectories. It emphasizes the need to have a diachronic approach in examining the transit migration trajectory of migrants, considering the fact that the transit experience is not often bound to a given place and space, as it can be inferred from the case of Ethiopian female migrants presented in this paper. Furthermore, the discourse on transit migration often portrays transit migrants as individuals stranded in a place against their will and lacking the agency to decide about their prospects of mobility/immobility. By drawing on an extended ethnographic study conducted over the course of six years (2017–2022) in Djibouti and in Ethiopia, this paper explores the intricate transit experiences of Ethiopian female migrants in two different transit places and their agency in deciding about their mobility/immobility, redefining their destinations and transit pathways, and settlement, a theme that escaped attention in prior works on female migration from Ethiopia.

Keywords: female migrants, Ethiopia, Djibouti, rerouting transit, agency

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SETTING THE SCENE

> ... Istanbul was my dream destination when I left my birth village in Northern Ethiopia back in 2017. Like many waiting here, I am revisiting my plan and looking for other alternatives. My latest plan is to move to the Sudan via Metema in May, Insihallah (Hikmat; 01 March 2018; Djibouti city).

> I stayed in Djibouti for 2 years, waiting for the Turkish visa that never arrived. By end of 2019, I left Djibouti and had to return back to Ethiopia to take the Northwestern route with the hope to get to Sudan and proceed further. My stay in Metema, which was originally supposed to be a short-lived one, turned out to be for good. Metema became my Istanbul (Hikmat; 22 October 2020; Metema Town, Ethiopia).

INTRODUCTION

The account of the female transit migrant, Hikmat, aptly captures the gist of the complex nature of transiting and the dynamics of change in migratory routes, the core issue addressed in this paper. The gendered migration pattern in contemporary Ethiopia can be seen in the massive labor migration to the Middle East and the Gulf states which has for long been dominated by female labor migrants. The post-1990 period in Ethiopia was marked by the mass exodus of thousands leaving the country in search for work in the oil rich Gulf states and beyond (De Regt, 2009). The major destinations for Ethiopian female labor migrants in the 1990s and 2000s include Dubai, Kuwait, Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia. In addition to the oil rich Gulf countries, thousands of Ethiopian female labor migrants were destined for economically less-developed countries such as Djibouti and the Sudan (Zeleke, 2019).

Despite the mass exodus, there is no official record of the number of migrants leaving Ethiopia, or gender-segregated data, except for a few anecdotal sources. The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA) estimates that around 1.5 million Ethiopians had left the country illegally between 2008 and 2014 (Girmachew, 2021). During this time, 480,480 Ethiopians migrated to Arab countries legally and women account for about 95 percent of these documented migrants (ibid). Several factors account for the phenomenon of the feminization of labor migration from Ethiopia. These include: the rising demand for cheaper sources of labor in the Middle East and Gulf States; the unemployment and poverty rate in Ethiopia; and structural factors at places of destination, such as the existence of the Khafala labor migrant sponsorship system (Dessiye, 2001). A crucial factor that often went unnoticed or underdiscussed is existing socio-cultural gendered norms and values in Ethiopia.

Reports indicate that about 160,000 undocumented Ethiopian migrants were deported from Saudi Arabia between November 2013 and April 2014. During 2016–2017, the kingdom of Saudi Arabia deported more than 120,000 Ethiopians. An estimated number of 1,780,000 migrants have left Ethiopia for the Middle East and

Gulf countries (Girmachew, 2021).

The objective of this paper is to examine the migration trajectories and lived experiences of Ethiopian female transit migrants moving from Djibouti to the Sudan. The paper elucidates the factors that informed their decisions and choices to reroute their migration paths and assesses the actors and factors involved. The paper pays due attention to the accounts of those who have moved to Metema (a bordering town on the Ethio-Sudanese border), where the migrants spend longer periods of transiting. Through the examination of the lived experiences of Ethiopian female migrants, the paper foregrounds the creative strategies the migrants employ while negotiating their precarious and vulnerable positions and making informed decisions about their migration trajectories. Furthermore, the study aims to understand the prospects of mobility and/or settlement of migrants in transit, including the factors that affect their informed decisions to continue the migration journey, to settle down, or to return home. These issues are contextualized by examining whether geopolitical factors in any way affect their potential mobility or immobility. By addressing these themes, the paper aims to contribute to academic discussions on transit migration.

The remaining parts of the paper are structured into five sections. It starts off with the section that provides background information on the gendered trends in the migration and transit trajectories of Ethiopian female migrants. The next section presents a review of the literature on discourses of transit migration, and introduces the analytical framework. This is followed by a discussion of the methodological considerations. The next section presents the empirical material by drawing on the accounts of key informants and their lived experiences in the two transit places. The final section presents concluding remarks.

BACKGROUND

Ethiopia's official ban of the legal migration to the Gulf States in 2013/4 increased the number of female migrants resorting to irregular migration using different routes. These irregular migration routes involve several stopovers, often referred to as transit places.

Djibouti is a transit country often used by Ethiopian labor migrants destined for the Middle East (RMMS, 2017). Apart from its significance as a transit pathway, Djibouti city, the capital of the Republic of Djibouti, is one of the fastest growing cities in the Horn of Africa region and is sometimes labeled as the "Future Dubai of the Horn of Africa". The civil war in Yemen has resulted in large influx of Yemeni refugees and Ethiopian migrant returnees from Yemen via Djibouti between 2016 and 2019. During this time, some Ethiopian female transit migrants in Djibouti considered looking for alternative destinations and transit routes. According to the finding of the study conducted by the author, between 2017-2019 a significant number of these migrants had left Djibouti for the Sudan. Sudan is one of the major transit and destination countries in the Horn of Africa. The finding of the extended study on Ethiopian female transit migrants indicates how migration routes and

migration aspirations change. The finding of the study conducted by the author further elucidates the fluid space of mobility in the Horn of Africa region.

As there is no direct route connecting Djibouti and the Sudan, the migrants have to travel back to Ethiopia before crossing to the Sudan. Sudan has for long been a transit pathway for migrants from Western and Eastern African countries destined for Europe, the Gulf and Northern African countries (Babkier, 2011). Sudan's geographical location and its long porous border with neighboring countries makes it a transit country for irregular migrants having the strategic significance for smuggling services (Ayalew et al., 2018). The migration routes in the Sudan are destined for Libya (the northwestern route) and the other one leading to the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt (the eastern route) constitutes the pillar of the so-called East Africa Migration Route. There is an estimation that close to three million Ethiopians reside in the Sudan (Zakir, 2019). Ethiopia is one of the top three countries of origin of the migrants in Sudan, after South Sudan, and Eritrea (Babkier, 2011).

This unprecedented complex development of rerouting transit pathways observed over the course of the study has left the author with key questions. In order to understand the changing transit migration experiences of the female migrants under study, the emerging intricate picture needs to be scrutinized in its full complexity. Hence, the paper seeks to bridge this gap by examining the dynamics of the transit migration trajectories of Ethiopian female migrants and thus aims to understand the various factors informing their decisions to reroute their migration paths and the related decision-making process while in transit. The paper sets out to answer several questions. Firstly, what are the different reasons that inform the migrants' decisions to leave Djibouti and re-route to the Sudan? Secondly, drawing on Papadopoulou-Kourkoula's (2008: 5) point that transiting is a situation that "may or may not develop into further migration", the paper asks, how do the migrants consider the new transit and what are the different factors that influence the migrants' decisions to further immigrate to the Sudan, or to settle at the place of transit, or to return home? Thirdly, by acknowledging the agency of the transit migrants, the paper asks, how do the migrants navigate around and muddle through existing options and changing migration trajectories while trying to make sense of their new social experiences in the new transit setting? The empirical basis of this paper is the extended ethnographic study conducted from 2017 to 2022 in Djibouti and in Ethiopia. This is discussed more fully in the methodology section.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: REFLECTIONS ON THE DISCOURSES OF TRANSIT MIGRATION

Despite the prominence of the concept of transit migration for over three decades, there is no commonly agreed-upon definition of the concept of transit migration. The UN/ECE (1993: 7) defines transit migration as "migration in one country with the intention of seeking the possibility there to immigrate to another country as the

country of destination". Transit is also defined as "the stage between emigration and settlement" (Papadopoulou, 2005: 2). Cassarino and Fargues (2006) conceptualize transit migration as a process rather than a migration status. Coutin (2005: 196) points out the inherent challenges and dangers faced by migrants in transit: "The term transit denotes the time and space when migrants are most bereft of state protection and, therefore are more vulnerable to crime, exploitation, injury, and death. Transit also redefines the territories through which migrants pass". For others, transit migration refers either to "ongoing mobility" involving undocumented border crossing (Düvell, 2006) or to a period of "involuntary immobility" (Collyer et al., 2010).

A conceptualization of transit by exclusively associating it with countries that migrants cross to get to their respective final destinations, contradicts the common reality in which countries often tend to fit in broader categories of origin, transit, and destination, challenging the discourse of the 'destination–origin' dichotomy (Suter, 2012). Two features stand out in the study of transit migration, namely, the migrants' intention to move on, and the temporariness of the transit (Suter, 2012). The centrality of these two features is however, contested. Ethnographic studies proved that places described as 'transit' are often considered as, or become, final destinations (Collyer, 2007).

This paper draws on Papadopoulou-Kourkoula's (2008) framework describing transit as the situation between emigration and settlement, characterized by indefinite migrant stay, that may or may not develop into further migration, depending on different factors. This paper adds to the existing discourse on transit migration, the fact that transit migration is characterized by indefinite routes of further mobility as the routes of next migration and destinations might be reconsidered while en route, as the analysis of the empirical findings of the research project on Ethiopian female migrants presented in this paper clearly shows. One of the major limitations in the conceptualization of transit migration relates to the Eurocentric undertones of the term, informed by an underlying assumption describing European Union (EU) countries as intended destinations of transit migrants (Düvell, 2006). Such presumption recognizes countries at the fringes of Europe as main transit countries, while paying less attention to countries located further away (Suter, 2012). By going beyond such geographical bias in transit research, this paper presents the experience of transit migrants at two transit points in the Horn of Africa.

The factors influencing decision-making of migrants in general and that of transit migrants in particular, tend to be varied and complex in nature. Suter (2012) argues that the decision leading up to spatial mobility or immobility in transit is not clear-cut, but a process that highly depends on external factors. Brewer and Yükseker (2011) accentuate the value of access to information as being a key factor. Van Hear (2004) places emphasis on migrants' access to economic resources, while other scholars foreground lived experiences of migrants in transit and the conditions they face during transit (Jordan and Düvell, 2002,). Since this paper aims to understand

the factors that affect the decision-making of transit migrants in rerouting their migratory routes, the primary question is: What are the different factors informing the decision of Ethiopian female transit migrants to reroute their migratory pathways from Djibouti to Sudan?

The discourse on transit migration often portrays transit migrants as passive individuals who are contained in a given space against their will (Düvell, 2006). Accordingly, transit migration is often associated with illegality, high risk, and lack of control over one's own state of being (Collyer et al., 2010). Furthermore, the common feature in transit literature is focused on the migrants' journey, the challenges they face, with little or no focus on exploring their lived experience (see e.g., Hammond, 2006).

This paper is framed against conventional discourses of transit migration, that often portray migrants in transit as criminal trespassers, passive actors who lack agency, without control over their mobility and immobility. By going beyond such a pre-biased perspective, this paper aims to contribute to the gap on the agency of transit migrants. As Schapendonk (2018: 665) observes:

> … migration trajectories cannot be explained by focusing solely on migrant agency as a form of autonomous power. In fact, the evolvement of individual pathways depends so much on social networks, brokering services, helping hands, un/expected encounters and policy interventions".

The lived experiences of Ethiopian female transit migrants presented in this paper clearly show how the migrants use the rerouting of migration pathways as a coping strategy and it further examines the resourcefulness of the transit migrants in planning/replanning their mobility and/or immobility from their new transit area, Metema. This paper argues that transit migrants make informed decisions in identifying the migratory routes, their final destinations as well as their overall mobility/immobility, as expounded in the case material presented in this paper. The discussions highlight how the female migrants' action – or inaction; or mobility/immobility – is at times a well-thought-out move, unlike the main discourse that emphasizes the victimhood narrative.

The discussions on transit migration have for long adopted a linear understanding of migration (Oelgemöller, 2011). However, such assumptions on linearity are debunked in this paper, which acknowledges the dynamics of Ethiopian female migrants who change the directions of their migration and their aspirations while in transit.

METHODOLOGY

The changing nature of migration trajectories in transit often poses a methodological challenge to researchers studying transit migration. The data collection method adopted by the author challenges the common trend of 'methodological nationalism'

often observed in migration research. Methodological nationalism is an ideological orientation that approaches the study of social and historical processes as if they were contained within the borders of individual nation-states (Glick Schiller, 2009). By going beyond such an orientation, the empirical study leading to this publication problematizes the migration trajectories of transit migrants as a phenomenon that is not contained in particular space and time. Transit migration research is by and large dominated by sedentarism thought which shapes the data collection method, whereby the researches tend focus on the points of departure and arrival, representing migration as a predominantly bipolar process (Bredeloup, 2012; Schapendonk, 2012; Suter, 2012). The research methods adopted are hence often framed with the expectation of migrants moving in straight lines that commence in the village, go through the town, the metropolis, and eventually reach international destinations (Schapendonk, 2018). By going beyond such a dominant approach of a linear understanding of a transit pathway, as a movement that starts at a place, transits at one specific site and ends at a destination, this research project resorted to a broader approach that examines a spatial-temporal link between migrants' situations in different transit places, both in Djibouti and Ethiopia. Accordingly, the study on the transit lived experiences of the Ethiopian female migrants was conducted in Djibouti and Metema.

As Van Liempt and Bilger (2006) suggest, in order to be able to capture the changing dynamics of migration trajectories of the migrants, ideally the same migrants should be interviewed at different moments along their migration process, to better comprehend their experience. The study adopted such an approach that pays attention to mobility in transit migration and draws on following the lived experiences of the same key informants interviewed in Djibouti. The empirical basis of the paper is an ethnographic study on Ethiopian female transit migrants, conducted in both Djibouti and in Ethiopia from 2017 to 2022. This paper draws on the lived experiences of Ethiopian female migrants documented in both Djibouti and Metema. The rapport established with the informants in Djibouti over three years (2017–2019) helped the author to win their trust and maintain strong contact. The author was in close communication with the informants through regular calls and communication via social media, especially Telegram and WhatsApp, which most migrants frequent. This helped the author to gain further insights into their migration trajectories, mainly pertaining to their rerouted transit pathways and their decisions to move/not to move across time and space.

Based on the relationship established and maintained, the author visited the key informants during follow-up visits in Metema, the places migrants moved to in 2020–2021. Of the 15 key informants, two have already left for the Sudan; the author met 12 of the key informants in Metema. Nine of these informants were between the ages of 25 and 30, while two informants were aged 19, one informant was 31 years old, two informants are 33 years old and the oldest one was 35. By going beyond the mere analysis of the factors that affect their mobility and as a way of specifying the

agency of the migrants, the in-depth interviews focused on how the migrants navigate around and muddle through existing options and changing migration trajectories while trying to make sense of their new social experiences. Related to this, one of the questions addressed in the study is: What are the factors that influence the migrants' decisions to further immigrate to a specific destination, or to reside in Djibouti, or to return home?

In addition to in-depth interviews conducted with the key informants in Djibouti and Ethiopia, the researcher conducted two focus group discussions (FGDs) with a group of female migrants in Metema. The FGDs were used to comprehend the lived experiences of Ethiopian female migrants in transit in Metema and to understand the various challenges they faced during transit. By going beyond the normative victimization narrative, during the data collection, due attention was paid to the creative strategies the migrants employed while negotiating their precarious and vulnerable positions.

The multi-site study approach goes against one of the major limitations in the study of mobility in transit research, that often inclines to privilege analyses of separate segments of individuals' migratory paths, rather than capturing the longitudinal character of migration (Castagnone, 2011). The long duration of the study – from 2017 to 2022 – enabled the author to conduct extended fieldwork in both study sites. In addition to the interviews and FGDs, the researcher conducted informal conversations with local residents of Metema town and did observations during the fieldwork in different neighborhoods where the transit migrants resided, with the aim of gaining further insights into the informants' socio-economic situations. During the study, the author frequently visited small coffee shops and restaurants run by the transit migrants, as well as those places where transit migrants were employed, to get insights into their work routines and the prospects of their integration with the locals. As a way of protecting the identity of informants, all names used in this paper are pseudonyms.

EXAMINING REROUTED TRANSIT AND SETTLEMENT AT TRANSIT: ACCOUNTS OF ETHIOPIAN FEMALE MIGRANTS IN DJIBOUTI AND ETHIOPIA

This part of the paper closely examines two themes, namely: the factors responsible for the rerouting of migration pathways/transit points; and the factors enhancing or inhibiting forward mobility from the second transit place – in this instance, Metema.

Redefining destination and transit

One of the key general research questions addressed during the course of the study was a question pertaining to how migrants decide to redefine destinations and transit points. Given the complex nature of decision-making during transit, such an attempt to capture the nuances of decision-making of transit migrants should aim at

exploring multiple factors "by going beyond a monocausal analysis of the decision-making process" (Zeleke, 2019: 60). Even though factors influencing one's decision-making process during transit tend to be subjective in nature, the findings of the study show how some factors are shared by groups of informants, as it can be inferred from the discussion here.

Geopolitics – Conflict in Yemen

The civil war in Yemen and the resulting humanitarian crisis that led to the mass exodus from Yemen is one of the developments that affected the migration dynamics in and around the Horn of Africa. Following the uprising in 2011 that overthrew the authoritarian regime led by the ousted president, Ali Abdullah Saleh, Yemen ended up in a volatile situation that led to a violent civil war. The war in Yemen has left Yemenis in a desperate situation and by October 2017 around 37,000 Yemenis has fled to Djibouti (Semnani and Sydney, 2020).

Even though the Markazi refugee camp established at the outskirts of the portal town of Obock in Northern Djibouti hosts Yemeni refugees, thousands of Yemenis have moved further south to mainland Djibouti, to the capital Djibouti city. This has affected the soaring living costs in Djibouti where the rental costs and prices for consumable goods, including food, have skyrocketed. Furthermore, the civil war in Yemen has also led to the return of thousands of Ethiopian migrants from Yemen via Djibouti. The transcript from the FGD conducted with five informants in Metema, states how such geo-political situations impacted on the decision-making process of rerouting a migration path:

> Following the arrival of the Yemenis, Djiboutian landlords doubled the rentals and the overall living costs in Djibouti soared. The Yemenis came with money and they have a strong support base from their relatives in the diaspora. The locals prefer to rent their houses to the Yemenis who were ready to pay whatever amount they are asked for. Even though they are generally called sidetegna (refugees), the Yemeni started running businesses in Djibouti – opening restaurants and shops. We had to look for other alternatives as there was no way that we could compete with the Yemenis in Djibouti (FGD; 25 March 2021; Metema).

Even though most informants shared the concern of the rising cost of living, two informants described the impact of the civil war on their decision-making differently. For them, a more pressing factor for reconsidering their migration journey, was the insecurity of the migration route via Yemen:

> One must be out of one's mind to consider traveling to Saudi via Yemen at this time. We met hundreds of Ethiopian migrants who made it back to Djibouti and shared their horrific experiences. We also saw with our own eyes – injured

> Yemenis and Ethiopians in Djibouti. So how can one consider proceeding to Yemen under such circumstances? (FGD; 20 September 2021; Metema).

The civil war in Yemen and its spillover impact has in one way or the other impacted on the decision-making processes of rerouting the transit pathways of Ethiopian female informants, in their decision to leave Djibouti to look for alternative destinations.

Studies have focused on the nexus between conflict and migration, emphasizing how migration results from conflicts and in return leads to new conflicts (Adamson, 2006). This paper argues that there is a need to go beyond the discussion on the correlation between migration and conflicts in the context of forced displacement. The analysis of the aforementioned cases shows how the conflict dynamics impact on the transit trajectories of migrants – an element that goes beyond the context of forced displacement.

Risks associated with strict immigration policy

In 2011, the government of Saudi Arabia introduced the Nitaqat programme, commonly known as the Saudi Nationalization Scheme – a policy implemented by the Ministry of Labor, requiring Saudi employers to hire Saudi nationals. This resulted in a crackdown on irregular migrants in Saudi Arabia. By November 2013, Saudi Arabia evicted more than 163,000 Ethiopian irregular migrants (Girmachew, 2021). In March 2017 a strict measure targeting irregular migrants was launched by the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). This was a campaign known as 'A Nation without Violations' whereby irregular migrants in the Kingdom were granted an amnesty period of 90 days to leave the country. The International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2019) estimated the existence of 500,000 irregular migrants in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia by March 2017. The amnesty period lasted until November 2017, after which the KSA government started taking harsh measures of detaining and deporting hundreds of thousands of Ethiopian migrants. About 10,000 Ethiopians on average were detained and deported by Saudi authorities every month (HRW, 2020).

During the FGDs, informants emphasized how this development discouraged their forward journey to crossing over to Yemen and proceeding to Saudi Arabia:

> Thousands are being deported from Saudi until this day, while thousands are detained in an overcrowded jail. We have come across short video footages showing how uninhabitable the jails in Saudi are. There was a short 2-minute video that went viral on WhatsApp, showing the hardship of a young Ethiopian mother and her new-born child in an overcrowded prison where her cellmates were trying to help. There were other graphic images coming out about the inhuman treatment of Ethiopian migrants in Saudi and watching those terrible videos was a game changer to my migration plan (FGD; 25 April 2021; Metema).

The strict migration regime was raised as a push factor to reconsider the original plan of traveling to Saudi Arabia. For many, Sudan seems to offer opportunities for work that they aspired to find in Saudi Arabia, but with relatively less pay and a safer working environment:

> Even though one cannot compare the fee to be earned in Saudi Arabia to what one would earn in Sudan, for me my life and wellbeing matters most, as I can only enjoy whatever I earn, only if I am alive (Tiruwerk; 03 May 2021; Metema).

The issues pertaining to strict migration regime and immigration policies often draw boundaries that inhibit integration, making migrants feel that they are in a state of permanent transit (Nyamnjoh, 2007). Likewise, the analysis of the data indicates how migrant decision-making is not a straightforward process and points to how an often-overlooked and underexplored factor of the perceptions of risk influences the decision-making of the migrants in rerouting their migration pathway. The circulation and perception of the available risk information plays a role in the decision-making process.

Hardship during transit

Many informants recounted the hardship encountered during transit in Djibouti and state how that contributed to their decision-making to reroute. Many considered immobility and time spent in transit as being a transitional stage when migrants acquired some life-skills while working in Djibouti. However, the lived experience related to the difficulty of finding a job in Djibouti and the low wages earned in Djiboutian households was mentioned as one of the factors that pushed the informants to look for alternative transits and destinations, as the account by Muna shows:

> I arrived in Djibouti in 2015 with an ambitious plan and hope to work as a maid for 6 months and earn an income to cover my trip to Saudi Arabia. I spent 2 years working as a janitor in a hotel in Djibouti but I hardly managed to pay for my accommodation and food, let alone saving for financing my trip to Saudi. When I heard about the better fee and better living conditions in Sudan, I decided to leave Djibouti and traveled to Sudan (Muna; 02 March 2021; Metema).

As Suter (2012) argues, the challenges encountered during transit often force migrants to look for alternative pathways, as the case of Muna and several Ethiopian female transit migrants elucidates.

The other aspect of hardship raised by informants relates to the negative encounters migrants had from abusive police and immigration officers in

Djibouti city. There is a strong crackdown on illegal migrants, leading to frequent imprisonment and deportation of migrants. All 5 participants of a focus group discussion encountered such maltreatment by the local police due to their illegal residential status:

> Some policemen feel entitled to getting a bribe from irregular migrants. Bribing the local police is like sharing whatever we earn equally with them. Many of us had to change the neighborhoods we lived in, just trying to run away from such abuses. A local policeman living in the neighborhood approached us through our landlord, asking for a weekly bribe of 100 birr. We were threatened that he would report us to the immigration authorities if we failed to pay him. We used to contribute 25 birr every week and paid him for about 2 months (FGD; 20 April 2021; Metema).

The encounters of the Ethiopian female transit migrants resonate with Horwood's account that irregular migrants in transit in the Republic of South Africa "pass immigration officials in large numbers and pay 'fees' / bribes …" (Horwood, 2009: 43).

While transiting in Djibouti, the migrants encountered various challenges, ranging from economic hardship, detention, kidnapping for ransom, to sexual abuse. These challenges were described by informants as being among the leading factors that made them reconsider their original migration plans and rerouted their migration route.

Social networks and information

The findings of the extended study conducted at both transit points show the value of social networks in influencing migrants' decision to reroute their migration journey. The value of social networks can be examined from two perspectives. For some, the strong social network they have with friends and family members who took the north western migratory route to Sudan is the main source of information. For this group of informants, their friends and family members in Sudan are their main pool of information about the living conditions in Sudan. This group of informants accentuated how the relative sense of deprivation pushed them to consider leaving Djibouti for the Sudan, as the following account clearly shows:

> I have a friend and two cousins in Khartoum. They all earn between 175–200 USD working in a cafeteria in Khartoum. They are free to live on their own and live in a rented room that they share. I am working at a house with extended families of 8 [in Djibouti]. I am a live-in maid and hence I work day and night and earn only 100 USD a month. I have to rent a place for my weekend days off on Friday. The income they earn and the work opportunities they have in Khartoum are by far better than the limited options one has in Djibouti. I will

be leaving for Khartoum in March (Betty; 04 January 2018; Djibouti).

As Brewer and Yükseker (2011) emphasize, access to information is a key factor that influences the decision-making of the migrants on the move. Betty's account above clearly shows how the information that transit migrants get from their social networks impacts on the decision-making process. In some cases, the value of social networks extends to the provision of a safety-net to migrants in the form of financial support. The second dimension of the value of social networks relates to the networks that migrants established in Djibouti. Migrants in Djibouti have institutional and non-institutional social networks. The weekly church service in Djibouti is one of the main platforms where they exchange information about a wide range of issues, including alternative routes and destinations. Furthermore, there is a vibrant customary self-help association of migrants in Djibouti called Idir/Kire, a forum that migrants get information from. It is a customary member-supported association where by members of the association meet on occasions such as weddings and in circumstances when members lose their loved ones. The kire social gatherings are occasions when migrants get together and exchange information on a wide range of issues including contacts of brokers, contacts of individuals at the destinations – both in Metema and Khartoum, and exchange information about potential co-migrants, i.e., individuals planning to depart.

The lived experiences of the migrants relate to the phenomenon that Jordan and Düvell (2002) discuss on how lived experiences of migrants in transit and the conditions they face during transit influence their prospects of further mobility and immobility. Based on the analysis of the empirical data on the diverse factors that migrants consider in redirecting their migration journeys presented above, this paper argues against the dominant discourse presuming migration decisions during transit are often taken in the context of idiosyncratic personal needs, stress, urgency, uncertainty, and limited information about livelihood opportunities (Düvell, 2006). Transit migrants are often portrayed as migrants stranded in a certain place against their will, often having limited access to resources and information (Carling, 2002). On the other hand, the lived experience of the Ethiopian female migrants clearly shows how initial plans of migration tend to change and are redefined during the transit phases of the migration trajectory. Furthermore, the paper argues that an attempt to examine the factors responsible for the rerouting of migration journeys, should take into account a multitude of factors, ranging from social networks, and access to information, to experiences during transit.

Redefining transit as destination

By going beyond examining the rerouting of migration journeys, this paper also aims at understanding the multitude of factors and the complex decision-making process of migrants in settling at a place originally considered to be a transit pathway. Examining the issue is essential. Of the 15 key informants whose stories the author

closely followed up, only two proceeded to the Sudan, one reconsidered the whole idea of migrating, while the remaining 12 decided to stay in Metema, a transit place.

Migrants rerouting their journey from Djibouti to Sudan, pass though the border town of Metema Yohannes, commonly known as Metema. The town is located in Northwestern Ethiopia, in Amhara regional state, West Gondar Zone, Metema wereda. Metema wereda has 19 rural kebeles and two urban districts, namely Gendewuha, and Metema Yohannes. Following the administrative adjustment in 2015, Metema Yohannes town was upgraded from a kebele to a town administration with an independent municipality. The town became a bustling business center, given its strategic location on the border of the two countries and its a strategic position in its proximity to the Sudan. The area has significant commercial importance in Ethio-Sudanese business relationships and also for the historical long-distance trade route running from Gondar, up to Timbuktu via northern Africa (Hagose, 2014).

Metema's significance as a transit pathway for migrants destined for Sudan has a long history (Ayalew et al., 2018). The town of Metema Yohannes and the Sudanese border town of Gallabat in Gadarif state share 10 km border. Metema Yohannes and Gallabat are separated by a porous border – a bridge demarcating this international border. This route was used by thousands of political refugees who ran away from the political persecution of the Derg regime in the 1970s and 1980s (Hagose, 2014). Historically the border area is known for the volatile conflicts that took place at different times (Gezahegne, 2019).

The analysis of these key findings pertaining to the settlement of the migrants at the supposedly transit place, Metema town accentuates Schapendonk's account that migration trajectories in transit are beyond mobility, involving periods of immobility, waiting, reorientation and (un)intended temporary or long-term settlements (Schapendonk, 2012). The circumstances of immobility while transiting in Metema, as the account of the 12 key informants interviewed both in Djibouti and Metema clearly show, are therefore an important part of the migration trajectory that allow the migrants to gain new experiences, acquire new information and reconsider their original migration plans. Schewel (2020) asserts that understanding the multitude of factors that hold people in a place, are important in getting a full understanding of their immobility. The closer examination of the lived experiences of the key informants revealed the interplay of several factors that informed their decisions to settle in Metema, as presented here.

Work opportunities

For many, Metema offers ample work opportunities, mostly in the informal petty business sector and informants recounted how this experience changed their original plans. Metema is the hotspot for both small-scale petty trading and large-scale cross-border trade. The Metema-Gallabat border is well-known for the regular and irregular trade and mobility of goods and people. Metema has a strategic significance for the bustling business due to the mega agricultural cash-crop farming, and its

wealth of livestock resources (Bakewell et al., 2020). A recent policy framework that contributed to the enhancement of the commercial significance of Metema Yohannes is the Petty Periphery Cross Border Trade (PPCBT), an agreement that offers residents of the border areas an opportunity to be involved in small-scale business and trading of food commodities and small consumable goods. This was developed with the intention of controlling the informal cross-border trade.

Three of the informants were actively involved in cross-border informal cross-border trade. They smuggle mainly coffee, sunflower (suf), and butter from the Ethiopian side and bring henna, edible oil, spices/herbs and perfumes from Sudan. The migrants originally started the informal cross-border business as a share business with well-established residents of Metema town. They all mentioned how in due course they became autonomous and changed their original plans of proceeding to Sudan once they found the business lucrative and profitable. Hirut reported it thus:

> I came to Metema in February 2019 with the intention of moving to Sudan. But once I reached here, I met several returnees from Sudan who are involved in informal cross-border trade. I was lucky to be introduced to a family friend, a woman who was in Saudi Arabia with my sister and returned to Metema in 2016. She mentored me on how to get into the business. I had only 5,000 birr – money that I used as a start-up capital when I first crossed over to Sudan. Even though my intention was to do the shiqala (trade) for a while and move on, I found myself in this business for the last 2 years. There are some challenges with the tax authorities which at times become discouraging, but I am now learning the best way to deal with it and I do not see myself migrating to Sudan or anywhere else (Hirut; 20 October 2021; Metema).

Unlike the victimization narrative that portrays transit migrants as passive individuals – as passive agents, mere victims stranded en route devoid of agency (Dowd, 2008), in most circumstances, transit migrants make informed decisions in various circumstances.

Hirut mentioned two challenges: the border control of informal cross-border trade often done by the officials stationed at the customs post of the Ethiopian revenue and customs authority in Metema Yohannes; and the curfew. There is a curfew on the cross-border – residents of the two border towns are allowed to cross the borders between 7:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. and they commute across the border daily. This paper argues that while research studies pay attention to the structural constraints, they need to simultaneously engage in examining how transit migrants cope with and overcome the challenges.

For others, the work opportunities relate to starting up a small business. Two other informants had started running small coffee shops, locally often referred to as yajabana bunna bet. The small coffee shops are not limited to the town of Metema

Yohannes, as in some cases, individuals cross the border to Gallabat and sell coffee and tea at the Sudanese market. Tilaye, one of the key informants, mentioned that she decided to extend her stay in Metema after she started the small coffee shop at the bus stop where she serves hundreds of customers in a day. She expanded her business by employing a young girl from Wollo, who crosses the border daily to sell tea, coffee and Ethiopian bread (difo dabo) in Galabat market. Tilaye pays about 200 Sudanese pound (circa 0.50 USD) for the rental of the shade and a tax daily.

Meti, another key informant, runs a small road-side restaurant in Metema town. Her road-side restaurant is made of a rugged and faded emergency tent that accommodates up to seven customers at a time. Her main customers are daily laborers, locally referred to as saluges:

> My main customers are the saluges, who come to work on the large-scale plantations and farmland on both the Ethiopian and Sudanese sides of the border. I had a large number of customers over the summer (July to the end of August) as many would come during school break holidays to work and earn an income to cover their school expenses the following year. After paying for the rent of this shelter, and the salary of the girl assisting me, I make a profit of up to 5,000 birr a month on average. Even though this is not much considering the labor that goes into it, I am quite grateful and satisfied with the income (Meti; 20 September 2021; Metema).

The saluges that Meti referred to, work on the Ethiopian side of the border on different sesame and cotton plantation farms in the district during the rainy season. Most of them move to the Sudan during the autumn and work on the large-scale sorghum plantations. Metema Yohannes is renowned for its status as a transit area to these migrant workers. The agricultural high seasons from June to September are times when hundreds of thousands of people working as day laborers in the mechanized agricultural farms flock to the area.

For others, another work opportunity is related to either working in or running bars. Selamawit, a key informant who settled in Metema, runs her own mini-bar in Jingira, a red-light neighborhood. She moved to Metema in November 2019 with the intention of moving further to the Sudan. Upon arriving in Metema she was welcomed by a friend whom she knew back in Djibouti, who was running the bar, which Selamawit took over. She narrated her experience as follows:

> I was lucky to be welcomed by Lily, who integrated well to Metema by the time I got here. Upon getting here, I started working in this bar as a bar attendant. I was with her for almost a year and a half before she left for Cairo. Her Sudanese boyfriend, who is a businessman, helped Lily to move to Egypt. I took over her business and now there are three young girls working for me – one of them is a returnee from Sudan who speaks fluent [Arabic]; her clients are mostly

Sudanese tourists. The other two girls have Ethiopian and Sudanese clients. The reason why you don't see many Sudanese men now, is because this is their fasting season, the Ramadan. I don't have any intention of migrating further and I don't also have any plans to do what I am doing now. My plan is to work hard, save enough, get some basic training and open a small beauty salon in Addis (Selamawit; 05 May 2020; Metema).

Selamawit's account indicates how social networks affect migration decisions and subsequent movements of migrants. The stage of waiting while in transit, is significant in giving the migrants in transit a chance to reflect on their further mobility plans.

The Sudanese men often cross over to the Ethiopian side, mainly to Metema Yohannes town for business and entertainment. Most of the small bars sell alcohol, an item which is banned in Sudan. Kinfu (2019) indicates that there are over 300 hotels, bars, nightclubs and restaurants housing sex workers in Metema.

As the lived experiences of the seven informants presented above clearly show, the different work opportunities they secured in Metema are considered as significant improvements in their lives, regardless of how little, but significant the money that they generate is. This shows how the work opportunities that the migrants come across are fulfilling in enhancing their sense of increased self-esteem and self-worth – factors that make them reconsider their further mobility plans.

This phenomenon challenges the very conceptualization of transit that by and large is associated with countries that migrants cross to get to their respective final destinations. As the case of Ethiopian female transit migrants clearly shows, places that are supposedly considered as transit areas, like Metema, tend to fit rather into broader categories of origin, transit, and destination, challenging the discourse of the 'destination–origin' dichotomy (Suter, 2012).

Relationships and starting a family

Relationships and starting a family are additional factors that play a significant role in the decision to settle at the place of transit, reconsidering migration plans. The migrants start relationships, either with local Ethiopian men or in some cases with Sudanese. For two of the key informants, the relationships and the families they established in Metema are described as being key factors that made them reconsider their original migration aspirations. Nina, one of the key informants, married a local businessman and was expecting her first child at the time of the interview. She summarized her experiences in Metema:

Starting a family has been my life-time dream. But considering the situation I was in, like spending three years in Djibouti and with the plan of moving to Egypt. I never saw myself starting a family in the near future. After getting to Metema I got the information about the possibilities of migrating to Israel with the help of Sudanese brokers – information which made me reconsider my

original plan of moving to Cairo, back in 2019. The travel to Israel is expensive and for that I had to work and make a saving. I rented a small verandah where I started running a coffee shop with the hope of working for a year and then proceed further. I met my current husband by the end of 2020. He used to own a grain store around the neighborhood of my coffee shop. He was my regular customer and we started dating. I moved in and started living with him in January 2021. Now I am a wife and will soon be a mother. There is no way that I can leave behind my new family; so Metema is where I will be spending the rest of my time, inshihallah (Nina; 07 September 2021; Metema).

As Schapendonk (2018) observes, the evolvement of individual migration pathways is highly influenced by different factors, including social networks and un/expected encounters. In line with this observation, Zinat's experience of relationship and marriage has impacted her migration trajectory. Zinat is an informant, described by locals as a sheqaba, a broker. Informants emphasized that she is a middleperson working with local and Sudanese brokers involved in smuggling migrants. Zinat is in a de facto marriage with her Sudanese partner, whom she was dating for over eight months and whom she refers to as bal (husband) even though they are not yet officially married. Her partner Kareem is based in Galabat. Zinat related her experiences, below:

> My husband, Kareem, is an official agent for the Sudanese investor that runs a cotton farm in Galabat. They often get workers for the farm from here [Metema]. He travels to Metema at least once a month on a business trip. I met him in February 2021 through his Ethiopian friend, a broker who has business here and in Gonder. Kareem is divorced from his Sudanese wife and has three children. He bought this small house for me and helped me to start the kiosk I am running now. I mainly sell coffee, incense and Sudanese perfume. I help my husband with his business mainly in recruiting local workers. Even though many workers would cross the border without any work contracts, my husband and the local delala are also liaising to recruit those who want to cross the border on a work contract (toleb). This does not incur a cost to the saluges, as my husband and his co-worker are paid by the Sudanese investors who are looking for a reliable worker. My role in most cases is to introduce the young men looking for jobs, to the friend of my husband, who is mostly here in Metema. My shop is located near Meqomiya, a station where the daily laborers hang out to be picked. There are dozens of kiimits (mistresses) of Sudanese men in this small town. I don't want to end up like them, but rather start living with my husband and we are in the process of legalizing our marriage (Zinat; 21 September 2021; Metema).

Zinat felt uneasy about being referred to as a sheqaba, as the word denotes being

involved in the smuggling business.

The analysis of the aforementioned case and similar cases shows how social networks shape the migration decisions and subsequent prospects of mobility/immobility of migrants. The social networks might range from the networks that migrants have with their friends, close family members, extended family members, and people they met en route.

Essence of time

There was a phrase which informants used during the FGDs, emphasizing the essence and value of time. On two different occasions informants cited an Amharic saying that seemed to be familiar to all taking part in the discussion: Gize werik new la set lij degimo almazwa (Time is gold for all, while it is a diamond for a woman). When the author probed further about the meaning of this popular saying, all informants emphasized how powerful this statement is, underscoring the value of time for the subjects of the study:

> One thing that we realized through time, is the indefinite nature of a migration journey. We came here with the assumption that crossing over to the Sudan will be quite easy. I am turning 30 in a week. I have spent three years in Djibouti and another one year here. It might take me another 5 years to get to Europe and bear in mind that I am a woman. I am racing against time as the biological clock is ticking for us women. [At this point, all the FGD participants nod their heads in agreement with the informant, Fozia] … Once a woman is over 30, it gets harder to conceive, and even if she does, she runs a greater risk of having an unhealthy baby (FGD; 20 April 2021; Metema).

Time spent at the second transit place, Metema, gives the migrants the chance to reflect on their past migration experiences and their future migration plans. The indefinite time-frame emphasized in the quotation above, is considered an essential element affecting the decision to settle at the place of transit. This is a clear example of why researchers need to adopt a gender lens in migration processes.

Geopolitics – Crises in Sudan

Informants referred to geo-political instability as being a key element inhibiting further mobility from Metema. The revolution in Sudan and the subsequent political instability, have their roots in the protests against former Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir's imposed emergency austerity measures and the resulting economic inflation. These factors have caused many to reconsider their original plans of moving to Khartoum. The volatile political situation in the Sudan in the aftermath of the overthrow of former President Al-Bashir from power on 11 April 2019, and the protests following this event, have left Sudan in an economic crisis, amid political

instability. Finot reflected on her experiences:

> My intention upon coming to Metema in 2019 was to get to Egypt, as it is less complicated than getting to Europe. I got a tourist visa in Addis Ababa in March 2019 with the plan to move to Khartoum. The visa was valid through April 24, 2019. My plan was to cross over to Sudan from Metema with a bus, meet the broker in Khartoum and then proceed to Cairo. But the night I got here, there was an intense crackdown on protestors in Sudan and there was a strict border control. The broker told me that I should wait for few months and that I will cross over to Sudan with the tahrish, a Sudanese ID, that he would get me. I met dozens of returnees from Sudan here. Some of them were those who were trapped in Khartoum for months with the hope to cross over to Cairo. Had I left Metema last year, my fate would have been the same. I changed my mind after reaching here. Heading to the Sudan feels like throwing oneself to a flame, as they too, are going through a difficult time (Finot; 03 November 2020; Metema).

Furthermore, informants also mentioned how the growing political tension between Ethiopia and Sudan made them feel insecure to find themselves on the other side of the border. During the FGDs, informants referred to the 2020 deadly conflict and the resulting standoff over al-Fashaga – the 260 km2 borderland which has been a contested area between Ethiopia and the Sudan for decades. Following the eviction of thousands of Ethiopian farmers from the area in December 2020, there were several clashes that led to tensions and the closure of the border.

The points raised by the transit migrants as factors informing their reasoned decisions, clearly go against the conventional wisdom in the field of transit study – the perspective emphasizing the lack of agency of transit migrants in making informed decisions. Furthermore, this is a point best illustrating the subjective nature of the decision-making process in rerouting migration paths and making decisions to settle in a place of transit. As the case material presented above clearly indicates, destinations are entities defined and redefined through time.

CONCLUSION

This contribution advances knowledge in the field of transit migration. Through an empirical case study, it has critiqued three dominant discourses in transit migration and has suggested new lines of inquiry. First, is the issue of linearity. The dominant academic discourse in transit research is informed by the underlying assumption of linearity of transit migration (Oelgemöller, 2011). Such a linear assumption considers transit points like Djibouti and Metema as the in-between phase between departure and arrival. The analysis of the lived experiences of Ethiopian female transit migrants in rerouting transit and redefining destinations, as presented in this paper, challenges such assumptions. The rerouting of migration pathway calls for the need for going

beyond methodological nationalism in transit research and following the stories of migrants across space and time, as it was done in this paper.

Another dominant approach in transit migration research which this contribution critiqued, is affording much attention to prospects of further mobility from transit places (Schapendonk, 2012). This assumption is informed by the consideration of a transit area as an in-between space. The discussion on the redefinition of destinations of migrants and the phenomenon of changing the supposed transit pathway to a destination presented in this paper, contributes to the existing academic literature on transit migration. It challenges the bias in contemporary transit migration discourse that focuses heavily on addressing prospects of mobility at the expense of immobility.

Furthermore, the due emphasis given to mobility in prior transit research has for long contributed to the marginal attention given to decision-making processes at the level of the individual, who might prefer to remain in a transit place (Suter, 2012). By paying attention to the case of migrants who settled at a place of transit – in this instance Metema – this paper argued that transit migration trajectories and the related decision-making during transit, are complex phenomena that need to be interrogated and scrutinized in their full complexity, rather than focusing the attention on part of the transit experiences of migrants, at a specific space and time. This contribution emphasizes the need to examine the decision-making of migrants, in contexts of both mobility and immobility.

The dominant trend in transit research has for long portrayed migrants in transit as passive agents (Düvel, 2006). As a way of specifying the agency of the migrants, and by going beyond the mere analysis of the factors that affect their mobility, this contribution argued that researchers need to pay attention to the question of how the migrants navigate around and muddle through existing options and changing migration trajectories (Suter, 2012; Schapendonk, 2018). As the case of the Ethiopian female migrants clearly showed, migrants consider several contextual issues, such as: geopolitics, shifting migration policies, opportunity structures of transit places, and the consequences of moving or not moving in a certain direction, when they decide to reroute their migration paths or settle at a place, originally considered as a transit area. The paper argued that transit migrants' trajectories are shaped by a multitude of factors, including policy frameworks, socio-economic factors, social networks, and more. The gap in opportunities in an initial transit stop, whereby migrants are deprived of participating in socio-economic domains, is another structural constraint that pushes migrants to look for other 'better' alternatives. The agency of the migrants can be best understood by considering how the migrants cope with and overcome the multitude of challenges, including the contextual factors, through creativity and seizing new opportunities as they arise. This also includes rerouting their migration paths and settling at a place and the strategies they employ while negotiating their precarious and vulnerable circumstances.

This paper calls for more research exploring the complex process of decision-making of transit migrants to understand the experiences of migrants in transit. An

essential question to pose in such research, would be the question of how a temporary state of immobility influences migrants' actions and decisions of further mobility/immobility. Such research might explore themes that contribute towards evidence-based policy-making with regard to migration processes in the Horn of Africa region and beyond.

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Citizenship, Belonging and Crisis-Induced Returns of Ghanaian Migrants from Côte d'Ivoire

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The socio-economic embeddedness of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) foreign nationals and migrants in Côte d'Ivoire has been amply described. Despite previous episodes of political violence and the somewhat recent anti-immigrant policies, Côte d'Ivoire has served and will continue to serve as a haven for foreign-born populations of ECOWAS nationals and Ivorian-born descendants of foreigners. This paper draws on the notion of citizenship and belonging, and qualitative data gathered through interviews to explore the experiences of returned Ghanaian migrants who were victimized and trapped in a conflict situation in Côte d'Ivoire in 2002–2003 and 2010–2011. All interviews were transcribed fully, and the reflexive thematic coding and analysis technique was employed to analyze the qualitative data. The findings show that despite playing a passive role as perpetrators of the violence, Ghanaian migrants experienced harassment, intimidation and physical attacks, which in turn contributed to traumatic feelings beyond the crisis period. While the notion of citizenship and belonging facilitated migrants' easy entry to Ghana upon return, they had to navigate multiple challenges, including hostile attitudes of militants, rebels and vigilante groups at border checkpoints, extortion of cash and other material possessions. Re-integration and resettlement were further exacerbated due to their experiences. These findings have important implications for emergency responses to situations of migrants being caught up in crisis.

Keywords: political violence, migrants, re-integration, experiences, Côte d'Ivoire

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INTRODUCTION

For several years, Côte d'Ivoire served as a centre of attraction for migrants and foreign non-citizens, particularly those from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) community and elsewhere. The country has been described as the "first immigration country of West Africa", and a primary destination for labor migrants and displaced populations (Fargues and Rango, 2020; UNDESA, 2020). Protracted conflicts in neighboring countries such as Mali and Liberia, and elsewhere within the sub-Region have also meant that economic migrants, as well as individuals and families fleeing violence and instability have found Côte d'Ivoire as one popular destination (Allouche and Mohammed, 2014; Marc et al., 2015). Fundamentally, the high economic growth rates experienced in the post-independence era mainly through the production of cash crops such as cocoa and coffee have made Côte d'Ivoire a country of large-scale immigration (Ajayi et al., 2009; Solhjell et al., 2019; Sabas et al., 2020). Nevertheless, austerity measures implemented throughout the 1980s in the country led to socio-economic challenges, key among them being the closure of businesses, and public sector downsizing, which led to unemployment among the Ivorian political elite and graduates (Zongo, 2006). It has been argued that the crisis which erupted in the 2000s was largely underpinned by the economic recession experienced in the 1980s and 1990s which by implication overturned previous migrant-friendly policies in Côte d'Ivoire.

In light of concerns around migration, belonging and identity, the 1990s electoral upheavals and tensions, facilitated a national discourse around what it meant to be a real Ivorian citizen, and the deep fissures in Ivorian society resulted in binary categorization of citizens on the one hand, and non-citizens on the other, as well as between the Muslim and the Christian communities (NDI, 2013). In the late 1990s, foreigners made up around 26% of Côte d'Ivoire's population, with the greater share originating from Burkina Faso (Kress, 2006). Nevertheless, the government-sanctioned anti-immigrant policy implemented throughout the mid-1990s and early 2000s onwards led to a decline in the immigrant population. Despite previous episodes of a positive net migration rate (generally between 2 and 5 migrants/1,000 population) since the 1950s, state-sanctioned anti-immigrant measures have meant that the net rate of migration in 2017, for example, was estimated to be 0 migrants/1,000 population (IOM, 2009a, 2009b; CIA, 2017). It is fundamentally clear that policies and practices around citizenship and nationality in the Ivorian context have tended to promote migrant unfriendly practices, thus restricting the freedoms and rights of migrants. In this connection, Romano (2015) asserts that the notion of belonging and citizenship in the Ivorian context, since the 2000s, has been conflated with politicization of identity, economic austerity, and outbreak of violence that is often, but not always, targeted at foreign nationals (particularly African foreign non-citizens) and those perceived as non-Ivorian citizens in the country.

Notwithstanding previous political violence and state-sanctioned anti-immigrant measures, Côte d'Ivoire still serves as the principal destination for

foreign-born populations of ECOWAS nationals and Ivorian-born descendants of foreigners. For example, in 2012 the country hosted 2.4 million ECOWAS nationals, following post-electoral violence which implicated migrants (Awumbila et al., 2013). The immigrant population (excluding refugees) in Côte d'Ivoire stood at 2.2 million in 2015, accounting for approximately nine percent of the country's population (UNDESA, 2015; UNDP, 2016). Although the immigrant population in Côte d'Ivoire might have decreased over the years, the country has served and would continue to serve as an important destination, particularly for citizens of other ECOWAS member states residing in the country. This raises fundamental questions about the socio-economic embeddedness of migrants in the Ivorian society, and what implications this might have for future crises, should they occur.

This paper draws on qualitative data gathered through one of the six case studies in the Migrants in Countries in Crisis (MICIC) research project – Côte d'Ivoire at a crossroads: Socio-economic development implications of crisis-induced returns to Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Liberia (see also Pailey et al, 2017). The project focused on improving the capacity of states and other stakeholders to assist and provide protection to migrants who find themselves in countries affected by crisis, as well as addressing the long-term implications that result from such crisis situations. The paper sheds light on the experiences of returned Ghanaian migrants who were victimized and trapped in conflict situations in Côte d'Ivoire during the periods 2002–2003 and 2010–2011. First, it becomes evident through the qualitative interviews that the notions of citizenship and nationality played no role in ensuring migrants' belongingness to Ivorian society in the context of the politico-economic challenges that generated the episodes of conflict in 2002–2003 and 2010–2011.

Although Ghanaian migrants were not directly seen as perpetrators of the violence, they became victims of the conflict, with many experiencing harassment, intimidation and physical attacks, which in turn contributed to traumatic feelings beyond the crisis period. While the notion of citizenship and nationality facilitated easy entry to Ghana upon return, migrants had to negotiate multiple challenges including hostile attitudes of rebels and vigilante groups at border checkpoints, extortion of cash and other material possessions, which in turn exacerbated their experiences of the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire. Again, citizenship and belonging played a minor role in facilitating the re-integration and resettlement of some return migrants, especially those with weak social ties. On the whole, this paper contributes substantially to the literature on the vulnerabilities of migrants caught up in crisis situations and to policies and emergency responses to address the situation of migrants caught up in crisis situations.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows: The next part provides a conceptualization of citizenship, nationality and belonging as the framework to understanding the experiences of migrants during the conflict situation and upon return. Next, we outline the methodology including the research design, research participants and methods of data collection, and analysis of the data. The penultimate

section presents the findings and discussion of the research which leads to the conclusion as well as some reflections on policy implications.

CONCEPTUALIZATION OF CITIZENSHIP, NATIONALITY AND BELONGING

In social and political discourses, citizenship and nationality are sometimes used interchangeably, even though the two concepts do not exactly mean the same thing. As Hartnell (2006: 342) notes, while "nationality" and "citizenship" both capture fundamental aspects of the content and meaning of "belonging", they are different. Hartnell (2006) and Mammadova (2020) posit that nationality is the legalistic term that connotes the linkage between an individual and a state, whereas citizenship refers to "full membership" in a political community. Citizenship has further been conceptualized as membership of a self-governing political community, bringing with it rights and obligations for both the citizen and their community (Stanford University, 2017; Prabhat, 2018). Healy (2019) however, notes that having a sense of belonging whilst being rejected and alienated can be frustrating. Other scholars perceive citizenship as a mechanism of distinction between migrants and non-migrants based on associations with place, origin, and national community (Bauder, 2007; Van den Brink and Kochenov, 2019).

When related to international migration, Bauböck (2006) and Neumayer (2006) argue that citizenship from an international perspective acts as a sorting device that allocates human populations to sovereign countries and in the process helps to sort the desirable from the undesirable immigrants through the granting of visas, and it also acts as an established second gate that immigrants have to pass through in order to become full members of the countries that host them. As such, citizenship can act as a medium through which immigrants are granted the opportunity to enjoy the same rights and entitlements as the citizens of the hosting country (Bauder, 2014) or serves as an avenue for an international migrant to have a formal belonging to a specific country by providing the official recognition of a close relationship between them and the destination country (Yuval-Davis et al., 2005; Koser, 2007; Bhabha, 2009; Antonsich, 2010; Golash-Boza, 2016; Prabhat, 2018; Chin, 2019). Put broadly, citizenship can, therefore, be defined as being a legally recognized member of a sovereign political community, including the enjoyment of rights and obligations and emotional belonging for both the citizen and their community (Stanford University, 2017; Prabhat, 2018) or a medium through which people build a formal legal relationship and status with a state (Long et al., 2017). However, citizenship is not just a legal concept, but it is embedded in the quest for self-identity (Manby, 2018). Generally, the concept of citizenship is primarily constructed and understood within the confines of national identity and belonging (Aber and Small, 2013).

Globally, membership of a particular society or a group of people is governed by legal citizenship regimes. These structures also regulate the multifaced systems of conferring citizenship. Broadly, there are two principal modes of conferring citizenship at birth – jus sanguinis (attainment of citizenship through blood

connection) and jus soli (citizenship by soil or place of birth). The conferment of jus sanguinis varies from country to country on how citizenship is passed from parents to children. Ng'weno and Aloo (2019) contend that attainment of citizenship through jus sanguinis is selective in that it poses the risk of marginalizing people within the same shared space of the nation-state. Citizenship, therefore, is inherently a means of inclusion and exclusion (Van den Brink and Kochenov, 2019). A third principle for the acquisition of citizenship is by jus matrimonii (citizenship by marriage); however, it varies from country to country, coupled with its challenges regarding the holding of dual citizenship and the associated complexities in the enjoyment of rights. Individuals attain rights to state protection, opportunities, and privileges by virtue of being a national of the state (Mancini and Finlay, 2008; Middleton and Wigginton, 2012; Cohen, 2022). Nationality can therefore be characterized as "the right to have rights" (Arendt, 2007:299).

Citizenship transforms and borders and boundaries transform (Schacher, 2020). In most countries across the world, demographic changes have impacted jus soli, which has further engendered debates and complexities around issues of belonging, membership, and citizenship. These have also influenced immigration policies (Van Waas, 2007; Mancini and Finlay, 2008; Tarumoto, 2020; Cohen, 2022). Some countries have introduced the concept of double jus soli in their citizenship policies where at least one migrant parent is required to be a citizen before children born to immigrants in soils of destination countries can attain automatic citizenship (Manby, 2018). At independence, African countries that were colonized by Britain, France and Portugal applied double jus soli to determine the citizenship of migrants as a means of limiting the volume of claims to citizenship by migrants who were born in these countries, but their parents were foreign-born.

Aside from the attainment of citizenship, migrants also have the option of being granted permanent residency, right of abode or indefinite leave to reside/remain, which are often devoid of the obligated rights associated with citizenship. In other contexts, citizenship can also be granted to migrants through registration, naturalization and investments (e.g., Antigua, the Comoros, or the Dominican Republic). This channel is mainly used by states, especially small Island states, to attract foreign investments for economic purposes. While the overwhelming focus of citizenship is a symbol of belonging, possession of national identity and exception from exclusion (Cresswell, 2006; Van den Brink and Kochenov, 2019), citizenship is also linked to the concept of "othering", culminating in exclusion and denial of rights and privileges. Citizenship is one of the tools of inclusion and exclusion used by states to cope with the perceived threat of mobile migrants (Gilmartin, 2008; Healy, 2019; Ng'weno and Aloo, 2019; Schenk, 2021).

There are also racial, religious, and gender requirements in acquisition of citizenship in some countries (Solhjell et al., 2019). The constitution of Liberia, for instance, is categorical that all applicants for citizenship must be 'negro or be of negro descent'. This obviously excludes all non-black residents – like Lebanese – from

acquiring Liberian citizenship (Long et al., 2017). More so, the same constitution also bars non-citizens from owning property in Liberia. Beyond race, other countries (Benin, Burundi, Eswatini, Guinea, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Mauritania, Somalia, Sudan, and Togo) have citizenship laws that discriminate based on gender (Manby, 2018). Whereas males can transfer their citizenship status to their offspring, females cannot.

In the case of Côte d'Ivoire, as noted by Manby (2018: 62), the country had a legal provision that changed the jus soli route to acquiring citizenship for children born in the country to parents, one of whom was a citizen, to requiring that both parents must be born in Côte d'Ivoire. These changes were occasioned by the motive to disqualify some political candidates from contesting elections. As such, the constitutional amendments that required candidates for the presidency or vice presidency of the country to be "Ivorian by birth" (ivoirien de naissance) born of parents who were (both) also Ivorian by birth (Manby, 2018: 62), reinforced a legal environment in which all those who might be regarded as not from Côte d'Ivoire's "core" ethnic groups, were not eligible for nationality. As argued by Hendow and Kandilige (forthcoming), it is important to examine how the process of establishing "groupness" of the "self" and exclusion of the "other" based on racial, ethnic or cultural characteristics involves establishing policies and practices, as well as public narratives or discourse, which set the boundaries of certain groups' belonging or exclusion (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000: 19; Brubaker et al., 2004: 4647). The pernicious reliance on othering is manifested in the exploitation of power imbalances in relationships to the extent that the gains of one party are at the expense of others (Canales, 2000; Miles, 2002; Bastos et al., 2006). Moreover, othering can be either overt or transpire through more opaque and subtle instances of exclusion, with the potential of being taken for granted as part of the routine of daily life (Sibley, 1995). These include institutional and structural arrangements whereby boundaries are constructed between different groups in society, some of whom believe themselves to be superior to others (Jensen, 2011; Mensah and Williams, 2015).

We draw on the concepts of citizenship, nationality, belonging, and othering to examine the context within which the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire was occasioned, as well as the experiences of victimized and trapped migrants during the conflict, and their re-integration into their communities of origin in Ghana.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

The research employed a qualitative research design involving semi-structured interviews conducted with six main categories of participants in Ghana. Cresswell (2006) explains that qualitative research techniques are useful when one wants to explore and gain an in-depth picture of the meanings and subjective views that individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human phenomenon. According to

Bryman (2012) and Akcam et al. (2019), qualitative research is characterized by the deployment of a wide range of interconnected methods, including desk-based research, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observation. Our choice of the qualitative design is informed by the main objective of our research, which was to gain in-depth knowledge on the experiences of victimized and trapped migrants in a conflict situation at a destination and their experiences with re-integration upon return. Hammarberg et al. (2016) posit that qualitative methods are useful to answer questions about experiences, meaning and perspectives from the perspective of the participant. The choice of this design is also informed by the fact that we were interested in seeking the views of participants on a focused topic, namely, to understand the experiences of victimization and re-integration upon return (Hammarberg, et al., 2016; Braun and Clarke, 2021).

Target population and sampling procedure

The research targeted Ghanaian migrants who were victimized in Côte d'Ivoire but had returned to Ghana, their adult relations (siblings, aunts, mothers, fathers, etc.) in addition to key stakeholders involved in decision-making, policy formulation, protection, advocacy and support services for migrants through evacuation, repatriation and re-integration of migrants. In all, 22 participants were purposively sampled to participate in the study. They included: 4 government authorities (A), 2 intergovernmental organizations (I), 1 civil society organization (C), 1 private sector actor (E), 9 return migrants (M), and 5 family members of return migrants (F). The alphabetic characters assigned to each category (i.e., A, I, C, E, M, and F), together with the designation 'GH' (which is an abbreviation for Ghana) and the unique numerical codes e.g., 01, 02, etc., are meant to aid the anonymization of data from participants.

Within the returnee category, the sampling technique adopted was mainly snowball sampling. This was necessary because there is no credible sample frame that one could rely upon to carry out rigorous probability sampling of participants. In addition, due to the traumatic nature of involuntary returns from crisis situations and the fact that few returnees registered with formal governmental as well as non-governmental agencies, using different entry nodes based on contacts with returnees who could serve as bridgeheads was the most viable approach. Return migrants were selected based on their experience of crises in Côte d'Ivoire in 2002–2003 or 2010–2011, subsequent evacuation and return to their country of origin. Family members of migrants were interviewed based on their knowledge of relatives' migration and return experiences. Government authorities, intergovernmental organizations, civil society organizations, experts and private sector actors were purposively sampled based on the degree of their knowledge of or involvement in policy formulation and execution, advocacy, protection, technical and logistical support or the provision of funding for evacuation, repatriation and re-integration of migrants.

Data collection

The researchers developed six tailored semi-structured interview guides for the six main categories of respondents, based on an overall topical guideline prepared for the Migrants in Countries in Crisis (MICIC) project as well as a data collection manual developed by research teams at the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) and the International Migration Institute (IMI). Key themes covered included: drivers of migration to Côte d'Ivoire, role of migrants in the conflict, experiences of the conflict, return processes, key institutions that oversaw the evacuation of migrants, availability of support to reintegrate into origin communities, and impact of conflict on migrants and members of their households. The researchers executed the fieldwork within April and May 2016 with a focus on Accra, Ghana's capital, and the Western Region. Accra was selected because it hosts the head offices of almost all government authorities as well as those of inter-governmental organizations. The Western Region accounts for the largest number of Ghanaian migrants to Côte d'Ivoire and returnees to Ghana during 2002–2003 and 2010–2011 (Awumbila et al., 2013).

Data analysis

The researchers transcribed all the interviews fully, and employed the reflexive thematic coding and analysis technique to analyze the qualitative data. This approach involved the centrality of the researchers' subjectivity and reflexivity, involving a six-phase process (Braun and Clarke, 2021). The reflexive thematic coding and analysis technique first involved reading through all the transcribed texts to help with familiarization. The next process involved coding the text. This involved assigning words and phrases to chunks of the textual data which enabled the researchers to sort, reduce and distil the content of the textual data. The coding process involved was iterative, involving revisions, reorganization of codes and relating coded interview data to the key questions that were asked during the data collection process. The next step involved analyzing the data using the thematic analysis technique. This approach involved identifying and grouping closely related codes, expressions, ideas, and patterns which emerged from the qualitative data. This enabled the researchers to derive the key themes for analysis and write up.

Research ethics

The researchers obtained written consent from participants who were literate. In cases where written consent was not possible, because the participant was illiterate, interviewers obtained verbal consent. For the sake of confidentiality, consent forms and interview transcripts were kept separate, at all times, to ensure that interviewees were not linked with their responses. Researchers reiterated to participants that participation in the research (i.e., interviews) was voluntary and that withdrawal from the interviews would not lead to any sanctions. Where possible, and in most

cases, researchers conducted interviews in locations where participants could speak freely without interruptions or the risk of being overheard by others. The researchers presented a summary sheet containing information on the rationale for the research to any participant who needed more background information.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Migrant experiences of and responses to Ivorian crises

Relying on the conceptualization of citizenship and nationality, we discuss the experiences and responses of Ghanaian migrants to the crises. Citizenship and nationality did not play a significant role in discourses about belongingness to the Ivorian community prior to the economic and political challenges that culminated in the 2002–2003 and 2010–2011 conflicts in the country. Our interview data suggest that during periods of economic upturn and increased demand for agricultural labor, the presence of foreigners was not perceived as posing a risk to national security, a dilution of the national identity nor an encroachment on the sense of belongingness. In fact, as noted by Pailey et al. (2017), between 1960 and 1980 foreign-born non-citizens and Ivorian-born non-citizens were accorded courtesies as citizens even though they lacked any such formal legal status as citizens. However, a poor run of economic performance characterized by falling prices of cocoa and coffee and the ensuing spike in unemployment rates, ignited a complete reversal of the sense of inclusiveness of migrants into the Ivorian society. Discriminatory and xenophobic sentiments thrived amid stiff competition for scarce land resources. This ended the longstanding collegial attitude to land ownership and the ability of migrants or people of migrant heritage to transfer same to others. Two examples demonstrate this complete change in relations between the destination community and West African economic migrants:

> We used to enjoy the country [Côte d'Ivoire] a lot! People mingled well and bought things from our kiosks. The same people wanted to kill us the next day (GH/M/14; 40-year-old female return migrant).

> This whole thing [conflict] had nothing to do with us [foreigners] but we were used as scapegoats. I managed to buy a small plot on which I built my business; but they are now saying that I'm Ghanaian so I can't own land in their country! This is not the Côte d'Ivoire I knew (GH/M/18; 32-year-old female returnee from Côte d'Ivoire).

Quoting Bekoe and Bartoli (2010), Pailey et al. (2017) further note that the passing of the Rural Land Law (1998) firmly revoked non-citizens' rights to customary ownership of property. Within the political realm, accusations of unqualified or illegitimate non-citizens tilting the outcome of the 1990 elections in favor of the then

incumbent government, marked the beginning of violent retaliatory attacks against foreigners. As noted by Human Rights Watch (2011), the outbreak of conflict in 2002–2003 and the electoral crisis of 2010–2011 fostered anti-foreigner reprisals against non-citizens and 'non-Ivorian' citizens, who were arbitrarily detained, attacked at checkpoints, burned alive, or had their homes or businesses looted or confiscated (Pailey et al., 2017). Citizenship, therefore, became an exclusionary concept within the Ivorian polity, singling out migrants as the 'other'.

Citizenship and experiences of violence and trauma

Unlike the citizens of Burkina Faso and Liberia who were widely accused of participating in the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire as mercenaries who actively fought in support of multiple factions, Ghanaian migrants were less involved in the direct upheavals as perpetrators. Nonetheless, the relatively passive role of Ghanaian migrants did not immune them from becoming victims of the conflict. Within a political climate where migrants were perceived as an undifferentiated group, who were scapegoated for all economic and political problems, Ghanaians were tagged along with other migrants as mercenaries and biased conspirators who encroached on the national identity of "Ivoirité" (Bjarnesen, 2012; Romano, 2015). As a result, Ghanaian migrants were subjected to physical attacks, intimidation, and harassment, which led to traumatic feelings beyond the crisis periods.

Citizenship as a vehicle through which rights are accorded to persons within a polity, serves as a double-edged sword that states equally use to exclude so-called undesirable sections of a population when it is politically expedient. Migrants, as a perceived threat to national security during a conflict situation, are exposed to exclusion and victimization (Gilmartin, 2008). Migrant enclaves or sections of Côte d'Ivoire that hosted significant numbers of migrants, quickly became frontlines during the conflict. As recounted by a male and a female return migrant from the 2010–2011 conflict in Côte d'Ivoire, both factions of the conflict perceived migrant neighborhoods as a contested turf for settling political differences:

> In Koumassi, where I was staying, military men numbering thousands started patrolling the place day and night. So, the place became uneasy for us to live in. Then at one point, the supporters of one of the fighting political parties killed one of the military men and that started the riot and the unrest in Koumassi. The military men also became crazy over the loss of their colleague and forcibly went into houses to drive occupants out and subjected them to unnecessary questions. If you're not able to answer correctly, they'd give you severe lashes … What was happening in the town, was that if they found you outside, you could be arrested by the military men or harassed by the civilians who were fighting the military men (GH/M/20; 25-year-old male returnee from Côte d'Ivoire).

> The conflict was very severe in my neighborhood. It was so intense, that we woke up every morning to hear rumors circulating that hundreds of people have been massacred on the streets. It was very scary; the cry of gunshots intensified each passing day. Sometimes you could hear people shout, "They are coming!" referring to the rebels. Then you have to run and look for a good place to hide (GH/M/12; 38-year-old female returnee from Côte d'Ivoire).

Beyond the residential neighborhoods of migrants and other non-citizens, the conflict targeted economic sectors that were popular with non-citizens. Côte d'Ivoire, like many other host countries, has a dual/segmented labor market (Piore, 1979) with a primary labor market of high-wage, secure and high-status jobs, mostly occupied by the native population and a secondary labor market comprising low-wage, insecure and low-status jobs, mostly done by the immigrant population.

Ghanaian migrants interviewed as part of the study all held secondary labor market jobs. This does not, however, suggest that no Ghanaian migrant works in the primary labor market, but rather that the overwhelming majority operated within the secondary labor market. The job roles undertaken by Ghanaian labor migrants are to some extent gendered. For instance, the predominant employment for female Ghanaian labor migrants in Côte d'Ivoire is trading, but apparently includes some prostitution as well (Anarfi, 1998). These two sectors are readily accessible to female migrants (for instance, GH/M/15 was a clothes trader; GH/M/19 was a fishmonger; GH/M/16 was a petty trader; GH/M/17 was a food vendor; GH/M/12 was a retailer of jewelry; GH/M/14 was an owner of a supermarket) compared with the sectors that male labor migrants tend to engage in (fishing and farm labor) (for instance, GH/M/13 was a farm laborer; GH/M/20 was a fisherman).

As noted earlier, the concept of 'othering' can either be overt or transpire through more opaque and subtle instances of exclusion and victimization whereby persons who are deemed not to belong, are targeted for attacks, sometimes in a manner that could be mistaken for being coincidental or random (Sibley, 1995). Three Ghanaian female return migrants all recounted how markets, which were popular with the non-citizen migrant population, became a focus of attacks:

> One day at the market I heard people screaming and running and there was a tenant who lived in our house who wanted to close his store before running and he was hit by a bullet. So, we went to the village, where my husband was working and we walked; we couldn't take any of our things. So, we walked till we got to a point and we boarded a bus and came to Ghana (GH/M/18; 32-year-old female return migrant).

> I was selling [goods] when the war broke out. I had to run without packing my things. We walked to 'Konzak' and we boarded a vehicle to Ghana. I get worried sometimes because I had to leave everything I had in Côte d'Ivoire

(GH/M/14; 40-year-old female return migrant).

I was trading. I was selling fish also. When the war started, we were in the market selling our fish and other products. I had to run because guns were being fired. So, I left the things I was selling behind and came home. I was thinking the war would stop, but it rather worsened, so I had to leave that country because my life was in danger (GH/M/16; 40-year-old female return migrant).

While the market attacks might have affected some of the indigenous population as well as the migrants, the choice of a location that is predominated by migrant workers, suggests a degree of victimization of foreigners based on their otherness. Akin to the possibility of one enjoying citizenship or nationality (and all the rights and privileges that are associated with citizenship) on account of one's parents through the jus sanguinis, jus soli or double jus soli channels of gaining citizenship, we suggest that the experience of violence and the trauma of conflict can be suffered due to the citizenship status of one's parents. The targeting of non-citizens equally imperiled their children who were caught up in the conflict on account of their lack of citizenship or that of their parents. The implications of war have the potential to be detrimental to children who observe, unwillingly participate, or are compelled to plan and execute their own escape from violence. The impact of the Ivorian crises, therefore, extends beyond adult migrants to affect children with long-lasting implications for their mental health and well-being, as explained by a female Ghanaian migrant who fled the crisis in 2011:

When the war happened, my child really suffered. She was just eight years [old] as at that time; the kid walked for miles in trying to come to us. She was made to jump over dead bodies that were lying on the streets. She was made to handle a gun as young as she was to protect herself; it was even broadcast in the print media. She walked all the way from Bouaké to Abidjan. Most of the kids she came with became paralyzed and they couldn't walk again … Because of the war, my children became traumatized and terrified by any sound; anytime they heard any sound or loud noise, they would quickly run to hide. It really affected them psychologically; but gradually through prayers, they came back to normal. The neighbors convinced them that we don't kill human beings in Ghana (GH/M/12; 38-year-old female return migrant).

Citizenship, nationality, and involuntary returns

As both exclusionary and inclusionary concepts, citizenship and nationality equally define the nature of involuntary returns to a geographical space where one can reassert one's sense of belongingness and membership. The same national identity that constitutes a basis for discrimination and victimization at the destination

country, becomes the marker of belongingness upon return, even in involuntary situations. Involuntary returns were realized through the efforts of a combination of actors – international, state, non-state and private individuals. Despite the geographical closeness of Ghana to Côte d'Ivoire, evacuations and returns were arduous for Ghanaian migrants. Trapped migrants did not rely on consular officials who were located at the capital city for assistance, but rather fled through the nearest exit points. In addition, a lack of a credible registration database of Ghanaians in Côte d'Ivoire suggested that embassy officials did not know the number of migrants who needed evacuation assistance, in the first instance. Additionally, Ghana did not have a policy on evacuation of nationals from conflict situations abroad, until the country's National Migration Policy was launched in 2016. The absence of such a policy led to delays in extracting trapped migrants from not only Côte d'Ivoire, but also from other conflict situations, such as Libya in 2011. Migrants returned via a variety of modes of transportation during both episodes of crisis, including on foot, by hired cars, boats and buses.

As GH/M/12 recounted, most victims escaped on foot:

> Most of the journey was done on foot. The fact is, you are running for your dear life, so no time to wait for vehicles. We walked to a point and then joined a car. Those who had cars were also doing their business. Some people took advantage of the situation and were making money out of the desperate people. So, these drivers go round looking for stranded people to transport; then, after transporting you to your destination, they would charge you. Sometimes you get to a point [when] the car can't proceed because the road is barred from any vehicular movement. So, when it happens like that, we had to continue the journey by foot (GH/M/12; 38-year-old female migrant).

Others left on buses that were escorted by military personnel, under the auspices of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM):

> They advised that those who wanted to go, should come out with their luggage. So, I went there and stayed there for a day because the people gathered there were many – we were in the thousands who agreed to return to Ghana, in Koumassi alone. They arranged to take us in batches, and I was in the third batch, which was the last one. Some of the military men would accompany the first batch into the vehicle to Abidjan and put them in a vehicle that would bring them to Ghana (GH/M/20; 25-year-old male migrant).

Moreover, GH/M/13 explained that some Ghanaian migrants relied on a combination of means of transportation, including boats and walking:

Some people died in the bushes and their bodies were never found. Yes, some were Ghanaians, Nigerians, Togolese and Beninese and others. A lot of people lost their lives because they were caught unawares. So, there are people who died and their bodies have not been found to date. Initially, we used boats, but some guys showed us a route on land. We had to pass through bushes till we got to the Ghanaian border. We met the officials at the border and explained to them that we were Ghanaians and they understood (GH/M/13, 45-year-old male migrant).

While transportation was organized by the UNHCR and the IOM, in some cases (GH/M/20; GH/I/01), other migrants escaped on their own. In all cases, the sense of 'Ghanaianness' by virtue of their citizenship or nationality entitled return migrants a hassle-free entry and welcome at border entry points. However, prior to arriving at the entry points, where their citizenship was an asset rather than a liability, migrants had to navigate several checkpoints and barriers that were manned by multiple actors in the conflicts they were fleeing from. These included military personnel, rebels, and vigilante groups. Crossing each barrier involved thorough searches and the extortion of cash and personal possessions, especially by vigilantes. Failure to succumb to demands for bribes, could lead to death (GH/M/12). These conditions exacerbated migrants' experiences of crises in Côte d'Ivoire, as demonstrated by a female Ghanaian migrant who fled the political violence in 2011:

Each living thing crossing any of these barriers, was given an amount to pay, including children and even the unborn babies, before they were allowed to cross. This amount is per head; so, I, for instance, had five kids and I was also pregnant. I was made to pay for each and every child, including the one I was carrying in the womb. Failure to pay would mean you can't cross. You would have to die. They would kill you should you fail to pay (GH/M/12; 38-year-old female migrant).

The right of citizenship, coupled with the proximity of the origin to the destination country, allowed some Ghanaian migrants to returned to their hometowns and villages without any contact with government agencies and officials. These migrants returned to their towns and villages along the shared border with Côte d'Ivoire, without going through any formal immigration control processes. This was possible because these are communities that share common linguistic, cultural, and familial relations with communities in parts of Côte d'Ivoire and they were one community prior to the artificial carving of national borders by colonial powers. Two respondents reflected thus:

When you speak to them, it is mainly for the economic reasons. With the western side, with Côte d'Ivoire, you know, if you look at the South-Western

corner of Ghana, they are predominantly Nzemas and there are Nzemas at the other side in Côte d'Ivoire; basically, they see themselves as one people. So, they maintain close family ties, going there to stay and if need be, they return to Ghana (GH/I/01; Staff of intergovernmental organization).

Nobody met us; we just crossed and entered our homes with no reception from anywhere. We weren't even expecting anything. All we wanted was to get home safely, which we did; so that was okay for us (GH/M/12; 38-year-old female migrant).

The shared linguistic, cultural, and familial relations were insufficient to protect Ghanaian migrants in times of the conflict situations in Côte d'Ivoire because the attacks against the 'other' were premised more on the political/legal concept of citizenship or nationality rather than a cultural sense of affiliation. As opined by Aber and Small (2013), the concept of citizenship is primarily constructed and understood within the confines of national identity and belonging. Hartnell (2006) also emphasizes that citizenship refers to "full membership" in a political community. While Ghanaian migrants could assert some level of belongingness to some communities in Côte d'Ivoire on account of their shared cultural history, their lack of "full membership" as citizens ultimately determined their experiences of conflict.

Belongingness in the process of re-integration

Re-integration is a multifaceted phenomenon that operates at different levels. This suggests more than a mere reinsertion of an individual into their community of origin after an episode of migration. Re-integration must be sustainable for it to be meaningful to both the returnee and the community. The IOM (2017) notes that re-integration can be considered sustainable when returnees have reached levels of economic self-sufficiency, social stability within their communities, and psychological well-being that allow them to cope with (re)migration drivers. Having achieved sustainable re-integration, returnees are able to make further migration decisions, as a matter of choice, rather than of necessity. Cassarino (2008) also posits that re-integration is the process through which a return migrant participates in the social, cultural economic and political life of the country of origin.

Citizenship and belongingness to a home community do not automatically guarantee a seamless re-integration upon an involuntary return. For returnees who made it back safely to their communities of origin, the processes of resettlement and re-integration proved to be difficult, particularly for those without strong social networks and transferable skills that could easily be absorbed into the local labor market. This adversely affected their economic self-sufficiency as well as their social stability within their communities of origin. Members of return migrants' households in Ghana attested to the lack of material as well as monetary possessions during the involuntary return of their relatives. For migrants' families, the abrupt return of their

relatives contributed to increased household expenses, which have become sources of tension. Nonetheless, families have had to extend reciprocal gestures of support to returnees, in recognition of remittance income received during periods abroad. Due to the sense of belongingness, some migrants who returned to their villages were received by their extended families and provided with shelter and food, as corroborated by a relative of a return migrant and a return migrant who fled Côte d'Ivoire:

> Well, if you couldn't bring anything, but you came back with your life, that is good enough. Besides, everyone knows what happened; so, she can't be blamed. She lost all her room's possessions, including the things at her shop, so she couldn't bring anything along. Getting these things now will be quite difficult. We can't eat without her, because she used to provide for our feeding. So, since she doesn't have anything now, we give her some of what we have (GH/F/15; 41-year-old brother of a return migrant from Côte d'Ivoire).

> Oh yes, as I said, my family received me warmly; they supported me financially since we returned empty-handed. My elder siblings supported me in terms of money and food. They gave us almost everything and my children never lacked [anything]. They really did well (GH/M/12; 38-year-old female return migrant).

As much as this type of socio-economic support to returnees is helpful in meeting their immediate needs, it is not sustainable. Moreover, the psychosocial support, which is vital in addressing the traumatic experiences that led to their forcible return, was lacking. Beyond direct kinship relations, some return migrants also received support from non-familial ties, such as friends, including a 45-year-old male returnee who said: "Some of my friends helped by giving me money or even food" (GH/M/13). This support was critical, especially in cases where returnees' nuclear and extended families perceived their returns as particularly burdensome, as indicated by the following quotes from Ghanaian returnees who fled Côte d'Ivoire during the 2010–2011 crisis:

> I didn't get any help from the family. They were all looking up to me. They didn't consider the fact that I could have died. They were rather complaining about the fact that I couldn't bring anything when I was coming. The major problem is that I am not earning enough to help my family the way I want to. I am not getting help from anywhere. So, that is my worry at the moment. That is why I go to the bush to work to make ends meet (GH/M/13; 45-year-old male return migrant).

> I'm now a useless person over here with nothing. It's my younger brother who

even helps [me] because he now works after he completed school. He also takes care of my mother (GH/M/18; 32-year-old female return migrant).

It is worth noting that not all return migrants were gainfully employed in Côte d'Ivoire and therefore able to support family and friends while abroad. Household members are ambivalent about the impact of return if migrants previously lamented hard times while abroad and failed to remit, as articulated by this spouse of a Ghanaian returnee:

> Initially I did not want her [my wife] to go, but she managed to take the kids with her when I was not at home. She returned when the war started. She told me she was selling fish, but it wasn't lucrative enough. I can't really tell if she told me the truth. She was always complaining of hardships. She couldn't even call; I was always doing the calling. I can't really tell what she lost. She came with just a polythene bag. Aside [from] the clothes I bought for her on credit when she returned, I did not help her in any way. She had to join me in the firewood business in order for us to earn a living (GH/F/14; 46, male).

Re-migration as a last resort

The absence of economic self-sufficiency, social stability within their communities, and support towards improving the psychological well-being, exposed returnees to a high risk of re-migration. According to Pailey et al. (2017), migrants who were unable or unwilling to fully reintegrate in their countries of origin, considered re-migration to Côte d'Ivoire to be an enticing alternative. For example, after the Lina Marcoussis agreement of 2003 was signed between the Ivorian government and rebels, bringing the first Ivorian crisis to an end, many Burkinabé returnees re-migrated to Côte d'Ivoire, especially those who wanted to reclaim farms and property they had abandoned (Pailey et al., 2017). In 2007, the Government of Burkina Faso estimated that more than two thirds of Burkinabé migrants previously resident in Côte d'Ivoire returned to the host country (Bredeloup, 2009).

Ghanaian returnees interviewed also cited the lack of employment opportunities and re-integration programmes in Ghana as the catalyst for their re-migration to Côte d'Ivoire (GH/M/12; GH/M/13; GH/M/18), as articulated by GH/M/13 above. Some returnees to Ghana found that, apart from reception and accommodation, they received almost no contribution from families, which forced them to re-migrate (Bredeloup and Zongo, 2005). This also highlights the nexus between provision of economic opportunities and reduction in international migration in the longer term, even though the migration literature indicates initial short-to-medium term increases in migration flows due to development (De Haas, 2005).

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY

This paper explored the experiences of Ghanaian migrants who were trapped and

victimized in Côte d'Ivoire, following the episodes of political violence in 2002–2003 and 2010–2011. It focused on migrants' experiences during the crises as well as with re-integration and resettlement upon return to Ghana. Overall, what emerges from a variety of experiences and narratives is that, unlike other foreign citizens or migrants from elsewhere who were perceived to have played a fundamental role as perpetrators of the violence, Ghanaian migrants were seen to have played no active role in the processes leading to the escalation of the two episodes of political crises in Côte d'Ivoire. Nevertheless, their passive role did not necessarily immune them from encountering physical attacks, harassment and other forms of torture that were meted out to migrants as a result of the crises. In effect, migrants – including those we interviewed from Ghana – were implicated in the Ivorian political crises, not because of their ethnicity or nationality, but rather because of their perceived involvement (and the involvement of their governments) in the crises (i.e., Liberians and Burkinabé) and their often falsely perceived advantaged socio-economic positions in the Ivorian society. While one would have generally expected that the notion of citizenship and nationality would have facilitated migrants' re-integration and resettlement of migrants upon return to Ghana, the process of return itself was particularly daunting for the Ghanaian migrants we interviewed. With little or no support from neither the host nor the origin country, migrants were implicated in the process of return, often through extortion of cash and material possessions. Moreover, the extra burden of re-integration and resettlement was particularly problematic for return migrants with no networks and skills that could have opened up opportunities for them in the labor market. This ultimately impacted their economic, social and psychosocial re-integration into their communities of origin and formed the basis for re-migration.

Overall, these findings bring into sharp focus the limited capacity of governments of origin countries and their development partners, including private sector and civil society in developing comprehensive mechanisms that facilitate long-term mass return of migrants implicated in humanitarian emergencies. This points to the need for origin country governments to better recognize the unique vulnerabilities and circumstances that migrants in crisis situations are confronted with, to better organize targeted actions and strategies to protect such groups from crisis as well as to facilitate their re-integration through initiatives that enable their access to skills, the labor market, resources and opportunities in the home country. Furthermore, the ability of origin governments to support their nationals abroad in crisis situations – particularly through embassy consular services – would be significantly enhanced by reliable data on their migrant populations abroad, as well as nationally derived migration policies with crisis and emergency response protocols. The collation of credible migration data and real-time access to migrant stock, as well as migrant flow figures, are also critical to international responses to crisis situations in which migrants are implicated (see Pailey et al., 2017).

Finally, the findings also call into question the need for clear-cut and well-carved policies and procedures to facilitate the timely evacuation, resettlement and

re-integration of migrants caught up in crisis abroad. Such procedures and policies need to outline actions and plans, and identify actors responsible for a delineated mandate, through making resources available to relevant stakeholders and actors. Origin country diplomatic missions abroad, particularly in countries where migrants are caught up in crisis situations, will need to be fully engaged in the process of supporting their nationals, through providing easily accessible consular services beyond capital cities.

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Migration and Politics in South Africa: Mainstreaming Anti-Immigrant Populist Discourse

Johannes Machinya[1]

In 1994, a 'new' South Africa was born out of electoral democracy. While democratization dismantled minority authoritarian rule as well as legalized racial intolerance, prejudicial and discriminatory practices remained, this time directed against foreigners. This is at variance with South Africa's commitment to principles of liberal democracy, human rights, and regional integration. What then explains this paradox? This paper underscores that what feeds and bestows social legitimacy to xenophobia is the foregrounding of an anti-immigrant populist discourse in the mainstream political discourse with the participation of political leaders from across the political spectrum. But how has a morally repugnant anti-immigrant populist discourse been made a sensible and justifiable political narrative? The paper analyzes the mediated populist performances of selected political leaders like press statements, public speeches, interviews, or other statements posted on social media platforms like Twitter, and how these leaders scapegoat foreigners for the challenges the country is facing.

Keywords: xenophobia, anti-immigrant sentiment, South Africa, migration, populism

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INTRODUCTION

In 1994, a 'new' non-racial South Africa was born out of electoral democracy and was solidly anchored on principles of liberal democracy and human rights. Nelson Mandela's vision of a 'Rainbow Nation' and Thabo Mbeki's 'African Renaissance' sought to facilitate South Africa's re-integration into, and strengthen its ties with, the rest of the continent and further reinforce this democratic dispensation. The idea and vision of this 'new' South Africa differed strikingly from the apartheid socio-political (dis)order that preceded it. After the end of apartheid, there was an influx of migrants, particularly from other African countries as South Africa was considered to have a relatively stable political and economic climate. However, while democratization dismantled minority authoritarian rule as well as legalized racial intolerance, prejudicial and discriminatory practices remained entrenched, this time directed against 'outsiders', especially those from elsewhere in Africa and in particular those perceived as 'illegal' foreigners or 'outsiders' (Neocosmos, 2006).

Several scholars have characterized South Africa's immigration policy in the first decade of the twenty-first century as restrictive and exclusionary (Peberdy, 2009; Klotz, 2013). Through this restrictive stance, the South African state sought to distinguish between legal immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and 'illegal' immigrants in order to exclude the latter from entering the country and deport them if they entered, even though this was done with little success.

As South Africa continued to receive an increasing number of migrants, most of them undocumented, tensions between local South Africans and foreign migrants were also rising. To this end, discursive and physical attacks on foreigners, especially those perceived to be in the country 'illegally', surged, and the most violent and widespread attacks occurred in May 2008 (Hassim et al., 2008), which Crush (2008) christened "a perfect storm". The violence was a historically significant moment to which Landau (2010) opined that if fortune were to smile, South Africa would never again witness the same kind of violence. This presupposed that the authorities may have derived some lessons on, and sought lasting solutions to, the problem of xenophobia. Unfortunately – but unsurprisingly so – since this 'perfect storm', violent episodes against foreigners continue in South Africa as witnessed in 2015, 2019, and recently in 2022 when numerous communities mobilized against undocumented foreigners under the banner 'Operation Dudula'.

The persistence of violence against foreigners in recent years is at variance with South Africa's commitment to democratic principles, human rights, and the assumption that the country may have derived some lessons from the 2008 violence in dealing with the problem of xenophobia once and for all. How, then, has this 'new' political order built on a solid foundation of human rights and democratic principles, and a commitment to African sisterhood/brotherhood – ubuntu, a common African humanity – continued to witness the very thing that is opposed to these values? Vexed by a question of the same nature and commenting on a Southern African Migration Project (SAMP) survey that showed the prevalence of anti-immigrant attitudes in

South Africa, Botswana and Namibia (see Crush and Pendleton, 2004) – which are the three shining examples of liberal democracy in southern Africa – Neocosmos (2006) notes that it is not impossible to have some connection between liberal democracy and xenophobia, and that xenophobia is not unique to authoritarian regimes.

Writing in the aftermath of the 2008 xenophobic attacks, Pillay (2008) stressed the need to take a step back and ask the question: 'Why?' Why is South Africa constantly experiencing different forms of violence targeted at foreign nationals? This current paper offers some explanation to the question why and shows how xenophobic sentiment is becoming more entrenched in South Africa. The paper underscores that what is feeding and somehow bestowing social legitimacy to xenophobia, is the strategic and often opportunistic foregrounding of a crude anti-immigrant populist discourse in the mainstream political discourse with the participation and collusion of many political and other leaders at both national and community levels. The paper further argues that this normalizes anti-immigrant sentiments and practices as acceptable patterns of the mainstream political agenda on immigration. Political parties and politicians from across the political spectrum have been blatantly mobilizing anti-immigrant populist discourse, and this became a strong rallying point, especially in the run-up to the May 2019 national elections (Bornman, 2018; Davis, 2019; Heleta, 2019; New Frame, 2019).

This paper pursues the following question: Why and how is anti-immigrant populist discourse, despite being morally repugnant and at odds with South Africa's democratic principles and vision of regional integration, becoming a sensible and justifiable way of speaking and thinking about immigration in the mainstream political discourse? While some scholars note that the political terrain in South Africa is plagued by xenophobic sentiment with government officials and parliamentarians being instrumental to this (Neocosmos, 2006), there has been no analysis of how these political actors entrench and propagate an anti-immigrant populist discourse in the mainstream political discourse. To pursue this analysis, I follow Jagers and Walgrave's (2007) understanding of populism as a political communication style.

In the following sections, I conceptualize populism, identify some of its major signifiers, and highlight the connections between populism and xenophobia. Before examining the mainstreaming of anti-immigrant populist discourse and how this is performed by political leaders, I provide a note on methodology as well as some explanations to the persistence of xenophobia in post-apartheid South Africa.

POPULISM AS A COMMUNICATION STYLE

Political scientists are increasingly branding as populism certain political phenomena, or a certain breed of politicians, or some ways of doing politics. In the late 1960s, Ionescu and Gellner (1969) wrote about the vagueness of the concept; and almost 50 years later, the term populism maintains its conceptual slipperiness (Taggart, 2000; Mudde, 2004; Jagers and Walgrave, 2007). The term is applied to different political parties and actors on the political spectrum because it does not embody a distinctive

type of political regime, neither does it define a particular ideological content. It is often used as a pejorative category with menacing connotations without really subjecting it to critical analysis.

To rescue the concept and its conceptual and analytical substance, Taguieff (1995) maintains that the term must be conceptualized as a type of social and political mobilization, which means that it designates a dimension of political action or discourse. There is some scholarly agreement with this definition of populism as a political strategy (Betz, 2002; Barr, 2019) or political style (Jagers and Walgrave, 2007) whose political rhetoric is less/not grounded in ideology but gives reference to 'the people', evokes latent grievances and appeals to emotions provoked by these grievances.

The question that some scholars grapple with is why has the same term (populism/populists) been used to describe entirely different political parties or actors? These scholars thus emphasize the need to find the existence of "a lowest common denominator" (Rooduijn, 2014) or "core signifiers" (Stavrakakis et al., 2017) that characterize populism. Three elements are thus considered core signifiers of the different historical and theoretical shapes of populism. First, is the idea of 'the people' – populism always refers to, seeks to appeal to, and identifies with 'the people'. Second, populism is rooted in anti-elitism, but substantial populist energy today, especially in Europe and North America (as is the case in South Africa), is being directed against a demonized foreign 'Other' (Wodak, 2015), particularly the 'illegal' migrant. Third, populism simplifies the political terrain and proposes simple solutions to complex problems.

Scholars refer to populism as a political strategy or style (Betz, 2002; Jagers and Walgrave, 2007; Barr, 2019), a "thin" ideology according to Mudde (2004), that creates a social imaginary of society as separated into two camps – the perfect 'people' at the core of its articulation and the evil elite or a certain constructed 'Other'. With the rise of right-wing populism across the world, there has been an increasing dichotomization of the society between 'the people' and the enemy camp, with the enemy being increasingly defined in terms of their foreignness. Thus, populists claim to put 'the people' (our people) first, while creating a chasm between and turning 'the people' against the enemy 'Other' that is perceived as obstructing 'the people' from realizing their collective interests (Rooduijn, 2014). The 'Other' is not just a people who happens to be constructed as different from 'the people', they are evil and dangerous (Mudde, 2004). Therefore, when investigating the existence of a populist discourse, it is imperative to examine whether 'the people' or 'our people' or 'us/we' are the central reference point of a given discourse, and whether the reference to 'the people' is used to create a chasm between 'the people' and a perceived enemy to the exclusion of the latter.

Generally, the conceptualization of 'the people' can mean different things to different populists (Canovan, 1981; Mudde, 2004); it can refer to the electorate, the nation, or to no fixed group at all. However, this does not mean that 'the people'

is devoid of meaning. Instead, the meaning of the term depends on the context in which it is being mobilized.

'The people' are often constructed as a monolithic group with no internal differences; oftentimes, as is the case in the mobilization of anti-immigrant populist rhetoric in South Africa, important fissures such as class, race, and ethnicity are neglected, and focus is concentrated on the enemy 'Other', the ('illegal') foreigner. Populist rhetoric sees 'the people' as a virtuous community that can be linked to Taggart's (2000: 95) populist heartland in which a "virtuous and unified community resides". Albertazzi and McDonnell (2008) argue that this heartland is not a utopia; it is a harmonious place which is held to have existed in the past but has been lost because of the invasion of the enemy. However, for South Africa, the populist heartland is more utopian than real. It only exists in people's imaginations of the past promises of post-apartheid prosperity, which have not yet been realized. The end of apartheid signaled the beginning of the journey towards this virtuous place – the heartland – where people were promised welfare, jobs, free education, free health, and housing. This heartland is imagined as less attainable as long as 'outsiders' remain present in South Africa.

Populism is able to achieve its people-centrism and anti-'Other' politics by strategically enacting a "moral panic" (see Cohen, 2011) where a particular group is defined as a threat, thus creating a relationship of antagonism between 'the people' and the 'Other'. It is essential in constituting distinct socio-political identities that enhance the identification and exclusion of the 'Other'. This is the basis for populism's exclusionary approach in which populists claim to be protecting the integrity and well-being of those who belong from the threat posed by a dangerous and morally corrupt 'Other'. In the context of migration and politics, the more ethno-nationalistic the conception of the 'people' is, the more xenophobic the positioning against the 'Other'. This antagonistic relationship is intensified with promises for better life once the 'Other' is vanquished from among 'the people'.

Populism is known for its penchant for simple solutions to complex problems; its seductive appeal rests on simple narratives that barely explain or interrogate complex socio-political circumstances (Waisbord, 2018). Populist actors refer to 'the people' to show that they care about and are ready to defend people's interests, or that they are not alienated from the public but know what the people really want (Jagers and Walgrave, 2007). To put their message forward, populist actors proclaim a serious crisis that threatens to annihilate 'the people' if it is not resolved. Whether the crisis is real or imagined does not matter, what matters is that a sense of crisis is created, and the culprit is pinpointed (Taggart, 2000; Betz, 2002). This "politics of fear" (Wodak, 2015), which is a form of over-emotionalized "anxious politics" (Albertson and Gadarian, 2015), is designed to stimulate feelings of resentment and exploit them for political gain.

Inglehart and Norris (2016) express the widely held view regarding the rise of populism that it is spurred by increased economic inequality and growing

social exclusion. From this perspective and in the context of migration and politics, immigrants and refugees are blamed for the increasing economic insecurity experienced in many countries, which often foments popular resentment against them. In the midst of the proclaimed crisis, the populists proffer simple solutions that are tailored to the language and understanding of the general public and rely on polarizing mechanisms such as scapegoating, witch-hunting and conspiracy theories that appear true but have no basis in fact (Comaroff, 2011).

METHODOLOGY

This paper is based on an analysis of selected political actors' mediated performances like press statements, public speeches, interviews, or other statements posted on social media platforms like Twitter and YouTube, and how these politicians presented their messages with a conspicuous anti-immigrant populist appeal. I examined the political messages of several political actors, who included Bongani Mkongi, the former Deputy Minister of Police (Eyewitness News, 2017); Aaron Motsoaledi, the former Minister of Health (Mbhele, 2018); David Makhura, the African National Congress (ANC) Gauteng Premier (eNCA, 2019); Solly Msimanga, Democratic Alliance (DA) Tshwane Mayor (SABC News, 2018); Herman Mashaba, former DA Johannesburg Mayor (Davis, 2019); Ace Magashule, ANC Secretary General (Modjadji, 2019); Fikile Mbalula, former Minister of Police (eNCA, 2017); Bheki Cele, the Minister of Police (Ndlazi, 2018); Faith Mazibuko, ANC Gauteng Member of the Executive Council (MEC) for community safety (Bornman, 2019a).

My analysis follows a critical discourse analysis in terms of anti-immigrant rhetoric, uncovering key patterns of the political actors' mediated discursive articulations of immigration issues. The analysis examines the ways the political actors communicate their messages presenting a distorted, non-factual and negative account of immigration in South Africa. The analysis aims to show how these messages are strategically disseminated to create a 'moral panic' around immigration. The political actors mobilize an anti-immigrant populist rhetoric by relaying their messages through a spectacularized performance of crisis (Moffit, 2015) in which they identify a failure (i.e., the failing immigration control system), elevate it to the level of a crisis and establish an equivalential relation (Laclau, 2005) with the other challenges the country is facing. They always identify the culprit (i.e., 'illegal' foreign nationals) and propose simple solutions to an otherwise complex set of challenges. While doing this, the political actors often hide behind the veil of xenophobia denialism common in statements like, "I am not being xenophobic" or "This is not xenophobia", implying that their anti-immigrant messages are truthful and factual. I argue that this communication style and xenophobia denialism legitimizes, normalizes, and entrenches xenophobic populist discourse in the mainstream political discourse.

This populist discourse comes in a nationalist garb (Norbert, 2009) and is framed around a "politics of fear" (Wodak, 2015) that constructs foreigners as an ethno-cultural 'Other' who threatens the socio-economic wellbeing of 'the people'. By

contrast, 'the people' are portrayed as pure and whose existence is threatened by the presence of outsiders. For their own convenience, the political leaders always ditch the principles of Pan-Africanism and ubuntu that were integral in the conception of the 'new' South Africa and call for the expulsion of foreigners. This bolsters an already long-standing culture of anti-foreigner attitude and stirs the "demons of xenophobia" in South Africa (see Landau, 2011).

SOME EXPLANATIONS TO XENOPHOBIA IN SOUTH AFRICA

Following democratization, South Africa became an attractive destination for migrants from other parts of Africa and beyond because of its relatively stable political and economic environment. Despite a new democratic dispensation being birthed in South Africa, Klotz (2013) considers as vestiges from the apartheid past the country's exclusionary definition of nationality in the wake of an influx of migrants, which is the basis for the contemporary expressions of xenophobic populist discourse today. In this regard, Chipkin (2007) notes that the removal of race as a core determinant of citizenship in post-apartheid South Africa opened a complex question of "who are the people" that should be served by the democratic dispensation. With the new diffuse and inclusive national identity conceptualized with no primary reference to 'black' for making social and political demands, 'South Africans' as an identity became unclear with no obvious content. Colonially imposed national territorial boundaries then became the basis for asserting the meaning of democratic citizenship, of being South African (Geschiere, 2009), and of constructing and excluding the alien 'Other'.

Scholars locate anti-immigrant sentiment within the context of social transition and change and explain violence against foreigners as driven by relative deprivation and frustrations resulting from the failure of the post-apartheid government to deliver on its promises in housing, education, healthcare, and job creation (Morris, 1999; Tshitereke, 1999). In this context, Tshitereke notes, "people often create a 'frustration-scapegoat'" (1999: 4) – a target to blame for their deprivation. When the majority group faces a perilous economic situation, they are more likely to feel threatened by minorities, who in this case are often 'illegal' foreigners.

Advancing the above position, Pillay (2008) dismisses the simple attribution of xenophobia to issues of identity (i.e., that South Africans hate foreigners) and takes a sociological approach that gives more nuance to the idea of identity politics and xenophobia. He analyzes how factors such as socio-economic class, power and access to resources interlink to produce xenophobia. For Pillay, at the root of the May 2008 xenophobic violence, where poor people attacked other poor people, was "class inequality as a systemic problem of uneven development" (2008: 94). Pillay argues that the post-apartheid government, by adopting neoliberal policies, instead of pursuing a redistributive course, unleashed a socio-economic system of market violence against the majority of poor South Africans. Since the perpetrators or beneficiaries of this violence remained increasingly out of touch, the victims (poor South Africans) then turned to the 'soft targets' closest to them who were conveniently

scapegoated for taking up resources and opportunities. However, this understanding of relative deprivation and frustration as causal factors of xenophobia fail to account for the pervasiveness of xenophobia among South Africans of different classes, races, and genders (see Crush and Pendelton, 2004). Again, statistical analysis of incidents of violence during the 2008 attacks illustrates that the poorest areas were not those on the rampage, suggesting poverty and disadvantage cannot alone explain the violence (Landau, 2010).

Adding to the argument that xenophobia in South Africa is fueled by poor people's frustrations at the government's failure to deliver on its post-apartheid promises, Glaser (2008) points out that the violence was not coming from the elites – either the major political parties or major organized civil society actors. Instead, for Glaser, the attacks emerged from below and were "profoundly democratic" (2008: 53). This argument exonerates the leaders from any direct responsibility in the attacks. However, acquitting the leaders of any wrongdoing misses the point. While there were no leaders publicly making anti-immigrant statements, there were also no anti-xenophobic leaders condemning xenophobia. Instead, the leaders were in denial that the attacks were xenophobic even as foreigners were being killed and their properties looted. The argument that the xenophobic attacks were democratic is important in as far as highlighting the social legitimacy behind the attacks, but it ignores politicians' manipulation of the crisis and also other preceding factors that informed and animated the violence.

Crush and Pendleton (2004) show that anti-foreigner attitudes are pervasive and widespread across the South African society. Foreigners are scapegoated as the primary cause of unemployment, and a threat to societal values (Murray, 2003; Landau, 2010). Crush and Pendleton's observation does not absolve any specific group of harboring negative attitudes against foreigners, which contradicts the general belief that certain groups in the population are more xenophobic than others. Research has shown that South Africans generally display high levels of intolerance and hostility against foreigners; they feel threatened by the presence of foreigners and prefer draconian policies such as electrifying borders, denying foreigners basic rights, and having refugees live in border camps (Crush et al., 2013). With these pervasive negative attitudes, it is therefore easier for anti-immigrant populist discourse to find space in the country's mainstream political discourse.

MAINSTREAMING ANTI-IMMIGRANT POPULIST DISCOURSE IN SOUTH AFRICA

There has been a significant rise in right-wing xenophobic populist political parties around the world. These are an "amalgam of differing groups united primarily by their shared hostility to migrants, their provocative, exclusionary, scape-goating brand of ethnic nationalism" (DeAngelis, 2003: 84). In trying to account for this global trend, scholars speak of a "populist Zeitgeist" (Mudde, 2004: 542), or populist times. Some scholars believe that this tidal wave of populism across the globe has been spurred by

the different crises the world is facing (see Moffit, 2015). It is believed that crisis sets the stage for populism as a strategy for politicians to appeal to the people (Knight, 1998).

In South Africa, a state of crisis is on the horizon; the country's social and economic fortunes are in serious decline: unemployment, pegged at 32.5% in 2021, is escalating, wages are declining, the public health sector is crumbling, crime rates are soaring, and municipalities are dismally failing on service delivery. Amid the prevalence of these challenges, South Africa is witnessing a steady rise to prominence in anti-immigrant populist rhetoric in the mainstream political discourse with numerous leaders proclaiming a direct causal relationship between the socio-economic challenges and the presence of migrants (Bekker, 2015; Fogel, 2019). Blatantly anti-immigrant language is becoming a part of mainstream political discourse. The question for this paper is about how these political leaders manage to make anti-foreigner rhetoric a sensible and justifiable part of the political discourse on the challenges the country is facing. Below I demonstrate how they have managed to do this through the populist performance of crisis (Moffit, 2015).

Claiming to be a voice for the people

While scapegoating immigrants for the challenges South Africa is facing is convenient for many populist actors, doing so often raises the ire of rights activists and groups. In such circumstances, the populist actors' strategy is to claim being the courageous voice of the unarticulated sentiments of ordinary people (Betz, 2002). Raising such a controversial subject publicly positions the populist actor as attuned to the issues affecting the people. A good example is Herman Mashaba, the former DA Mayor for Johannesburg who, in a media briefing during his first 100-days-in-office address, expressed his commitment to fight 'illegal' immigration. He said, "They [illegal foreigners] are holding our country to ransom and I am going to be the last South African to allow it" (Mashego and Malefane, 2017). In another media statement that was posted on the City of Johannesburg's website in January 2019, Mashaba indulged in self-praise saying that by publicly speaking against the state of 'illegal' immigration, he "went where angels feared to tread" (Mashaba, 2019). He even expressed dismay about why "it took so long for someone to speak about an issue of such importance to our citizens" (Mashaba, 2019). Predictably enough, Mashaba's boldness to speak publicly against 'illegal' immigration made him an instant celebrity to many South Africans who urged him to remain resolute in "cleaning" the city of 'illegal' foreigners.

In the same media statement, Mashaba writes about how "ordinary people" appreciate him for his efforts to speak about the issue of 'illegal' immigration:

> Something strange began to happen. Everywhere I went I was being stopped in the street by ordinary people who were so grateful that someone had said something about it (Mashaba, 2019).

This way, Mashaba positions himself as a political leader who cares about and is ready to fight for "ordinary people", who he refers to as, "our poor, forgotten people" (Mashaba, 2019), and that he is not out of touch with the everyday realities affecting them. Speaking about how 'illegal' immigration makes the people of South Africa suffer, gives Mashaba and other populist leaders ground for xenophobic denialism. Rather, they claim to be speaking about 'real' issues affecting the people, and this gives moral legitimacy to their anti-immigrant political message.

A quite effective strategy for anti-immigrant populists when advocating against foreign nationals, is to play the perpetrator-victim reversal. Given South Africa's robust legal rights framework, the xenophobic utterances of these leaders inevitably generate moral outrage and condemnation from civil society groups, democratic politicians, and public intellectuals. The populist leaders in return bemoan that such strong condemnation is a way by the liberal democratic forces to silence them from articulating issues that affect 'the people', which conveniently amounts to perpetrator-victim reversal (Cammaerts, 2018). Mashaba turned himself into a victim after his xenophobic stance received widespread condemnation and in the media statement he laments, "For merely lamenting the state of illegal immigration I was labelled 'xenophobic', 'afriphobic' and 'illiberal'" (Mashaba, 2019).

He also took to social media to express rage at the way he had been castigated for speaking against 'illegal' immigration. He wrote on his Twitter handle, "Calling against illegal immigration is now labeled Xenophobic & populist in South Africa… Illegal immigration debate must be elevated" (Herman Mashaba, @HermanMashaba, January 14, 2019).

The perpetrator-victim reversal enabled Mashaba to portray himself to his constituents as a selfless leader who practices self-abnegation by continuing to fight for the interests of "ordinary people" despite the backlash he faces. Mashaba, despite receiving a lot of criticism for his discernible anti-foreigner attitude, has managed to establish a huge followership of people who see him as their mouthpiece, and he has since formed a political party called ActionSA.

Identifying and elevating failure to the level of crisis

Another tactic used by the populist actors in South Africa to make their anti-immigrant political message appealing to their constituents, is the spectacularized performance of crisis (Moffit, 2015) whereby they identify a failure, elevate it to the level of a crisis and bring it to attention as a matter of urgency (Betz, 2002; Rooduijn, 2014). Whether this crisis is real or not does not matter; what matters is that a sense of crisis and an urgent call for action to solve the crisis have been made.

Building a sense of crisis is vital for mainstreaming populist discourse because it necessitates the demand to act immediately and decisively. Populists use crisis by linking it to failure – in the case of this study, the failure of the immigration control system – and the impetus to act or make vital decisions emanates from the need to remedy the failure and stem the crisis. This spectacularization of failure makes crisis

a key part of, rather than something external to, populism (Moffit, 2015).

Elevating a failure to the level of crisis requires the identified failure to be of huge political concern; 'illegal' immigration is one such issue in South Africa. Over the past few years, several political leaders have raised concern over the failure of the country's immigration control system to stop 'illegal' immigrants from coming into South Africa. In 2018, leader of the Congress of the People (COPE), Mosiuoa Lekota, was quoted in the media alleging that, "Government, at national [level], is allowing people to flood South Africa" (Madia, 2018). Another example is the ANC government's Deputy Minister of Police, Bongani Mkongi, who in July 2017 during a press-briefing after visiting Hillbrow Police Station to discuss issues of crime and illegal trading, perfectly adopted a typical populist choreography. His statement had all the ingredients of xenophobic toxicity and the video was re-circulated on social media platforms during the xenophobic attacks in early September 2019. He lamented:

> How can a city in South Africa be 80% foreign nationals? That is dangerous; that in Hillbrow … South Africans have surrendered their own city to the foreign nationals. The nation should be debating that issue … if we do not debate that, that necessarily means the whole of South Africa could be 80% dominated by foreign nationals and the future president of South Africa could be a foreign national. We are surrendering our land, and it is not xenophobia to talk truth (Eyewitness News, 2017).

What makes Lekota's and Mkongi's claims populist, is that they are not based on fact. The most recent data refute that South Africa is being flooded with immigrants or that it will in future be 80% dominated by foreign nationals. The 2011 census from Statistics South Africa (StatsSA, 2015) showed there were about 2.2 million immigrants in 2011, which equates to 4.2% of the total population (StatsSA, 2015). In addition, a 2016 community survey by StatsSA puts the number of foreign-born people at 1.6 million out of a national population of 55 million at the time (StatsSA, 2016). While there may be possibilities of methodological issues of undercounting in the StatsSA data (Gumbo, 2016), Heleta (2019) maintains that it would not be surprising if this figure is correct, especially as the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) has deported close to 400,000 foreign nationals since 2012 (DHA, 2017). Judging by these deportation figures, if the country was indeed swamped by 'illegal' immigrants and given that the country has been known as a prolific deporter of immigrants (Vigneswaran, 2008), one would expect the figure of deportations since 2012 to be in the millions. These politicians' use of aquatic imageries to describe migrants entering South Africa as "pouring" or "flooding" as well as using exaggerated guesstimates, help in manufacturing an atmosphere of crisis so that the issue is elevated in political debate.

To disseminate high-impact messages in populist fashion, the political leaders

link the migration crisis to the socio-economic challenges the country is facing. In doing so, the populist actors attempt to show how the migration crisis spreads to and impacts the different aspects of life for the people of South Africa. In his press-briefing, the Deputy Minister of Police was able to link the presence of 'illegal' foreign nationals, or in his own words, "lunatics that we don't know", to a host of other problems being faced in Hillbrow – gun violence, hijacking of buildings, illegal trading, lack of housing, etc. Mkongi successfully magnified the impact of the alleged immigration crisis by establishing "an equivalential relation" (Laclau, 2005: 73) to other problems affecting the people of South Africa.

The ANC government's then Minister of Health, who is now the Minister of Home Affairs, Aaron Motsoaledi, was also recorded on SABC news making a similar equivalential relationship between the immigration "crisis" and the country's failing health system. He told a nursing summit that was convened by the National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union (NEHAWU) that when migrants "get admitted in large numbers, they cause overcrowding, [and] infection control starts failing" (Mbhele, 2018). The crisis and the challenges the country is facing do not automatically knit themselves together into an equivalential chain; it is the job of a populist leader to do that, and that is what the populist actors in South Africa are doing to normalize and entrench anti-immigrant populist discourse in the country's mainstream political discourse.

This populist performance of crisis is also framed by the populist actors in a temporal dimension within which failure to take decisive action will aggravate the crisis. We note this in Deputy Minister of Police, Bongani Mkongi's address, referred to earlier, when he lamented that if the issue of immigration goes undebated, this may result in South Africa's population being 80% dominated by foreign nationals and the future president of the country being a foreign national. For Mkongi, this was an invasion and a sign that foreigners were taking over power from South Africans. And if this is not dealt with now, South Africa would end up being occupied and ruled by foreigners.

Mkongi is not the only one preaching about the threat of foreign invasion and a possible take-over of the country by immigrants. In early August 2019, after violent clashes in Johannesburg central business district between the police and shopkeepers and street traders – the majority being immigrants – the ANC's Gauteng MEC for community safety, Faith Mazibuko, was recorded in the news declaring that, "We can't co-govern [our country] with criminals, especially foreign nationals who want to turn our country into a lawless banana republic" (Daniel, 2019). The MEC's statement also demonstrates the urgency with which the issue of crime by foreign nationals should be dealt with. She implied that if they allowed co-governing with these "criminals", the country will be turned into a lawless country.

Setting the enemy against 'the people'

As the populists spectacularize systemic failure to crisis levels, they also simplify

complex developments by looking for a culprit who is not only blamed for the crisis, but also construed as quintessentially evil and a threat to 'the people', 'our people'. Most of the populist actors in South Africa impute bad character on immigrants, particularly 'illegal' immigrants, and blame them for the problems the country is facing. In 2017, the Minister of Police, Fikile Mbalula, told news reporters that former Zimbabwean soldiers enter the country illegally to rob and kill. He said:

> There are Zimbabwean ex-soldiers who are in this country, robbing banks, promoting criminality … They enter illegally and they just come here and do not promote goodwill (eNCA, 2017).

The ruling ANC's Gauteng Premier, David Makhura, was also in the news in March 2019, accusing foreign nationals of committing crime, saying, "in some specific crimes, specific nationalities are involved" (eNCA, 2019). In these statements, the political leaders single out foreigners as the lawbreakers responsible for the country's spiraling crime rates.

Conspicuously absent in this populist narrative on crime are South Africans themselves. Herman Mashaba posted a series of tweets about crimes allegedly committed exclusively by African immigrants in Johannesburg under the hackneyed hashtag #WorldCupOfCrime. South African citizens did not feature in the charts. The absence of statistical data on crimes committed by South Africans in Mashaba's #WorldCupOfCrime tweets suggests that crime in South Africa is a world cup match that the hosts do not partake in. Even when African ambassadors met with Ministers Lindiwe Sisulu of International Relations and Co-operation, Bheki Cele of Police and Siyabonga Cwele of Home Affairs to discuss the xenophobic attacks that had erupted in Durban against Malawian nationals in April 2019, several ambassadors were dismayed by the meeting as, "It was all about crimes committed by foreign nationals [against South Africans] and nothing about crimes committed by South Africans against foreign nationals" (Fabricius, 2019).

However, the crime statistics posted by Mashaba on his Twitter page were again rebutted as simply driven by his xenophobic character, particularly given that of the 1.5 million arrests that were recorded in South Africa, over 95% were committed by South Africans (Bornman, 2019b). While it is undeniable that crime rates are staggeringly high in South Africa, and that some of that crime is perpetuated by some immigrants, but to selectively blame non-citizens as responsible for the souring crime rates, implicitly suggests that people are criminal because they are foreign and betrays the populist simplicity behind such a social diagnosis, which works to construct Manichean divisions between the morally upright and virtuous South Africans and evil and dangerous foreigners. This scapegoating of a particular group as responsible for the crisis not only exposes who the enemy is, but is also crucial in constituting the identity of 'our people' as noted by Taggart (2000: 94), that "populists are often more sure of who they are not, than of who they are", and in this case, South

Africans are not involved in crime.

Through this approach, threat scenarios are created in which 'we' (our people) are threatened by or deprived because of 'them' (foreign nationals). Immigrants are blamed for the suffering of South Africans, as Bongani Mkongi stated in his press-briefing:

> We are facing here service delivery protests that we don't know where they are coming from. Some of the issues is because of we can't give shelter to our people because these buildings are being occupied and hijacked by people and lunatics that we don't know [sic] (Eyewitness News, 2017).

For Mkongi, the government was failing to provide shelter to 'our people' (South Africans) because the buildings were being occupied and hijacked by foreigners. So, immigrants are the enemy who the people of South Africa consider to be the "demon from outside" that inherently threatens the post-Apartheid renaissance (Landau, 2010).

This demonization and 'othering' of the foreigners was also clear when Herman Mashaba executed his first citizen's arrest of a man who was pushing a trolley full of cow heads in central Johannesburg. Mashaba engaged in a Twitter row and responded thus to someone who had accused him of killing small businesses in Johannesburg:

> We are [not] going to sit back and allow people like you to bring us Ebolas in the name of small business. Health of our people first. Our health facilities are already stretched to the limit [sic] (Herman Mashaba, @HermanMashaba, November 13, 2018).

Mashaba clearly presented immigrants as posing an existential threat to the people of South Africa. He equated foreignness to bringing Ebola, which equates being foreign with disease, thus insinuating that foreigners are dangerous carriers of disease. He then talked about the health of "our people" which is a priority as the country is infested with the diseased foreigners who cause a strain to the health delivery system.

Proposing simple solutions to complex problems

Following their simple diagnosis of the crisis that, through the "politics of fear", create Manichean divisions between "good" and "evil" people, the populist actors propose simple solutions to complex problems, which hardly address the structural causes of the crisis. Since they allege that South Africa's problems are caused by foreign nationals "flooding" the country, the populist actors propose tight, exclusionist and restrictive immigration control. The DA made immigration one of its key campaign pillars for the 2019 national elections, calling for stricter immigration controls and had banners inscribed "Secure our borders". The DA was not the only political party

advocating "to close our borders" (Mailovich, 2018); almost all the other parties, except for the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), have been calling for tightening immigration enforcement as a way of dealing with the country's challenges.

However, research has shown that such anti-immigrant populist solutions do not address the deep-lying structural issues affecting South Africa. An example is crime. The Institute for Security Studies (ISS) argues that the call by politicians for the targeting and deportation of undocumented immigrants as a way of dealing with high crime levels in South Africa has little, if any, impact on public safety. The ISS notes that in Gauteng Province, despite the police ramping up their efforts to arrest 'illegal' immigrants, there has been no decrease in violent crimes, which the immigrants are alleged to commit. Instead, the police reported that between 2012 and 2017 crime levels increased by 36% (ISS, 2017), which exposes the inadequacy of simplistic populist rhetoric. Nonetheless, proposing tight immigration control measures allows the populist leaders to be seen as doing something to solve South Africa's problems, which are largely attributed to the presence of 'illegal' foreign nationals.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper was to examine the ways in which anti-immigrant populist political discourse is being entrenched and normalized in the mainstream political discourse and I have done so by demonstrating how several political leaders in South Africa communicate their messages, enacting a moral panic through a spectacularized performance of crisis in the way they speak about immigrants or immigration. I have stressed that anti-immigrant violence runs against South Africa's commitment to democratic principles, human rights, and regional integration. My submission is that for us to find answers to the pressing questions on the persistence of xenophobia in a liberal democratic context like South Africa, we need to look at how political leaders mobilize an anti-immigrant populist discourse so that anti-immigrant messages become more appealing and justifiable in articulating the problems South Africa is facing. Through a spectacularized populist performance of crisis, the populist actors present themselves as a voice of the people, as leaders who care about and can articulate the issues affecting the people. They also identify a systemic failure, which in this case is the failing immigration control system, and elevate it to the level of crisis by establishing an equivalential relation with the other challenges that the county is facing. In this spectacularized performance of crisis, the populist leaders will name the culprit behind the country's challenges, which therefore creates a division between 'morally' upright people and 'dangerous' outsiders. Given the culprit is pinpointed in this populist practice, the politicians finally propose a simple solution to the challenges the country is facing – tight immigration enforcement and expulsion of the culprits.

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Examining Nigeria's Digital Identity Project as a Tool for Economic Inclusion and Regional Integration

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Access to the digitized economy has an increased penetration across the spectrum of Africa's rural and urban populace. Unlike the prevalent informal economy, the digital economy scrutinizes people's identities as individuals with exclusive identities. After years of prior proclamations postponements, in 2017, the Nigerian government began enforcing the harmonization of sundry digital identity databases and compelling digital identity registration of all citizens and residents. On the other hand, there is a de facto delineation of the Nigerian citizenry into normative categories of 'indigenes' and 'settlers', which is at the heart of the Nigerian identity question. This casts doubt on the ability of the Nigerian State to fulfil its commitment to regional and continental free movement protocols it has ratified. This article explores the de facto nuances of stratified Nigerian citizenship, which the Nigerian digital identity project can help solve. I employ descriptive and explanatory analysis of extant national, regional and continental policy frameworks to appraise Nigeria's digital identity management systems. Harmonizing Nigeria's sundry digital schemes is critical to defining citizenship, residency rights, socioeconomic inclusion, transnational citizenship and border security, while facilitating the desired free movement of persons and goods within the African continent, as yearned by regional and continental protocols.

Keywords: citizenship, digitization, transnationalism

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INTRODUCTION

Digital identity systems in Nigeria have been characterized by independent personal data curations by private and public agencies, which are not harmonized and centrally accessible. The initial drive at identity registration by sundry public and private organizations was aimed at issuing "identity cards" deemed valid to be utilized by the bearer for the activity it prescribes (NIMC, 2010). For example, the Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC) manages the issuance of driver's licenses (FRN, 2007a); Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) handles the issue of international passports (FRN, 2015). The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) issues voter cards (FRN, 2010), among several governmental agencies which administer identity cards to signify the registration of the bearer. In several cases, these sundry identity cards are recognized as identity particulars to validate one's identity when required publicly.

Advancement in technology has ensured the sophistication of identity management systems. There is now a universal penchant for switching from non-digital forms of identity curation to digital or electronic formats, which are interoperable across organizations and nation-states and utilized to access various services relating to human activities. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) systems are now incorporated into public and private enterprise service delivery. Referred to as 'e-governance', these measures are intended to enhance transparency and improved service delivery (Bannister and Connolly, 2012). This modality would require interaction with a consistent digital identity of citizens rather than multiple digital identities for effectiveness (Ayo, 2010). This measure serves as a check for faceless individuals and sharp practices within the digital economy.

Technological advancements in digital systems now enable the synchronization of digital identity across human activity platforms such as business transactions, voting, health insurance, driver licensing, etc. (Engin and Treleaven, 2019). This aligns with the extant globalization trend, which requires seamless cross-border human interaction in public and private dealings. Such would require data sharing and synchronization to drive the economy and uphold formalized transactions worldwide.

Current initiatives at harmonizing Nigeria's digital identity began in 2005, building on past national identity implementation initiatives when Nigeria's Federal Government constituted a Technical Sub-Committee to evaluate extant identity card projects. The findings declared twelve independent identity schemes, most of which inculcated biometrics (Presidency, 2006). These separate identity schemes held data ranging from ten thousand to fifty-eight million persons (ibid). However, these several independent identity schemes were found to duplicate functions and were tantamount to resource wastage, particularly for digital identity management initiatives of governmental agencies. Consequently, governmental efforts were invigorated to manage the harmonization of digital identity systems in Nigeria. This culminated in the establishment of the National Identity Management Commission

(NIMC), backed by the NIMC Act 23 of 2007. This Act established the National Identity Database (NIDB) to be managed by NIMC, as prescribed in Sections 14–17 of the Act (FRN, 2007b). Therefore, the identities of Nigerian citizens and legal residents would be coded in unique National Identification Numbers (NIN), which would be a prerequisite to obtaining a national electronic identity card (ibid). Additionally, the NIN is expected to be a digital identity requirement for accessing government services and a framework for the integration of other independent databases such as voter's cards, driver's licenses, bank accounts, international passports and the likes (FRN, 2017; Soriwei and Adetayo, 2017). Extant enrolment figures declared by NIMC as of July 2021 stand at a little over 54 million Nigerians (NIMC, 2021), which is around a quarter of the national population, estimated to be 211.4 million persons (UNFPA, 2021).

Ongoing efforts by the Nigerian government to institute and harmonize digital identity schemes to consolidate the National Identity Database present an opportunity to address the underlying issues of inclusion among Nigeria's citizens and legal residents. There is a search for the soul of the 'Nigerian identity' amidst fragmented identity allegiance along the lines of ethnicity, religion and regional bias (Odum, 2018). This phenomenon is the bane of broader socioeconomic exclusions through which Nigerians may face discrimination in accessing governmental services on the grounds of ethnic ancestry. Exclusion based on religion is also common; however, exclusion based on indigeneship[2] is prime. Enforcing this exclusion is the "certificate of local government of origin", which serves as the de facto Nigerian citizenship identity document required to access most government services, especially civil service jobs, scholarships, and elective and political appointments. Nigeria has a long unsettling citizenship stratification question with the normative categorization of citizens as "indigenes" and "settlers" (Olakunle et al., 2016; Akintola and Yabayanze, 2017; Oyeweso, 2021). Though not a constitutionally recognized identity document, the local government of origin certificate enforces the stratification of Nigerian citizenship as indigenes and settlers. This, in turn, queries the constitutional mandate and privileges of Nigerian citizenship, legal residency, and the Nigerian State's ability to confer privileges of transnational citizenship within regional and continental free movement protocols. The de facto prevalence of ethnoreligious identity schemes with discriminatory intent as the basis for defining stratified Nigerian citizenship will inhibit the intent of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and the African Union (AU) and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Protocols on the Free Movement of Persons in Nigeria. There is a need to appraise the ability of the Nigerian government's digital identity scheme to foster internal,

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2 The indigeneship question is the core of the Nigerian identity debate. Due to fears of domination by ethnic sections, the extant Nigerian Constitution enshrines the "Federal Character Principle", which ensures a sectional representative balance of appointments/employment in all national government institutions. Section 147 (b) of the 1999 Constitution stipulates that "the President shall appoint at least one Minister from each State, who shall be an indigene of such State" (FRN, 2011). To this, the "certificate of local government of Origin" obtained from traditional rulers or local government areas to which one can trace ethnic ancestry serves as the de facto identity document with which a Nigerian citizen can access governmental service.

regional and continental integration. In three core segments of this article, I explore the nuances of the Nigerian de facto and de jure identity, citizenship and residency. I explore regional and continental frameworks for socioeconomic integration in Africa that Nigeria subscribes to and interrogate how Nigeria's digital identity scheme would facilitate socioeconomic inclusion on the local, regional and continental scale. The first segment draws from the theory of boundaries of inclusion to underpin the research framework. In the second segment, I case study the European Union (EU) Schengen Agreement, drawing from its success as a Pan-European socioeconomic regional integration tool through an integrated identity repository. The third segment examines the Nigerian digital scheme, exploring gaps that might inhibit its functionality from fostering national, regional and continental socioeconomic integration.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The article relied on secondary data to explore and explain the core themes of the topic. As such, the qualitative research method was employed. This entailed a literature search and documentary reviews. Citizenship and transnationalism were keywords used to ignite the literature search on Google scholar. Documentary reviews covered Nigeria's 1999 Constitution, digital identity policy documents, ECOWAS and AU protocols on the free movement of persons. Berkwits and Inui (1998) argue that qualitative research employs case studies and participant observation methods to present a descriptive account of a norm. In appraising Nigeria's digital identity project to achieve national, regional and continental socioeconomic integration, I draw from my personal experience as a Nigerian and case study of the European Union's Schengen Agreement.

THEORIES ON THE BOUNDARIES OF INCLUSION AND CITIZENSHIP

The phenomenon of globalization permeates international border barriers bringing about worldwide interconnectivity in all spheres of human socioeconomic and cultural interactions (O'Rourke and Williamson, 2002). In a sense, the feel of a vast world has been reduced to what is termed a "global village" (Martens et al., 2010). As a result, the trend of globalization and migration is increasingly creating multicultural societies. As the composition of peoples of modern nation-states becomes heterogeneous, there is a rising dichotomy along the lines of inclusion and exclusion on the group that should be rightly ascribed as "the people". Näsström (2007) points out that the people identity question becomes thorny in the face of border delineation for local municipalities and nation-states. As such, the legitimacy of the claimants alluding to being "founding peoples" in a given society and then having to determine the legitimacy and apportioning citizenship and residency rights of subsequent settlers is called to question (ibid). Political theory scholarship finds a puzzle to justify the legitimacy of "founding peoples" claims to the extent

of this group determining the lines of inclusion and exclusion (Thomassen, 2006; Deckard and Heslin, 2016; Okamoto and Ebert, 2016; Fischer et al., 2020). Building on deductions of political theorists such as Habermas (2005) and Benhabib (2004), the premise for the founding of societies to be based on "unexamined prejudices, ancient battles, historical injustices and sheer administrative fiat" (Benhabib, 2004: 178; Habermas, 2005).

Ordinarily, residency confers rights to social rights, which provide access to living the "good life" (Macaro, 2005). However, citizenship avails a much fuller measure of demanding greater rights from the social contract, which is invisibly extant between the government and the masses (Adejumobi, 2001). Normative legal citizenship conferment identifies jus soli or citizenship acquisition by birth and jus sanguinis or citizenship acquisition by descent (Faist, 2009). However, depending on extant national laws, there could be an alternate path to citizenship by naturalization, which procedural requirement differs from country to country (Andreouli and Howarth, 2013). By this, country residents can be delineated as citizens and non-citizens. The non-citizen category is further divided into temporary and permanent residents.

The Aristotelian definition of citizenship confers judicial and political privileges on individuals within the confines of a nation-state (Deckard and Heslin, 2016). Arendt (1962) argues that the privilege to acquire political rights makes a significant difference between human and animal organizations. Therefore, citizenship confers "rights to have rights" within a sociopolitical commune (Arendt, 1962; Deckard and Heslin, 2016). Scholars have identified core attributes of citizenship as status, rights, political engagement, and identity (Bosniak, 2006; Scherz, 2013: 2). To this end, citizenship status is described as statutory obligations of individuals to the nation-state. Individuals begin to enjoy the privilege of citizenship only after fulfilling the set obligations as required by the nation-state (Weinstock, 2001). Having attained the required eligibility for citizenship, individuals are required to register and procure the necessary state-issued identity documents. This validates the status of qualified individuals as citizens and makes the state liable to provide the privileges of citizenship to such individuals (Hammar, 2018).

From Marshall's (1950) theory of citizenship, the attributive rights of citizenship are identified as civil, political and social. Civil rights come under the purview of fundamental rights necessary for preserving human dignity, as guaranteed by the state. Such include liberty rights, property ownership rights, right to justice, freedom of thought, belief and speech. Political rights allude to the right to participate in the state's political process either as an elector or by taking up political leadership positions. Social rights refer to the right to access social services provided by the state (De la Paz, 2012).

While the citizenship attributes of 'status' and 'rights' are inclusionary, lines of exclusions emerge in the other citizenship attributes of 'political engagement' and 'identity'. The utmost delineation of resident categories within a state is the attribute

and right to political participation. This presents exclusionary situations wherein a category of the citizenry is limited or excluded from political involvement. Marshall's citizenship theory argues that the concept of citizenship affords equality amongst the diverse socioeconomic groupings within a state, particularly in liberal constitutional societies. Despite being a professed constitutional liberal democracy right from its founding, pre-1960 USA did not guarantee the full right to political participation of non-white racial groups. The Jim Crow laws (Klarman, 2004) notably reinforced discriminatory political and economic disenfranchisement of black American citizens who were rated as three-fifth humans (Henricks, 2017). Therefore, where such individuals are opportune to vote, they do not have one full vote. Neither can such a category of citizenry stand for elective positions. However, discriminatory exclusionary racial laws were abolished in the USA in the 1960s, following intense civil rights activity led by Martin Luther King Jr (Kotz, 2006).

Identity as an attribute of citizenship manifests as patriotic or nationalistic allegiance to the state (Weinstock, 2001). However, the identity attribute of citizenship poses substantial controversies, as presented in the concept of modern nation-states, especially for cases of colonial-created countries, in Africa. Identity is a social construct typified by ethnic, religious and cultural affiliations (Rundle, 2009). Nation-states rally around common identity constructs to define and portray a national identity. While this would be easy for homogenous nation-states, heterogeneous ones would have to acknowledge the diverse identity components to forge an inclusive national identity. Nevertheless, citizens of multi-ethnic nation-states – such as Nigeria – grapple with identity preferences torn between prime allegiance to ethnic-leaning or the nation-state. Nigeria's extant constitution defines three pathways to obtaining Nigerian citizenship: descent, registration, and naturalization (FRN, 2011).

The conferment of Nigerian citizenship by descent is on having one or both parents as citizens regardless of the country in which one is born. Acquiring Nigerian citizenship by registration can be claimed by marriage to a Nigerian citizen (in the case of a foreign woman) or through a verified claim of Nigerian grandparentage (FRN, 2011). A foreign resident may acquire Nigerian citizenship by naturalization if such person has lived in Nigeria for at least 15 years and is conversant with at least a Nigerian language and custom, has attained the age of 17, is of good character and has a veritable source of income (ibid).

Privileges and rights accruing from acquiring citizenship of a nation-state come with responsibilities, as required by the nation-state of its citizens. These responsibilities are encapsulated as civic and patriotic duties, including voting in elections, national or military services when required, respect and protection of national symbols and willingness to pay the supreme sacrifice for the homeland (Weinstock, 2001). Globalization and neoliberalism have evoked a new category of citizenship identity in transnational or global citizenship. This novel citizenship category recognizes the interconnectedness of nation-states, and therefore identity is tied to humanity above nation-state citizenship. This notion is iterated in the 30

articles of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1948. Article 22 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights iterates transnational social rights as stated:

> Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality (UN, 1948).

The Westphalia Treaty of 1648 initiated the concept of "sovereignty" of nation-states in the consciousness of global governance. By the emergence of independent feudal Protestant Princes in Western Europe from the Hapsburg-controlled Holy Roman Empire, it became an underpinned covenant in the sphere of international politics and diplomacy for nation-states to have absolute control over internal matters of the state devoid of external influence (Hayman and Williams, 2006). Increasing cross-border migration has opened questions on exclusive citizenship rights within sovereign nation-states. As of 2019, around 3.5% of the world's population live outside their countries of birth, with the immigration attraction tending towards high and middle-income countries (UN DESA, 2019). The case of transnational migration for voluntary and involuntary reasons would continually increase as people seek the good life for themselves.

THE EUROPEAN UNION SCHENGEN AGREEMENT

Just as Europe presented the world with the concept of sovereignty from the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, the Schengen Agreement, which came into being in 1985, denoted an exemplary shift from unilateral sovereignty to multilateralism. The Schengen Agreement guarantees free movement between signatory countries. It is a culmination of decades of efforts at progressive European integration following the carnage and butcherdom of the Second World War between 1939 and 1945 that left all of Europe in ruins (Schengen Labour Info, 2021a). Efforts at post-World War Two European integration mirrored the 1648 Westphalia Treaty, which ended the 30-year war that ravaged much of Western Europe at the time. While seventeenth century European peace efforts guaranteed sovereignty and rights to national independence, twentieth century peace efforts recognized the need for international collaboration, integration and trade to stimulate economic growth and ensure global peace. Lessons were learnt from the post-World War One failed efforts at multilateral cooperation (Diehl, 2005). Therefore, most international institutions that emerged from post-World War Two peace sustaining initiatives, such as the World Bank, United Nations, and European Union, have stood the test of time despite challenges.

The journey to the Schengen Agreement can be traced to the Treaty of Paris of 1951 and the Treaty of Rome of 1957, which established the European Coal

and Steel Community (ECSC) and the European Economic Community (EEC), respectively. The EEC envisioned the free movement of persons across borders of member nations to foster greater economic integration. This initiative would require the synchronization of the identity database of member countries (Kurz, 2016). Although the Schengen Agreement sought to incorporate EEC (now EU) member countries to actualize the goals of the Treaty of Rome, not all EU member countries ratified the Schengen Agreement. Some non-EU member states opted to join the Schengen Agreement in the same vein. Germany, France, Luxembourg, Belgium, and the Netherlands were initial signatory countries to the Schengen Agreement. While EU member countries such as the United Kingdom (UK)[3] and Ireland chose to opt-out of the Agreement, non-EU member countries such as Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland and Iceland (Gstöhl and Frommelt, 2017) opted into the Agreement. Aside from these EU member and non-member countries' opt-ins' and 'opt-outs' (Wang, 2016), other EU member countries have ratified the Schengen Agreement. As such, the Schengen Area covering Western Europe includes 26 countries, having a cumulative border of 50,000 km within an area of 4,312,099 km2 with a population of 419,392,429 citizens (Schengen Visa Info, 2021b).

In understanding the Schengen Agreement from the perspective of political theory, the Agreement typifies multilateral cross-border integration efforts characterized by theories of liberalism, neoliberalism, intergovernmentalism, postfunctionalism and neofunctionalism (Börzel and Risse, 2018). While concepts, as applied to the Schengen Agreement, have the hallmark of integrative inclusion, Article 96 of the Schengen Treaty allows for the right of member states to temporarily suspend the implementation of the Treaty if they consider the person(s) "a threat to public policy or public security or national security" (EU, 2000: 44). Migrant concerns due to the influx of refugees fleeing the Syrian conflict and increasing waves of economic and involuntary refugees from Mediterranean crossing have tested the resolve of the Schengen Agreement (Popa, 2016). In the same vein, some Schengen member countries invoked temporary border controls in efforts to curb the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic (Linka et al., 2020).

In operationalizing the Schengen Agreement, member countries leverage digital technologies to make borders smart and avail efficient surveillance systems (Lehtonen and Aalto, 2017). To this, by the framework of the Agreement, already implemented is the Schengen Information System, a centrally accessed digital database for internal border surveillance. Other implemented Schengen digital controls are the Visa Information System (VIS) which is purposed as a platform for sharing data on visa details (EU, 2019a). The European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) manages and checks on suspicious activities, asylum and refugee migrants at the point of entry into the EU, while the European Asylum Dactyloscopy Database (EURODAC) system serves as a fingerprint repository for asylum applications (Ponzanesi and Leurs, 2014; EU, 2019b). The Lisbon Treaty and Dublin

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3 The UK ceased to be an EU member from 31 January 2020.

Regulation[4] provide the legal framework for the immigration policies within the EU and Schengen area (Blockmans and Wessel, 2009; Brekke and Brochmann, 2014). Citizens of Schengen member countries and valid Schengen visa holders are granted free movement across the international borders within the Schengen zone. To ensure standard border surveillance and control amongst member countries, the capacities of new EU member countries are ensured to be upgraded to fulfil set criteria[5] in Article 3 of the Act on Accession of 2003 before admittance into the Schengen zone (EU, 2019b). Overall, the Schengen Agreement as an EU initiative has presented a workable example of how digital identity management can be utilized to foster multilateral economic inclusion. By ensuring newly admitted countries into the EU upgrade capacity to required standards upheld by older members in terms of labor standards, digital and personnel capacity, the Schengen zone has lived and upheld its standards over time.

NIGERIA AND CONTINENTAL INTEGRATION

On 7 July 2019, Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari signed the ratification of Nigeria's membership of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Agreement, becoming the 34th member of the continental economic bloc. This move could be considered a reluctant one, considering Nigeria's pole position in contributing to regional and continental organizations fostering integration, peacekeeping and development. Nigeria's ratification of AfCFTA came one year late from its launch at the AU summit in January 2018, where 27 African countries signed their articles of ratification at the instant. Ironically, the Nigerian government had also shut land borders to transit goods since the last quarter of 2019, only mooting to rescind that decision before the end of 2020 (Olawoyin, 2020).

As Africa's most populous country and one of its largest economies, Nigeria has been a keen player in the formation of Pan-African integration, poised alongside regional and continental organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in 1975 and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963 (Tella, 2018). Initiatives for Africa's economic integration were rooted in post-independence Pan-Africanist visions espoused by post-independence African leaders grouped in three ideological blocs, namely: the Monrovia bloc (comprising Nigeria, Ethiopia, Liberia, Sudan, Togo, Somalia and Sudan) advocating gradual progressive continental integration; the Casablanca bloc (comprising Guinea, Ghana, Mali, Libya, Morocco, Algeria and Mali) advocating the radical dissolution of colonial borders; and the Brazzaville Bloc (comprising other Francophone countries, chiefly Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal) insisting on maintaining socioeconomic ties with France (Gumede, 2019).

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4 The Dublin Regulation is the EU's legal framework for dealing with asylum and refugee applications. The first Dublin convention was established in 1990 and came into force in 1997. The Dublin II regulation became operational in 2003 and Dublin III became effective in 2013.
5 Some of the criteria include: personal data protection infrastructure, police cooperation deportations, and border control legislation.

Drawing from the economic integration success of the EEC, the OAU, through the Lagos Plan of Action Agreement of 1980, sought to initiate Africa's economic integration, which was designated to be implemented by the continent's component Regional Economic Communities (RECs), namely: ECOWAS, the Common Market for Eastern and South Africa (COMESA), and the Economic Community for Central African States (ECCAS). Later, the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) was established (Vhumbunu, 2015).

In 1979, ECOWAS leaders launched the ECOWAS Protocol on the free movement of persons. This Protocol allowed for unrestricted movement of citizens of ECOWAS member countries across borders of ECOWAS member countries without the need for visas for 90 days. The Protocol also availed free movement of goods and capital across borders of member countries, intending to spur economic growth. Article 27 of the Protocol envisioned an ultimate goal of "community citizenship" whereby by 2020, "community citizens" would no longer need to obtain residency permits if they choose to live in any ECOWAS member country other than their home country. The unified identity document proposed to validate community citizenship, is the ECOWAS passport. Border checks were envisaged to be eliminated, and immigration and security operatives would share information (Okunade and Ogunnubi, 2021).

On the continental front, the overarching Pan-Africanist vision, as iterated by the AU Agenda 2063, is "an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa" (AU, 2015: 5). Achieving this vision calls for trade liberalization and free movement of African citizens across the borders of AU member nations. To facilitate this, the AU Agenda 2063 iterates the issuance of AU passports that would replace that of member countries. The AU passport was launched at the extraordinary summit of the AU Heads of State held in Kigali, Rwanda, in 2016. The AU passport is intended to eliminate visa requirements for holders in cross-border travels amongst African nations. The AfCFTA Agreement, as launched by the AU in 2016, began to receive instruments of ratification from AU member countries at the AU summit of January 2018. Operational since 2021, it aims to liberalize trade among AU member states (Aniche, 2020). In the same vein, the AU protocol on the free movement of persons was also launched at the 2018 AU summit. This Protocol harmonizes the policy framework for the free movement of citizens of AU member states. Articles of note in the Protocol enhancing transnational citizenship are:

- Article 10: on the AU passport
- Article 11: on the use of vehicles across borders
- Article 12: on the free movement of residents of border communities
- Article 13: on the free movement of students and researchers
- Article 14: on the free movement of workers
- Article 16 on the right of residence

The implementation of the AU free movement protocol is to be in phases, with

member countries allowed to progressively adjust their migration policies to suit the desired intent of the Protocol over time (Hirsch, 2021). However, the AU free movement protocol was revised into the Migration Policy Framework for Africa as released by the AU in May 2018. The exemplary success of the EU's socioeconomic integration can be replicated in Africa through the AU's Protocol on Migration. In February 2020, the AU adopted its Digital Transformation Strategy, which is a 10-year policy framework (2020–2030). The strategy builds on the AU's extant protocols on socioeconomic integration aforementioned to "support the development of a Digital Single Market (DSM) for Africa, as part of the integration priorities of the African Union" (AU, 2020: 1). However, progress on this quest will mean that AU member states have to escalate individual digital identity programmes and synchronize and share data systems among member nations.

Nigeria's efforts and contribution to regional and continental integration – matters arising

The Nigerian government has long been at the forefront of forming regional and continental treaties to integrate ECOWAS and AU member countries. Some of the Treaties, Agreements and Declarations rolled out in Nigeria are:

i. The 1975 Treaty of Lagos establishing ECOWAS
ii. The 1979 ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of Persons – signed in Lagos
iii. The 1980 Lagos Plan of Action
iv. The 1991 Abuja Declaration

Despite hosting and championing regional and continental integration initiatives, the Nigerian government has sometimes tended to initiate policies that counter the initiative of regional and continental integration. For example, in 1983, just four years after ratifying the ECOWAS Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons, the Nigerian government expelled foreigners (mostly non-Nigerian ECOWAS citizens) to reduce crime and protect local industry and jobs for Nigerians (Benjamin et al., 2015). In the same vein, the Nigerian government has occasionally shut its borders with neighboring Benin to tackle smuggling (Aluede, 2017).

ECOWAS and the AU had set 2020 as the target year for operationalizing the ECOWAS' "community citizenship" and the AU's continental citizenship via the broader use of the ECOWAS and AU passports by citizens of member countries (Bettencourt, 2018). However, in 2022 this target is yet to be implemented or actualized. For security guarantees and identity verification, most countries, including those of the Schengen zone, issue biometric passports capturing mandatory features, as specified by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). Such passports would contain an electronic microprocessor chip storing the holder's digitized identity in facial, fingerprint, and iris recognition. Since 2009, the ICAO mandates international travel documents to have electronic machine-readable zones

on them (ICAO, 2021). This ensures international operability, uniformity of security features, durability and quality reliability of travel documents. Therefore, while not all African countries issue e-passports – such as Ghana, Ethiopia, South Africa, Malawi, Eritrea, and Zambia – these passports have the ICAO prescribed machine-readable zones. Even though Nigeria has completely phased out non-e-passports, the ECOWAS travel certificate, an alternate travel document within the subregion, does not contain biometric identity features of holders. Therefore, the extant use of non-electronic identity documents not having machine-readable zones for travel within the ECOWAS region yet, entrenches suspicious fears of foreign migrants as their identities cannot be digitally verified.

Nigeria's national identity scheme – matters arising

The Nigerian government is seeking ways to accelerate the digital identity enrolment of its citizenry. This is done through the issue of National Identity Numbers (NINs) after a process of biometric capture. The standard passport currently issued by the Nigerian government is compliant with ICAO specifications, and the national identity card that bears the NIN also captures the holder's biometric features. The government has sought to expand national ID enrolment by linking the use of the NIN to access government services. However, national ID enrolment remains low and inefficient.

The relevance and legitimacy of the state/local government of origin document as a normative citizenship and identity document come into question. Section 41 of the Nigerian 1999 Constitution grants rights to every Nigerian citizen "to move freely throughout Nigeria and to reside in any part thereof, and no citizen of Nigeria shall be expelled from Nigeria or refused entry thereby or exit therefrom" (FRN, 2011). While this is a de jure rule, contemporary Nigerian citizenship experience proves it otherwise. There is yet discrimination along ethnic lines in accessing government and social services outside one's region of ancestry. Resultant social friction and suspicion among Nigeria's multiple ethnic groups can be diffused to the barest minimum when the prime identity reference of citizens and residents is the National Identity Number. I refer to the United States Social Security Number and the South African National Identification Number, among examples from other countries where government assigned and curated digital identity numbers are used to compute and manage the welfare of the citizens and legal residents.

The de facto concept of Nigerian citizenship and residency as tied to ethnic affiliations is conventionally enforced through the local government of origin certificate. Although not backed by law as a legal identity document, it is required for obtaining the Nigerian Passport and National ID. The certificate is issued upon request by traditional authorities and local government councils to persons who can prove ancestry within the jurisdiction areas of the issuing authority. Studies by Fourchard (2015) and Ehrhardt (2017) reveal a widespread arbitrariness and

indiscretion[6] in the issue of the document, which also lacks standardization. Regardless, the de facto relevance of this document is further perpetuated as one of the requirements for accessing civil service jobs, public tertiary education and government scholarships. With respect to land governance, Christopher et al. (2018) note another discriminatory manifestation wherein, in some parts of Nigeria, a settler is barred from perpetual land ownership, only holding land title on a lease, which is in contravention of the Land Use Act. It is also a weapon for excluding non-indigenes within a community from political office. According to the Act of Establishment of the Federal Character Commission, non-indigenes are excluded from holding Federal/National representative positions in their place of residency. This legal impediment contradicts constitutional legal residency provisions for Nigerian citizens and is at the heart of the residency rights debate resulting from the dichotomy of stratified Nigerian citizenship.

Effective urban governance amplifies the dilemma of legal residency and Nigerian citizenship rights. Urban centers are an agglomeration of internal and external immigrants. In most cases, the dominant population percentage of urban dwellers cannot trace historic ancestry to their current residence community. However, with the perpetuation of the local government of origin certificate as a prerequisite to benefitting from social services, a more significant percentage of the urban populace faces social and economic exclusion. The AU digital strategy asserts digital identity as a guarantee of legal protection for individuals to access the benefits of "gender equality, social protection delivery, financial inclusion, improved governance, safer migration, superior health delivery, enhanced and refugee child protection, reducing statelessness" (AU, 2020: 39).

Grappling with the dilemma of governance perpetuated by the lack of digital reference for residents, some Nigerian states like Lagos, Ondo and Oyo have mooted independent provincial residency identity registration schemes separate from the Nigerian Federal Government. For example, the Lagos State Residents Registration Agency (LASRRA) maintains a database (comprising biometric details) of Lagos State residents and issues an ID number independent of the Nigerian government's NIN (LASRRA, 2020). This LASRRA number is required to access services provided by the Lagos State government but is not linked to the Nigerian Government database of residents and citizens. Noting the dichotomy between civic and customary Nigerian citizenship and the need to respect constitutionally ascribed rights of legal Nigerian residents regardless of ethnicity, this resolves the obnoxious normative categorization of the residency status of Nigerians in any part of the country within the prism of indigenes and settlers. The legitimacy of Nigerian citizenship and residency would then be adjudged by an individual's contribution to the host community using

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6 Fourchard (2015) identifies commodification of these certificates by issuing authorities. The nonstandardization of the certificate also makes it susceptible to counterfeiting. Applicants who may ordinarily not be eligible to obtain the certificate can beat the system by inventing a life story of their ancestry which would sound favorable to the issuing officer. Ehrhardt (2017) also notes that there are no explicit criteria to access indigeneship claims. While there are uncontested claims, the criteria ambiguity is also giving rise to 'difficult cases' from applicants.

likely tax compliance and property ownership parameters. This provides an identity framework for the Nigerian State to avail trans-national citizenship to its residents and fulfil its obligation to the ECOWAS and AU Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons.

There is an urgent need to penetrate national digital identity schemes across all African countries. More importantly, this would manage the diffused citizenship between border communities. Extant borders of Africa's nation-states are arbitrarily drawn colonial borders that take no cognizance of agelong ethnic boundaries. Identity allegiance in border communities is tied primarily to ethnic leanings above the national cause. Therefore, economic activities in border communities are linked to suspicion of smuggling, which has led to the Nigerian government occasionally shutting down its land borders.

The trend of international polity has shifted from unilateral sovereignty to multilateral cooperation as nation-states seek to benefit from the global system. This has impacted increased voluntary and involuntary migration, as individuals gravitate to seek the good life in foreign nation-states. The AU and ECOWAS Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons, and the AfCFTA, being examples of multilateral agreements to which Nigeria is a signatory, are aimed to liberalize cross-border migration and trade and ultimately ascribe "community citizenship" status to citizens of member states. The Schengen zone proved a worthy example that ECOWAS and the AU can emulate in the progression towards ascribing transnational community citizenship. A coherent, accelerated, and synchronized digitization drive in AU member states is anticipated with the recently launched AU Digital Transformation Strategy.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Digital identity for individuals is a vital facilitator for socioeconomic, regional and continental integration. Concurrent digital identity schemes operated by some Nigerian states like Lagos should be appraised as necessary to blur the lines of stratified Nigerian citizenship. Noting its effectiveness in Lagos, it should be replicated across other Nigerian states and be enshrined in the national identity framework. This would be a key driver to perpetuate residency rights within the federalist apparatus of the Nigerian State through digital identity other than the irregular local government of origin certificate. While awaiting the implementation of AU passports to liberalize cross-border travel and trade within AU member countries, other alternate identity documents that could be utilized for intra-African travel – such as national IDs – should be upgraded to ICAO standards. AU member countries should phase out identity documents that are not biometric and lack machine-readable parts. Furthermore, there is a need for African countries to invest in and develop local digital database management infrastructure with a view to eliminating dependence on the EU and China for such. Just as obtained in the Schengen area in Frontex, a central regional and continental border control agency leveraging an AU centrally

managed database would help coordinate digital identity continentally, leveraged for immigration and customs purposes. Digital technology permeates all facets of human life; digital identity is the modality for navigating the globalized digital world.

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