# Migrants and Borders - Synthesis

Catherine Quiminal, Jean-Yves Blum Le Coat

# Work Package 3
# Migrants and Borders - Synthesis

From deliverable 3.4

March 2011
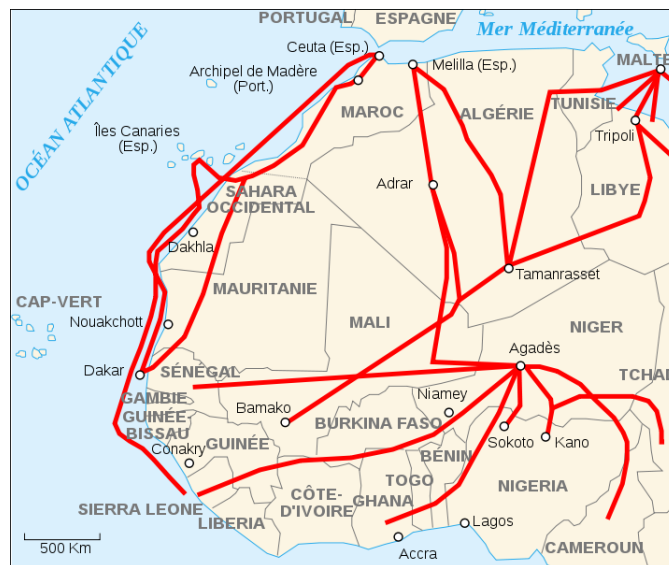


**Migrants and borders**

Catherine QUIMINAL (UP7, France) &
Jean-Yves BLUM LE COAT (UP7, France)

## Abstract

This text is based on the researches on the migrants' representations of Europe and how their representations evolve during migrants' itineraries realised for the program Eurobroadmap. These researches have followed three major migratory 'routes' to the European Union: the Southern route that crosses the Mediterranean Sea (Mali, Senegal, Morocco, and Malta), the Eastern route through the former Soviet countries (Romania) and Central Asia (India), and finally Latin America (Argentina).

Focusing on the evolution of the representations from candidates for migration prior to their departure, to migrants in transit and then to immigrants already settled in Europe, this text shows the ambivalence of these visions of Europe, between an image of the European Union as a pole of attraction and the European Union as a proving ground. In relation with this first issue is also studied the way the migrants develop some strategies to enter and settle in Europe linked with these visions (how migrants represent the constraints and opportunities offered by migration).

Three specific issues concerning these visions are discussed: the articulation between memory and history, and especially the vision of Europe as a continent of democracy, freedom and rule of law, and the notion of debt; the vision of Europe as a space of welfare and opportunity but also of discriminations and racism; the representations and knowledge the migrants have of the European migratory policies, through their individual experience and social relations, and the strategies they use to get round these constraints.

Cover: African migrations toward Europe (http://commons.wikimedia.org/).

# Introduction

Although European migratory policies have become increasingly restrictive in recent years, ever greater numbers of prospective migrants, especially in former European colonies, have accepted the difficulties and legal obstacles involved in migrating to Europe, sometimes at the risk of their lives. This paradox has driven researchers to explore the 'reasons' that compel migrants to challenge these policies. Some studies have emphasized economic factors[1], while others have focused on the convergence of multiple factors[2]. The approach adopted by the Migrants and borders Work Package teams that conducted the present study takes a relatively novel approach that focuses on migrants' representations of Europe and how their representations evolve during migrants' itineraries.

We have identified three intervals in migrants' itineraries in which to document the evolution of their images of Europe: candidates for migration prior to their departure, migrants in transit, and immigrants already settled in Europe. We have analysed how Europe is constituted as a destination for future migrants, how migrants represent the constraints and opportunities offered by migration to themselves, and how contradictory, ambiguous imaginaries inform their decision to embark on migratory voyages towards Europe. For the second group of migrants, those who are detained in so-called transit zones, we have focused on how the circumstances surrounding their departure, the interruption of their voyage, and detention conditions influence the representations behind their original decision to leave. Finally, we have focused on how perceptions of Europe among individuals already established in Europe have been affected by their contacts and their integration or exclusion experiences since they arrived. For the purposes of the study, these three situations are assumed to follow three major migratory roads (*routes*) to the European Union: the Southern route that crosses the Mediterranean Sea (Mali, Senegal, Morocco, and Malta), the Eastern route through the former Soviet countries (Romania) and Central Asia (India), and finally Latin America (Argentina). Our hypothesis is that migrants' representations reveal varying degrees of ambivalence and ambiguity between an image of the European Union as a pole of attraction and the European Union as a proving ground.

---

[1]Moulier-Boutang Yan, *De l'esclavage au salariat. Économie historique du salariat bridé*, PUF, 1998; Piore Michael J., *Birds of Passage: Migrant Labor and Industrial Societies*, Cambridge University Press, 1979.

[2]Sayad Abdelmalek, *L'immigration, ou les paradoxes de l'altérité*, De Boeck Université, 1992; Quiminal Catherine, *Gens d'ici, gens d'ailleurs*, Bourgois, 1991.

# 1 Methodology

As our study focuses on representations, our approach is qualitative and takes into account the diversity of situations in the countries of departure and the heterogeneity of migrants' itineraries and 'routes' while seeking to avoid the reification of such fixed categories as 'host country', 'transit zone', and other terms. Our goal was not to evaluate migrants' knowledge-base, but to understand and describe individual and collective imaginaries that incorporate elements from four sources: history, geography, national memories, and diverse contact experiences. The notion of a shared collective imaginary is related to Benedict Anderson's characterization of national imaginaries and to subsequent development of the concept by Arjun Appadurai, who defines the imaginary as a landscape constructed of collective aspirations that is able to become organized into a field of social practices[3]. The participant selection varied depending on the different research contexts. In the case of Indian and Malian migrants, we interviewed men and women of rural and urban origin and of different social categories and educational levels. Argentinian migrants whom we interviewed were primarily middle class, which characterizes nearly all Argentinian migrants to Europe. Participants in Malta were predominantly women because of the amount of time available for the study, the very limited number of women in other retention areas such as Romania, Morocco, and Senegal, the small number of prior studies of women refugees' itineraries and their vulnerability, and finally because this allowed us to underscore the gender-bias of migratory policies and trajectories. There were no woman residents in the camps in Romania during the study period, and, after authorization and selection by the camp authorities, the individuals we were able to meet were middle-class, like most of the Moldavian in Romania. It should also be noted that the relatively short duration of migrants' stays in the camp - approximately twenty days - made follow-up interviews difficult.

This diversity of settings and participants created certain difficulties in developing a final synthesis, but it also has enabled us to describe representations of Europe in a nuanced way that reflects their diversity and complexity. It also made it possible for us to account for particularities among migrants' itineraries influenced the changes in their representations as their migratory experiences unfolded, and ultimately to explore the many facets of collective and individual imaginaries. In accordance with our shared methodol-

---

[3]This reference to Arjun Appadurai does not indicate agreement with his contention that the world is currently characterized by the dominant role of the imagination in social life, nor Appadurai's excessively ironic conception of globalization. The notion of a shared imaginary seemed to us to have a heuristic value as a means of understanding processes of subjectivization that we are discussing in this chapter; a subjectivization understood as 'the production of modes of existence or life-styles', Deleuze Gilles, *Pourparlers. 1972-1990*, Éditions de Minuit, p.156.

ogy (anchored theory), meetings and exchanges between the research teams throughout the duration of the project enabled each team to benefit from the other teams' progress and questions. This allowed for strengths and broad hypotheses to be identified while the study was under way and for generalizations across contexts to be drawn only they seemed warranted. We did experience problems, however, relative to the question of differences. Despite having agreed upon elaborate interview guidelines (see EuroBroadMap working paper, Migrants and borders, methodological guideline), the different disciplinary affiliations among the researchers introduced a certain degree of bias due into individual team studies. This contributed to different levels of emphasis on particular categories of interview questions, the time accorded to each interview, and the central or peripheral commitment to the imperatives described in the contract. Finally, it was not always easy to maintain the appropriate distance from interviewees, because in some instances researchers were perceived as being connected to the authorities (in Malta and Romania), or as a resource person for the migratory project (in Mali, Morocco, and sometimes in Argentina). Indeed, we found that the more difficult and full of obstacles the trajectory of an interviewee's experience was, the greater their expectation of assistance from the researchers. In certain settings like detention areas, the lack of a shared language between interviewee and interviewer, and the filter necessarily introduced by an interpreter, limited the exchanges, and those interviews are difficult to treat as narratives. We attempted to take these difficulties into account in interpreting the data, and the specific conditions and modalities of the individual studies are described in the 'national' working papers (Argentina, Mali, Moldova), where the interview guidelines may also be found.

## 2    Memory and History: Prestige, Power, and Debt

Europe projects representations throughout the world that include the notion of a continent 'blessed by the gods', with its benign climate, wealth, and culture, and the idea of a continent that is superior to the rest of the world while also generous with its own resources. This image is linked to the fiction that Others are barbarians and represent the antithesis of Europe, a fiction that dates from Ancient Greece and has been perpetuated in Europe since the Middle Ages. This representation of the world as divided between the civilized few and the barbarian hordes continues to some extent to nourish the imaginaries of migrants and candidates for departure. Despite sometimes violent relationships over the centuries with these Others, colonization and migrations towards Europe have contributed to the development of a more relativized, nuanced image. Europe is perceived as a powerful continent that has given birth to human progress and produced 'universal' principles, but it is also increasingly seen as having no intention of sharing its wealth or apply-

ing its principles outside its borders among the peoples whom it previously dominated and who now contribute to its development. This contradiction is the source of a profound ambivalence in how Europe is perceived by migrants. The memorial reconstructions of the period of colonial or Soviet domination, and the migratory experience contribute to critical interrogation of the myth of Europe as a civilizing force, and they allow us to build on the Other's perspective towards a less ethnocentric image of Europe.

## 2.1 Prestigious Europe

Europe is perceived as possessing a history and a past that constitute the fundamental matrix of all modernity. Nearly all of the migrants whom we interviewed share this Eurocentric idea of Europe[4], which identifies it with history, progress, and modernity, and views it as a continent where human rights are respected. This representation encompasses different contents that vary in their specificity depending on certain variables, including the interviewee's age, social category, rural or urban origins, and level of schooling. Gender did not appear to be a significant variable, however. On the other hand, as will be seen, one primary determiner in the construction of differences in perceptions of Europe was the past or present relationship between the country of departure and Europe.

Collective representations of the past are manipulated through the memorial policies of governments, political parties, and organizations, and by how these forces shape the construction of national history, how the past is taught and commemorated, and how it is represented in museums and monuments (Hobsbawn, 1992; Anderson, 1996). Migrants who have chosen Europe as a destination often refer to the arts (literature, music, film, architecture), to material culture (clothing style, consumer objects, new technologies), and to political concepts like democracy and human rights. They also refer to shared historical events and subjects, such as colonization, wars, independence, institutions, and languages. These representations are in turn manipulated and filtered through more fragmented family memories that are developed principally through the search for European origins or the stories of former migrants. Europe is central to the Argentinian imaginary, which is forged from the dissemination and appropriation of European culture at the national level. References to Europe are often initially form in the culture of schooling, where primary and secondary textbooks accord significant space to European history and reproduce the 'origin' story and the temporal divisions of 'universal' history. Europe provides the core of this narrative and of how the globe is depicted cartographically by the Mercator Projection. Europe is often identified with history in 'young' American nations and acquires the status of the cradle of Western civilization and thus of the origins

---

[4]Goody Jack, *Le vol de l'histoire. Comment l'Europe a imposé le récit de son passé au reste du monde*, Gallimard. 2010 (2006).

of Argentina and the source of its historicity. These representations were distinctly present among the departure candidates and migrants who were interviewed for the study and were typically expressed through the idea of a shared patrimony: 'Why did I want to come? Out of curiosity, to know Europe, because I love history... I wanted to know the Louvre, I wanted to know the Mona Lisa, I wanted to know the Eiffel Tower, the Pantheon...' (Francisco, 37, married, one daughter, employed, Malaga).

When European cities or countries are described by migrants, they refer to the same major sites as their school textbooks, including Greece, Egypt, Rome, Paris, London, and Madrid. This representation of Europe as the pre-eminent locus of Culture and the cradle of Argentinian culture is thus acquired at school and widely distributed. A universe of migrants' representations emerges of a Europe that is a 'museum-continent' rich in grand historical monuments. Departure candidates, themselves descendants of European immigrants, consider themselves to be the guardians of a remote European outpost in Latin America that avoids cultural references to the US 'imperialists'. Migrants remind interviewers that European migrants built Argentina, and, although familial memories of migration tend to be somewhat fragmented, the national imaginary of Argentina as a 'white nation' whose origins are European is very present in the collective imaginary.

In India, Europe is not perceived as the cradle of civilization, but as one of several regions that has produced an important culture, and there are notable European influences on certain aspects of daily life, including architecture and institutions. Parts of India were Portuguese and French colonies, and the whole of India was a British colony for a long period. The two former colonizing countries preceded the British and exerted an important impact on the cultural and physical landscape of the regions that they colonized. Even today, this influence is revealed in a number of ways in the former French colony of Puducherry, including the material forms of architecture, the language, and locals' migratory aspirations, in which France is considered a desirable destination.

The role of the British Empire in India is completely different and is not limited a historical influence passed down through hereditary sources, shared knowledge, and textbooks. Its presence is palpable throughout the legal system, in patterns of communication, and in the widespread use of English, which is among India's official languages. Tracing the representations of Europe through objects reveals its influence in static objects like architecture, as well as in the codes of ethics in government offices, and other objects like school textbooks and media. British architecture is prominent throughout India, including the national capital, and there are residences and offices that date from British times. British influence also suffuses codes of conduct, particularly in the law courts, and have the resonance of colonial customs. The physical and cultural evidence of British influence can be

overlooked by people who are not interested in the shape of buildings or the source of habitual and customary practices. But other kinds of objects like textbooks and media images, the systemic reproduction of images of Europe in general and in particular of England is more notable. This cannot be seen simplistically as hegemony, because even in these media, there is a diversity of images of Europe. For example, the history books and school textbooks tend to represent a fuller understanding of the relationship between India and the colonizing powers.

However, the penetrative colonial power can be seen differently in geography books or in literature curricula. Europe emerges as a continent with beautiful physical landscapes and a different culture that is often portrayed as somewhat superior. The poetry of Wordsworth and Blake, among others, provides a picture of Europe that is less political and more sensory. These varied images can be seen through institutionalized representations and the reproduction of a hybrid Europe. Some of the case studies and interviews revealed this influence from textbooks and illustrate their influence on the construction of potential immigrants' impressions of Europe. They also reveal the fact that the variety of textbooks is also dependent on the subject of study and the medium of instruction. Students in language schools, for example, were able to read about European culture in the native languages - French, English, Spanish, or German. Textbooks of certain kinds are therefore accessible only to a particular educated class of people, contributing to the formation of more complex images of Europe.

For Rahul, the USA came across to him as a country with a single culture. Being a literature student, Europe has taken the shape in his imagination of a spectrum of 'rich history, daunting architecture, enduring literature and evolving art'. The authors that he has read, from Camus and Kafka to Wordsworth, and the films of Ingmar Bergman have all built up a visual and ideational collage in his mind. 'The real Europe is so dynamic and diverse.' He always wanted to experience and soak in this visual spectacle. Rahul feels that there is so much to explore in Europe, from architecture to food to music.

The data collected among college students in India indicate that their perceptions of Europe vary, but that major cities such as Paris and London are seen as coveted places where the students would love to stay in the near future. Overall, the image of Europe as a beautiful, clean, rich continent is seen to be present in the imagination of the less educated potential immigrant and the local population in general in India.

In Mali, like in India, the imaginaries that conceive of Europe as a prestigious continent vary considerably depending on interviewees' backgrounds and educational levels. For individuals with little or no schooling in the Kayes region, still the principal region for emigration to Europe, this image is primarily sustained through the narratives of previous migrants. Some mon-

uments and achievements are mentioned, such as the technological prowess represented by the Eiffel Tower, the splendid squares, the Champs-Élysées, Versailles and Notre Dame, which are cited as examples of Europe's spectacular mastery of stone construction. Material achievements such as the railways, roads, and bridges that span the Niger and the Senegal rivers are also cited. Europe for these individuals is primarily France and its larger cities: Paris, followed by Bordeaux, Marseilles, and Le Havre. These references are linked to the places of residence of elders who migrated to France in the past, which was also true of young migrants interviewed in Gibraltar, Madrid, Naples, and Berlin.

By comparison with Argentina, regardless of social origin or category, the national memory of Mali is only loosely organized around these references to Europe, as might be expected. In fact, official references to history tend to emphasize the prestigious imperial past (the different Soundiata, Songhai, and Fulani empires) and an 'African' future. The title of the national anthem, which was written in 1962, is 'For Africa and For You, Mali'. The colonial period appears to be masked in favor of an less constrained history of the 'real' Mali, open to construction of an independent future.

A few Malian students and graduates referred to prestigious or famous figures, either because of their roles in history or their achievements. For example, they referred to Napoleon, credited with the creation of Europe, and to De Gaulle, perceived as the father of African independences. Artists mentioned most often include Victor Hugo, Lamartine, Mozart, Picasso, Verdi, and Shakespeare. Individuals with higher educational levels believe that it is important to include Antillais authors, particularly Aimé Césaire. The Queen of England and the King of Spain are cited as 'European anomalies, vestiges of former times'. (Note that these references are simply those that individuals made in the course of the interviews and are not representations of interviewees' full cultural capital).

The Somali women whom we interviewed reported having little specific knowledge of Europe before migrating after experiencing twenty years of conflict in their country. The colonial legacy does not appear to have exerted a strong impact on their representations of Europe.

There appear to be several reasons for this:

- Differences in colonial history: Italian imperialism was not as culturally dominant as the British or French. For instance, Italian schools were intended only for Italians. Following decolonization, the Italian cultural and political influence tended to rapidly diminish in its former colonies.

- The obliteration of collective memory by the on-going civil conflicts. The women whom we interviewed referred explicitly to the war, re-

porting that there had basically been a state of war since their births, and that they have no memories of anything else.

- Gender differences in access to education. School is a crucial vector for the transmission of national history, and many of the women we interviewed did not attend school or left school very early (only three graduated from secondary school, only two of whom attempted to pursue higher education)[5].

Some of the women we met referred to the Islamic world (*Dar al Islam*) as an area of cultural solidarity, in contrast with Europe.

It noteworthy that no mention was made of Europe as the cradle of scientific or technical achievement, even by engineers. Europe is simply represented as a modern continent.

The cinema plays an important role in the construction of representations, with the exception of the Malian participants, for whom going to the movies is an exceptional if not non-existent practice. This is not the case in Argentina, however. Maria (29, single, employed, Malaga) told us that she wanted to travel to Rome 'since seeing the film *Gladiator*'. Films can furthermore help individuals to make connections between their own experiences and their family's migratory history to a collective history with which migrants can identify. This is particularly true of the series *Vientos de Agua*, directed by Juan José Campanella and first broadcast on Spanish television in 2006 and later in Argentina, where it met with great success. The series tells the story of the cross-migrations of a Spanish father, who left Argentina in the 1930s to avoid police repression and misery, and his Argentinian son, who emigrated to Spain in order to escape the economic crisis of 2001. The Argentinians interviewed in Argentina and those interviewed in Spain reported that the series had triggered a highly emotional response and strong identification with the series' characters and their lives.

Isabel (25, single, student and employed, Buenos Aires) discussed the emotions of her father, the son of a Spanish anarchist, on viewing the show:

> *And with this series, my father began to open up, he had never told me the story of his parents, and he realized seeing this series that he himself did not know their story. The son of old people who come from Spain, the protagonist doesn't know anything about his father, of what he did in Spain. And my father, who is a tough man, cried and told me he didn't know the story of his father, either, that he only knew that he was an anarchist, but that he never told him about any actions...*

---

[5]Somali women tend to drop out of school in their early teens, when they have reached mature? womanhood. Mothers encourage their withdrawal from school out of apprehension for their safety and honour? (Abdi, 2007).

Javier (28, co-habiting, artisan, Malaga) began his response to a question about his family history by referring to this series. According to him, the series summarizes 'his story' as well as that of many Argentinian immigrants from Spain. *Vientos de Agua* appears to have enabled a collective reconfiguration of family histories through the migratory experience in Spain. It also seems to have enabled the emergence of a sense of continuity between the familial migration of Europeans to Argentina and their descendants' outmigration back to Europe, which had previously been experienced as a major break. In this sense, the series provided a sense of identity to a group that was constructed on the basis of shared images, endowing their experience with meaning (Appadurai, 2005[6]). Other examples of films were cited, most often succinctly and rarely spontaneously, including Almodovar's films, which represent a 'crazily' attractive Spain. The French and occasionally German and Northern European cinemas were also cited and were perceived as reflecting a 'serious culture' that was 'wiser' and to some extent more 'boring'. The English and Belgian cinemas were thought to be 'wilder and more modern' (blending with icons of the American cinema like Kubrick's films).

Music exerts a similar influence on Argentinian migrants. In addition to references to the folkloric repertoire associated with their elders, whether out of tenderness or real interest, most foreign musical references are perceived as 'international' and are mixed with references to American pop music. Interviewees who were fans of particular musical trends cited specific groups from particular countries, but most drew a distinction between Argentinian pop music and 'international' music and developed their personal preferences without prejudice towards a particular source.

In India, movies have exerted an important influence in shaping a heterogeneous image of Europe. Old Hindi movies like Purav Pachim (East West) represented a very fixed understanding of Europe, in contrast to the Orient, which is seen to be different in culture, norms and values. There was a patriotic undertone that in effect elided the foreign elements in these movies. Recent Hindi movies have become more experimental and incorporate different depictions of Europe, with protagonists often based in European cities, preferably London. In the course of our interviews, however, the popular imagination about Europe was not expressed through movies. One or two respondents cited cult movies like *Dil Wale Dulhaniya Le Jayenga* (*The Lover Will Take Away His Bride*) as having provided their initial impressions of Europe, particularly of its physical landscape, including the snow-capped mountains of Switzerland.

Although the cinema is not commonly accessible to future Malian migrants, sports and music are universal references. For the majority of young residents of Bamako preparing for departure, Europe is admired for the pop-

---

[6]Appadurai Arjun, *Après le colonialisme. Les conséquences culturelles de la globalisation*, Payot, 2005 (1996).

ularity of music and sports. Young painters report that they are painting for the European market and that Mali does not have the means to provide them opportunities.

> There is no place for artists in Mali. Even the great ones became great [only] in Europe. You can't be recognized if you don't pass through Europe. (Bamako, young artist)

Similarly, local variants of pop music and rap symbolize the modernity in which the young people seeking to leave plan to participate. While they wait, they sing songs about exile, strumming guitars and beating djembés to rhythms borrowed from their immigrant brothers in Europe, aware that it is in France that musicians like the group Blacknega and Les Ghettoik have created their music, became famous, and either begun or pursued their careers. These musicians represent individuals with whom young people can identify, particularly because they sing about Africa and migration while condemning racism in France and declaring 'I'm here, I'm staying' (the title of a song by the well-known group Zebda). Other song titles and bits of songs include: 'Leaving for there', 'Where else do you think I'm going?', 'I fought in Mali to come to Paris...' by Blacknega[7]. Other scraps of songs and lyrics that are hummed by the young and that are evidence of the ambivalence of processes of subjectivization that are part of the framework of modernity and of imperial globalization[8] include: 'France, a country where you are free depending on the color of your hat'. 'Gibraltar, a dream that will happen fast if it happens, in the Straits of Gibraltar. There's a young black who is coming to life, who shouts like the brave'[9]. 'Green card you got nothing without it. My ancestors fought for France well before they lived there'[10]. And further, 'Accept the challenge. Go ahead-shoot higher. Change your life', 'Make your own way'.

The many Malian soccer players on European teams are also mythical references whose material and symbolic success is interpreted based on the importance that European countries attribute to sports, and particularly to soccer. The inauguration of the Salif Keita Stadium in Cergy, France, is celebrated in the popular neighborhoods of Bamako, and the soccer star Mahamadou Diarra was born in the popular Bamako neighborhood Medina Coura, where he periodically returns for visits.

---

[7]www.blacknega.com

[8]Quiminal Catherine, "Mondialisation impériale : Migrations, rapports sociaux de sexe, exploitation et domination", *Journal des Anthropologues*, 118-119, p.89-111, 2009.

[9]Abd al Malik. *Gibraltar*. CD Barclay, ASIN: B000EJ9R1K,2008

[10]Slimane Azem and Nourredine Meziane. *La Carte De Résidence*. Disques DomASIN: B0012F23B6.

## 2.2 Europe, the Continent of Democracy, Freedom, and Human Rights

Europe is universally perceived as the land of human rights, freedom, and democracy. A few reservations are associated with this vision, however, particularly concerning certain historical episodes and the reception of non-Europeans within and outside of Europe's borders. The idea that European governments are functioning, legitimate states where the rule of law is well-established is one of the most-often cited justifications for migrants' desire to migrate definitively to Europe. The precarious circumstances of migrants awaiting passage or with refugee status in Malta, Morocco, or Romania reinforces this element of the collective imaginary.

On the other hand, recent migratory policies, as well as the colonial pasts of India, the African nations, and, to a lesser extent, Argentina, help to sustain powerful ambiguities in the representations of Europe, a region with which important historical periods are shared. As a consequence, there is a belief that Europe owes migrants a debt of hospitality, blood, and economics.

The perception of Europe among Somali women in Malta is related to the current conflict in Somalia and to the need for assistance from the West. In Somalia, their images of Europe and the West in general are influenced by NGO employees assisting Somalis, particularly those made homeless by the conflicts. Our interviewees also referred several times to the military intervention by United States, which lasted from 1992 to 1994.

Unlike Malians or Argentinians, the Somali women who were interviewed, and, for different reasons, Indian men and women, exhibited limited knowledge of the colonial past and tended not to mention this shared history.

## 2.3 The Great Shared Events: Wars, Resistance, Colonization. Europe as a United Power and the Defender of the Human Rights, Liberty, and Democracy

The impression of sharing a certain number of important historical periods and events with Europe is systematically conveyed in the accounts of Argentinian and North African migrants. This sentiment is not solely an echo of the colonial period, however, and it is associated with more recent events such as the participation of immigrants in the economic development of Europe, or, in the case of Argentina, in the Spanish Civil War. This notion of historical connectedness is directly linked to the notion of a debt owed by Europe to migrants or to their countries.

Notions of debt and heritage have a Christian and free-market economics resonance but are paradoxically particularly present in the narratives and representations of African migrants. These concepts are related to the issue of development and are used by interviewees to legitimate migrants' presence in Europe. The idea of reparations that was initiated by the Organization of

African Unity (OAU) and tied to the slave trade and the colonial past structures to some extent the social imaginaries of both Africans in Europe and of African migration candidates. Africans participated in both World Wars, and frequent reference was made by our interviewees to the example of the Senegalese sharp-shooters (who, they often add, were not all Senegalese). Grandparents participated in the WWII so that Europe could be freed of Nazism: Their blood flowed for France's freedom. Many of the wounded received only very small pensions and 'sometimes nothing at all'. 'The elders, men and women, were often requisitioned for forced labor. Sometimes they were never seen again when they were taken far away, even to other countries'. 'The roads, the railway, it was for them, it was they who benefited from them, and us who were whipped, and who built them for free.' Migrants' departures are currently considered a direct consequence of underdevelopment for which France is responsible. And of inequitably distributed aid: 'The money comes back to corrupt authorities. The people never see the color of it.'

The war theme recurs systematically in interviews with Argentinians, regardless of the supposed dates of arrival of their relatives. Spain did not participate in the First or Second World War, but references to exile and to the Spanish Civil War are all the more explicit, echoing the heroic image of combatants that is so present in the Spanish collective imaginary. This heroic warrior figure structures an originary narrative that ennobles the ancestors' departure for Argentina while allowing the family to share in the European collective memory of blood spilled in the name of freedom, and in a national tragedy.

Other traumatic historical events such as the Shoah surface at the margins of these narratives a to illustrate the weight of family history. For Argentinians, painful events associated with the war include 'famine' and 'misery' and feature prominently in the narratives of their origins. These stories often allude to the shared suffering of the European population, but they also refer to the hospitality of the Argentine nation, which opened its gates 'to all the people of the world who want to live on Argentine soil' and offered them a better future. This is the justification offered for the debt owed by Spain to Argentinians. As the originating countries of these earlier emigrations, it appears legitimate that Spain and Italy should in turn welcome migrants in the same way that Argentina welcomed Spaniards and Italians.

The notion of debt also appears in the Moldavian migrants' accounts with respect to Romania. Moldova, which was called Bessarabia at the time, was an integral part of Romania between 1918 and 1939, when the Molotov-Ribentropp Pact attached Moldova to the Soviet Union. Many Moldavians consider themselves Europeans, as illustrated by the waving of European and Romanian flags during a protest in April 2009 against the

14

election results. For Moldavians, acquiring Romanian citizenship is perceived as a kind of rehabilitation of the historical injustice committed after 1940, when Bessarabia was seized by the USSR. There is a sense of an inherited right to be recognized as Romanian citizens, derived from sharing the same language and history.

Migrants from India and Somalia rarely referred to a shared history, and even less often the notion of a debt owed to them by the colonial powers. In the case of the Somali women in Malta, the traumatic circumstances of their departure seems to have effectively effaced the colonial period from their collective imaginary or memory. Several reasons for this absence in Indians' accounts can be surmised, the first of which relates to the circumstances of the study itself, and it is conceivable that the issue would have surfaced during more extensive interviews. It is also possible that the Indian nation 'compartmentalizes' its views of the West to some extent by focusing on the present and future rather than vaunting a past dominated by a colonial power. In interviews, Europe is often considered to be a region in decline. Furthermore, the requisitioning of more than two million Indian soldiers by the British Army during WWII was accompanied by Britain's commitment to grant complete independence. Different indigenous forces within India were in conflict concerning the proper position to take: some supported the British war effort, while others favoured the Axis Powers and the Congress, Gandhi, and Nehru called for civil disobedience. The period of the WWII was a period of considerable internal division that culminated in independence in 1947, and any debt is seen as less significant than the imperative to build the future.

The memory of a common past is indicative of a certain closeness to Europe, of claims of strong mutual bonds on the basis of which reposes the idea of a European debt - a blood debt, a hospitality debt, and an economic debt.

## 3   Europe As a Rich Continent: Welfare and Discrimination

The image of Europe as a rich continent governed by effective social policies is unquestionably shared by all of the migrants included in our studies. It is also the vision that changes the most significantly between a migrant's initial departure and their settlement in the country of destination. This image and how it evolves center on a comparison between the living conditions in the country of departure, those that the migration candidate imagines prevail in Europe, and those that s/he ultimately experiences as an immigrant. The desire to leave always proceeds from criticism of the originating country's government, which is accused of being incapable of guaranteeing its citizens a dignified future. In the imaginaries of emigrants, Europe represents another

way of life, other values, other duties, another system of labour, education, and social protection, in short, a functioning consumer society in which individuals are respected. Differences among migrants' social categories and gender as well as the phase in his or her itinerary represent the most significant variables in shaping their views of employment, health, education, and discrimination.

## 3.1   The Land of Opportunity

For every person interviewed for our study, Europe is composed of societies that function effectively and that guarantee health and education for the entire population, in contrast with their countries of origin. Labour relations are regulated efficiently, and labour laws are generally respected, provided one has legal documentation. Migrants are aware of the risk of being excluded or marginalized, but they wilfully choose to believe the stories of those who have succeeded: European societies have become multicultural, and the networks established by one's predecessors ensure the possibility of success.

The employment situation is well known to departure candidates, but each believes that with courage and the will to work there will always be openings available to foreigners, particularly in occupations already filled by their compatriots. For candidates with fewer qualifications, Europe represents the possibility of gaining access to money, of 'following the cash'[11]. These migrants have borrowed and adapted from the West what might be called a neo-free-market ideology for the poor that is fused with regret for the lost solidarity that prevails in their own countries. The rapid dissemination of the concrete manifestations of modernity has reinforced their consumerist aspirations, which in the countryside has witnessed the transition from stewpot over a wood fire to gas cooker, and in the city from fan to air-conditioner and Bic pen to computer. Europe represents access to an income, and thus to a new way of life that is inaccessible in their countries of origin.

Departure candidates in Mali are well informed about the unemployment rates in Europe, but they also know that there are occupations in which they are 'welcome'. The men hope to gain access to income by being hired in trades related to cleaning, restaurants, construction, or manual labour, with additional help from 'odd jobs', even if they are temporary. A list of 'good bosses' who hire undocumented immigrants makes the rounds in Bamako. The risks encountered by undocumented workers or those working in the black economy are widely known, but work in Europe is above all perceived as being protected by labour laws that codify labour relations and provide access to social services. This representation of a Europe where labour is

---

[11]This is particularly true among migrants in India, Mali, certain migrants in 'transit', Morocco, and Malta.

protected by legislation and regulation is counter-balanced, however, by the impression that the rules are so complex and rigid that they are impossible to apply, and hence easy to circumvent.

The struggles of undocumented immigrants to become regularized are widely known and confirm the idea that in France and throughout Europe hard work offers the possibility of combating difficult living conditions. Freedom of expression functions in Europe.

Malian women who are not graduate from secondary school believe that there are career possibilities in Europe that are unavailable in Mali, including service jobs in hotels and aid to families and the elderly. Only rich countries offer such employment possibilities, which are believed by these women to permit them to acquire greater autonomy. City-dwellers, on the other hand, represent Europe as a place where equality between men and women is promoted, which they do not believe is the case in Mali.

Whether they are of urban or rural backgrounds, Malian women tend to criticize the European idea of the family, arguing that the elderly are not cared for and that the culture inculcates young people with values like 'everyone for himself' and money-above-all. Young men, on the other hand, associate the voyage to Europe with the idea of sexuality beyond family control and thus less constrained. Women do not refer to this eventuality.

Once they arrive in France, Italy, or Spain, migrant men and women discover a far more complex situation, both in terms of its richness and of their own misery. They attribute their misery to their arrival countries' refusal of to share their wealth and to the Europeans' individualism and selfishness.

For Indians, Europe is also a place that offers employment possibilities and income to unskilled departure candidates. Social institutions and workplaces are perceived as better organized and less corrupt than in India, where success is described as a matter of nepotism and patronage; the existence of rules in Europe lessens social inequalities.

One perceived indication of Europe's modernity is the efficiency of the administration, particularly in the areas of health and education. But the lifestyle of Europeans is not uniformly viewed as modern and progressive, and numerous aspects of life in Europe are described as regressive. This representation is reinforced for individuals who settle in Italy, where difficulties in finding work and prolonged periods of unemployment, the daily experience of racism and segregation, the difficulties in obtaining work authorization and even disqualification in some cases serve to heighten the gap between Europe as it is experienced and as it was imagined, reinforcing for some migrants a certain nostalgia for their pre-departure circumstances.

Some Indian women who find themselves restricted to a very narrow social world after arriving in Europe express the belief that they had more

freedom in India because of women's networks and more possibilities for circulating outside the home because of familiar surroundings and a greater sense of safety. They find that in Europe the weight of patriarchy is reinforced by their isolation and marginalization by Italians. They feel trapped, particularly because of the impossibility of returning to India due of a lack of resources.

The gap between the representations of those who are still in the planning phase of their European trip and those who are already settled is narrower for middle-classes migrants, for whom the gap is principally attributable to the European economic crisis. They report benefiting from a certain level of comfort and sense of harmony with the European lifestyle. They nevertheless criticize the lack of tolerance, particularly of the culture and religion of others.

For Argentinians, Europe offers the possibility of work, of earning a better living, and of pursuing better studies than in Argentina. Europe represents a space in which they can escape from the crisis, a 'possible elsewhere' as opposed to an 'unlivable' Argentina. In Europe, they believe that it is possible to live 'peacefully' from the income earned from one's work and to gain access to material possessions such as housing and 'modern' consumer goods that only a stable currency and income can provide. They also report that in Europe, one can finally attempt to escape from the loss in stature that one enjoys in one's country, even if it means temporarily experiencing this loss in Spain. Ultimately, moving to Europe for these individuals is about being able to escape domination by the family and society and to 'become oneself'.

Leaving for Europe means the possibility of 'making one's living' in the middle class, even of an upwardly mobile social trajectory according to the ideal of continuous progress between generations in social stratification, at the risk of a temporary loss of status in the labour market.

All of the middle-class migrants who were part of our study (whether from Argentina, India, Mali, Morocco, or Romania) shared the idea that only by going to Europe could they participate in the top levels of globalized economy. Spending time in Europe for the purpose of studying or for nearly any professional reason is thought to represent an asset compared to those who have not 'traveled' to Europe. Europe provides a sort of higher-level certification that nourishes hopes of greater social recognition. For Argentinians, this aspiration to a 'normal' life, without insecurity or fear, arises from thirty years of feeling economically, socially, and politically insecure. Security for these individuals is something that Europe offers to its citizens.

This sensation of order and security in European countries dominates among the Somali women in Malta. Their migration towards Europe should be interpreted as a means of escaping the violence of the on-going civil war in Somalia for a perceived safe haven. Every woman we met either had

18

experienced or feared being the victim of war-related violence, and this fear was cited as the primary reason for seeking to migrate. Many reported leaving because they had been or feared being kidnapped. Under these circumstances, it is easy to understand why Europe is perceive as a safe-haven, a perception shaped not only by the situation in their country of origin but by the migratory journey itself. Europe is perceived as safe compared to the difficulties, violence, and obstacles women had faced during their itineraries, especially in Libya and while crossing the Mediterranean. These women's narratives tell us that arriving in Malta corresponds to arrival in a safe place and to access to clean water and proper nutrition.

But they perceive Europe as a safe-haven not only in comparison to their passage through Libya and their crossing of the Mediterranean. Europe is also viewed as a judicial entity in which agreements such as Schengen and Dublin mean that they can acquire protected status under the judicial framework that regulates immigrants' mobility[12]. Europe is seen as a place to gain 'legal capital' and protected status that in turn provides opportunities that benefit the whole trans-national family network (Al-Sharmani 2006[13]).

Women report with somewhat less frequency deciding to migrate in order to help their families or to emancipate themselves from constraints imposed by their families. During their stays in Malta, women's visions of Europe become refined and more specific as they confront ambivalent feelings and difficult circumstances. On the one hand, they perceive their situation as having considerably improved. On the other hand, they experience numerous problems on a daily basis that are detrimental to their image of Malta and Europe. The first difficulty is the experience of detention and the legal obstacles to reuniting their families. The new institutional context - which is usually referred to as the European 'burden-sharing' policy - is very important to understanding immigrants' visions of Europe. All of the women we met desired to be resettled to another country, whether European or not.

By contrast, one of the elements of migrants' imaginaries of Europe that changes throughout their migratory itineraries relates to discrimination. The rejection of the Other and the lack of openness on the part of natives is universally mentioned, and it is felt all the more intensely because the women belong to, or are classified as belonging to, a lower social category.

---

[12]Under the 1951 Geneva Convention, especially following the war in Yugoslavia, the EU is obliged to grant asylum to Somali refugees and to provide security for women who have been subjected to gender-oriented violence (Baldwin-Edwards 2006, JRS Malta 2009, Schafer 2002). Malta became subject to the Dublin Convention upon joining the EU in 2004.

[13]Al-Sharmani M., *Living Transnationally: Somali Diasporic Women in Cairo in International Migration*, Blackwell Publishing, 2006.

## 3.2 Discrimination and Racism

Argentinian migrants' migratory experiences and relationships with Europe present certain peculiarities compared to the other groups included in this study. The differences arise from the fact that they are a white, Christian population who, whether documented or not, do not experience the same kinds of discrimination that foreigners or 'nationals' arriving from Africa, India, and Eastern countries experience[14]. This is even more true for those who settle in Spain and are able to 'recover' their Spanish nationality. Still, the difficulties that they face lead them to revisit their family memories, and as they confront problems in joining the professional labor force, they begin to realize that they are considered 'immigrants' and not 'Spanish' and do not enjoy the same rights as natives. The family memories that they mobilize under these circumstances serve as a strategic resource for them to position themselves and hence to distinguish themselves from other migrants. This helps them to escape from processes of stigmatization and discrimination that they could be the victims of. This is a particular risk for those with darker skin, in which case they are treated like '*sudacas*', a pejorative expression that lumps them with other South American migrants. Being able to claim Spanish origins allows Argentinian migrants to experience a less radical alterity than other foreigners.

When they arrive in Romania, non-Moldavian migrants face discrimination among employers and the rest of the resident population. Because they do not speak Romanian, they sign work contracts that they do not understand, discovering only later the conditions to which they have committed themselves. Particularly in the construction and textile industries, they express surprise at the housing and food costs deducted from paychecks, unpaid over-time hours, and pay calculations based on extremely high productivity.

Racism does not occupy a prominent place in the representations of Europe of departure candidates in Mali because it is not considered to be specific to Europe but a common feature of social relations in every country, beginning with Mali itself. During the preparations for their voyages, Malians confront a certain level of contempt and occasional browbeating in the various consulates. Whether they are school graduates or not, they are systematically suspect when they request visas for settling in France.

Migrants already settled in France and Italy, some of them since the 1970s, deplore the poor housing conditions that sometimes lead to dramatic incidents like fires in the dilapidated hotels in which they have been 're-housed'. They note the patterns of discrimination in how government housing is assigned that lead to segregation and do not contribute to healthy inter-ethnic relations. Finally, they believe themselves to be victims of labour

---

[14]The only interviewee who was controlled by the police and risked expulsion for being undocumented, 'strongly ressembled as African' as she put it.

discrimination, with lower salaries than citizens and jobs refused despite equivalent qualifications to Europeans. These examples of discrimination seem to them to contradict the values that European governments claim to represent. They report that they experience racism on a daily basis, and several individuals made reference to insults from soccer fans in stadiums in Italy and France. But what they dread most is institutionalized racism: 'People respect us when they know us. The institutions have contempt for us'.

Powerful perceptions of racism are extremely common in the images of Europe of Indian migrants to Italy. Students who were interviewed report having more often been the victims of the racism of European fellow migrants than of Italians. This does not mean that they did not experience of racism at work, in shops, and in schools. They report that racism was expressed through insults, and criticisms of attitude, clothing, and appearance.

Finally, Somali women report finding that in addition to sexist discrimination, certain Maltese residents do not accept them either in terms of their refugee status or their 'racial' profile. For example, two women whom we interviewed cited buses not stopping for them when they are waiting at bus-stops.

Throughout their long itineraries, each migrant experiences Europe in his or her own particular way. Their images of Europe are uniquely transformed by the obstacles that they encounter along the way, depending on their social category, economic or social capital, and gender. Europe is perceived as a rich continent where one can adopt a modern lifestyle and participate in globalization. Modernity is associated with individualism, which at times is seen as desirable, but, at other times, is criticized because it engenders inequality and discrimination. Once they arrive in Europe, this ambiguity is accompanied by a sense of nostalgia whose strength is proportional to how marginalized and insecure they feel in the host country. This feeling leads to a comparison between Europe and their originating country that can cause them to question the representations at the time of their departure for the supposed continent of liberty and equality. These criticisms are more salient because they refer to European Union migratory policies that to a large extent are responsible for this degradation in social relations.

## 4 European Migratory Policies: New Identifications and Violence

Recent migratory policies have enriched collective imaginaries, adding new place names to the handful of city names that hold meaning for prospective migrants to Europe. New additions like Schengen, Seville, Gibraltar, Ceuta and Mellila, Amsterdam, and Tempere evoke either the possibility of entry

or the impenetrable character of 'Fortress Europe'. Joining the images of Europe that individuals have heard or learned about in other ways are new ones shaped by recent migratory policies. New strategies have to be developed to contend with these new policies, which in turn create new ties - desired, invented, or real, including some with often undesired effects. Sometimes it is a matter of defying European power regardless of the cost, while, at other times, these strategies involve finding ways of slipping through the cracks in a protective system or using the law to help do so.

## 4.1   Variable but Specific Knowledge of Legislation

Migration candidates are very knowledgeable about the requirements for entering Europe. Indians and Malians are required to obtain a visa that is almost impossible to obtain due to the suspension of economic immigration. Exceptions include immigration for the purpose of reuniting families, subject to various conditions depending on the country. Other exceptions include a small number of students as well as immigration for health reasons or to join a European spouse. Argentinians can enter Italy or Spain without a visa for a period of up to three months or under the 'historical memory' law 52/2007, also called the 'grandchildren's law', which allows them to obtain Spanish nationality and, later, a European passport. Certain Moldavians can also obtain Romanian nationality under similar provisions. By definition, refugees are on their own until they arrive in a country from which they will be able to make a request for asylum and prove that they merit refugee status.

Many Indian immigrants know European immigration laws only very approximately and resort to an intermediary to procure the necessary documents. They are largely unaware of political debates about immigration. In Italy, they learn about new legislation that restricts family reunification through interactions with the different institutions responsible for establishing their stay in the country. The restriction of immigration laws has not interrupted migration from India. What has changed is their migratory histories, because it is now difficult to bring on's parents until one's residential situation is settled.

Upon arriving in Malta, Somali women do not have a clear idea of the European and local migration policy framework, but the concrete negative experience of Malta and European migration policies soon contribute to the deterioration of their image of Europe. Three particular periods and experiences in these women's itineraries that contribute to this deterioration:

- The detention experience: The women whom we met, with one exception who was very ill, remained in detention for a period of between two and seven months. According to a Médecins du Monde report, detention conditions in Malta are highly detrimental to immigrants'

physical and mental health, particularly among women. UNHCR staff with whom we spoke reported, for example, that women in detention are not provided separate bathing areas.

- The impossibility of reuniting families and, as a consequence, of envisioning a life project locally, because Malta does not permit reuniting the families of immigrants under subsidiary protection.

- Deportation and the legal borders that many women have experienced when applying for asylum in other European countries. Their experience of the Dublin convention is embodied through the experience of finger imprints (because of the recent Eurodac European finger imprint system) and forced return. There is a process of self-identification with the Dublin convention (some of the women we met used to say 'I am Dublin' to refer to the fact that they were registered in the Eurodac database).

Future migrants also know that Europe is in a period of economic crisis and is attempting to limit, if not prevent, entry into the territory.

African migrants know from experience, or through the stories of 'adventurers' who have failed to cross borders, that European police collaborate in controlling borders in certain African countries. They are fully aware of the process of externalization of these controls but unaware of the details of the accords between European and African governments. Malians know that their government has not signed a readmission agreement, however. This knowledge is more or less accurate and takes on a different connotation depending on the source, whether it is a consulate, an association for the defence of national and international migrants' rights, middle-men, or direct contact with European borders.

This knowledge and experience is translated in different ways at the level of representations.

For middle-class Indians, school graduates, and Malian university students, migratory policies are indicative of Europe's decline and the economic crisis. It is legitimate for Europeans to defend their borders and protect their citizens from unemployment and insecurity. The violence that sometimes accompanies these policies is deplorable, but it is not a central concern in the development and enforcement of European migratory policies.

For other countries like Mali and Morocco, Europe's increasingly enforced policies cast doubt on their image of Europe as democratic and respectful of human rights and individual freedoms. Others describe these policies as a racist method for excluding foreigners from the South.

African migrants settled in Europe share a fear that too many of their fellow citizens will immigrate and need to be taken care of before discovering unemployment and even delinquency in their turn. They denounce their

leaders but believe that nothing will prevent future migrants from undertaking the passage. They find that violence against future migrants appears not to discourage them while also contradicting Europe's values. Worse, current migratory policies make African immigrants into interior enemies and scapegoats for the crisis. They legitimize, in direct contradiction of laws against racism, racist behaviours in circumstances in which inter-ethnic relations are already tense. It is in the context of these perspectives that the idea of a debt owed to people who have contributed to economic development throughout Europe surfaces: 'When we aren't profitable anymore, they throw us away.'

Argentinians' point of view is different because they believe that it is legitimate for them to benefit from the Spain and Italy's favourable policies towards descendants of expatriates, although this favouritism appears to contradict European legislation. Some do mention, however, discriminatory policies that sort individuals according to origins - like green cards or selective immigration - or the racist treatment of individuals of European origin and those from the former colonies. This differential treatment gives some of them the impression of being considered second-class citizens.

These representations of migratory policies influence migrants' strategies, engendering contact with the actors responsible for enforcing these policies relationships. These contacts can in turn modify their representations. We have identified three strategies. The first consists of playing on the contradictions between European and individual governments' migratory policies, particularly those that pertain to European citizenship. The second involves outwitting EU policy by obtaining false paper or illegally entering Europe. The third strategy is to view the power of the EU as a direct challenge to be surmounted at any cost.

**Strategies of assimilation: Becoming a European Citizen**

The possibility of obtaining the nationality of a European country and becoming a European citizen is one of the paths attempted by migrants at different stages of their itineraries. For example, a European passport is one of the methods used by Moldavians with Romanian citizenship to enter and circulate within Europe. A passport represents a precious juridical asset that, according to our study, can be obtained before departure by Argentinians or in other countries that might issue them, including Romania, Spain, Italy, and France. Stories about European institutions willing or able to award nationality based on *jus sanguis* or *jus solis* illustrate the complex procedures involved. Complications that interviewees reported include administrative slowness that sometimes entails waiting for several years, and the suspicion that weighs on applicants, demands for documents that can be impossible to obtain, and elevated financial costs. The more complicated the administrative procedures, the more refined nationality seekers' strategies become, creating pressure to resort to counterfeit documents and certificates. An-

other consequence is the increase in the number of departures outside legal channels in the hopes of becoming regularized after arrival. These initial contacts with the institutions of a given European country causes changes in migrants' and immigrants' visions of Europe. Our interviewees, particularly Argentinians, rarely mentioned the idea of Europe as welcoming and hospitable to foreigners. The prevailing idea of Europe for others is an inhospitable region that is suspicious of foreigners and is overwhelmed by security concerns. The result is a cumbersome, inefficient bureaucracy more concerned with tracking fraud than with respecting rights.

Malians in France with French-born children increasingly apply for naturalization. Some of them apply out of a desire to be considered French citizens like their own children, while others see it as a means of escaping ever-increasing difficulties with the police and bureaucracy. All of them mention the length of the process and the ever-increasing number of documents required. A similar experience is reported by a certain number of students, particularly from Africa, whose applications for student visas are often declined, as well as applicants for family reunification, who encounter increasingly stringent conditions, among them financial guarantees.

At the same time, fewer and fewer students who are awarded scholarships or grants believe that they are awarded based on merit, competence, and excellence; they perceive a contradiction in the inequality of financial support and the values that they associate with Europe, values that they believe contribute to the success of Europe as compared to their own countries, especially India and Mali, where favouritism and corruption predominate. Those who are awarded financial support to study in Europe consider it normal that they have been selected. Others complain about the difficulties encountered in their dealing with consulates and the quasi-systematic refusal of their visa requests despite financial guarantees. Those who have succeeded in registering for a university program also complain about how few hours student visa-holders can legally work. In their view, this limitation on work violates the principle of equal opportunity, enabling only rich foreigners to pursue higher education in France.

The suspicion and contempt with which they are treated by EU country institutions causes them to change students' images of the Europe that they aspire to but whose migratory policies contradict the ideals of liberty, equality and racial non-discrimination.

Some individuals reported an impression that Europe cares more about projecting its image as an economic power than as the standard-bearer for grand civilizing principles. The policies towards foreigners illustrate the decline of diplomacy and the rise of market-based politics and the bilateral accords with Southern governments that deploy military and police resources to control immigration at the source, especially in Africa.

The limits placed on family reunification are sometimes cited as negating

of values traditionally attributed to the family in Europe.

## Strategies for Subverting Legislation

One side-effect of stricter migratory policies is that fraud has become more widespread in every migratory route. Although one of the reasons for aspiring to go to Europe is the rule of law that supposedly provides a framework for European citizens' lives, migrants do not consider it illegitimate to resort to illegal practices. Migration candidates express puzzlement at the fact that their presence in Europe is undesirable, and at the bureaucratic slowness and complexity and/or the policy of border closings, which they perceive as contributing to the necessity of resorting to illegal means.

Their idea is that because their objective of migrating to Europe is not criminal, they are merely finding and exploiting weaknesses in the European system of protection against foreigners.

These illegal practices range from what candidates call a 'trick', like entering Europe on a student or tourist visa (Argentina, Romania, and India), to marrying a European in what are called 'rational marriages' or using false documents or clandestine entry (Africa and Romania). These practices all flow from as assessment of European governments as less powerful than they want the world to believe. These practices are very often possible only because of intermediaries who ostensibly work with European collaborators within institutions such as consulates or prefectures in Italy or Spain, where corruption is not unknown.

## Middle-men

Regardless of the migratory route, a key individual in the search for documents and travel arrangements is the middle-man. Both future migrants and individuals already in Europe commonly use the expensive services of these ambiguous figures, half thieves and half saviours, to assist in obtaining visas, real or counterfeit passports, and for arranging for transportation with the help of 'mules'.

The middle-man is made necessary by the complexity and difficulties of preparing for departure. In India, he is called an 'agent', in Argentina a 'gesture', and in parts of Africa he is called a 'coaxer'. He can serve simply as a counterfeiter or a mule, and his services are never free. 'Agents' manage all of the required procedures, including collecting documents and depositing them at consulates as well as the fabrication of counterfeit documents or organization of a clandestine passage. He derives his reputation and power to persuade candidates that he is reliable from knowledge of migratory policies and laws, his supposed relationships with the authorities who deliver visas, i.e. Europeans, his ability to procure counterfeit documents, and his

acquaintance with mule networks. His services generally take a long time to complete, which serves as justification for their elevated cost.

It is not considered illegal to resort to counterfeit documents, but a response to the suspicion with which prospective immigrants are treated and the humiliation and danger faced by individuals who see migration as their only option. Those who use counterfeit documents claim not to be afraid of being caught, although some did admit concern about failure. According to them, in Europe, money is the only way to solve problems.

For individuals who cannot acquire counterfeit papers, the only remaining choice is to force their passage by using mules who live off of this traffic in human beings. These individuals express a desperate vision of their passage that involves crossing deserts and oceans before finally forcing their way into 'Fortress Europe' (a widespread term, particularly among Malian departure candidates and Africans in Morocco).

Their perception of Europe can be described as paroxysmal ambivalence.

**Strategies of Defiance**

This sub-section concerns the following study participants in the study: departure candidates unable to acquire real or counterfeit travel documents, those who have been expelled or turned away and who have decided to return to Europe, individuals waiting for 'resettlement' or for refugee status, and clandestine immigrants who crossed borders illegally either alone or with the help of a mule network.

We group these participants together because of their perilous itineraries. The process of subjectivization that drives them is profoundly contradictory, and it derives from an eminently ambiguous relationship with Europe. The EU's migratory policy represents a fearsome and feared power in their view. Attempting to deceive this power represents a somewhat existential challenge. Meeting the challenge gives meaning to their lives, and they are gambling in the present in exchange for the hope of a respectable future. Answering the challenge represented by a Europe that rejects foreigners means that one can prove oneself, become someone, and recover one's dignity. The heroic-tragic character of this itinerary gives some idea of the dimensions of the shame that accompanies failure, or the pride if they succeed in their bid to migrate to Europe.

With the exception of the Somali women, all of our interviewees are aware of EU common policies regarding border controls. They have learned about them from the EU member-nation consulates in their countries of origin, organizations for the defence of local or European migrants, whose language and points of view they often adopt, and through their own experiences or those of their 'lucky' and less lucky predecessors. The Internet and cellular telephones also play a significant informational role. Migrants have a clear

idea of what the common EU border-control policy implies in terms of mechanisms of border protection within Europe and throughout their itineraries. They know about fences at Ceuta and Melilla, about the barbed wire along the Prut, the river that separates Romania and Moldova. They are also aware of more recent EU efforts to limit border-crossing between Greece and Turkey, where nocturnal helicopter patrols are backed-up by ground police and other sophisticated techniques for detecting their presence in the desert or at sea. They are familiar with Frontex, the EU border security agency, and they eagerly follow the latest updates and recommendations of less dangerous routes or those used by mules. In their own countries, they know about European liaison officers who have come to train local agents to enforce bilateral agreements.

Migrants criticize the governments of the countries of the South that, in exchange for aid from which they will never benefit, have agreed to participate in these operations, and some of them see a form of neo-colonialism and acceptance of European power in this collaboration, as well as a new form of dependency.

The EU's power resides in representing a united front, and the dangers of attempting to force one's entry into it are enormous. Being on the migratory road is to be afraid. But the fear that the EU provokes does not dissuade migrants, no more than it does those who have successfully crossed into Europe and live in fear of expulsion. It is noteworthy that the number of immigrants who risk expulsion steadily grows as stricter migratory policies increasingly necessitate illegal methods of entry into the EU. Despite the risks, these individuals remain fascinated by Europe, even as it turns against them.

Migrants re-interpret the past through the lens of European migratory policy, engendering powerful feelings of hate. Europe has always dominated Africans, and current policies are only a variant on colonial policy: 'During colonization, only servant boys and soldiers were accepted on the continent'. 'Going to Europe, forcing one's way across the borders, facing the police and the army, this is our revenge'. 'Ever since slavery, Europe has refused to give us citizenship. Today we want to be citizens of the world.'

The widespread dissemination, even to remote villages, of the material and symbolic artefacts of modernity is framed by the total impossibility of achieving a lifestyle that is even close to the modern lifestyles that these artefacts represent. These modern objects and symbols are connected to the impossibility of legal migration for most of these candidates, which places prospective migrants in a kind of no-man's-land in between their current lives and Europe. They wait, hoping to find the means of rising to the challenge, as they see it, represented by migratory policies.

These migrants find themselves in a situation of liminarity[15] as they wait to migrate and to make the passage from being a non-person[16] to that of a contemporary man or woman. It is a rite of passage, except that the rules governing the passage towards dignity and respectability are established by precisely the same forces that seek to prevent it. In this context, liminality means a suspended itinerary. Departure candidates construct inventories of subjectivization that are fuelled by imaginaries in response to this situation, in which the space and the waiting time that they inhabit are indefinite and unpredictable.

## Conclusion

The relationship between migrants and Europe is branded by ambiguity, an ambiguity that stems from the encounter between a process of domination and a process of individuation. It acquires its meaning through a mirroring of perspectives that generates a belief that contempt will be transformed into recognition and failure into success, and that proximity to power will lead to self-recognition and the possibility of being somebody. Migratory policies designate a 'redundant' population in the sense meant by Zygmunt Bauman: 'To be redundant means to be super-unnecessary, unneeded, of no use... The others do not need you, they can do as well, and better, without you'. It is precisely this definition of oneself by the Other that departure candidates are compelled to challenge[17].

In this sense, Europe represents El Dorado - a cruelly protected but nevertheless utterly compelling destination. Although migrants' voyages grow out of a fragile community of experience, taking root and becoming part of collective imaginaries, while the subjectivization process gives a heroic dimension to the voyage, this only partially attenuates the voyages' more tragic features. There are many failures, and the power relationships are profoundly unequal, pitting individuals against a fragmented 'multitude' and governments. The ambiguity of the representations of Europe is rendered all the more powerful, and experiencing their reality all the more violent, by the fact that the available choices are so limited.

---

[15]Turner Victor, *The forest of symbols*, Cornell University Press. 1967; *Le phénomène rituel. Structure et contre-structure*, Paris, PUF, 1990.

[16]Dal Lago A. *Non-persone. L'esclusione de migrant in societa globale*, Feltrinelli, 1999.

[17]Bauman Zygmunt, *Wasted lives. Modernity and its Outcasts*, Polity Press, 2004, p.12.