



CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

« Sub-Saharan African migrations: stakes and dynamics of an expanding phenomenon »

Nadeige Laure Ngo Nlend¹ & Japhet Anafak

Argument:

History of immigration is a very active branch of the Western history of this last decade². (Philippe Regyiel, 2010 :7) However the history of emigration has been sidelined in African historiography, while external migrations have continuously increased, and the vulnerability and the misery of the African migrant regularly make the headlines in international medias. This western grip on the rhetoric of migration helped to label his field with regionalism and its topics with provincialism.

In France, for years, immigration studies focused on the Maghreb. Nonetheless, recent literature has focused on sub-Saharan Africa too³, with an emphasis put on west African migrants, whose mobility procedures have been analyzed from the perspective of their working status, family circumstances, specific pathologies and economic production. A noticeable paradigm shift occurs from inside the continent, where efforts have been recently made, particularly, by anthropologists, geographers, sociologists, and jurists, to tackle this issue. Consequently, as a renowned result, these scholars show that, unlike a tendency aiming to overestimate sub-Saharan mobility to Europe, African migrations are more often directed within the African continent⁴. However, not only old geographical schemes of the study of migration remain duplicated, but also, the disciplinary divisions of scientific work carried on in this field, which make it difficult to accurately approach migration issues from a historical perspective.

Within the framework of this project, researchers, NGO members, politicians, etc., are invited to send unpublished proposals, which not only can lead to the renewal and the enrichment of development issues, as well as the economic and politic determinants from which perspectives migrations issues have been tackled so far, but can also permit to investigate new lines of approach and explore new spaces. The purpose is to make full use of separated approaches of social and human sciences dealing with migration, and to draw an overall, complete and balanced picture, that will suit the African context.

Theme 1. Conditioning and politic sizzle of African migrations

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² Philippe Rygiel, « L'historiographie des migrations », mémoires publiés par la *Fédération des sociétés historiques et archéologiques de Paris et de l'île de France*, tome 61, 2010, pp7-17.

³ Liliane Kuczynski et Elodie Razy, « Anthropologie et migrations africaines en France : une généalogie des recherches », *Revue européenne des migrations internationales*, 2009, (25)3, pp.79-100.

⁴ Christophe Daum et Isaïe Dougnon, *Les migrations internes au continent africain, Hommes et Migrations*, (en ligne) 1279/2009, mis en ligne le 29 mai 2013.



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For decades, the tragedy of stranded African migrants at the gate of Europe has dominated international news often with exaggerated statistics, leading to question the political, economic and social situations of countries where migration originated, classified as potentially perilous or explosive. If there had been several attempts to relate such political contexts with the decisions of departure of migrants, more connections are still to be found between political evolutions in some countries of immigration and the political activism of their diaspora provided by the secured and democratic milieu of the countries where they live.

Other poorly analyzed aspects concern the willing or forced role of African diaspora in the emerging armed uprising in their native countries, as well as how subversive discourses held by political refugees from the comfortable and relative safe context offered by the host country, helped military guerillas of the departure countries to stay resilient or even to radicalize. Cameroon and Nigeria are typical examples of such situations. About Cameroon, recent events have revealed causal linkages between the terrorist activity of the secessionist movement in the North West and South-West regions, and the militancy of a portion of their diaspora living in the USA and Nigeria. Such case studies are also desired.

Other awaited researches concern critical point of views on African state migration policies, namely the application on the principle of the free movement of people and goods, became leitmotiv, adopted around the 1970s, by newly independent African states, which wanted to show their determination to work towards genuine integration between their respective citizen, above linguistic barriers and borderland splits. In fact, this target was hard to achieve. Thus, while West and South African integration models are often held up as examples, with regards to the good results they have achieved, the economic community of central African states was widely criticized for the little improvements recorded on people mobility. However, such a finding should be balanced by the personal commitment of Central African citizens to deliver greater mobility, irrespective of the barriers on integration raised by their governments.

In addition to the increasing mobility of their citizens, African states are now facing growing flows of migrants from Asian countries, which have recently implemented economic and trade agreement with local governments. The presence of Chinese migrants in Africa is designing a new political, economic and social architecture that should be addressed.

Theme 2: Deciding factors and economics stakes of African migrations

Qualitative and quantitative valuable surveys, carried out by OECD experts and by researchers have addressed the issue of the economic role of black diaspora towards their countries. The basic question being asked was whether development assistance from European government could effectively challenge sub-Saharan immigration to the West⁵. In fact, the financial and material resources provided by sub-Saharan migrants to support their countries proved significantly higher than development assistance aids input, which not only was powerless to absorb migration flows to the West, but had also revealed its inability to reduce poverty on the continent.

⁵David Lessault, Chris Beauchemin « Ni invasion, ni exode », *Revue européenne des migrations internationales*, (En ligne), vol. 25-n°1/2009, mis en ligne le 25 juin 2012 ; Chris Beauchemin, Lama Kabbanji, Papa Sakho, Bruno Schoumaker, (dir.) *Migrations africaines : le codéveloppement en question. Essai de démographie politique*. Arman Colin/ Recherches, 2013.



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Generally, these surveys, which mainly centered on west Africa and some countries of Great Lake region, were less representative of the real situation in the whole continent. In fact, Central African region, where researches on the economic input of migrations have not been carried out enough, needs additional analysis to gain a deep understanding of its citizens' remittances procedures (the purpose for which the funds are intended), and the role they play or not in developing the recipient countries. Contributors are asked to raise an attention about women. As a matter of fact, Africa has experienced a digital outburst this last decade, which has resulted in women starting to lead migration projects, instead of being followers. Thanks to the NICT and the internet, women, who used to be 'sisters', 'daughter' or 'mothers' of migrants, are now taking full control of their mobility. Despite real or fraudulent weddings via the internet, occupations in the health care sector, housework, and, unfortunately, prostitution, women have increased their capacity as economic assets of their communities. However, there remains an insufficient appreciation of the value transfer generated by their remittances, as well as their social and economic impacts.

Theorizing financial leverages, which had helped to set African migrations in motion, is one of the feature characterizing economic impacts of African migration, on which further studies could be carried. In addition to the emotional suffering that the breakout of departure causes to families, migrations, whether they are voluntary or forced, generate financial cost bearded by local communities, with financial commitment to the exiled, even extending far beyond the end of their journey. Such expressions of solidarity are part of extensive support networks, whose implementation procedures, response capacities, and connection strings, would be interesting to study.

Theme 3: Environment and migrations in Africa

According to the Geneva Convention of 1951, the word « refugee » refers to someone who is fleeing persecution « because of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion »⁶. Since then, the concept of refugee has considerably been broadened. Thus, in the middles of 1980s⁷, numerous of expressions appeared such as environmental refugees, ecological refugees, climate refugees, environmental migrants, or climate evacuees, to define victims of natural disaster forced to migrate. In fact, the purpose here is to describe a specific form of forced migration, bound to a major ecologic event⁸. In fact, according to the United Nation Higher Commissioner for the Refugee (HCR), in the middle of the current century, environment devastation will force almost 250 million persons to move⁹. However, international law is slow to grant them the refugee status.

Africa is facing encroaching deserts in the Sahara and Kalahari regions, the decrease of the dense forest, the gradual disappearance of lakes and rivers. Consequently, this situation causes people to move from the countryside to cities, then to neighboring countries, and finally, to the European continent. The object of this segment is to analyze in which extend climate change in Africa causes people migration. The aim is to focus on migrations related to environmental destructions in sub-Saharan Africa, as well as the body of law bound to this new phenomenon.

Theme 4. African migration, cultures and identities

⁶Article 33. Convention de Genève

⁷Christel Cournil, « Les "réfugiés environnementaux" : enjeux et questionnements autour d'une catégorie émergente », in *Migrations Société*, 2010/2 (N° 128), p. 212

⁸*Ibid*

⁹Extrait du discours de L. Craig à la Convention des Nations-unies sur les changements climatiques à Poznan en 2008



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Multiple cultural practices of sub-Saharan migrants, like polygamy, excision, levirate, have been discussed since the 1980s¹⁰. However, there still is more to say about these issues, namely the various forms of pressures African migrants suffer to maintain beyond exile, very restrictive cultural ties, and to comply with values that are at odds with their identity.

Because of the tightening in the regularization process of the migrant status, in many host countries, the trend is to address them from the perspective of immigration countries. Yet, to foreign nationals, acquiring the citizenship of the host country, which is the final step of the integration process, is synonymous with the loss of rights and privileges in their country of origin. In Africa, however, ethnic ties prevail upon national belonging. Therefore, despite their citizenship change, migrants are still expected to honor their duty of helping their home community. The same applies to the respect of sacred traditions, the perpetuation of ancient rituals, or the safeguard of old order.

By calling researches on cultural identity-shaping in relation to migration procedures, the committee is expecting to address the issue of how African migrants have been able to preserve their traditions despite the cultural differences faced in immigration countries. Another fruitful sub-field to study could be how migrants manage to link their new identity with the requirements of their native cultures, namely inheritance rituals, endogenous spirituality, family totem, endogamous marriages, etc. Given that the mobilization of cultural features through identity negotiation in the context of migrations may work both ways, authors are invited to reflect on the return procedures of cultural features, from immigration countries to migrants' native lands, as well as their socio-cultural impact.

Migrations don't only foster knowledge and values, but they also favor religious mediation. In the aftermath of the 11th September attacks, the spread of radical Islamic groups around the world led to Muslim migrants to be stigmatized in host countries. As a result, a sub-field of studies has emerged, dealing with religious affiliation as a driving force for immigration, or the end-point to discriminate the exiles. In the same vein, authors willing to explore the relationship between migrations and religious belongings could equally address the issue of religion being used by migrants to succeed in their migration. Topics to be covered may, for example, include religious conversions for convenience, migratory networks, or attendance to religious events as excuses for illegal migrations.

Submission of proposals

Proposals should be sent to the following:

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Agenda

- Deadline for the submission of abstracts: May 31th, 2018.
- The maximum length for abstracts: 250 characters.

¹⁰Christian Poirer, *Familles africaines : technicisation, ségrégation et communalisation*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1996.



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- Front : Times New Roman.
- Front size : 12
- Simple space
- Drafting language : English and French
- Deadline for the submission of full papers: June 30th, 2018.

Members of the scientific committee

Pr. Papa Demba Fall, Cheikh Anta Diop University, Senegal

Pr. Nguyuay Kadony, International Law specialist, the University of Lubumbashi.

Pr. Robert Kpwang Kpwang, Dean of the Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences, the University of Douala.

Pr. François B. Nyamnjoh, social anthropologist, the University of Cape Town

Pr. Sid Ahmed Soussi, the University of Québec-a-Montréal

Pr. Kime Sabiha, the University of Tlemcen, CERDYM

Pr. Anafak Japhet, Université de Lubumbashi - Université Libre de Bruxelles

Pr. Dr. Ernest Messina Mvogo, coordinator of the Center for the study of dynamics of contemporary world (CERDYM)

Pr. Dr. Nadeige Laure Ngo Nlend, expert in the history of contemporary religions and civilizations- Member of the Center for the study of dynamics of contemporary world (CERDYM)

Dr. Guy Thomas, archivist, Red Cross International Committee.

Dr. Mazyar Koojinian, Research fellow, the Free University of Brussels, Expert in the history of migration in Europe.

Dr. Emmanuel Noel Babissagana, Catholic University of Central Africa, director of the Newspaper, « Notre Afrik »