

Return Migrants Reintegration Projects in West Africa: Critical Notes on the Sahel*

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Abstract

Migration issue is more than ever on the agenda of global concerns, particularly with regard to Africa, even though human mobility remains essentially internal on the African continent and rooted in centuries-old circulatory traditions. While a large literature emphasizes the criminalization of migration from the South to the North, but also the policies of outsourcing borders and the control of flows, the links between migration and development are still poorly studied, particularly with regard to the returnees, expelled and other categories (re) integration. However, return migrants are often at the heart of different logics and realities in tension, especially in the context of various reintegration projects, with mixed results. This paper contributes to rethink critically the public policies of reintegration of return migrants in Sub-Saharan Africa as a component of the European Union governance of migration, and in a context of regional free movement promotion. It is based on a combined analysis of some projects implemented as part of the transfer of European migration governance policies and measuring the scope, but also their inconsistencies.

Key words: Return migrants; Migration policy; Reintegration projects; Sahel; West Africa

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Introduction

Researches on migration are experiencing a revival in recent years due to several geopolitical events and the rise of extreme rights in northern countries with a polarization on the movement (forced or not) of population from the South countries to the North . While a large literature emphasizes the criminalization of migration from the South to the North, but also the policies of outsourcing borders, the control of flows and the outsourcing of control, the links between migration and development are still poorly studied, particularly with regard to the returnees, expelled and other categories (re) integration. The related questions are generally analyzed in economic terms (Boesen and Marfaing 2004; Chort 2013), of influence on the labor markets, or even in terms of cultural transfers (Garcia and Munoz 2009), while myths on migration are relayed and confusions between migration and mobility are maintained. However, it must be emphasized that the case of readmissions remains poorly examined, even though they have become progressively more important issues than the migration policies themselves.

Return migrants are often at the heart of different logics and realities in tension, especially in the context of various reintegration projects, with mixed results, even as these projects are implemented as an effect and at the same time an intrinsic component of migration governance, particularly in West Africa. Giuffré (2011: 2) proposes a historic return on readmission agreements and stresses from the beginning of his article that « The issue of the return of irregular migrants has become an underlying component of the European Union (EU) immigration and asylum policy, which has been progressively defined and consolidated after the entry into force of the Maastricht, Amsterdam and the Lisbon Treaties³». However, the global

³ Treaty of Amsterdam, 2 October 1997, entry into force on 1 May 1999; Treaty of Lisbon,

governance of migration is taking place particularly in Europe, and more and more, by signing of readmission agreements (Cassarino, 2009 and 2016), particularly with the countries of the South. These readmission agreements clearly establish and strengthen asymmetrical relations between Southern and Northern countries, as shown by El Qadim (2010 and 2015) in the case of Morocco and the European Union, at the same time as they appear as a central instrument for outsourcing control of the external borders of the European Union. As of now, the control migrates progressively from Europe to the Southern countries and tends to reach almost the countries of origin, or more prosaically the countries of departure.

Although the aesthetic terminology of readmission aims to hide ethically questionable situations, the fact remains that migrants forcibly repatriated to their countries of origin, particularly from Europe to sub-Saharan Africa, or from North Africa to sub-Saharan Africa, constitute new issues for sub-Saharan African states already beset with many structural problems. One of the consequences is the reintegration of returnees once they get back to their country of origin. New challenges are presented to them individually, to their families, and more broadly to the states of the region. This one remains essentially structured by the Economic Community of West African Countries (ECOWAS) Memorandum on the Free Movement of Persons and Goods, which regulates mobility in the region by legally conferring the right to circulate to the population, as an extension of the centuries-old habits of African citizens.

This paper intends in this context to contribute to rethink critically the public policies of reintegration of return migrants in West Africa as a component of the European governance of migration. It is based on a combined analysis of some projects implemented as part of the transfer of European migration governance policies and measuring the scope, but also their inconsistencies.

13 December 2007, entry into force on 1 December 2009.

In this contribution, we examine with critical view public policies for the readmission of migrants in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly in the Sahel, as de facto components of European migration governance. By focusing on reintegration projects, their structuring and their effects, our objective is to offer a local and contextualized perspective of the distant effects of the European doxa of migration and border management. The purpose offered here is based on a combined analysis of some projects implemented as part of the transfer of European migration governance policies and measuring the scope, but also their inconsistencies.

The Readmission of Return Migrants

The readmission of migrants has become a central means of collaboration between the European Union and the African Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries especially since the Cotonou Agreement signed in 2000. Several studies (Kabbanji 2011, Nuun and Price 2004) examined widely the Cotonou Agreement and described how readmission appeared in the debate on migration, and more broadly in the pattern of cooperation between Europe and Africa. In doing so, it has produced the readmitted category as a variant of return migrants. This time, the return migrants are forced by the European public authority that repatriates them for reasons such as lack of paper or the fight against terrorism. The range of formal and informal reasons may vary according to the practices of each country (host country transit country) and the typology of migrants categories should be analyzed in the context of other work. By historicizing the advent of this category of “readmitted”, who are thus a type of return migrants, Kabbanji (2011: 51) recalls that:

“Migration from ACP countries will have to be modulated according to the new imperatives of the globalized economy and its needs for mobile and flexible skilled labor. This is reflected in Articles 13, 79 and 80 of this Agreement, which specify the role of migration in the partnership for development. A clause on readmission is introduced in Article 13 to oblige

any ACP State to readmit “its own nationals illegally present on the territory” of one of the States included, as well as migrants from other countries who have transited through its territory. This clause also provides for the negotiation of bilateral agreements to govern “the specific readmission and return obligations” of the States concerned (article 13, paragraph 5).⁴⁷

In fact, this clause was imposed at the last minute on ACP countries as said by Statewatch (2000) and widely disputed during the negotiations of this agreement. This is a good illustration, as some authors point out, of the imbalance in the negotiations between the EU and economically dependent partners where “The signing of trade agreements and concessions of economic aid” are subordinated to “the application of” good practices “in the migratory field “(Gabrielli 2007: 163)” (Kabbanji 2001 : 52).

The reference to the ideology of “good practices” is also a constituent element of the negotiations and development issues in other fields, presupposing by default that the countries of the South or the countries under assistance should systematically find better practices or ‘ ‘good practices ‘ ‘ by referring to their donor’s patterns.

The asymmetrical relationship between EU countries and Sahelian States, almost imperceptible sometimes, is thus legitimately innervated. The migratory field has not remained free from these logics which seem

⁴ The original version in french argues that : « La migration en provenance des pays ACP devra ainsi être modulée selon les nouveaux impératifs de l’économie globalisée et de ses besoins en main-d’œuvre qualifiée mobile et flexible. Cela est concrétisé par les articles 13, 79 et 80 de cet accord qui précisent le rôle des migrations dans le partenariat pour le développement. Une clause sur la réadmission est introduite dans l’article 13 visant à obliger tout État ACP à réadmettre « ses propres ressortissants illégalement présents sur le territoire » d’un des États parties ainsi que des migrants d’autres pays ayant transité par son territoire. Cette clause prévoit également la négociation d’accords bilatéraux en vue de régir « les obligations spécifiques de réadmission et de retour » incombant aux États concernés (art. 13, par. 5). » (Kabbanji 2011 :51)

self-evident. The Migration field has not remained free from these logics which seem self-evident. These logics massively influence the States' way of reacting, at the same time as it testifies daily to this asymmetrical and disjointed relationship.

In short, treating returnees here includes both migrants forcibly repatriated from Europe who are commonly referred to as readmitted, as well as migrants who willingly choose to return to their country of origin. The return migrants' category thus covers at least these two types of people, differentiated by the return arrangements. Like the African students trained in the USSR during the cold war, the return trajectories are multiple (Eyebiyi 2013; Eyebiyi 2015: 234) and can sustainably structure economic reintegration strategies, or at least the perceptions that concerned people may have about state or pseudo-state reintegration programs. This reinforces the idea that «the explanation of the successes and failures of economic reintegration projects for return migrants is based on a subjective analysis» as stated by Ndione and Lombard (2004). This analysis also deserves to be extended to the entire migratory experience, whose success or failure is ultimately assessed according to entirely subjective criteria, from one person to another, due particularly to the diversity of expectations that governed the continuous construction of the migration process. Bredeloup (2015 : 8) aptly points out that «it is clear that the migrant is no longer the main success model, as he has been for many decades.» Some are forced by readmission agreements and the others constrained by their personal choice or more personal situations. The first (readmitted) can be considered as an immediate effect of the «illegal» status in terms of «undocumented people» but the latter often have their papers and try return patterns at a stage of their migratory journey. One or the other, however, must face the same difficulties in return, including the thorny question of financing investments planned to reintegrate into the economic area of the country of origin.

Migrants' investments in Sub-Saharan Africa

The economic literature on migration generally approaches migrants' investments in terms of money transfers (De Haas 2003 and 2005; Daffé 2008; Zongo 2009 a and b; Chort et Dia, 2013), or in terms of economic benefits. It is thus assumed that migration generates economic benefits, for the original flaws and this polarizes the attention. If this is true on the one hand, it is also true that migration has a cost, including economic cost for the mobility candidate. Thus, economic and financial investments related to migration should be part of a continuum integrating, among other things: the economic costs generated by the migration project, the economic benefits earned by the candidate in both the transit countries (Boubakri and Mazzella 2005) and the arrival very often, in exchange for the work it provides in host societies, the economic resources generated, if need be, by the trafficking networks that organize insecure migration trajectories, but also the economic resources intended for families in the countries of origin and at the same time the migrant's economic investments in his country of origin.

Obviously here we do not mention the other forms of costs, including the psychological costs that Pierre-Joseph Laurent highlights in his latest book *Practical Loves* (2018) by examining the case of Cape Verdean migrations to the United States, with Europe as transit continent. We therefore emphasize the fact that the analysis of the economic benefits of the migration project must go beyond considerations related solely to migrant investment in the countries of origin. Still further, we should take into account the economic investments specific to reintegration projects in the case of migrants forcibly repatriated to their countries of origin or departure. In the latter case, it is necessary to underline for example the situation of the countries of the Sahel, and more broadly of the African countries. In particular, the latter are confronted by readmission

agreements (Cassarino 2016)⁵ with the question of the integration of returnees. These are often victims at the return, of lack of professional qualifications, insertion structures that are not adapted to their needs, etc.

Definitely, experiences like that of Centre d'Information et de Gestion des Migrations (CIGEM) in Mali have produced contrasting results. These contrasts are due in particular to the lack of ownership of projects in Africa as well as in Europe, the lack of coordination, the absence of key players (civil society, private sector, etc.), and resources but also seems to us there a fundamental divergence in the cognitive perception of the purpose of these projects.

Indeed, if the economic reinsertion seems according to the European doxa, to be a means to fix and immobilize on the continent migrants (including the return migrants), for these their return is very often only a stage in their course, and much less a definitive return. At the same time, returnees expect to get from reintegration projects (economic) resources to enable them, on the one hand, to be financially fulfilled in the country of origin, following a welcome return, but sometimes also to be able to prepare their next expedition.

In support of this argument, let us underline for example the work of Toma et al. (2015) that “Remigration appears [thus] as the result of the failure of socio-economic integration in the first European destination and concerned the most vulnerable migrants” (Toma et al, 2015: 73-74). The failure of socio-economic integration may de facto be an indicator of the inefficiency or inadequacy of reintegration policies put in place for returnees. These cognitive divergences between the main actors who develop the policies implemented and those of the implementation, on both sides of the Mediterranean, seem to be a central element that can explain the inconsistency and the inefficiency of these projects.

⁵ The readmission requirement is legally imposed by the Cotonou Agreement (Article 13 (5) signed in 2000.

First, the Migration Information and Management Center (CIGEM), based in particular on the Rabat Declaration, was created in Mali in 2008. This follows a series of political dialogues between Europe and Africa. Although often presented as “the fruit of a series of Euro-African dialogues on” Migration and Development “, the CIGEM conveys various contradictions, especially if we realize that” development is perceived as a tool to curb migration “(Funakawa 2009: 5). Its goal, recalled by Funakawa (2009), is to “implement a Malian migration policy adapted to national, regional and international dynamics”, with particular emphasis on the “link between migration and development”.

Also, the name ‘CIGEM’ itself as an institution highlights a somewhat fuzzy dimension of migration management. From a legal point of view, the Glossary on Migration defines “management” of migration as “the set of decisions and means for achieving specific objectives in the area of admission and stay of foreigners, as well as in the field of asylum and the protection of persons in need of protection” (Perruchoud 2007: 36)⁶. It goes without saying that “management” means here in the sense of control, and way to repress migration, rather than supervision, administration, regulation. The control dimension (almost policing) appearing indirectly and sometimes expressly in the practice of the various institutions operating under the guise of migration management on the continent.

The particular focus of CIGEM, since its creation, on “migration management” also highlights the need for EU countries to use as a guarantee, the ECOWAS and the European Commission, between dominant players (France and Spain in this case), and a dominated actor (Mali). It may be

⁶ The original words are : « *l'ensemble des décisions et des moyens destinés à la réalisation d'objectifs déterminés dans le domaine de l'admission et du séjour des étrangers, ainsi que dans le domaine de l'asile et de la protection des personnes ayant besoin de protection* » (Perruchoud 2007 :36).

underlined that, despite of ECOWAS aspirations for the free movement of persons, it seems to be concentrated in the ECOWAS area, excluding any possibility of easy movement outside this area as long as it is acts of migrations towards Europe. However, and as Eyebiyi and Mendy (2019a) underlined this, the figures rightly show that the flow of African migrants outside Europe, a *contrario* to the old myths, are very far from posing a threat to Europe. The bulk of African mobility is still taking place in Africa, and this is the historical continuity of human movements in the black continent.

On the other hand, CIGEM is strongly criticized for its relative effectiveness, even its inefficiency; and this despite of its budget provided by the European Union, since its creation. Ten (10) million euros from the 9th EDF⁷, were allocated more to curb migration, rather than working on the real nexus between migration and development.

It can be emphasized that European perception of development when it comes to African migration is part of a large logic of mobility prevention. While public discourses often talk about guaranteeing a secure migration, the experiences of African citizens, –students, workers or not, struggling to obtain their visas for the European Union States are legion and widely documented (Neumayer 2006, Mavroudi and Warren 2013) reflecting on the one hand the discursive contradictions but also illustrating on the other hand the logic of constitution and preservation of a European fortress against particularly African migrants.

This does not affect only so-called economic migrants or the poorest, but also African academics who struggle even when they have provided all the required documents, and sometimes after a Kafkaesque process and spent enormous financial resources, to obtain a visa. One of the latest episodes was relayed by the British daily The Guardian when African researchers

⁷ 9º Fundo Europeu de Desenvolvimento (FED)

participated in European Conference on African Studies (ECAS) 2019⁸. At more, the detention of academics in airport detention centers, such as in Paris CDG2 recently, has not ceased to make newspapers headlines, as it was the case of the many African researchers reported by various medias⁹.

The general tendency is therefore for the confinement and restriction of movements towards Europe, especially when they come from the African continent and this is easily legitimized by the use of a discourse on securing or even securitization (Huysmans 2000; Harmon 2015) of migrations.

In summary, the development of African regions appears to be largely absent from the structural policies of mobility control and extraversion of European borders towards the African continent. Finally, it does not spare or privilege any citizen of these spaces, whether they are more traditional migrants or scholars and students mobility. Nonetheless, if the European fortress is constituted as such a fortress, it is a safe bet that the lack of development in the regions of departure will only increase the pressure at the start at all costs desperate candidates. The drama observed in the Mediterranean Sea then appears as simple social indicators, probably announcing more serious and complex events, especially as the search for a well-being remains essentially the main focus of every human being.

Those conducted by various structures such as the IOM for example in the framework of the subcontracting of the Emergency Trust Fund by the EU. In fact, as much for the rare institutional and political initiatives, as for individual or associative and family, non-commitment in the long term weakens integration initiatives of returning migrants, where they exist.

⁸ See <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/jun/08/home-office-racist-refusing-research-visas-africans>

⁹ For more details about the case of scholars, see <http://www.rfi.fr/france/20181007-universitaire-senegalais-arrete-enferme-roissy-karamoko-kallouga-demba> and <http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20160212-senegal-procedure-obtention-visas-france-critiques-compliquee>

The (re) conversion sectors of returnees (forcibly or not) in the Sahel, as elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa, appear to be mainly trade and services, agriculture in the broad sense¹⁰, and transport. These sectors are not specific to the Sahel since some studies show that even in coastal countries, return migrants (mainly volunteers) invest mainly in them (Curran 2002, Eyebiyi and Mendy 2019b). The commercial and service activities in which returnees are involved are usually the construction and management (sometimes delegated) of grain warehouses, the sale of building materials, grain mills, catering, but also financing telecentres and telephone booths.

Investments in agriculture, livestock and fisheries often involve the cultivation of cereals, market gardening or fattening, while fishing activities remain very specific to migrants from countries, and localities with a strong fishing habit. In other words, these activities generally extend the sectors in which migrants invest from their host country. Once back, many of them naturally move towards activities that seem easily manageable according to their skills.

In Senegal, for example, Delaunay and al. (2016) note that “the use of agricultural workers and the investment of money from migration in cattle fattening or trade seem to be new phenomena” (Delaunay et al. 2016: 87). This means that local economic structures are changing not only because of national circumstances but also because of the direct and indirect contribution of migrants, especially when they are back. The effects of these return migrations are still largely to be measured very precisely.

The area of interurban urban and freight transport is another area of investment for migrants. These sectors, as can be seen, do not require a specific qualification and, in many cases, the accumulated migratory

¹⁰ These are agricultural, livestock and fishing activities in the villages of origin, either through direct exploitation or through indirect investments: boat purchases and establishment of fishing fleets, etc.

experience offers them a dynamism easily reinvested from the first often reported capital of migration.

Cognitive resources and financial resources are therefore implemented without resorting specifically to significant intellectual resources for some, and for the others who are more qualified. The investment in these areas consists in setting up the financing and the activity. Then entrusting it to parents or other employees in charge of day-to-day management, when the returning migrant decides to leave again.

The Reintegration Projects Financing and their Ambivalence in the Sahel

Since a decade, European countries on the southern shores of the Mediterranean Sea are at the forefront of bilateral readmission cooperation, including Spain, France and Italy (Cassarino 2009). This undoubtedly explains the strong commitment of these countries apart from the fact that Italy is very often the country most confronted with the management of ship wrecks of wrecked migrants in the Mediterranean. The funding of reintegration projects for returning migrants is an integral part of Europe's migration governance, notably through the imposition of the readmission of migrants. While the funding itself is usually external, and accompanies legal agreements, their effectiveness remains largely open to question. Designed to serve as a buffer, as for the negative impacts of the readmission of migrants in the countries of origin, the programs concerned are paradoxically the object of various criticisms. They often seem to plunge in certain ambivalence the actors of the Western region at the same time as they testify to logics that are difficult to define.

Financing the Reintegration of Returning Migrants: a Project Logic-based Scheme

As an instrument of public action to absorb readmitted migrants, reintegration projects implemented in the Sahelian area have generally experienced

funding problems. It should be emphasized at first sight that returnees, whether re-admitted or not, often intend to invest in their locality of origin in order to ensure, on the one hand, the development of their communities (and even of the country), and on the other hand to be able to integrate into the local labor market, which they left several years ago or where they have never actually exercised. If funding meets top-down logic for projects carried by migrant associations from abroad, in their localities of origin, or by international institutions, most of the return migrants' projects are funded by the resources constituted in reserve during the migratory course. Under these conditions, repatriated migrants who had not been able to accumulate significant financial resources before their repatriation experienced more complex situations than others. We can therefore schematically isolate three ways of financing the projects of returning migrants (readmitted or not): the financial reserves resulting from migration, government projects and external financing. Personal funds from reserves accumulated during the migratory journey are generally the first resources of returning migrants. They are used primarily to finance the installation (housing, amenities and first needs) and sometimes to finance small income-generating activities.

The practice of remittances from abroad does not fail to burden budgets: return migrants do not necessarily have significant financial reserves that can enable them to engage too large projects. Ndione and Lombard (2004) have shown that in Mali, personal funds play a major role in financing projects for the economic reintegration of returnees. The situation seems similar in the other countries of the Sahel, and more generally in West Africa, where the migrant generally contributed at length to the financing of several community investments in his village of origin, while he was still migrating.

Government projects, where they exist, are another opportunity for funding reintegration projects. While several countries have set up diaspora ministries, often attaching this theme to the prerogatives of their foreign

affairs ministry, very few structured government projects have emerged and genuinely provided support to returning migrants.

The posture of the states of the region, beyond the speeches, is generally manifested by an expectation towards the diaspora, especially since the statistics of several reports constantly stress that the contribution of migrants in money to their country of origin exceeds many times the amounts of official development aid (Eyebiyi and Mendy 2019a).

It goes without saying that, the interest of banks to capture these transactions, is growing. This is combined with the interest of countries wishing to centralize these private resources, on the grounds of financing national development. It should be noted, however, that these resources sent by migrants are now financing whole sectors of the social economy (social and community infrastructures, start-up funds for agricultural activities, school fees, community and family ceremonies, etc.). So, a state plan to centralize these resources could actually have devastating perverse effects on family cells if it were not well designed and administered. Still, the money of migrations (Chort and Dia 2013) does not cease to whet the appetite of the States. At the same time, readmitted migrants do not generally have the resources to participate in investments once they return to their home country. The Government issue is therefore still entire on this aspect of the question.

Finally, external financing remains essentially the source of funding for reintegration projects in the Sahel region. Perceived by some as compensation related to readmission agreements and by others as additional manna, these funds have experienced various fates through the projects they fed. The international organizations involved in these issues, and this in the European perspective of securing the southern borders of Europe, mainly include the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the European Union, but also the Spanish Association for International Development and Cooperation, to name just a few. We will examine here two specific projects:

the PAIERA in Niger and the *Projet de Renforcement de la gestion et de la gouvernance des migrations et le retour et la réintégration durable* in Mali.

- The «projet de Renforcement de la gestion et de la gouvernance des migrations et le retour et la réintégration durable au Mali»

This € 15 million project, adopted on December 14, 2016 and funded by the International Organization for Migration and the Spanish Organization for International Development and Cooperation, this project was designed to impact 1,600 transit migrants, 4,000 voluntary returns to communities, and 1.900 returnees with government partners, 200 local communities in high migration areas and 70,000 migrants on migration routes.

It should be noted that this project is not focused exclusively on reintegration projects. Most of the target audience is migrants identified on migration routes. It is possible to hypothesize that “return migrants” would be a pretext for setting up projects for other purposes, the essence of which would simply be stopping all migration to Europe.

Considering the use of the ‘return migrants’ category as a Trojan horse is probably excessive, but it is clear that inappropriate programs have been designed with stated objectives, which ultimately differ from those actually hoped for or are expected by local communities.

- The « Plan d’Actions à Impact Economique Rapide à Agadez (PAIERA) »

Following the overthrow of the Libyan regime and the assassination of Muammar Gaddafi, Niger, a transit country par excellence, has witnessed massive returns of many West African nationals, legal and non-legal migrants. For example, IOM organized the repatriation of at least 3,500 Nigeriens from Libya. The massive returns have also increased pressure on local communities and resources in the region. Already considered as the epicenter of migratory routes, Agadez has found itself at the heart of the

region's migratory systems, both in terms of roads and the socio-economic consequences to be managed. The interest of the European Union has therefore increased, at more since Libyan chaos, Niger had become the new "Europe's immigration officer" according to the terms of Idrissa (2019) and has adopted the Law n ° 2015-36 of May 26, 2015 on the prevention and fight against the smuggling of migrants¹¹.

In line with the reintegration of returnees, the PAIERA, with funding of 8 million Euros by the European Commission and placed under the coordination of the High Authority for the Consolidation of the Peace of Niger, professional integration to the migration actors. In his report on the impact of EU Migration Policy on West African integration, Idrissa (2019) does not fail to draw up an uncompromising analysis of PAIERA.

The compact that was offered to Niger for its cooperation included aid destined to offer new economic opportunities for those whose livelihood was tied to the migrant industry in the northern desert. The migrant industry that had developed in northern Niger since 2009 approximately was not defined solely by transport. People in Agadez organised accommodation, food and many other services for migrants, rekindling a prosperity that had deserted the town since the demise of tourism following the Tuareg rebellion of 2007 and the later rise of Saharan terrorism. Niger's state workers – executive elected officials, security personnel – also levied forced contributions and bribes on migrants. To suppress migration meant to dismantle an economy that profited the region in many ways, at the risk of fostering social instability within traditionally restive communities. To limit those risks, the Trust Fund is financing a project, the Plan d' Actions à Impact Economique Rapide à Agadez (PAIERA, 'Actions Plan with Rapid Economic Impact in Agadez') through a government-sponsored institution, the Haut Conseil à la Consolidation de la

¹¹ Loi n° 2015-36 du 26 mai 2015 relative à la prévention et à la lutte contre le trafic illicite de migrants.

Paix (HACP). PAIERA aims at sensitising migrant transport workers to the policy of the state, to the risks they will be taking in pursuing their activities, and to the ‘reconversion’ opportunities that are on offer. (Idrissa 2019: 32-33)

This shows very well the ambivalent climate in which not only the PAIERA but also the programs envisaged to formally reintegrate returning migrants into the local economies, with the idea of preventing them from engaging new migratory processes, to attack the European fortress. It is then necessary to examine how this ambivalence is constructed and in what terms it manifests itself.

The ambivalence of reintegration projects in the Sahel

The effects of readmission in terms of reintegration projects also remain ambiguous. Analyzing PAIERA in Niger, Idrissa (2019) also concludes:

Just as the Trust Fund itself, the PAIERA is a stopgap project that does not aim at addressing structural economic issues in the region. While the EU promises more wide-ranging support, the facts on the ground still beg the question as to why Niger chose to cooperate with the EU in the repression of migration to this extent. (Idrissa 2019 : 32)

If the PAIERA is locally challenged, it is mainly because it seems to respond only to the European obsession to prevent African migrations directed to its southern Mediterranean borders, and not to boost the development of the regions concerned, contrary to professed speeches. At the same time, most of the reintegration programs, including those run by IOM and other NGOs, have a very limited time span. In a year it is almost impossible to lead a development in the regions concerned. The operation per project then presents itself as an uncertainty that does not guarantee coherence in the duration of the so-called actions of development. These risks have, moreover, been highlighted in the world of development for several decades, but clearly still seem to be less considered by national public policies and especially the European approach to migration governance.

It can therefore be concluded that, on the one hand, the inadequacy of the proposed responses and, on the other hand, the inconsistency of these responses with local and national issues in the areas concerned, contribute to making ineffective several projects of returnees economic reintegration. This seems to be mainly due to the repressive and defensive vision that drives the posture of current European policies. The European Union fortress does not seem to consider the main issues related to underdevelopment and the mobility constraints of the concerned people, as far as flows towards Europe are concerned.

However, Pécoud and de Guchteneire (2009) have shown through their simulations that the scenario of opening borders was not essentially a threat to Europe. A change of approach on the part of the European Union is needed to better understand the issue of migration; and write it into the nexus that it forms with development, rather than isolating it. It is clear that project-based pattern of reintegration program cannot capture the complexity of migration phenomena; and that an exclusively repressive and defensive approach has also shown its limits.

To Not Conclude ...

This paper intends to offer a critical analysis of the current returnees' socioeconomic reintegration projects, by challenging EU view on migration governing in Sahel in one hand, and in other hand, local communities' attempts. We emphasized on the cognitive distortion between understandings of migration policies stated by EU. In this region where migration was more than a legal right, it was embedded into historical patterns of mobility.

Over the boundaries of fortressing Europe, EU migration policy in particular its part devoted to returnees reintegration is still problematic. This happens mainly due to the misconception between EU states and the Sahelian states which were imposed to readmit "illegal" migrants with inappropriate programs. Even these are based on project logic, they are still far from the

ambitious to fulfill development and link it really with migration patterns and issues.

The issue of migration is more than ever on the agenda of global concerns, particularly with regard to Africa, even though human mobility remains essentially internal on the African continent and rooted in centuries-old circulatory traditions. However, return migrants are often at the heart of different logics and realities in tension, especially in the context of various reintegration projects, with mixed results, even as these projects are implemented as an effect and at the same time an intrinsic component of migration governance, particularly in West Africa.

In West Africa, the still largely unsuccessful attempts to implement formal and functional migration policies are in tension with the regional initiatives for the free movement of persons and goods (ECOWAS e.g.), as well as economic integration efforts (West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) e. g.). This paper enlightens an alternative perspective to rethink critically the public policies of reintegration of return migrants in West Africa as a component of the European governance of migration. It is based on a combined analysis of some projects implemented as part of the transfer of European migration governance policies and measuring the scope, but also their inconsistencies.

This paper has also attempted to show that readmission agreements are part of the philosophy of outsourcing and controlling European borders by other countries considered as issuing centers or transit countries of those which are now calls ‘migrants’. This reinforces the desire to make Europe as a safe fortress through several protection strategies. It also tends to systematically restrict human mobility by sorting out among the citizens of the world, who have the right to access Europe. By criticizing the EU approach towards migration via returnees reintegration projects, this discussion has highlighted various inconsistencies in the approaches taken in sub-Saharan African, notably in Sahelian areas.

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