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Le *aleksandrinke* in Egitto
Senegalese Translocal Livelihood Strategies
Diaspora e State-building in Somalia

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Migration in Times of Changing Geographies of Vulnerability. The Reconstruction of Senegalese Translocal Livelihood Strategies during the Economic Downturn in Italy and Spain

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Introduction¹

Mobility has always played an essential role in the West African Sahel region and in Senegal. Through nomadism, shifting cultivation and further practices based on mobility, the local population has for a long time adapted to the local scarcity of natural resources and to the precarious environmental equilibrium by searching access to extra-local sources of revenue (cf. Hammer 2005; Walther, Retailié 2008). Whilst in the last decades long-standing practices of mobility have been progressively hindered by a changing legal and administrative framework, internal and international migration has increasingly replaced them in their role for local livelihood strategies (Gonin 2010; Müller, Romankiewicz 2013).

Through the migration of some of their members, households gain access to sources of revenue located elsewhere and increase their resilience towards risks, such as bad harvest seasons, and stresses, such as a worsening soil deterioration (cf. Stark, Bloom 1985; Stark 1991). This allows them to cope with environmental and economic vulnerability. However, the effectiveness of specific migration destinations can change over time. It is influenced by evolving factors such as the economic contexts and immigration

policies. This can be observed, in particular, with regard to the current economic downturn in Italy and Spain, countries which have been, for a long time, among the main destinations of Senegalese migrants (Agence Nationale de la Statistique et de la Démographie – ANSD 2014).

The role of migration as a coping strategy with economic and environmental crises in the home country has been widely examined (e.g. by: Scoones 1998; Kapur 2004; Gonin 2010). However, the consequences that crises in migration destinations have for translocal livelihood strategies remain insufficiently studied. This paper aims at investigating how Senegalese households facing an economic downturn in the migration destinations of one or more of their members reconstruct their livelihood strategies. This research question is analysed here in particular with regard to the economic downturn taking effect in Italy and Spain since 2007. The paper draws upon ethnographic fieldwork conducted at four Senegalese communities and two South European migration destinations between 2012 and 2014. The four communities are Yoff (region of Dakar), Guédé Chantier (region of Saint-Louis), Sambé (region of Sambé), and Dindéfélo (region of Kédougou), and the two migration destinations are Piacenza (region of Emilia Romagna, Italy) and A Coruña (region of Galicia, Spain).

This paper is divided in two parts. In the first part, translocal livelihood strategies are introduced, in coherence with the case study and with a review of the literature. This part includes an investigation of the adaption of livelihood strategies to changing contexts of vulnerability. In the second one, these processes of construction are investigated with regard to how Senegalese households have coped with the economic downturn in Italy and Spain. Finally, some conclusions are drawn.

Methodology

This paper draws upon a multi-sited ethnography conducted in Senegal, Italy and Spain. Whereas ethnographic studies are usually conducted in one single location and treat mobility as an exception from the rule (cf. McDowell, De Haan 2017), multi-sited ethnographies (Falzon 2009; Mendoza, Morén-Alegret 2013) allow to include into the analysis both mobility and its embeddedness into places. Multi-sited ethnographies recognize that – although constructed translocally – social spaces are constituted by and expressed in places. Therefore, multi-sited ethnographic studies are conducted in the multiple places composing translocal spaces. Far from being just a combination of ethnographies taking place in multiple places, however, multi-sited ethnographies aim at integrating into the analysis the flows and the relations stretching between places, as well.

The multi-sited ethnographic study on which this paper is based was divided in four phases. The first two phases took place at the four Senegalese communities at Yoff, Guédé Chantier, Sambé, and Dindéfélo between November 2012 and January 2013 and between November 2013 and January 2014. They also included researches in nearby

villages and towns. The four locations were selected because they are representatives of the following variables of vulnerability, having an impact on livelihood strategies: a. urbanization (Yoff); b. agricultural crises (Guédé Chantier and Sambé); and c. fluctuating tourism flows (Dindéfelo). The second two ethnographic phases were conducted at Piacenza (Italy) and at A Coruña (Spain) - the two main international migration destinations from Yoff -² between March and April 2014. The focus of the last two phases of fieldwork on migration from Yoff is based on the higher number of both regular and irregular international emigrants there compared to the other three villages. Italy is the second main destination of all Senegalese migrants and Spain is the fourth (ANSD 2014): therefore, migration destinations from Yoff are within national tendencies. Additional interviews with internal and international migrants took place at all four Senegalese villages during the first two fieldwork phases.

At Yoff (region of Dakar, 59,675 inhabitants),³ the Lebu population has for a long time based its livelihood on fishing activities. However, in the last decades overfishing and the increasing competition with foreign fishermen have led to a progressive reduction of fishery resources. Simultaneously, an intensive urbanization process has led to a rapid value raise of land parcels and to land conflicts. Local households have tried to reconstruct their livelihood strategies through the adoption of alternative income generating activities (e.g. retail and formal employment) and through emigration.

Livelihood strategies at Guédé Chantier (Senegal River Valley, region of Saint-Louis, about 7,000 inhabitants)⁴ have mainly been based on agriculture since the foundation of the village in 1930. The French colonial administration created the village as an experimental site for intensive rice cultivation. Agriculture has for a long time allowed the local population - which is mainly composed by settled and half-nomadic Peul and Tukolor people - to remain at Guédé Chantier, despite the strong emigration trends registered in other villages of the Senegal River Valley. However, due to climate variations such as persistent droughts, and to the ecological consequences of decades of intensive land use, soils are now highly deteriorated. Consequently, local farmers face considerable difficulties in financing, producing, and selling their products. As a result, both internal and international emigration trends are increasing.

At Sambé (groundnut basin, region of Diourbel, about 650 inhabitants), as well, the Serer population has long based its livelihood strategies on agriculture, and in particular on the cultivation of groundnut. However, farming profits have declined in the last decades, due to manifold factors, including a rapid desertification trend, augmenting costs of inputs, and declining subsidies by the state. The situation of local households is further worsened by the scarce diversification of the local economy, by the absence of banks and organisations providing farming loans, and by the scarcity of development and humanitarian aid measures provided by foreign organisations. As a consequence, Sambé has strongly impoverished. Internal emigration is very common at the village, whereas international emigration is infrequent, due to its higher costs.

Finally, Dindéfélo (region of Kédougou, about 1,200 inhabitants) is situated in an area characterized by a rich biodiversity. The surrounding forest, the presence of chimpanzees, and a waterfall attract a growing number of tourists. As a result, the provision of services to tourists (e.g. retail or tourist accommodation) is progressively replacing agriculture in the livelihood strategies of the local population, which is mainly composed by settled Peul people. However, in the last years tourists' flows have been unstable, due to security concerns, including the proximity of the village to Guinea Conakry, where cases of Ebola have been registered. Both internal and international emigration can be observed at Dindéfélo.

Research methods applied included individual and collective interviews, informal conversations, focus groups, and a participant observation. A total number of 193 qualitative interviews was conducted, of which 40 at Yoff, 48 at Guédé Chantier, 35 at Sambé, 40 at Dindéfélo, 10 at A Coruña and 9 at Piacenza. At the four Senegalese villages and at Piacenza, the researcher lived with local households and was therefore in a privileged position to conduct participant observation and informal conversations. Interview partners included decisions makers, representatives of associations (of migrants, farmers and women), migrants, relatives of migrants, and people working in agriculture. Interviews were conducted in French, Spanish, Italian, English, Wolof, Serer, and Pulaar. The evaluation of data followed an inductive (Kuckartz 2012) and grounded-theory-methodology inspired approach (Corbin, Strauss 2007).

Translocal livelihood strategies and their adaption to changing contexts of vulnerability⁵

Households at Yoff, Guédé Chantier, Sambé, and Dindéfélo are highly vulnerable, due to their exposure to livelihood crises and to their scarce ability to adopt adequate adaption strategies and to recover in short time (cf. Bohle, Watts 1993). This vulnerability is furthermore the result of complex environmental, social and economic processes (cf. Krüger 2003). Whilst Senegal is listed at the 170th position of the Human Development Index ranking of United Nations Development Program – UNDP (2015) and the poverty rate of its population is 46.7%,⁶ vulnerability is unevenly distributed. In particular, the National Population Census of 2013 has shown that women, young people and inhabitants of rural regions are more likely to be poorer, unemployed, and illiterate (ANSD 2014).

Households at the four villages experience a permanent vulnerability; however, vulnerability contexts are continuously changing. Whilst the attention to situations of increased vulnerability has led some authors to distinguish between *coping* strategies and normal-times *livelihood* strategies (Steinbrink 2009) and to differentiate strategies adopted before vulnerability crises from strategies adopted *ex post* (Ellis 1998; Devereux 2001), such distinctions appear to be inappropriate for the investigation of the current case study. At Yoff, Guédé Chantier, Sambé and Dindéfélo, households

deal with sequential livelihood crises and losses of income, resulting in a constant situation of vulnerability. Simultaneously, the vulnerability context they experience and their ability to adopt effective strategies are influenced by shocks, trends, and seasonality, from one side, and by institutions, organisations, and policies, from the other side.⁷ Therefore, in this paper the expression "livelihood strategies" is used to designate strategies adopted by households in a constant situation of vulnerability. Through livelihood strategies, households living in contexts of vulnerability try to strengthen their resilience towards possible livelihood crises (Chambers, Conway 1992: 6; Scoones 1998: 5). Simultaneously, they try to maintain or enhance their means and assets, including their social and financial capital.⁸ In order to adapt them to changing contexts of vulnerability, livelihood strategies are continuously reconstructed.

In the West African Sahel region and in Senegal, households have for a long time coped with vulnerability through strategies based on mobility, allowing them to gain access to extra-local sources of revenue (Walther, Retaillé 2008; Gonin 2010). In this way, the risk of livelihood crises was reduced, and the maintenance of the precarious environmental equilibrium was assured through a reduction of the pressure on the land (Hammer 2005). In the last decades, however, changes in the administration of land – such as measures aiming at an increased sedentarization of nomadic groups and a land reform introducing private land tenure – have progressively hindered such traditional practices. However, households have reconstructed mobility-based livelihood strategies through contemporary migration patterns. Whilst internal migration (mostly from rural to urban regions) still accounts for the majority of migratory movements in Senegal, further migration destinations include other (mainly West) African countries, and European and North American countries (ANSD 2014). Migration to the Middle East, to Latin America and to Asia is increasing, as well.

Through migration, household and community members are distributed in multiple places. Migratory flows have for a long time been investigated with regard to either the country of origin or the country of destination, not taking into adequate consideration the fact that migrants belong to more than one place. In the last decades, the literature has tried to overcome this limitation by adopting approaches allowing to focus on multiple places. Transnational approaches have extended the analysis to both the country of origin and the country of destination, and to the social networks stretching between them (e.g. Glick Schiller *et al.* 1992; Pries 2008). Like transnational approaches, translocal approaches focus on the multiple places that are relevant for the studied persons, and on the social, financial, and material flows that stretch between these places. However, translocal approaches differ from transnational approaches, by suggesting that migration occurs between multiple internal and international locations, rather than between two nations (e.g. Brickell, Datta 2011; Van Bochove 2012). In a similar way, French researchers have suggested to conceptualize space as "multi-sited", i.e. as embedded in multiple places (Giraut 2013; Cortes, Pesche 2013; Lima 2013). In

this paper, a translocal approach is adopted, however considerable attention is beared to the "multi-sited" embeddedness of translocality.

Translocal livelihood strategies (cf. Steinbrink 2009; Brickell, Datta 2011; Schöfberger 2016, 2017) are embedded in and stretched between places in and outside Senegal. Therefore, they need to be investigated through multi-sited ethnographic studies (cf. the methodology section of this paper), and by dedicating adequate attention to both mobile and immobile (cf. Sheller, Urry 2006) members of the translocal household, i.e. to members who emigrate and to members who remained at the home place. In this paper, a translocal household is defined - as suggested by Steinbrink and Peth (2014: 33) - as a household community recognized as such in a specific social context, and whose members coordinate their consumption, reproduction, and resource use activities on a long term.

Translocal livelihood strategies are constructed at multiple levels. At the intra-household level, they are influenced by power structures, aims and perceptions. Migrant and non-migrant household members negotiate the role of local contributions to shared objectives, income distribution, and cultural and social meanings. At the extra-household level, they are impacted by structural constraints, including institutions, policies, and social relationships (De Haan, Zoomers 2005). Structural constraints can to some extent change over time; for instance, immigration policies in Italy and Spain have changed in the first years of the economic downturn. Translocal households furthermore reconstruct their livelihood strategies in order to adapt them to changing conditions in the places where household members are located, including the home village and migration destinations. At Guédé Chantier and at Sambé, for example, worsening farming conditions have increased emigration trends. In particular, when the possibility of a livelihood crisis arose in 2013 due to a dramatic harvest season, many young inhabitants migrated to Senegalese towns or to the neighbouring countries Gambia and Mauritania. Remittances mostly complement local sources of revenue, such as agriculture and retail. This can be observed at Dindéfélo, as well, where some young men combine working as tourist guides at the village with working as internal migrants at Kédougou when tourist flows are insufficient. A diversification of the household's migration destinations is in the same line, as explained by a woman at Guédé Chantier as follows: "[...] Here at the village, families with international migrants often have some internal migrants, as well. [...] One starts emigrating and then he gives the family the money to finance the resettlement of someone else. They try to go to different places, in order to reduce the risks. So if it doesn't work in Spain, for example, there will be someone else in France or in Dakar".⁹

Households from the four communities react to economic crises in their migration destinations through the same mobility-based strategies through which they react to livelihood crises in their home places. Italy and Spain have for a long time been the second and the fourth major destinations of Senegalese migrants, hosting respectively

13.8% and 9.5% of them (ANSD 2014). According to interviewees, factors contributing to the high presence of Senegalese in the two countries have been geographical proximity, scarcer controls on informal activities such as street-selling, and the presence of established Senegalese diaspora communities. Since 2007, however, Italy and Spain have been affected by an ongoing economic recession. As described in the next section, this recession has increased the vulnerability of migrants and undermined their ability to contribute to translocal livelihood strategies. In other words, the geography of vulnerability as perceived by migrants has changed. As a reaction, migrants and their household members have renegotiated and reconstructed their livelihood strategies. In the next section, an analysis of related processes of reconstruction is done.

Adaption to the South European economic downturn

Starting from 2007, the economic recession had a significant impact on immigration flows in Italy and Spain. In Italy, the inflow of foreign population in 2014 (i.e. 248,360) was less than half what it was in 2007 (i.e. 515,201). In Spain, the inflow of foreign population in 2014 (i.e. 265,756) was less than one third than what it was in 2007 (i.e. 920,534). These trends are partially different than those registered in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) as a whole: indeed, even though total immigration to OECD member states declined in the years 2008–2010 compared to the years 2005–2007, it increased again starting from 2011. In the European Union, only Italy, Spain, Portugal and the Czech Republic registered decreasing immigration flows until 2014, the total negative variations of Italy (–64%) and Spain (–72%) being the most significant. Simultaneously, increasing inflows in Northern European countries included migrants that had previously been living in Italy and Spain. In 2014, immigration to Spain increased slightly by 2%, whereas immigration to Italy continued decreasing by 19%. That year, humanitarian migration was the only category of migration increasing in Italy, in line with a general increase of humanitarian migration in the OECD since 2014 (OECD 2016).

The economic downturn had an impact on Senegalese migration to Italy and Spain, as well. The registered inflow of Senegalese migrants to Spain decreased since 2008, passing from 11,602 in 2007 to 2,970 in 2014. In particular, a dramatic decrease was registered between 2008 (10,568) and 2010 (3,824). The situation is slightly different in Italy, where registered Senegalese immigration first increased, passing from 2,280 migrants in 2007 to 8,851 in 2010. This increase may be due to the slower increase of the unemployment rate in Italy in the first years of the economic downturn and to the relocation of migrants from Spain. Starting from 2011, however, a persistent declining trend was observed in Italy, as well: in 2014, the number of registered Senegalese migrants was of 6,270.¹⁰ Remittances have been more resilient than expected. Whereas their rate of increase decelerated in the OECD in the years 2008–2009, they did not decrease as sharply as predicted by the World Bank in 2008 (Ratha *et al.* 2008). This is

due to the fact that in spite of decreasing new immigration in 2008-2009, the net flow of migration remained positive (Mohapatra *et al.* 2010), because return rates remained very low (Tilly 2011). It was further observed that diversified migration destinations rendered remittances particularly resilient (Ratha *et al.* 2010); it is interesting to note that this observation confirms the validity of migration diversification strategies adopted by households from Yoff, Guédé Chantier, Sambé, and Dindéfélo. It must be further considered that due to the simultaneous decline of foreign aid investment (-40%) and of private debt and portfolio equity flows (-80%), remittances as a source of external financing became more important in many developing countries (Mohapatra *et al.* 2010). In Senegal, in 2013 remittances constituted 11% of the national gross domestic product (Ratha *et al.* 2015).

One of the major factors having an impact on immigration flows and on remittances is employment. In Italy and Spain, unemployment rates have increased consistently both for native- and for foreign-born persons since 2007. Whereas already in 2007 the unemployment rate amongst migrants was higher than amongst natives (7.9% compared to 6% in Italy and 10.3% compared to 7.9% in Spain), differences have increased in the following years. It can be observed that in 2008 – immediately after the beginning of the economic downturn – 8.5% of immigrants in Italy and 16.4% of immigrants in Spain were unemployed, versus 6.6% of natives in Italy and 10.3% of natives in Spain. The highest differences were registered in 2012 in Spain (35.4% vs. 22.9%) and in 2013 in Italy (16.7% vs. 11.7%).¹¹ The key factor contributing to a higher exposure of migrants to the current economic recession is the high percentage of them being employed in sectors that have been particularly hit by the crisis, such as construction, manufacturing, hospitality services, and retail. It must be further considered that migrant workers are particularly exposed to precarious employment relationships, such as informal or temporary work, and therefore at risk of retrenchments, and of reduction of their wages or working hours (Ghosh 2011). Moreover, they are on average younger and less-skilled than native workers (Dadush, Falcao 2009). Finally, they suffer hindrances such as a lower integration in local social safety nets, a scarce knowledge of local legal guarantees, a more difficult access to local sources of information, and language barriers.

Employment problems have a high impact on further aspects of migrants' lives, as described by interviewees at Piacenza and at A Coruña. Since for Senegalese economic migrants being formally employed is a prerequisite for obtaining a permit of residence, irregular migrants encounter increased difficulties in regularising their situation. Interviewees related that prior to 2008 the *sanatoria* in Italy and the *regularización de extranjeros* in Spain used to allow irregular migrants to pass from a first phase of precariousness to a second phase of improved life conditions. The first phase – which used to last 1-3 years – was marked by the effects of lacking a regular legal status and by economic, social, and professional instability. In the second phase, migrants having

acquired a regular status used to experience a better social and economic integration in the host society, to conduct home visits to Senegal, and to be able to contribute more effectively to translocal livelihood strategies. This is not the case anymore. Most of the interviewed persons having immigrated to Italy and Spain after 2008 have been unable to find an employment and consequently to gain a regular legal status. A migrant from Guédé Chantier living in Italy described the situation as follows: "Now with the crisis [...] people here in Senegal think that if they travel to Europe they will be able to find a job, but [...] migrants used to manage it before, but now it's not worth going there anymore. You are selling on the street, even when it's raining. And what you earn is just enough for you to eat. Sometimes you even have problems paying the rent. [...] I know some people who have been there for six years now, and they still haven't got a work permit. Others do have it, but still they can't find a job".¹²

Regular migrants experience a worsened situation, as well. At Piacenza and A Coruña, many became unemployed after 2008. In some cases, this resulted in a loss of the residence permit. Others had to accept worse working conditions, such as unpaid supplementary hours. A changing economic context has in some cases led to an intra-household renegotiation of roles and responsibilities. This can be observed for instance with regard to some women at A Coruña, who – having first joined their husbands through family reunification and without intending to get employed – are now working, whereas their husbands are out of work. Unemployed migrants having children or holding a European citizenship have access to social measures, whereas others mainly rely on intra-ethnic solidarity nets. While acting as a guaranty against dramatic increases of vulnerability of unemployed persons, social support concurrently augments pressure on further community members, as illustrated by the following extract from an interview: "You feel the crisis both if you're working and if you are not, you see. Even if you are still working, you will have a friend or a relative being unemployed. And of course you're not going to leave him stranded".¹³

Migrants experiencing an increased vulnerability at their places of destination are less able to meet the high expectations of their family members in Senegal. Some interviewees reported having avoided visiting Senegal since they started having economic difficulties, because they can't afford fulfilling the requests for money and gifts they receive there. The shame of not being up to local mythicized migration perceptions appears to play a relevant role, as well. Interviewed migrants from the four communities explained that cases of migrants who interrupt communicating with home due to this shame are frequent. According to two former migrants who unsuccessfully tried to reach Europe by crossing the Sahara, the shame of returning empty-handed contributes to hinder stranded migrants to return home, as well. In order to fulfil the expectations and requests for support of their household members in Senegal, migrants try to decrease their living expenses in Europe. However, interviewees said that this renders them unable to save money for difficult times. Whereas from one side such social obligations increase migrants' vulnerability, from the other side sending money

home allows migrants to remain part of the translocal household (cf. Dia, Lacan 2015). Therefore, Sinatti writes that remittances are "a regular renewal of the promise of future return" (Sinatti 2011: 160).

The way household members in Senegal perceive the economic downturn in Italy and Spain and the difficulties experienced by migrants appear to be related with their degree of vulnerability. In particular, differences exist between Yoff, located in an increasingly urbanized context in the region of Dakar, and the other three villages, located in poorer rural regions. At Yoff, the local population is gaining awareness of the difficulties experienced by migrants in Southern Europe, due to its access to communication media and to the fact that most households have migrant members describing them the situation. Some cases of voluntary return have moreover contributed to spread awareness. The following extract from an interview illustrates how the local perception of migration has changed: "Now if you go to Senegal with a plane and ask people there to come to Europe, I doubt the place will be full. I think [...] it's different now. It used to be a dream, because they didn't know... it is as if there had been a wall that had to be climbed to see what was on the other side. But now every family has a migrant telling them what he really lives".¹⁴

At Sambé, Guédé Chantier and Dindéfélo, on the contrary, migration to Southern Europe is still considered an effective strategy. There, living standards are lower and access to the media more difficult than at Yoff. Interviewed relatives of migrants reported that starting from 2007 migrants have sent less remittances and reduced contacts with them. However, the local higher degree of vulnerability leads to a different perception of migrants' vulnerability than at Yoff, as appears from the following extract from an interview conducted with a relative of migrants at Sambé: "[*Question*] What do they tell you about their life there? [*Answer*] People who go abroad tell good things. And even if they don't, we see the results of migration. We see them send money to their families, we see them building houses and support their families. [*Question*] And what do they tell you about their life conditions there? [*Answer*] Well, they sometimes say that life there is not easy. And that's probably true. But life in Senegal is harder. Abroad it's difficult, but at least you're producing something".¹⁵ Migrants' and their household members' perception of opportunities and difficulties available in the places of origin and in the places of destination have an impact on the strategies through which they cope with the economic downturn. Three categories of strategies can be identified: a) permanence in the place of destination; b) return to the home place; c) relocation to a third place. Each strategy is connected to a certain way of negotiating and reconstructing translocal livelihood strategies.

Permanence in the place of destination

Permanence in the place of destination allows maintaining the current structure of the household's translocal space. Even if remittances flows may decrease, the future access to local sources of revenue is guaranteed, through the migrant him/herself or through

the subsequent migration of further household members who may join him/her through family reunification. Indeed, evidence shows that most migrant workers decide to remain in their countries of destination in spite of worsening economic conditions (Fix *et al.* 2009). Regular migrants interviewed at Piacenza and at A Coruña underlined the sacrifices accomplished in order to obtain their residence permits, including dangerous migration routes, initial periods of irregularity and connected hindrances. Most long-term migrants are moreover integrated in the local society, have reached a more or less stable professional position, and invested in welfare payments. Even if they consider themselves still deeply integrated in translocal social spaces, their every-day life is embedded in their place of destination. In particular, some interviewed migrants related that choosing whether to stay or to return allowed them to recognize for the first time that their place of origin does not correspond to their home place anymore. As illustrated by the following extract from an interview, some feel belonging to multiple places: "[Interviewee 1]: Well, people like us, who migrated to Europe... Now we can't go back. We can't really stay here, either. The only thing we can do is to move from one place to the other. Back and forth... that's how it is. [Interviewee 2]: Exactly! That's how it is. Back and forth".¹⁶

Other interviewed migrants, however, said that they remained in Italy and Spain mainly because they are aware of the risks of relocation and return. In many cases, finally, migrants who stay do it with a "wait and see approach".¹⁷

Migrants who have remained at Piacenza and A Coruña have adopted creative strategies, in order to cope with their situation of vulnerability. They have searched for new work opportunities in sectors less affected by the economic downturn, such as agriculture, education, health, and domestic services, or they have opted for self-employment. Some migrants holding temporary residence permits who have been unable to renew them because of having lost their job have decided to "overstay" (cf. Koser 2009, Ghosh 2011). Becoming again irregular migrants, they have readopted informal income generating activities, such as street selling. This regression in the migration trajectory was considered as particularly worrying by the interviewed persons.

*Return to the place of origin*¹⁸

Voluntary return to the place of origin produces a shrinking of the household's translocal space. Since it is connected with a decreasing diversification of places and sources of revenue, return may furthermore lead to an increase of the household's vulnerability. In order to avoid this, the lost access to sources of revenue located in the former migration destination needs to be compensated with access to alternative local or extra-local sources of revenue. For instance, some returned migrants reported having opened a retail shop or invested in agriculture at their home villages. Other returnees decided to relocate to new internal or international migration destinations, or to re-migrate to their former destinations. In this regard, Sinatti (2011: 154) underlines that

Senegalese return migration "may take many forms and can be more or less permanent", and Ammassari and Black (2001: 12) point out that it "should not be intended as a 'closure of the migration cycle, but rather' as 'one of the multiple steps of a continued movement'". For instance, for some of the interviewed returnees, return first took place in an exploratory way as a visit to Senegal of indefinite length. For others, return took the form of a relocation of part of the family, done in order to reduce living expenses in Europe. In coherence with the general trends (cf. Tilly 2011), however, the number of voluntary returns due to the economic downturn is still low at Yoff, whereas at Guédé Chantier only one migrant has returned, and at the other two villages none.

Migrants are translocal actors, integrated both in their place of origin and in their place of destination (Grillo, Riccio 2004). Translocal social networks allowing migrants to remain "children of their village" (Lima 2013: 345) in spite of their physical absence also allow them to maintain a connection to their migration destinations after their return to Senegal. For instance, through translocal business activities or development projects, migrants from the four communities preserve the possibility of re-extending their livelihood strategies to former places of destinations in the future. This is in line with the observation of Cassarino (2008) and Ghosh (2011) that voluntary return decisions are mostly taken when the maintenance of mobility rights and opportunities is assured.

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Due to the importance of migration for livelihood, the return of migrants often leads to intra-household negotiations that are marked by contrasting interests, perceptions and plans. In some cases, return may be perceived as a personal and/or familiar failure. A young woman described the difficulties she encountered returning to Yoff as follows: "It has been very hard. First, I came back for one month, and then I left again [...]. Return is difficult, because people expect a lot, because everyone thinks that you came with millions, because you're expected to solve the problems of everyone around you just because you have been to Europe. Return is difficult, because you must avoid behaving like a *toubab* [...].¹⁹ And they say: 'So you came back, when are you leaving again?' [...] Migrants used to sell illusions, you see. They used to save money for years in Europe and then come back and act as if [...]. And if you come back and don't do it, it is difficult [...]. I have come back again now, but [...] I don't know if I will be able to stay."²⁰ Returned migrants renegotiate their position in their community of origin, as well. As reported by the Senegalese Population Census, only 19.1% of the emigrants leaving the country in 2013 were unemployed (ANSD 2014). The others were still in education or working in agriculture and in further economic sectors. However, many returnees experience a difficult reintegration in the local labour market. Interviewees related for instance that the position they held prior to departure had been occupied by others. Returnees searching for new work opportunities furthermore face employers' perceptions of them being overqualified and social expectations that they should find high positions up to their migration experience. Simultaneously, they gain awareness

of the disadvantages of emigration. For example, one man related having left Senegal for Italy when he was a student, worked as a street-seller for some years when he was an irregular migrant, found a job as a blue-collar worker and later lost it due to the economic recession. He observed that in the meanwhile his former fellow students in Senegal finished university and gained a stable professional position as white collars. Furthermore, other returnees who experienced similar situations underlined that everything they have constructed in the last years or decades is now located in European countries to which they have a difficult access.

Being translocal actors can, however, allow returned migrants to contribute positively to the local economy. Thanks to money earned as migrants and/or to relationships established with supporting persons and groups (e.g. associations and charity groups) in their migration destinations, some returnees at the four villages have made investments such as opening a retail shop or improving farming conditions. In particular, at Guédé Chantier - where most local farmers are currently indebted due to the high costs of intensive farming inputs - a man returned from Spain has financed the introduction of biological and less expensive agricultural techniques.

*Relocation to a third place*²¹

Finally, some migrants decide to relocate to a third place. This strategy allows them to maintain a diversification of the places on which the livelihood strategies of their households are extended, through a reconstruction of the translocal space. Relocation may take place to third locations in the same country of destination, in Senegal (international migrants thus becoming internal migrants), or in other countries. As mentioned above, relocation can follow a phase of return, "in a continuous effort [of migrants] to negotiate between the benefits offered by staying in migration and sustainable permanent return" (Sinatti 2011: 164). According to Fassmann (2008), migration often takes the form of circular migration and it is composed by stages in different places, including the place of origin. In this regard, voluntary relocation is in line with local traditional and contemporary practices of mobility (cf. Müller, Romankiewicz 2013).

Most international migrants from the four communities have lived in more than one migration destination. Circular migration was common already before 2008. Migrants relocate according to arising economic opportunities and changes in national immigration policies (cf. Tall, Tandian 2011). They also consider "factors such as minimum wages, access to social security and social services and rights to family reunification",²² as well as supporting social networks. Interviewees furthermore related having moved between Italy and Spain basing on hearsay about possible *sanatorie* or *legalizaciones de extranjeros*. On the other side, relocation can be hindered by a number of other factors, such as lacking ownership of financial means, scarce language knowledge (Italian and

Spanish being easier to learn for francophone Senegalese people than e.g. German), and limitations to mobility rights (e.g. for irregular migrants).

Conclusion

Drawing on a multi-sited ethnographic study at Yoff, Guédé Chantier, Sambé and Dindéfélo (Senegal), and at Piacenza (Italy) and A Coruña (Spain), this paper has investigated how Senegalese households cope with economic crises in the migration destinations of their members by reconstructing their livelihood strategies. This question has been analysed in particular with regard to how migrants from the four selected Senegalese communities have coped with the economic recession taking effect in Italy and Spain since 2008.

Based on a critical review of the literature and on the case study, this paper has first introduced translocal livelihood strategies and investigated how they are negotiated and (re)constructed by migrants and their household members according to changing contexts of vulnerability. Then, this paper has examined such construction processes through an analysis of the case of the economic downturn affecting Italy and Spain. This paper shows that Senegalese households react to economic crises in their immigration destinations through the same mobility-based strategies through which they cope with livelihood crises in their places of origin. Strategies and spaces are permanently renegotiated and reconstructed according to changing contexts. Migrants and households from the four studied communities have reacted to an increased vulnerability in their places of destination in Italy and Spain and to the loss of effectiveness of these places for shared translocal livelihood strategies through three main strategies: a. permanence in the place of destination; b. return to the home place; c. relocation to a third place. The adoption of each of these strategies has a relevant impact on present and future livelihood strategies. In some cases, two or more of these strategies are combined.

This paper furthermore suggests that translocality plays an essential role for Senegalese livelihood strategies. It strengthens households' resilience to subsequent risks and crises at the place of origin and at the places of destination. Therefore, it seems appropriate to point at the negative effects that migration management measures hindering translocality may have on Senegalese livelihoods.

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NOTE:

- 1 – The research described in this paper stems from the author's doctoral research, which was concluded in 2015 and supported by scholarship funds from the State Graduate Funding Program of Baden-Württemberg (Germany).
- 2 – Source: Municipality of Yoff, personal consultation, Yoff, 8 November 2013.
- 3 – See villedakar.org.
- 4 – In Senegal, missing statistical surveys render it difficult to find exact demographic data. Unless stated otherwise, the sources of population data reported in this paper are interviews with representatives of local municipalities.
- 5 – In this section, a short presentation of translocal livelihood strategies is done, in order to introduce the investigation of the reconstruction of Senegalese translocal livelihood strategies during the economic downturn in Italy and Spain. For an expanded analysis of a translocal approach to livelihood, please refer to Schöfberger (2017).
- 6 – *Senegal-World Bank data*, "World Bank", n.d.: <http://data.worldbank.org/country/senegal>.
- 7 – *Framework. Sustainable Livelihoods Guidance Sheets*, "DFID", 1999: <http://www.eldis.org/vfile/upload/1/document/0901/section2.pdf>.
- 8 – *Framework. Sustainable Livelihoods Guidance Sheets*, "DFID", 1999: <http://www.eldis.org/vfile/upload/1/document/0901/section2.pdf>.
- 9 – Interview with a relative of migrants, female, in Guédé Chantier, 12 November 2013.
- 10 – *International Migration Database*, "OECD.Stat", n.d.: <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=MIG>.
- 11 – *Employment, unemployment and participation rates by place of birth and sex*, "OECD.Stat", n.d.: <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=MIG>.
- 12 – Interview with a migrant, male, in Guédé Chantier, 14 November 2013.
- 13 – Interview with a migrant, male, in Guédé Chantier, 14 November 2013.
- 14 – Interview with a migrant from Yoff, male, in Piacenza, 6 April 2014.
- 15 – Interview with a relative of migrants, female, in Sambé, 23 November 2013.
- 16 – Interview with two migrants from Yoff in Piacenza, 7 April 2014.
- 17 – *Global Migration Group fact sheet on the impact of the economic crisis on return migration*, "International Organization for Migrations", 2010: http://www.globalmigrationgroup.org/system/files/uploads/documents/IOM_Fact-Sheet_1_final_21052010.pdf.
- 18 – Whilst the Valletta Action Plan has introduced an increased importance of return – including forced return – for European migration management, fieldwork researches for this paper were conducted prior to its adoption. Therefore, in this paper the focus is merely on voluntary return as a coping strategy with the economic downturn in Italy and Spain. See *Valletta Action Plan*, "European Council", 11-12 November 2015: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/21839/action_plan_en.pdf.
- 19 – Wolof word used to indicate people of European ancestry.
- 20 – Interview with a former migrant to Spain, female, in Yoff, 17.11.2013.
- 21 – In this paper, the term relocation is used to indicate the voluntary relocation of economic migrants. It therefore differs from the use of relocation in order to designate the relocation of asylum seekers as introduced by the European Agenda on Migration. See *A European Agenda on Migration*, "European Commission", 2015: http://www.epgencms.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/upload/15a8f13e-9561-49d8-a507-9dffd70cd9/Session_1_-_communication_on_the_european_agenda_on_migration_en.pdf.
- 22 – European Migration Network, *Intra-EU Mobility of Third Country Nationals*, "European Commission", 2013, p. 6: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/reports/docs/emn-studies/intra-eu-mobility/emn-synthesis_report_intra_eu_mobility_final_august_2013.pdf.

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