

Migration und globale soziale Ungleichheit

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1. Einleitung

Der Klimawandel ist eine der größten Herausforderungen unserer Zeit. Die Intensivierung und Häufung von extremen Wetterereignissen wie Überflutungen und Stürmen sowie die Zunahme von Dürren, Desertifikation und ein Anstieg des Meeresspiegels werden weitreichende negative Folgen für Menschen und Ökosysteme haben. Insbesondere Länder im Globalen Süden sind von diesen Entwicklungen schon heute stark betroffen, da große Teile ihrer Bevölkerung auf landwirtschaftlichen Anbau angewiesen sind – sowohl im Hinblick auf ihr Einkommen als auch auf ihre eigene Lebensmittelproduktion. Gleichzeitig fehlen diesen Ländern weitgehend die notwendigen finanziellen und technischen Ressourcen, die notwendig sind, um sich auf diese Umweltveränderungen einzustellen und sich ihnen anzupassen.

Da eine Anpassung an diese Umweltveränderungen für die Menschen vor Ort oft sehr schwierig ist, ist Migration eine häufige Adaptionstrategie.³ Zu großen Teilen findet diese Art der Migration als Antwort auf sich verändernde Umweltbedingungen nicht grenzüberschreitend, sondern innerhalb von Staaten statt, wie ein aktueller Bericht der Weltbank zeigt ([Rigaud et al. 2018](#)). Zudem ziehen diese sogenannten UmweltmigrantInnen typischerweise von ländlichen Gebieten in die nahe gelegenen Städte und tragen somit zu einer verstärkten Urbanisierung bei.

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² Dieser Aufsatz ist eine überarbeitete deutschsprachige Fassung von [Koubi et al. 2021](#).

³ In Anlehnung an die allgemeine Literatur zu der Frage, wie sich der Klimawandel auf Migrationsströme auswirkt, und im Besonderen in Anlehnung an das Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) sehen wir Migration als eine Form der Adaption an: „Changes in migration patterns can be responses to both extreme weather events and longer term climate variability and change, and migration can also be an effective adaptation strategy“ ([IPCC 2014, 73](#)).

Einerseits kann eine verstärkte Urbanisierung zu mehr ökonomischem Wachstum, einem Rückgang der Armut und einer reduzierten sozialen Ungleichheit beitragen, da gerade in Entwicklungsländern mit steigender Urbanisierung öffentliche Güter und Dienstleistungen auf effizientere Weise zur Verfügung gestellt werden können. Andererseits kann ein starker Zustrom von MigrantInnen in Städten auch soziale und ökonomische Ungleichheiten in Entwicklungsländern verstärken, da diesen häufig die institutionellen Kapazitäten fehlen, die notwendig sind, um diese Prozesse effektiv zu koordinieren und zu steuern. Damit kann eine solche Zuwanderung auch zu politischen oder sozialen Konflikten führen, die sich im schlimmsten Fall in gewalttätigen Auseinandersetzungen äußern.

Dieses Kapitel beschreibt am Beispiel Kenias, ob bzw. wie sich Migration vom ländlichen in den urbanen Raum, einschließlich der durch den Klimawandel induzierten Migration, auf politische Instabilität in Städten auswirken kann. Die Fragestellung basiert auf der Annahme, dass eine solche politische Instabilität zu Gewalt sowie weiteren negativen Konsequenzen für die Bevölkerung führen kann, die dann auch wiederum die Ursache für weitere Migrationsbewegungen darstellt. Ein solcher Zusammenhang wurde beispielsweise im Kontext des Syrien-Konfliktes in mehreren Studien aufgezeigt (Ash/Obradovich 2020). Allerdings ist weiterhin umstritten, wie groß der Anteil der Klimamigration in diesem Zusammenhang wirklich ist (Selby et al. 2017). Daher befasst sich dieses Kapitel konkret mit der Frage, wie sich die Gründe für Migration auf die Konfliktwahrnehmung von MigrantInnen und deren Bereitschaft, an Protesten teilzunehmen, auswirken. Damit einhergehend wird analysiert, inwiefern sich Klima- bzw. UmweltmigrantInnen hinsichtlich ihrer Konflikthaltung von anderen MigrantInnen unterscheiden. Aufbauend auf der Unterscheidung zwischen Push- und Pull-Faktoren der Migration erwarten wir, dass die Beweggründe für Migration einen Einfluss darauf haben, wie stark MigrantInnen dazu neigen, Konflikte am neuen Heimatort wahrzunehmen und diesen – gegebenenfalls durch Teilnahme an einer Protestbewegung – Gehör zu verschaffen. Konkret gehen wir davon aus, dass Personen, die vorwiegend aufgrund sogenannter Pull-Faktoren migriert sind – wie etwa bessere Beschäftigungsmöglichkeiten und Lebensstandards –, sich eher in ihre neue Umgebung integrieren können und daher weniger häufig an Protesten teilnehmen. Im Gegensatz dazu sollten Personen, die aufgrund von Push-Faktoren – einschließlich der Folgen des Klimawandels und daraus resultierender sich verschlechternder Umweltbedingungen – zu MigrantInnen wurden, sich an ihrem neuen Heimatort weniger gut integrieren können und daher eher Konflikte wahrnehmen bzw. diesen per Protest Gehör verschaffen wollen.

Wir testen unsere Argumentation mit Originalumfragedaten aus drei Städten in Kenia. Unser Datensatz umfasst Antworten von ca. 2400 MigrantInnen, die vom ländlichen in den urbanen Raum umgesiedelt sind. Diese Daten erlauben uns zum einen, das jeweilige Hauptmigrationsmotiv der Befragten zu identifizieren. Zum anderen können

wir so feststellen, ob die Befragten an ihrem neuen Heimatort Protestbewegungen unterstützen und an diesen teilnehmen würden. Während es kaum möglich ist, tatsächliches Konfliktverhalten mithilfe von Daten auf Mikroebene zu untersuchen, ist unser empirischer Ansatz darauf ausgelegt, dieses Verhalten so genau wie möglich zu erfassen. In Übereinstimmung mit bisherigen Forschungsarbeiten ([Koubi et al. 2018](#)) untersuchen wir daher die Wahrnehmung von Konflikten und die Absicht der Befragten, an verschiedenen Formen von Protesten teilzunehmen – auch dann, wenn diese Proteste gewalttätige Formen annehmen. Wir gehen dabei von der Annahme aus, dass tatsächliches Konfliktverhalten sowohl die Wahrnehmung konfliktbehafteter Themen als auch eine generelle Bereitschaft, an Konflikten teilzunehmen, umfasst (Rummel 1976). Wir messen mit unserer Forschung somit eine Vorstufe tatsächlicher Konflikte. Unsere Arbeit trägt demnach zum einen zu der Literatur bei, die sich mit klimainduzierter Migration und deren Auswirkung auf Konflikte beschäftigt und zum anderen zur neueren Literatur, die sich mit Konfliktwahrnehmungen, Konfliktabsichten und Konfliktunterstützung auf individueller Ebene befasst ([Koubi et al. 2018](#); [Linke et al. 2018](#); [Blair et al. 2013](#); [Lyall/Blair/Kosuke 2013](#)).

2. Literaturüberblick

Im Folgenden geben wir einen kurzen Überblick über drei für unsere Studie relevante Literaturstränge. Wir beginnen mit der Diskussion zur Frage, wie sich Umweltveränderungen auf Migrationsbewegungen auswirken, und diskutieren dann die Literatur, die sich mit der Beziehung zwischen Migration bzw. Urbanisierung und Konflikten befasst. Schließlich besprechen wir die Literatur, die sich dem gesamten Zusammenhang von Umweltveränderungen, Migrationsbewegungen und potenziellen Konflikten widmet.

In den letzten Jahren wurden einige Studien veröffentlicht, die sich mit dem Einfluss von klimainduzierten Umweltveränderungen auf interne Migrationsbewegungen sowohl auf Makro- (z. B. [Call et al. 2017](#); [Lu et al. 2016](#)) als auch auf Mikroebene (z. B. [Bohra-Mishra et al. 2017](#); [Koubi et al. 2016](#); [Thiede/Gray 2017](#); [Mastorillo et al. 2016](#)) beschäftigen. Die Ergebnisse dieser Studien weisen auf einige konsistente Ergebnisse hin: So führen extreme Umweltereignisse, die meist eher plötzlich auftreten – wie Überflutungen oder Stürme –, in der Regel zu einer starken Zunahme von Migrationsströmen (McLeman/Gemene 2018). Im Gegensatz dazu weisen die Ergebnisse bezüglich sich langsam entwickelnder extremer Umweltveränderungen, wie Dürren oder Versalzung, in unterschiedliche Richtungen (IPCC 2018; [Adger et al. 2015](#); [Hunter/Luna/Norton 2015](#)). Manche Studien kommen zu dem Schluss, dass beispielsweise Dürren zu einer Zunahme von Migration führen ([Mueller/Gray/Kosec 2014](#); [Thiede/Gray 2017](#); [Hermans/Garbe 2019](#)), wohingegen andere keine signifikanten oder sogar negative Effekte finden ([Koubi et al. 2016](#); [Thiede/Gray/Mueller 2016](#)). Wiederum andere Studien zeigen, dass der Effekt von Umweltveränderungen auf Migrationsbewegungen stark kontextabhängig ist ([Baez et al. 2017a/2017b](#)).

Auch die Literatur zu der Frage, wie sich Urbanisierung auf die Wahrscheinlichkeit von Konflikten auswirkt, ist von unterschiedlichen Ergebnissen geprägt, und unser Wissen, was diesen Zusammenhang angeht, ist nach wie vor eher lückenhaft. Einige – vor allem qualitative – Fallstudien weisen auf einen konfliktfördernden Effekt von Urbanisierungsprozessen hin ([Evers 1975](#); [Percival/Homer-Dixon 1996](#); Percival/Homer-Dixon 1998; Kahl 2006). Andere – vor allem quantitative – Studien stellen keinen solchen Effekt fest ([Schulz 2015](#); [Buhaug/Urdal 2013](#); [Urdal/Hoelscher 2009](#)), und zwar auch dann nicht, wenn explizit Migrationsströme vom Land in die Stadt untersucht werden: Der Zuzug von MigrantInnen aus dem ländlichen Raum in die nahe gelegenen Städte – ein Hauptgrund für Urbanisierungsprozesse – geht laut einer Studie von Østby ([2016](#)) nicht mit einer verstärkten Wahrscheinlichkeit von politischen Konflikten in diesen Städten einher.

Schließlich gibt es einen neuen Strang der Literatur, der sich explizit mit dem gesamten Zusammenhang zwischen Umweltveränderungen, Migration und Konflikt befasst. Allerdings besteht auch hier noch keine Einigkeit und daher viel Raum für neue Erkenntnisse. Ein Großteil dieser Forschung beschäftigt sich mit dem Fallbeispiel Syrien. Aber auch für diesen einen Fall weisen die Studien in unterschiedliche Richtungen: Auf der einen Seite gibt es Evidenz dafür, dass die extreme Dürre in den Jahren vor dem Konfliktausbruch zu einer verstärkten Migration vom ländlichen Osten in den urbanen Westen des Landes geführt hat und somit die Konfliktbereitschaft dort verstärkt haben könnte (z. B. [Ash/Obradovich 2020](#); [Kelley et al. 2015](#)). Andere Studien hingegen kommen zu dem Ergebnis, dass die Dürre keinen oder höchstens einen marginalen Effekt auf den Konflikt hatte ([Selby et al. 2017](#); [Fröhlich 2016](#)).

Studien, die sich nicht nur mit einem, sondern mit vielen Konflikten beschäftigen, kommen zu ähnlich inkohärenten Schlussfolgerungen (z. B. [Brzoska/Fröhlich 2015](#)). Reuveny ([2007](#)) zeigt beispielsweise, dass umweltinduzierte Migration in den neuen Heimatorten zu Konflikten beitragen kann, wohingegen Raleigh, Jordan und Salehyan ([2008](#)) keinen solchen signifikanten Effekt finden. Auch auf substaatlicher Ebene bleibt das Bild verwirrend: Auf der einen Seite können Bhavnani/Lacina ([2015](#)) zeigen, dass Migration in indischen Bundesstaaten, die von Klimaschocks verursacht wurde, zu einer höheren Protestwahrscheinlichkeit beiträgt. Auf der anderen Seite kommt Petrova ([2021](#)) zu dem Schluss, dass Migrationsströme, die von Umweltdesastern in Bangladesch hervorgerufen werden, sich nicht auf die Wahrscheinlichkeit von Protesten auswirken. Eine weitere Nuance birgt die Studie von Ghimire, Ferreira und Dorfman ([2015](#)), die zwar zu dem Ergebnis kommt, dass Migrationsbewegungen aufgrund von Umweltdesastern neue Konflikte nicht signifikant hervorrufen, aber bestehende Konflikte sehr wohl verlängern können. Schließlich scheinen Umweltveränderungen, die durch den Klimawandel hervorgerufen werden, das Risiko für Gewalt auf kommunaler Ebene in Kenia und ganz Ostafrika zu erhöhen ([Pas Schrijver 2019](#); [Detges 2017](#); [Adano et al. 2012](#); [van Baalen/Mobjörk 2018](#)).

Allerdings ist sämtlichen dieser Studien die Problematik inhärent, dass man auf Aggregatsebene nachvollziehen will, ob zum einen wirklich Umweltveränderungen ausschlaggebend für die Migration waren und ob zum anderen diese umweltbedingte Migration dann einen signifikanten Effekt auf die Konflikte am neuen Heimatort hatte. Diese Schwierigkeit versucht der neueste Forschungsstrang zu dieser Thematik zu vermeiden, indem solche Studien auf die Individualebene ausweichen. In diesem Kontext können beispielsweise Koubi et al. (2018) zeigen, dass MigrantInnen, die aufgrund von Dürren ihren alten Heimatort verlassen mussten, eine deutlich erhöhte *Konfliktwahrnehmung* haben als andere Typen von MigrantInnen. Dies muss sich aber nicht notwendigerweise in einer erhöhten *Konfliktbereitschaft* widerspiegeln, wie Linke et al. (2018) am Beispiel von Kenia zeigen. Insgesamt befindet sich diese Forschung aber noch in ihren Anfängen und dieses Kapitel trägt zu ihrer Weiterentwicklung bei.

3. Migrationsgründe als Impetus für Protestbewegungen?

Im Folgenden stellen wir unsere Argumentation bezüglich der Frage vor, warum MigrantInnen, die sich aufgrund von klimainduzierten Umweltveränderungen dazu entschlossen haben, ihren Heimatort zu verlassen, um in die nächstgelegene Stadt zu ziehen, sich wahrscheinlich schlechter integrieren können als andere MigrantInnen und daher eher dazu bereit sein dürften, sich Protestbewegungen am neuen Heimatort anzuschließen. Diese Argumentation besteht aus mehreren Schritten.

Zum einen gehen wir davon aus, dass die typischerweise eher zwingende Art und Weise, in der Umweltveränderungen Menschen dazu bringt (bzw. zwingt), ihren Heimatort zu verlassen, es diesen Menschen erschwert, sich problemlos am neuen Heimatort zu integrieren. Individuen sind zumeist sehr an ihre Heimat gebunden, was in der Literatur als „place attachment“ bezeichnet wird (Adams/Adger 2013) und die emotionale Bindung an den jeweiligen Ort beinhaltet (Lewicka 2011). Dieses „place attachment“ ist in ländlichen Gegenden grundsätzlich stärker ausgeprägt als in urbanen, da Menschen sich typischerweise nicht deshalb dafür entscheiden, an ländlichen Orten zu leben, weil dort die Dienstleistungen besser oder mehr Arbeitsplätze vorhanden wären, sondern weil sie dort geboren und aufgewachsen sind. Entscheidend sind also nicht materialistische, sondern eher emotionale Gründe und eine Art von Verwurzelung, also die Idee, dass „man/frau hierher gehört“ (Anton/Lawrence 2014; Lewicka 2011). Die oft unfreiwillige Umsiedlung aufgrund von Umweltereignissen bedeutet dementsprechend einen Bruch mit Tradition. Sie gleicht einer Entwurzelung und geht oft mit Nostalgie und dem Verlust des Zugehörigkeitsgefühls einher (Fullilove 1996). Dies alles sollte dazu führen, dass sich dieser Typ von MigrantIn eher schwerer damit tut, sich am neuen Heimatort zurechtzufinden, als andere MigrantInnen, die beispielsweise in die Stadt umsiedeln, um dort bessere Möglichkeiten im Sinne von Arbeitsplätzen oder Dienstleistungen zu finden (Fried 1963).

Zum anderen erwarten wir, dass sich UmweltmigrantInnen infolge der Tatsache, dass sie eben durch Umweltereignisse dazu gezwungen wurden, ihren Heimatort zu verlassen, häufig als zusätzlich entwurzelt ansehen. Das hängt auch damit zusammen, dass UmweltmigrantInnen im Vergleich zu anderen MigrantInnen noch seltener die Möglichkeit haben, eines Tages an ihren Heimatort zurückzukehren, da die Umweltveränderungen häufig die Lebensgrundlage am alten Heimatort zerstört haben. Die Migration wird demnach eher als unumkehrbar wahrgenommen. Somit kann eine mentale Haltung entstehen, welche auf einer Opferrolle, einem Ungerechtigkeitsempfinden, Unzufriedenheit und Wut basiert. Diese Art von Emotionen verleiten Menschen häufig dazu, höhere Risiken einzugehen und damit ihrer momentanen Lage Widerstand entgegenzusetzen ([Pearlman 2013](#)). So zeigt beispielsweise aktuelle Forschung im Bereich der Sozialpsychologie zu Fragen der Ungerechtigkeit und relativen Entbehrung, dass diese Emotionen eine große Rolle spielen, wenn es darum geht, ob Individuen sich bestimmten Formen der kollektiven Partizipation anschließen (van Stekelenburg/Klandermans 2017; [Pearlman 2013](#)). Auch Theorien, die auf dem „Grievance“-Ansatz in der Politikwissenschaft basieren, heben hervor, dass tatsächliche oder auch lediglich wahrgenommene Ungerechtigkeit viele Individuen dazu motiviert, an sozialen Bewegungen teilzunehmen (Gurr 1970). Daher nehmen wir an, dass UmweltmigrantInnen aufgrund emotionaler und auf Grievance basierender Logiken eher dazu neigen, an Protesten an ihren neuen Heimatorten teilzunehmen, um die von ihnen wahrgenommene Ungerechtigkeit anzuprangern.

Allerdings ist die Teilnahme an Protesten nicht ohne Kosten (Tarrow 2011; [Ober-schall 1994](#); Chenoweth/Stephan 2011; [Chenoweth/Ulfelder 2017](#)), und die Gründe für eine Beteiligung müssen diese Kosten übersteigen. Demnach müssen die negativen Erfahrungen durch die umweltbedingte Migration schwer genug wiegen, so dass dieser Typ MigrantIn die Kosten, an Protesten teilzunehmen, auch wirklich auf sich nimmt. Hier kommt unserer Meinung nach der Art und Weise, wie sich der Klimawandels manifestiert, eine wichtige Rolle zu. Wie oben bereits erwähnt wurde, führt der Klimawandel zum einen zu sich graduell verschlechternden Umweltbedingungen, die sich über einen langen Zeitraum entwickeln und es den Betroffenen häufig erlauben, sich an die Veränderungen anzupassen; typische Beispiele sind Dürren oder Versalzungen. Gleichzeitig manifestiert sich der Klimawandel aber auch in kurzfristigen Extremereignissen wie Tropenstürmen oder Überflutungen, die meist plötzlich auftreten; durch den immensen Schaden, den sie verursachen, ist es den Betroffenen häufig nicht möglich, sich adäquat darauf vorzubereiten. Damit ist der wichtigste Unterschied zwischen diesen beiden Manifestationen des Klimawandels – graduelle Langzeitveränderungen versus kurzfristige Extremereignisse – jener, dass im letzteren Fall eine Anpassung häufig nur schwer möglich ist und fast alle Individuen ähnlich stark, extrem und plötzlich betroffen sind. Diese kurzfristigen Extremereignisse verursachen typischerweise enormen Schaden und Zerstörung, und die Betroffenen müssen häufig ihren Heimatort verlassen, um

„ihr Leben retten zu können“ ([Warner 2010, 405](#)). Damit verursachen solche Klimaveränderungen zwar großen *absoluten* Schaden, aber häufig wenig *relative* Entbehrung oder ungleichen Schaden innerhalb der Gruppe der Betroffenen. Da typischerweise viele bis alle am jeweiligen Ort betroffen sind, sitzen diese Menschen sozusagen alle in einem Boot und teilen dasselbe Schicksal.

Das ist im Fall der graduellen Langzeitveränderungen anders: Da die Möglichkeit besteht, sich an diese Umweltveränderungen anzupassen, sind einige stärker betroffen (jene, die sich eben nicht anpassen können) als andere. Zwar ist die absolute Zerstörung, von der solche MigrantInnen betroffen sind, zumeist deutlich geringer als im Fall der kurzfristigen Extremereignisse, aber diese Art der Umweltveränderungen hat das Potenzial, relative Ungleichheiten zu verstärken und damit sogenannte Grievances, also subjektiv wahrgenommene Missstände, entstehen zu lassen (Davies 1962; Gurr 1970; [Koubi et al. 2018](#)). Zusammengenommen ist daher die Wahrscheinlichkeit, dass Menschen, die graduellen Langzeitveränderungen ausgesetzt sind, überhaupt migrieren, zwar geringer ([Koubi et al. 2016](#)), weil diese Art von Umweltveränderungen häufig eben nur graduell sind und eine Anpassung vor Ort möglich ist. Wenn die Menschen dann aber doch migrieren müssen, ist es allerdings deutlich wahrscheinlicher, dass sie ihr Schicksal als relativen Missstand im Vergleich mit anderen wahrnehmen – im Unterschied zu MigrantInnen, die aufgrund von Extremereignissen migrieren mussten ([Koubi et al. 2018](#)).

Zusammengenommen erwarten wir daher, dass diejenigen MigrantInnen, die eine Kombination beider Typen von Umweltereignissen – sowohl graduelle Langzeitveränderungen als auch kurzfristige Extremereignissen – erlebt haben, in einem so hohen Maße betroffen sind (sowohl hinsichtlich der absoluten Zerstörung als auch der relativen Missstände), dass sie am ehesten bereit sind, die Kosten einer Teilnahme an Protesten in Kauf zu nehmen. Die Argumentation dahinter ist zum einen, dass konstante und langanhaltende Entbehrungen und Missstände, die graduelle Langzeitveränderungen mit sich bringen, in der Wahrnehmung der MigrantInnen lange haften bleiben (Sen 2011) und damit das Sozialverhalten sowie die Wahrnehmung von Gerechtigkeit und Fairness am neuen Heimatort stark negativ beeinflussen können (van Stekelenburg/Klandermaans 2017). Wenn dazu noch Extremereignisse kommen, die aufgrund ihrer Stärke und ihres Zerstörungspotenzials die Migration vom ländlichen Raum in den urbanen stark beschleunigen, sehen wir die Wahrscheinlichkeit als relativ hoch an, dass diese MigrantInnen am neuen Heimatort gegen ihr Schicksal aufbegehren und eher an Protesten teilnehmen werden. Die Partizipation an Protesten kann demnach als eine Möglichkeit angesehen werden, auf die besonders schlechte Lage dieser MigrantInnen hinzuweisen ([van Stekelenburg/Klandermaans/van Dijk 2009](#)).

Insgesamt erwarten wir daher, dass MigrantInnen, die sowohl graduelle Langzeitveränderungen als auch Extremereignisse erlebt haben, im Vergleich zu anderen

MigrantInnen mit erhöhter Wahrscheinlichkeit an Protesten teilnehmen, um auf ihr Schicksal hinzuweisen.

4. Empirische Vorgehensweise

Die empirische Überprüfung unserer theoretischen Argumentation findet auf der Basis einer Analyse neuer Umfragedaten auf Individualebene statt. Zu diesem Zweck wurden für dieses Projekt insgesamt 2400 Individuen in drei Städten in Kenia befragt. Kenia wurde ausgewählt aufgrund seiner starken Betroffenheit durch den Klimawandel ([ReliefWeb 2019](#); [Eckstein et al. 2020](#)) sowie der hohen Urbanisierungsrate. Wir sehen Kenia daher als einen „most likely case“ an, wenn es darum geht, unsere Argumentation zu testen.

Die ausgewählten MigrantInnen wurden von Januar bis März 2019 in Nairobi, Mombasa und Kisumu befragt. Wir haben dabei all diejenigen als MigrantInnen gezählt, die zwischen 16 und 65 Jahre alt waren, in einer ländlichen Gegend geboren wurden und frühestens in die Stadt gezogen sind, als sie 16 Jahre alt waren. Sie mussten mindestens ein Jahr in ländlichen Gegenden gelebt haben, bevor sie in die Stadt zogen, und dort auch mindestens für sechs Monate bleiben wollen (diese Bedingung war notwendig, da wir sonst möglicherweise aus Versehen temporäre MigrantInnen in unser Sample aufgenommen hätten). Da MigrantInnen vor allem in Entwicklungsländern eine „hidden population“ sind, also keine offizielle Melderegister für sie existieren, auf deren Basis man eine Stichprobe vornehmen könnte, mussten wir im Schneeballverfahren vorgehen. Um Befragte zu rekrutieren, haben wir daher eine mehrstufige Gelegenheitsstichprobe erhoben. Die Umfrage fand „face to face“ mithilfe eines Tablets statt und dauerte im Schnitt 35 bis 40 Minuten.

Im Besonderen wurden die folgenden Informationen mithilfe eines Fragebogens erhoben: Um herauszufinden, ob ein/e MigrantIn ein/e UmweltmigrantIn ist, fragten wir nach Umweltereignissen und Umweltveränderungen am Heimatort. Dabei wurde überprüft, ob die jeweilige Person eines der folgenden Umweltereignisse erlebt hatte, bevor sie in die Stadt migrierte: Starkregen, Überflutung, Sturm, Starkhagel, Zyklon oder Erdbeben. All diese Ereignisse wurden von uns als Extremereignisse codiert. Wenn die Person hingegen Dürre, Desertifikation oder Versalzung nannte, wurde dies von uns als graduelle Langzeitveränderung codiert. Wenn keines dieser Umweltereignisse genannt wurde, so wurde diese Person als „Nicht-UmweltmigrantIn“ codiert. Dadurch entstehen für unsere Analyse vier verschiedene Kategorien: MigrantInnen, die sowohl Extremereignisse als auch Langzeitveränderungen erlebt haben (das trifft auf 1377, also 57 Prozent und damit die Mehrheit der Befragten, zu), MigrantInnen, die nur Extremereignisse erlebt haben (das trifft auf 585, also 24 Prozent, zu), MigrantInnen, die nur graduelle Langzeitveränderungen erfahren haben (295, also 12 Prozent) und MigrantInnen, die keinerlei starke Umweltveränderungen wahrgenommen haben (159 und damit 7 Prozent). In den statistischen Modellen, die im Folgenden gezeigt werden,

dienen die Nicht-UmweltmigrantInnen als Basiskategorie und scheinen daher nicht im Modell auf.⁴

Wir haben uns explizit dafür entschieden, unsere unabhängigen Variablen basierend auf der Frage nach wahrgenommenen Umweltveränderungen zu codieren (und nicht beispielsweise basierend auf tatsächlichen Umweltveränderungen oder auf der Frage nach den Hauptursachen für die Migrationsentscheidung). Zwei Gründe hierfür sind zu nennen: Erstens enthalten wahrgenommene Umweltveränderungen schon teilweise die Komponente der Frage, wie gut sich die Befragten an Umweltereignisse anpassen können – ein Aspekt, den wir für sehr wichtig erachten und wegen dem wir bewusst nicht auf tatsächliche Umweltveränderungen als Messung zurückgreifen (zu einer ausführlicheren Diskussion siehe [Koubi et al. 2016](#)). Zweitens erachten wir die Wahrnehmung von Umweltereignissen, die vor der Migration stattgefunden haben, als das adäquatere Maß im Vergleich zu der Frage nach den expliziten Migrationsgründen. Häufig geben Befragte beispielsweise als Migrationsgründe ökonomische Ursachen an, obwohl der Hauptgrund eigentlich beispielsweise von Dürren verursachte Ernteausfälle war. Daher sind wir der Meinung, dass wahrgenommene Umweltereignisse als Messinstrument den genannten Hauptmigrationsgründen vorzuziehen sind. Wenn wir unsere Analysen aber mit den Hauptmigrationsgründen anstelle der wahrgenommenen Umweltereignissen rechnen, kommen substanzial sehr ähnliche, allerdings–entsprechend der genannten Erklärung –weniger signifikante Ergebnisse heraus.

Um unsere abhängige Variable – die Bereitschaft von MigrantInnen, an Protesten teilzunehmen – messen zu können, verwenden wir verschiedene Fragen. Sämtliche dieser Fragen begannen mit folgendem Einleitungsstatement: „Imagine there is a group of migrants living in <CITY> who feel that they are being treated differently in various areas, which is affecting their overall quality of life in <CITY> in a negative way. They have formed as a group with the aim to eliminate discrimination against migrants and organize various activities to help further their goals.“ Daraufhin fragten wir die MigrantInnen, ob sie (1) an einer friedlichen Protestkundgebung dieser Gruppe teilnehmen würden (*Protest*), (2) auch dann noch an dieser Protestkundgebung teilnehmen würden, wenn es dabei zu Gewalttätigkeiten käme (*möglicher gewalttätiger Protest*), und (3) dieser Gruppe beitreten würden (*Mitgliedschaft*). Die ursprünglichen Antwortkategorien reichten von 1 (unbedingt) bis 5 (auf keinen Fall), die wir umskaliert haben, sodass 1 diejenigen bezeichnet, die mindestens bedingt bereit sind, an einer Protestbewegung teilzunehmen.

⁴ Auch wenn die Basiskategorie mit 7 Prozent einen eher geringen Anteil hat, sind die über 150 Beobachtungen immer noch ausreichend für unsere statistische Analyse. Zudem sind die Ergebnisse robust gegenüber einer Veränderung der Basiskategorie, wie wir in der Diskussion am Ende des Empirieteils zeigen werden.

Da all unsere abhängigen Variablen binärer Natur sind, verwenden wir logistische Regressionsmodelle. Jedoch ist die Struktur unserer Daten noch komplexer, da die MigrantInnen in den drei Städten Cluster bilden und deshalb angenommen werden muss, dass das Antwortverhalten von MigrantInnen in derselben Stadt ähnlicher ausfallen könnte als das von MigrantInnen in verschiedenen Städten. Aufgrund dieser besonderen Datenstruktur verwenden wir ein logistisches Mehrebenenmodell, das hierfür kontrolliert. Um zusätzlich dafür zu kontrollieren, dass MigrantInnen, die aus demselben Ort stammen, ähnliche Umweltveränderungen wahrgenommen haben sollten, integrieren wir in unserem Modell neben dem „city random intercept“ einen „county random intercept“ (Rabe-Hesketh/Skrondal 2009). Durch diese beiden zusätzlichen Y-Achsenabschnitte für die jeweilige Stadt- bzw. Bezirksebene können wir somit für weitere nicht beobachtbare Faktoren kontrollieren, die unsere Ergebnisse sonst möglicherweise systematisch verzerren könnten. Beide Y-Achsenabschnitte werden einer Normalverteilung folgend modelliert (Gelman/Hill 2007).

Als Kontrollvariablen werden die folgenden Faktoren in das Modell aufgenommen: das Alter und das Geschlecht der Befragten; ob ein Mitglied des Haushaltes schon in der jeweiligen Stadt lebt (1 = ja und 0 = nein), um für mögliche Migrationsnetzwerke zu kontrollieren; das Bildungsniveau der Befragten: 1 bedeutet, dass keine formale Bildung erworben wurde, 2 bezeichnet eine teilweise Grundschulbildung, 3 eine vollständige Grundschulbildung, 4 eine unvollständige weiterführende Schulbildung und 5 eine vollständige weiterführende Schulbildung; die Werte 6 und 7 stehen für höhere Bildungskarrieren (entweder Besuch einer technischen Oberschule oder einer Universität). Außerdem kontrollieren wir noch für das Einkommen der Befragten, wobei wir diesen die Frage stellten, ob ihr Einkommen zum Leben reicht. Diejenigen, die angaben, dass ihr Einkommen fast nicht oder gar nicht zum Leben reicht, wurden mit 1 codiert, alle anderen mit 0.

5. Empirische Ergebnisse

Tabelle 1 zeigt die Ergebnisse unserer Analyse. In der ersten Spalte sind die Ergebnisse dargestellt, die sich auf die grundsätzliche Bereitschaft beziehen, an Protesten teilzunehmen; die zweite Spalte zeigt die abhängige Variable, die angibt, ob MigrantInnen auch dann an diesen Protesten teilnehmen würden, wenn diese in Gewalt münden würden; in der dritten Spalte schließlich sind die Ergebnisse zur Mitgliedschaft in der Gruppe aufgeführt, die den Protest organisiert. Die Resultate zeigen in der Tat in die von uns theoretisch erwartete Richtung: So ist der Koeffizient zwar für alle Umweltveränderungen positiv, aber der Koeffizient, der angibt, ob eine MigrantIn sowohl Extremereignisse als auch graduellen Langzeitveränderungen ausgesetzt war, hat jeweils sowohl den stärksten als auch den signifikantesten Effekt. Vor allem ist dies die einzige der drei Umweltvariablen, die auch für die beiden Modelle, die stärker gewalttätige Konfliktbereitschaft messen, noch signifikant ist. Alles in allem sind damit die

Ergebnisse vereinbar mit der Interpretation, dass diejenigen MigrantInnen, die sowohl über einen langen Zeitraum den relativen Verschlechterungen ausgesetzt waren, die mit umweltbedingten Langzeitveränderungen einhergehen, als auch die absolute und häufig extreme Zerstörung von Extremwetterereignissen miterlebt haben, am ehesten dazu neigen, sich durch Proteste Gehör zu verschaffen, selbst wenn diese gewalttätig enden sollten.

Tabelle 1: Logistisches Mehrebenenmodell mit „city und county intercept“

	<i>Proteste</i>	<i>Mögliche Gewalt bei Protesten</i>	<i>Gruppenmitgliedschaft</i>
Extremereignis	0.358 [†] (0.187)	0.043 (0.284)	0.115 (0.290)
Langzeitveränderung	0.143 (0.204)	0.164 (0.308)	0.118 (0.316)
Beide Umweltveränderungen	0.595** (0.179)	0.477 [†] (0.268)	0.465 [†] (0.274)
Alter	-0.014** (0.005)	-0.008 (0.007)	-0.013 [†] (0.007)
Befragter ist männlich	0.260** (0.091)	0.007 (0.115)	-0.003 (0.119)
Mitglied des Haushalts ist schon migriert	-0.041 (0.105)	0.072 (0.136)	0.126 (0.140)
Bildung	0.071* (0.030)	-0.017 (0.039)	-0.007 (0.040)
Einkommen ist ungenügend	0.198* (0.093)	-0.072 (0.119)	-0.121 (0.122)
Log likelihood	-1,528.431	-1,046.069	-999.621
N	2,416	2,416	2,416

† p < 0.10, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01

Die Kontrollvariablen weisen Koeffizienten auf, die sich mit den Erwartungen decken, und sind daher unserer Meinung nach weitere Evidenz dafür, dass das Modell auch tatsächlich sinnvolle Ergebnisse liefert. Zum einen zeigen die Ergebnisse, dass zum einen Männer sowie zum anderen junge Menschen eher gewillt sind, an Protesten teilzunehmen, was auch von der bisherigen Forschung klar bestätigt wird (Chenoweth/Stephan 2011). Zudem sind Menschen, die am neuen Heimatort potenziell besser integriert sind, weil schon ein Mitglied des Haushaltes am neuen Ort lebt, weniger zu Protesten bereit. Interessanterweise wirkt sich ein höheres Bildungsniveau zwar positiv auf die Wahrscheinlichkeit aus, dass die entsprechende Person an friedlichen Protesten

teilnimmt, aber negativ darauf, dass sie dies auch dann tut, wenn die Proteste in Gewalt umschlagen könnten.

Schließlich sind unsere Resultate robust gegenüber einer ganzen Reihe unterschiedlicher Analysemethoden und empirischer Spezifikationen (siehe [Koubi et al. 2021](#)). Hervorzuheben sind hier vor allem zwei Aspekte: Zum einen könnte es sein, dass gewisse MigrantInnen ihre Antwort, ob sie an einem Protest teilnehmen würden, möglicherweise davon abhängig machen, ob es schon Proteste an ihrem neuen Heimatort gegeben hat. Die Messung unserer abhängigen Variablen beruht ja auf der Befragung der MigrantInnen und bezieht sich auf hypothetische Proteste gegen die Lage von UmweltmigrantInnen. Allerdings könnte für die hypothetische Wahrscheinlichkeit, dass diese an solchen Protesten teilnehmen, das tatsächliche Stattfinden von Protesten aller Art in der Einwanderungsstadt wesentlich sein. Wenn wir hierfür im Modell eine zusätzliche Kontrollvariable einfügen, bleiben die Hauptergebnisse jedenfalls erhalten ([Koubi et al. 2021](#)). Zudem sind die Ergebnisse robust gegenüber einer Veränderung der Basiskategorie. Da die Basiskategorie der MigrantInnen, die keinerlei Umweltveränderungen erlebt haben, zwar 154 Personen umfasst, diese aber lediglich 7 Prozent der Befragten ausmachen, sind unsere Ergebnisse hier möglicherweise nicht robust. Wenn wir aber sämtliche MigrantInnen als Basiskategorie betrachten, die entweder keine oder nur eine der beiden Arten von Umweltveränderungen erlebt haben, und damit nur die für uns theoretisch relevante Kategorie der MigrantInnen ins statistische Modell aufnehmen, die beide Arten von Umweltveränderungen erlebt haben, werden unsere Ergebnisse eher stärker als schwächer ([Koubi et al. 2021](#)).

6. Schlussfolgerung

Sowohl in den Medien als auch in der Literatur wird häufig argumentiert, der Klimawandel werde dazu führen, dass immer mehr Menschen vom ländlichen Raum in die nächstgelegenen Städte migrieren und damit Konflikte und Proteste einhergehen könnten (z. B. [Kelley et al. 2015](#)). Dafür gibt es momentan aber noch kaum wissenschaftliche Evidenz. Dies liegt vor allem daran, dass die Fragestellung, wie der Klimawandel sich auf Migrationsbewegungen und weiter auf Konflikte bzw. Proteste auswirkt, empirisch nur schwer zu untersuchen ist. Da sowohl Proteste als auch Konflikte ein Phänomen darstellen, das auf der Aggregatsebene stattfindet, lässt sich nur sehr schwer nachweisen, dass die beteiligten Personen tatsächlich aufgrund von klimainduzierten Umweltveränderungen zu MigrantInnen wurden und dann am neuen Heimatort auch tatsächlich in einen Konflikt involviert waren oder an einer Protestbewegung teilgenommen haben. Unsere Studie versucht dieses Problem zu umgehen, indem wir die Individualebene untersuchen. Im Vergleich zu bisherigen Studien, die ebenfalls dieses Verfahren gewählt haben, zeichnet sich unsere Analyse dadurch aus, dass wir die potenzielle Bereitschaft von MigrantInnen, an Protesten teilzunehmen (selbst wenn diese in Gewalt münden würden), so genau zu erfassen versuchen, wie es empirisch möglich ist.

Unsere Ergebnisse weisen darauf hin, dass umweltbedingte Migrationsbewegungen in der Tat das Potenzial haben, in Protest umzuschlagen. Die Ergebnisse unserer Mehrebenen-Regressionsmodelle zeigen, dass diejenigen MigrantInnen, die sowohl Extremereignisse als auch graduelle Langzeitveränderungen an ihrem alten Heimatort erlebt haben, signifikant bereitwilliger sind, an Protesten teilzunehmen, auch wenn diese in Gewalt umschlagen sollten, als andere Typen von MigrantInnen. Dabei hat sich herausgestellt, dass Migration in urbane Räume im Globalen Süden nicht nur deswegen zu möglichen Konflikten führen kann, weil schlichtweg mehr Menschen auf engem Raum um die gleichen knappen Ressourcen (wie Wohnraum, Arbeitsplätze, Schulbildung) konkurrieren werden, sondern auch deshalb, weil das Schicksal von UmweltmigrantInnen ein besonderes ist: Dadurch, dass sie ihre Heimat oft unfreiwillig verlassen mussten – häufig nach Jahren der Anpassungsversuche an graduelle Langzeitveränderungen wie etwa Dürren –, bringen diese Menschen häufig sogenannte Grievances mit, denen sie dann am neuen Heimatort möglicherweise Gehör verschaffen wollen.

Dies zeigt unserer Meinung nach, dass Policy Maker diesen Urbanisierungsprozessen im Globalen Süden mehr Aufmerksamkeit entgegenbringen sollten. Angesichts des Leids und der Entbehrungen, denen sie durch die Klimaveränderungen schon vor ihrer Migration ausgesetzt waren, sollte das Augenmerk besonders darauf gerichtet werden, dass UmweltmigrantInnen an ihrem neuen Heimatort eine realistische Chance erhalten, sich auch tatsächlich zu integrieren – selbstverständlich vor allem um ihrer selbst willen, aber auch, so die Ergebnisse unserer Studie, um möglichen Konflikten vorzubeugen.

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Belachew Gebrewold¹
Beyond root causes: Understanding African migration

1. Introduction

Poverty, conflicts and climate change are usually seen as root causes of migration from Africa to Europe. They are key issues of, *inter alia*, the 2004 Hague Program, the Rabat Plan of Action (2006), the Stockholm Program of 2009, the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (2011), the European Union (EU) Agenda on Migration (2015), the Valetta Action Plan (2015), the Marshal Plan with Africa (2017) and the Abidjan Declaration (2017). The Africa–EU Migration, Mobility and Employment Partnership, the Rabat Process, the Khartoum Process (Migration Route Initiative with the Horn of Africa in 2014), mobility partnerships such as those with Cape Verde (2008), Morocco (2013) and Tunisia (2014) and the Common Agenda on Migration and Mobility like that with Nigeria (2015) and Ethiopia (2015) are also centered on root causes. In 2015, the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa was set up to finance projects related to the root causes of migration in the Sahel and Lake Chad, the Horn of Africa and the regions of North of Africa and to enhance economic development, strengthen resilience, manage migration and promote conflict prevention ([European Commission 2020a](#)).

This chapter's main research question asks to what extent these "root causes" are the drivers of migration. Why do people migrate? I argue from a postcolonial perspective that highlights the search for identities in contexts historically shaped by slavery and postcolonialism as individual motives for migration. First, some theoretical aspects of migration are discussed, after which I address the economic, political and global structural aspects related to migration. Migration will then be discussed in the historical-colonial context of identity formation. Finally, the key points of the paper are summarized in the conclusion.

2. Why do people migrate?

Migration involves spatial, temporal and volitional aspects. Saunders defines migration as a human spatial movement and change of place of abode (Eisenstadt 1954, 1; Saunders 1956, 221) which takes place after having considered the advantages and disadvantages of moving. With regard to spatial and temporal features, it is important to distinguish international from internal migration. The former is usually thought to imply long-term movement from one nation-state to another (Castles 2010, 1566). Hofmann (2015, 817) suggests a very broad conception under which international

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migrants include any adult who has ever spent at least three months living abroad. More commonly a distinction is made between short-term migration – covering movements with a duration of between three and 12 months – and long-term or permanent migration for a duration of one year or more (United Nations 2022). The distinction between internal and international migration is easier to draw. According to the 2009 UNDP report, internal migration is human movement within the borders of a country in relation to regional, district or municipal boundaries, whereas international migration is defined as human movement across international borders, resulting in a change of country of residence (UNDP 2009, 15). The focus of this chapter is on international migration, as defined above, irrespective of the reason for migration or legal status.

Some people move due to life-threatening crises, armed conflict and environmental catastrophes, poverty, social exclusion, unemployment etc. The perceived imbalance between the *desired* 'standard of living' and the *actual* 'scale of living' plays an important role in the migration decision-making process (Massey et al. 2006, 36; Piore 1979; Todaro 1976), which is often triggered as the household's sense of relative deprivation increases (Myrdal 1957). As Czaika (2015) argues, those who intend to migrate continuously collect information and assess general economic prospects, including the labor-market situation, at home and abroad in order to form reference points and updates for their migration-related expectations.

Stephen Castles (2010) argues that the causes of migration and migration decision-making processes are multifaceted. As Nicholas Van Hear, Oliver Bakewell and Katy Long (2018) show, several driver complexes may interconnect to shape the eventual direction and nature of movement. For example, economic growth and peace in the source country do not necessarily curtail migration; rather they even tend to promote it (Flahaux/Haas 2016, 1; Clemens/Postel 2018, 1). These complex causes of migration show the limitations of the root-causes approach.

Migration researchers mostly focus on the causes of migration from economic, political/security and ecological/climatic perspectives. Against this background, it is often discussed whether migration is coerced or voluntary. However, it is not always easy to separate the two, as there are some coercive components in many instances of voluntary migration (e.g. where economically motivated migration is driven by a lack of means of subsistence) and voluntary components in coerced migration (such as migrants' agency with regard to the timing of departure and destination). The following section addresses this blurred distinction between coerced and voluntary migration, which becomes manifest when political stability or economic growth fail to curb emigration.

3. Would positive economic and political developmental growth curb emigration?

The correlation between economic growth and size of emigration is not that straightforward. For example, a study by Clemens and Postel (2018, 9) shows that sustained

economic development tends to encourage emigration; emigration rates in middle-income countries are also typically much higher than in poor countries, as emigration from North African countries shows (UNECA 2017). If today's poorest quintile of countries continued to grow at their historical rate of growth (over the last 24 years), they would only reach purchasing power parity (PPP) of \$8,000 GDP (Gross Domestic Product) per capita in the year 2198. Yet the deterrent effect of economic growth on emigration in poor countries sets in when they reach roughly PPP\$8,000–10,000 in GDP per capita.

If development aid could systematically raise their economic growth by one percentage point every year—more than a doubling of the historical rate—it would take until the year 2097. If aid could raise growth by two percentage points—a tripling—it would take until the year 2067 (Clemens/Postel 2018, 6).

Similarly, a 2017 United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) study suggests that economic development in low-income countries is initially associated with increasing rather than decreasing levels of emigration and that emigration decreases only when societies become wealthy. Around 2014 and 2017, the economies of Ghana, Senegal, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Togo, Guinea and other countries grew massively while, at the same time, emigration from these countries increased significantly (African Development Bank 2017/2018).

[...]in situation of poverty and constraints migration is generally part of deliberate, carefully planned, and largely rational strategies by families in order to improve their long-term social and economic wellbeing rather than a stereotypical “desperate flight from poverty” (UNECA 2017, 5).

Similar to the social transformation approach of Castles (2010), Clemens and Postel suggest that migration is caused by different components of social change that takes place in a society:

As development proceeds, human capital accumulates, connections to international networks increase, fertility shifts, aspirations rise, and credit constraints are eased. All of these changes tend to raise emigration. The most important of these factors appear to be rising education levels and international connections, which both inspire and facilitate emigration. (Clemens/Postel 2018, 9)

According to these research findings, aid raises net emigration from the average poor country to high-income OECD countries. Moreover, the sum of financial remittances sent back by international migrants to their families in their countries of origin amounted to an estimated \$601 billion in 2015 – over two-thirds of which were sent to developing countries, much more than official development aid (ODA) (IOM 2015). Ten African countries received in total about 60.3 billion in 2017, whereas the ODA for them was only about US\$ 16.4 billion (OECD 2017).

What about the political and security situation in those countries? Would political stability curb migration? One of the main reasons which asylum-seekers give for their asylum application is political instability at home. For example, between 2015 and 2018, a time when emigration increased significantly in some major African emigration countries, the economic or political situation was not particularly bad. During these years, the overall socio-economic and security situation in Ghana improved significantly. In Nigeria, from 2016 onwards, the overall socio-economic and security trend improved rather than deteriorated. In Ivory Coast, the socio-economic, political and security situation has improved significantly since 2013. Sierra Leone, the country, which was devastated by brutal war until 2002, has shown massive improvement in various aspects of economic, social, political and security issues since 2015 ([Fragile States Index 2021](#)). These data show that emigration is not always a spontaneous reaction to imminent physical insecurity or life-threatening poverty.

4. African solutions to African problems?

The European Commission, in its recently adopted *Comprehensive Strategy with Africa* suggests that “African states [...] bear the main responsibility to act, as they are the foremost guarantors of their own security” ([European Commission 2020b, 10](#)). According to the Declaration of the Beijing Summit of African Countries and China in 2018, China pledges to support African countries in their efforts to resolve African problems independently in the African way ([FOCAC 2018](#)). According to President Trump’s Africa Strategy of 2018, the United States (US) administration would continue to support African ownership of responses to regional security threats ([The White House 2018](#)). The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation from 2016 underlines non-interference in domestic affairs of other states as a way to ensure global security and to shape a sustainable world order ([Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2016](#)).

However, all these global powers are involved in many African conflicts, often in a destabilizing manner. Opposing groups see French military presence in the Sahel region as interference with the internal affairs of Chad, Burkina Faso, Niger, Mali or Mauritania. EU countries and the United States are also involved in military intervention in these Sahel states. France has been an unconditional supporter of Chadian President Idriss Déby, whose regime was ranked as one of the most corrupt in the world in 2005 and 2007 (ranked 172 out of 179 countries). Since 2012, the regime has scored only 20 points out of 100 and is ranked 162 among 198 countries in the Corruption Perception Index ([Transparency International 2019](#)).

China has been expanding its interest and influence in Africa not only through economic and trade cooperation but also through arms export to Africa. It provided 90 percent of all Sudan’s small-arms acquisitions between 2004 and 2006, at a total cost of more than \$50 million. Between 2015 and 2019, China accounted for 19

percent of arms transfers to sub-Saharan Africa – mainly to Angola, Nigeria, Sudan, Senegal and Zambia, some of the leading migrant-sending countries ([Wezeman et al. 2020, 7](#)).

Russia's intention is also to strengthen its role in a multipolar world marked by competition for Africa's resources between Europe, the United States, India, China, Japan and South Korea. Russia accounted for 87 percent of Sudan's major conventional weapons purchases in the period 2003 – 2007, during the Darfur conflict and violence that caused the displacement and emigration of hundreds and thousands of people ([Holtom/Bromley/Wezeman 2008, 315](#)). Between 2004 and 2008, Russia was the leading arms supplier, providing Central, North and West Africa with 74 percent of all major arms ([Wezeman 2009](#)). In 2008, Russia not only wrote off \$4.6 billion of Libya's debt but it also concluded a military-technical cooperation worth at least \$2 billion (Africa Research Bulletin 2009, 17910). In 2015–2019 Russia accounted for 36 percent of arms imports by states in sub-Saharan Africa ([Wezeman et al. 2020, 7](#)). Between 2013 and 2017, Russia's contribution was 39 percent of arms exports to Africa; 78 percent of Algeria's arms imports were from Russia. China's arms exports to Africa rose by 55 percent between 2008–2012 and 2013–2017, and its share of total African arms imports increased from 8.4 to 17.0 percent. A total of 22 sub-Saharan African countries procured major arms from China in 2013–2017 and China accounted for 27 percent of sub-Saharan African arms imports in that period (compared with 16 percent in 2008–2012). The USA accounted for 11 percent of arms exports to Africa in 2013–2017 ([SIPRI 2017](#)). Besides these major global arms exporters, there are new emerging suppliers of arms to different war-torn African countries: United Arab Emirates to South Sudan and Nigeria; Turkey to different African countries; Brazil to Mali and Angola ([Béraud-Sudreau et al. 2020](#)). However, are these the only causes of migration?

5. Beyond root causes: identity and migration

Before the corona pandemic started to affect the world, many African countries had been showing promising economic growth. As the various economic and political data demonstrate, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Senegal, Nigeria, the Gambia, Ethiopia etc. were economically performing very well and were politically no less stable than before the substantial migration increases between 2010 and 2017 (cf. [UNCTAD 2018](#)). According to an Afrobarometer 2019 survey (done between 2016 and 2018), 57 percent of those interviewed in Cabo Verde and Sierra Leone, 56 percent in the Gambia and 54 percent in Togo and São Tomé and Príncipe – to mention just a few relevant cases – thought of migrating ([Sanny/ Logan/ Gyimah-Boadi 2019, 3](#)). During this period, these countries were not performing particularly poorly, either economically or politically. All the same, many people intended to migrate. "Regionally, the desire to migrate is highest in Central Africa and West Africa, where more than four in ten citizens (46 and 41 percent, respectively) have given thought to leaving their country" ([Sanny/ Logan/](#)

[Gyimah-Boadi](#) 2019, 5). During the Afrobarometer survey period (2016–2018), Cabo Verde had a GDP growth of 4.5 percent, Sierra Leone 3.5, the Gambia 6.5 and São Tomé and Príncipe 3 (IMF [2018a/2018b](#)). These countries were also affected by wide inequality in 2017: in São Tomé and Príncipe, the income of the top 1 percent made up 43.3 percent of the national income, whereas that of the bottom 40 percent made up 5.4 percent ([WID 2021a](#)). In the case of Cabo Verde, the top 1 percent received 20.4 percent of the national income, whereas the bottom 50 percent only 10.5 percent ([WID 2021b](#)). In Sierra Leone, the share of the income of the top 1 percent was about 14 percent of the national income, whereas that of the bottom 50 percent was around 16 percent ([WID 2021c](#)). Even if it is not easy to draw a direct line between inequality and emigration, we can still conclude that enormous inequality can cause social problems that can initiate poverty, conflicts and social tension; in turn, these latter can push people to look for opportunities elsewhere. At the same time, as the Afrobarometer survey demonstrates, we should not forget that those who are not at all affected by lived poverty are almost equally willing to migrate as those who are poor ([Sanny/Logan/ Gyimah-Boadi](#) 2019, 18).

Migrants spend a lot of money organizing their migration journey. As [Loprete \(2016\)](#) confirms:

Migrants claim that, in order to cross the Agadez region, they pay between 300 to 700 euros, 750,000 to 1.75 million euros per week [in total]. Roughly [...]. In addition, thousands of euros per individual are spent from their savings and loans in order to reach Niger, lodge in Libya and cross over the Mediterranean.

Migrants know that they could open businesses and earn a significant income with that money in their areas of origin instead of migrating. However, they also know that relatives and friends are more willing to lend money to migrants than to those who invest it locally. As experience in the different regions shows, in general successful migrants make more money in a short period of time than those who did not migrate. Moreover, emigrants and their families enjoy a better social standing than others in the neighborhood. [Loprete \(2016\)](#) writes in his article: “[O]ne migrant told us during an interview in the transit center ‘I’m here because when my older brother died in the Mediterranean my mother said that now it is my turn to go’”.

In 2019, United Nations Development Program (UNDP) researchers interviewed 3,069 adult irregular African migrants who had travelled from 43 African countries of origin across 13 European countries. Only 2 percent of respondents said that greater awareness of the risks of irregular migration would have caused them not to migrate ([UNDP 2019, 5, 16](#)). Moreover, according to the research findings, those who travelled were relatively better off than their peers ([UNDP 2019, 5](#)). On 23 October 2019, 39 Vietnamese migrants died in a lorry belonging to people smugglers in Essex in Eastern England. The family of one of the victims had paid the smugglers almost 88,000 euros

for her and her sister, who ended up in Spain; a huge amount of money that could have been invested in a good business in Vietnam (Coen/Henk 2020, 14).

The Afrobarometer survey shows that, on average, more than half (51 percent) of all respondents with post-secondary educational qualifications admit to having given at least “a little” consideration to emigrating, whereas 43 and 29 percent of respondents with secondary and primary schooling respectively and only 24 percent of those with no formal education declare themselves to be potential emigrants ([Sanny/Logan/ Gyimah-Boadi 2019, 6](#)). Simply a lack of opportunities as a cause of migration cannot explain this phenomenon as those who are well educated have more opportunities at home than those with less or no education at all. This survey shows some substantial differences in motivations to migrate between those highly affected and those not affected by poverty. Individuals at the highest levels of lived poverty are more than twice as likely to indicate that harsh economic conditions are the main reason why they would consider emigrating (39 vs 18 percent), while those who experienced no economic hardship (“no lived poverty”) are substantially more likely to cite search for work as a main motivator (47 vs 40 percent) ([Sanny/Logan/Gyimah-Boadi 2019, 18](#)).

It is interesting to see that those who do not experience any poverty are more likely to migrate to search for work than their poor fellow countrymen. Moreover, according to the UNDP study above, a majority of Africans who migrate internationally are better educated and economically more successful than their peers back home ([UNDP 2019, 31–32, 35](#)) – meaning that education and economic success expand horizons and aspirations.

This “expansion of horizons and aspirations” is what I would like to focus on in the remaining part of this section. The desire to expand horizons and aspirations is triggered by comparison with both those who have migrated and those in the West in general. The objective of this comparison and, ultimately, of migration is two-fold: the accumulation of material wealth (which seems to be achieved through migration) and, as a consequence, the enjoyment of a higher social standing or recognition by others. However, comparison is not just about acquiring the wealth which others own but is also about the desire to be like others.

Historically, the social relationship of slavery and colonization disempowered Africans and treated them as sub-humans. Even the current global economic institutions, patterns of consumption, mass media, the ideals of beauty – in short, the cultural, technological and economic predominance of the former colonizers – has penetrated every corner of the world with a different form of power relations. The colonizers are “advanced”, therefore “advanced economies”, “advanced societies”, “developed countries” etc. The colonized are designated as “underdeveloped, backward, least developed, developing countries, societies” etc. The term “backward” is used not just by the former colonizers but also by the colonized themselves, even today.

How could the colonized become humans again, regain their denied humanity and prove to the colonizer that they are neither inferior nor “backward”? One possibility to do this is by imitating the colonizer through appropriation of the same material and technological goods and cultural values. Thanks to globalization, the ideas and patterns of consumption of the colonizer are prevalent everywhere. Ordinary citizens, intellectuals, religious conservatives or fundamentalists in the South who usually preach about going back to their own cultural values and attacking “Western decadence” are attracted by and adoring the lifestyles of the colonizer.

Therefore, the question is not if but how to acquire those Western goods that bestow identity and full humanity to the colonized. The luxury goods and food items imported by many African elites from the West tell us a great deal. The ultimate objective of the colonized is to regain their denied humanity and identity in two ways: first, if they can afford it, by consuming at home the same thing the colonizer consumes; secondly, through migration, to acquire wealth and to experience the being-together with the mystified or “supernaturalized” colonizer. This means, the being and becoming of the colonized is dependent on their successful imitation of the colonizer through consumption and migration. For example, it is not rare to observe in many African cities that, if you offer two pieces of completely identical clothing at the market and if one is “Made in Europe” and the other is made in an African country, buyers would prefer the “Made in Europe” item if the price is the same for both. Against this background, it is interesting to see that the middle and upper classes in many African countries import luxury food items like meat from Europe. South Africa imported food items with an import value of US\$88.1 billion from around the globe in 2019. Gabon’s luxury food imports reached €523.8m in 2014 ([Oxford Business Group 2015](#)), while Africa’s annual food import is estimated at \$50billion ([Reliefweb 2019](#)).

Another form of imitation process is migration. In his blog titled “Migro ergo sum – I migrate, therefore I am – Social Pressure as a Driver of Economic Migration from West Africa” Loprete ([2016](#)) suggests that there is considerable social pressure on young people, which forces them to migrate.

In many countries throughout West Africa, migration seems to have replaced the ancient rite of passage into adulthood. Gambians transiting through Niger are often as young as 16 years. From Senegal and Guinea Conakry young students want to reach French schools. Among those [the] most scared to return home are migrants who have sold their cows or plots of land, only to return carrying nothing but their failure [...] The pressure comes from all angles and young Africans cannot resist, they have to migrate if they want to “be”. ([Loprete 2016](#))

One of the very interesting conclusions of the above-mentioned UNDP study is that “Economic motivations [are] closely tied to self-actualization and a sense that aspiration can only be fulfilled through departure from Africa” ([UNDP 2019, 5](#)). Why is that?

The title of the UNDP study is “Scaling Fences”. This *scaling of fences* is both physical and metaphorical. The fence is the means of bordering, othering and ordering (Casas-Cortes/Cabarrubias 2019, 193). According to the UNDP study’s findings, the first feeling of migrants after arrival is “I made it”; they then hope to be able to say “mission accomplished” on their return home with enough money. However, it has to be said that the decision to remain at the destination or to return home is dependent on the individual circumstances and it is difficult to predict who returns home, when and why.

This *scaling of fences* is not just a search for better opportunities but also an undertaking to negate the historical and cultural rejection, negation, oppression, exploitation and exclusion that started with slavery and colonialism. It is an undertaking in order to “be”, to be recognized, to regain the identity denied through slavery and colonization, to overcome the historical and cultural wall. Imperialists like Winston Churchill maintained that rights and freedoms are inapplicable to non-whites and, for “African aboriginals”, civilization has no charms (Ibhawoh 2020, 44). This is the naturalized or essentialized wall. This is the negation of the humanity of the Africans. The ideational and physical walls like the Sahara Desert, the Mediterranean Sea and the walls of Ceuta and Melilla reinforce each other and keep the colonial and colonized identities apart.

Around the year 2005, Spain in particular began strengthening its walls in Ceuta and Melilla in order to keep away African irregular immigrants. However, the walls did not seem to deter them. One West African migrant said:

But they can build the fences [in Ceuta and Melilla] as high as they like, they can have as many soldiers as they like – nobody can stop us from getting through. [...] I don’t think it would be possible to go back [to my family without money] and face them with that shame. I think I would die ([BBC 2005](#)).

The historically emaciated group tries to regain its humanity by rejecting the historically and violently assigned place. In 1955, Rosa Louis Parks, from Alabama, protested against this *allocation* – she did not want *a* seat but *the* seat; the forbidden seat, reserved for whites. Her protest was about the expansion of horizons and aspirations, about freedom. The assignment of the seat was the creation of a wall. What a would-be migrant in West Africa said in 2019 – “You become a man once you have migrated” (Africa Research Bulletin 2019, 22783) – was exactly what Rosa Parks did in 1955 in Alabama; you become a human being only when you can decide by yourself where to sit. As Loprete suggests above, migration is, in this sense, a sort of initiation rite towards a new being.

In her novel, *Americanah*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie from Nigeria describes how colonialism, racism and African migration are interconnected. She shows that migration is not just about hunger, poverty or conflict but also about expanding horizons and aspirations, about looking for modernity, “civilization”, leaving behind the “backwardness.” As Adichie points out, people who do not belong to this “backward” or “uncivilized” group:

would not understand why people who were raised well-fed and watered but mired in dissatisfaction, conditioned from birth to look towards somewhere else, eternally convinced that real lives happened in that somewhere else, were now resolved to do dangerous things, illegal things, so as to leave, none of them starving, or raped, or from burned villages, but merely hungry for choice and certainty. (Adichie 2017, 276)

We could designate this “hunger for choice and certainty” as a desire to be recognized. Recognition by the model is essential for one’s being. Adichie describes how, whereas more Europeans are now moving away from processed and frozen food, many Africans – those who can afford it – are striving for it; while Europeans renovate 200-year-old mill granaries, Africans demolish and build something new; while the West makes a fetish of old things, Africans attempt to arrive first at the stage of modernity and civilizedness and overcome the “backwardness” they were told to incorporate (Adichie 2017, 436, 444).

In order to achieve this, migrants go through a rite of passage in the cultural anthropological sense to change their status in society by entering another group and a level considered to be more advanced and then to be recognized as such. Overcoming physical hindrances such as the Sahara Desert, the Mediterranean, the walls of Ceuta and Melilla or the FRONTEX surveillance systems, for example, is part of the passage process in order to achieve a new being at the destination. It is about reinventing or re- and deconstructing a certain image of the self in daily life, as Adeyanu and Oriola (2011) suggest. They talk about African migrants’ “insatiable desire for Euro-American countries” ([Adeyanu/Oriola 2011, 943](#)):

Africans’ interests in the West are rooted in three interrelated extraeconomic factors: colonial discourse, migrants’ accounts or presentation of self, and the contemporary mass media. Africans’ encounter with European colonialism had a lasting effect on their lifeworld. Colonialism amplified the difference between the self and the other by associating progress with European culture (religion, aesthetics, education, arts, philosophy, language, etc.) and primitivism and backwardness with the African other. But colonialism was also about material relations that existed within the larger context of global economic inequality that made the White individual look superior because of his or her race rather than because of his or her class ([Adeyanu/Oriola 2011, 961](#)).

Adeyanu and Oriola report a letter by two West African boys who tried to migrate to Europe: African countries were represented by these boys as a dystopia and immiserated, while Europe is presented not only as a place of comfort but also as an ethereal rescuer, characterized by love and progress ([Adeyanu/Oriola 2011, 950](#)).

The notion that the West has a higher moral value and ethical standard than Africa has probably been recycled for generations and is hence received unquestioned.

It is a conception that has become a reigning regime of truth in people's lifeworld ([Adeyanu/Oriola 2011, 960](#)).

They also suggest that "African migrants are concealing their hardships in the West from the glare of their peers back home" ([Adeyanu/Oriola 2011, 944](#)). Very often migrants lead a life of pretension and delusion. When they are in Europe they find themselves in very tense economic and social situations; when they go home on vacation, they conspicuously display material goods. Studies on migrants from Latin America in the USA or from African countries in Europe document that sometimes migrants send home photographs of skyscrapers or of beautiful cars (which are not their own) to show that they had made it, even if, in reality, they were in a precarious situation. Adeyanu and Oriola designate this as a concealed backstage, which consists of narratives of shortcomings, experiences of racism, unemployment and other disadvantages. African migrants are living in a state of delusion in their attempt to regain their identity denied by the colonizer. They live in a state of contradiction between a life aggrieved, hurt and disadvantaged by racism on the one hand and a life, on the other, which exists only in photos that show a fake good life – having a car, being well dressed and living in a city of skyscrapers ([Adeyanu/Oriola 2011, 956–957](#)).

I compare this phenomenon to Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra's (2000) *Don Quixote*. As Don Quixote idealized the life of the Knight Errant, migrants idealize the life of the civilized and developed colonizer. The deluded Don Quixote believes that he is the best Knight Errant the world has ever seen, who punishes the wicked and rewards the righteous; he believes he is the strongest man ever, even when he is defeated almost all the time by his enemies. Furthermore, he loves a woman who does not even exist; he despises Sancho Pansa, who eats and drinks like an ordinary human being. He, however, as a Knight Errant, does not care about hunger and thirst because these are just the things of the flesh and hence ephemeral. Whereas Don Quixote pursues fame incessantly, the reality pulls him down all the time. Similarly, in Dostoevsky's *The Double*, the tragic hero lives in this inner conflict between the ideal and the real himself. Initially, the main character, Golyadkin, seems to realize that he represents pitiable features. The *Double* to whom Mr. Golyadkin reveals all his secrets (rather than admitting them to himself) adopts all the negative and despicable characteristics that make up the other side of Golyadkin's nature (Dostoevsky 2013, xii; 58–59). It is about getting rid of all despicable qualities – the vices one cannot accept in oneself – transferring them to someone else, in this case to the *Double*. The most important thing here is not the construction of the *Double* as such but the desire to become and to be someone else. This desire not only leads to the doubting and denial of one's own existence but also even results in the ultimate destruction of the subject itself (Dostoevsky 2013, 180). In the case of Cervante's Don Quixote, however, we observe that, after having overcome his state of delusion, the state of pretending to be someone else, the world-famous

Knight Errant not only became sane again but also ceased to call himself Don Quixote de la Mancha instead of Alonso Quixano or even just the shepherd Quixotiz (Cervantes 2000, 973–975).

The social and historical power relations that cause the feelings of wretchedness and despicability create a gap between social values and standards on the one hand and a person's factual situation on the other. The perception of this gap and the desire to overcome it and to be recognized as an idealized social member is one important issue to be considered in migration theory. The despicability, pitiability, wretchedness and delusion which we learn from the novels of Dostoevsky and Cervantes, imply (self-)attributed "backwardness" and "uncivilizedness" thanks to (neo-)colonization. Consequently, the desire to become someone else after having migrated or having overcome the material and immaterial borders between the former colonizer and the colonized are implied in the *migro ergo sum* discussed above.

Even before migration, through consumption of Western goods and through imitating the way of life, culture, language etc. of the colonizer, the colonized would-be migrant searches for identity. However, after having migrated, his/her delusory identity depends on the recognition of it by those back home. The migrant has to show proof of owning a car and living in a city with skyscrapers like the former colonizer. Therefore, the identity of the colonized depends on the recognition received from those back home. In order to attain identity and recognition, the migrant has to send back pictures of the beautiful life in the West even if s/he is leading a wretched life in the Promised Land. The migrant gives up any aspiration to be recognized by the former colonizer because the racism with which s/he is confronted everyday does not allow this. Having overcome the walls of Ceuta and Melilla, the Sahara Desert, the Mediterranean, the person cannot overcome the wall of racism. This wall cannot be surmounted even if the migrant is successful in achieving a desired education or income. Racism becomes the dead-end, which nullifies all the aspirations to be equal. The migrant has only two options: either ending up – as in the tragedy of Mr. Golyadkin – in self-destruction by trying to be someone else incessantly or accepting oneself – like Don Quixote did in the end when he became the *shepherd* Quixotiz.

In the context of slavery and colonialism, I see migration as a postcolonial search for identity and strive for recognition. Migration is the desire to be recognized and therefore to 'be' by negating colonial and neo-colonial bordering, othering and ordering; to underscore a person's manliness in a patriarchal society and to replace the cultural-anthropological initiation rite with the scaling of fences erected to separate the mystic colonial world from the dehumanized colonized world. This tension between the desire to be recognized as an equal human being, on the one hand, and the rejection of equalization by the colonizer, on the other, is the continuation of the tension in the power relations started during the periods of exploration, slavery and colonialism.

Frantz Fanon says that the history of slavery and colonization was a history of internalization and epidermalization of inferiority (Fanon 1952, XV). “[T]he more the black Antillean assimilates the French language, the whiter he gets – i.e. the closer he becomes to becoming a true human being ... The black man entering France changes because for him the métropole is the holy of holies” (Fanon 1952, 2, 7). This shows the mystification of the colonizer, the supernatural creature. However, the history does not end there. There is a strong desire to reject this state of relationship, to negate the negation of the colonized, to regain the denied identity through modes of consumption, migration and imitation of the colonizer’s way of life. This is the process of liberation. Liberation, information and education, as Fanon would say metaphorically, awake the desire of the black man to sleep with the white woman (Fanon 1952, xviii). According to him, liberation means to set free the black man from the arsenal of complexes that germinated in a colonial situation (Fanon 1952, 14). The colonized are trying to demystify or overcome the metaphorical and physical wall between Africa and the West. Similarly, it is possible to observe such an inner conflict in the contemporary migration phenomenon. The root of this inner conflict lies in slavery and colonization at the root of which lies power.

The history of humankind is a history of power relations: the powerful try to maintain power relations, whereas the disempowered attempt to change them. As Thomas Hobbes (2017) would say, this is already proof of the equality of human beings because even the weakest are just waiting for a favorable moment to change this relationship and become dominant themselves. Similarly, as Heraclitus (1975) would say, war is the father of all things: some he makes masters, others servants.

In the migrants as well as the colonizers, there is a lot of quixotic mystification of the self. Quixotically, the colonial powers believed in their superiority in spite of their colonial brutality and barbarity. The same quixotic behavior can be observed in the colonized people, who look for their identity by imitating the colonizer and by trying to be with him at any cost, by scaling the metaphorical and physical fences which the colonizer erects. From the perspectives of the immigrants, the higher the walls, the harder they have to try to scale them because there must be something worthwhile and desirable behind them. From the perspective of the destination societies, the more the migrants attempt to climb over the dangerous fences, the stronger the perception of their cultural values, therefore, the walls must be built even higher and attempts to cross them made more dangerous to prevent irregular immigration.

6. Conclusion

Since the surge of migration to Europe which began in 2014, decision-makers have been looking for strategies to curb it. Poverty, conflict and climate change play central roles in the discussion of policy strategies. The key question of this chapter asks to what extent poverty, conflicts and climate change are the drivers of migration and whether

there are other causes that are neglected in academic discussion and policy strategies. Many racists in the West feel vindicated that Africans were incompetent in solving their problems and they themselves create conditions that force people to migrate. However, I think it is important to approach migration causes from both economic and political as well as historical-psychological perspectives.

Through interconnectedness and the availability of information, people acquire knowledge about inequality, injustice and discrimination as well as about opportunities abroad. Information means knowledge and knowledge means power – the power to not accept one's situation as destiny. Migrants decide to change their situation economically by going where there are perceived opportunities. Information instigates the power to reject cultural, political and psychological domination, exclusion, racism and oppression. Digital connectivity, education and a growing income are tearing down the historical, cultural and psychological walls that attempt to mythologize African savagery and Western supremacy.

This chapter has argued that there are psychological and historical factors that contribute to the migration decision. Migration is also caused by the desire to be recognized as an equal human being and to reject the description as the eternal bearer of the despicable. This is the *migro ergo sum*, the desire to be. Solving economic and political problems would not automatically end emigration. Therefore, firstly, the discourse on the root causes of migration should equally consider the internal as well as external historic and contemporary structural causes; secondly, there is no guarantee that the reduction of conflicts and poverty would decrease emigration.

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Leyla Safta-Zecheria¹

What does migration mean to young people on the economic periphery of the European Union?

1. Introduction

In Romania, children and young people with mobile parents have recently become the target of policy proposals, social and educational service development and even general moral panic (see Cojocaru et al. 2015). This resonates with a global trend, most notably observed in China (see [Wang/Mesman 2015](#)), as well as other countries with high levels of out- and circular migration. The term “left-behind children” is widely used in the literature. However, it is associated with the stigmatization of parents (especially mothers) who engage in migration ([Bezzi 2013](#)). To counter this process, I chose to use the term *young people with labor mobile parents* (hereafter YPMP) to describe adolescents who are still minors or have recently come of age and who have parents who live abroad for longer or shorter periods of time. This group is often discussed as part of the larger group of “left-behind” children, despite its age-related particularities. Moreover, despite the public attention for issues surrounding YPMP, the way in which this group and their peers define their situation remains understudied to date, even in the face of its obvious relevance for European-wide discourses and policies. In the present study, I understand young people as critical observers, co-investigators and co-constructors of their social realities. I center their perspective on migration by asking the question: What does migration mean to young people on the economic periphery of the European Union?

The qualitative inquiry based on participatory research methods shows that young people in a community with high levels of labor mobility relate migration to contexts of precarity and corresponding strategies for securing subsistence. Migration superficially appears as a solution after the dissolution of local employment opportunities in the context of post-socialist deindustrialization. Yet, it also appears as a loss in different ways. On the one hand, it is seen as a loss of care through the departure of a family member who is pushed into performing exploitative care labor for others abroad. These can be family members (such as parents) who were responsible for care work at home or people who are in need of care themselves (such as elderly grandparents). On the other hand, migration is seen as a loss of educational attainment through the precarious jobs that migrating young people are forced into instead of continuing their

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education in Romania. Thus, transnational migration appears to young people on the European economic periphery as both a postscript to the local economic history and a trajectory of downward social mobility. Instead of migration, continuing education in local and national settings is seen as a pathway to achieving upward social mobility. This points to the possibility of migration becoming less attractive to younger generations on the economic periphery of the European Union today. Similarly, in the present case, migration does not appear as a corrective of socio-economic inequalities in Europe but as a factor potentially deepening these inequalities.

In this chapter, I first locate my inquiry into the literature on “left-behind” children and then continue with a brief outline of my research methodology, followed by a discussion of my findings and a brief conclusion.

2. Literature review

2.1. Locating the study in the field of research

The situation of YPMP has often been dealt with as part of the literature on “left-behind” children and has, in recent years, found its way into the academic debate. The most relevant studies focus either on the children’s health (including psychological wellbeing) or their educational attainment (sometimes in relation to changing roles and responsibilities within the household).

Concerning the health impact that one or more migrating parents can have on their children, scholars seem to largely agree that the consequences are negative. A recent meta-analysis of studies dedicated to this aspect found that affected children had a higher risk of developing depression and anxiety-related disorders, as well as substance use, abuse, unintentional injury and even infectious disease ([Fellmeth et al. 2018](#)).

When it comes to the educational impact of parental migration, the results are more diverse. Building on a study from China, Feng Hu ([2013](#)) argues that, while the departure of a household member might have a negative impact on the educational performance of the children, the remittances sent back might actually improve their educational attainment. These are findings that also hold true for certain groups of Mexican migrants to the US ([Antman 2012](#)). Similarly, Battistella and Conaco ([1998](#)), who draw from data on school-aged children from the Philippines, argue that the departure of family members does not necessarily disrupt educational pathways, especially in cases where extended families’ involvement can securely compensate for parental involvement. In the Romanian context, Botezat and Pfeifer ([2020](#)) found not only that YPMP have a higher chance of developing health and emotional problems but also that they tend to have better school results than their peers.

In a recent meta-analysis of studies on this topic in China, Wang and Mesman ([2015](#)) found that migration had a negative impact on both children who themselves migrate and those whose parents are mobile. Migration affected their emotional, social and

economic development, even though these latter may also be explained through the socio-economic disadvantages that push people to migrate in the first place.

Apart from quantitative studies, qualitative scholars working on the Romanian context focused mainly on the changing nature of family relations in a transnational context ([Badea 2014](#); [Pantea 2011/2012](#)), marked by the impact of digital technologies on communication ([Nedelcu 2017](#); [Nedelcu/Wyss 2016/2020](#)). My research continues in this vein, aiming to understand what “living with migration” ([Asis 2006](#)) looks like. This is why I address the meaning-making processes of young people in relation to migration, transnational families and other social networks, as well as their local community. In my inquiry, I look at the perspectives of young people who are themselves YPMP, as well as those of their peers in their age group in order to understand the ways in which young people who are now adolescents and live in an economically peripheral part of Romania and the European Union relate to transnational processes of migration that affect their families and communities.

2.2. Context: children and young people in Romania with parents working abroad

The international research agenda is mirrored by a national research landscape on YPMP that has mainly developed since Romania’s accession to the European Union in 2007. A particularity of this context is that YPMP were initially the focus of research led by NGOs that sought to document emerging socio-educational problems in order to develop a service and policy agenda ([Munteanu and Tudor 2007](#); [Toth et al. 2007](#), 2008). This wave of research, despite its limitations (see discussion by [Cojocaru/Islam/Timofte 2015](#)), has led to establishing dedicated services for YPMP (such as the Save the Children program established in 2010: *Protection and education for the children affected by labor migration abroad* [*Protecție și educație pentru copiii afectați de migrația pentru muncă în străinătate*]) and to the legal recognition of minors whose parents work abroad as a vulnerable group.²

Another consequence of this wave of studies was that publicly collected statistical data on minors with parents working abroad are now available. These data point to large regional disparities in how widespread this situation is. In Suceava County, where the present study was conducted, as many as 5.7 percent of all children have at least one parent working abroad ([Administrația Prezidențială 2018, 25](#)). Migration is also clearly associated with precarious economic conditions and a dependency on migration-related income, since 70 percent of children with parents working abroad live in households with no local salary-based earnings ([Institutul Național de Statistică/ Institutul de Științele Educației 2018, 22](#)).

Suceava County, as part of the Romanian North-East, is often understood as an economically peripheral region in both a European and a Romanian context, because

² [Government Decree/ Hotărâre de Guvern 691/2015](#).

it is characterized by a steady post-socialist decline in terms of medium average incomes (Muntele and Ostopovici 2018). This region is also known for the post-socialist migration of its population from deindustrialized urban settings to rural locations involving a return to subsistence agriculture, as well as for migration towards other Romanian counties and European countries ([Mardale 2014](#)), leading to the high numbers of children and young people who have parents working in other counties or abroad.

3. Methodology

The research question that guided my inquiry was: *What does migration mean to young people on the economic periphery of the European Union?* To explore this issue, I invited 11 young people (five female, six male) to a four-day workshop in February 2020 where we explored the ways in which migration is visible and experienced in the local community. The young people were between 16 and 18 years old at that time and were high-school students. Some of the young people had parents living abroad, while others did not. This was a conscious choice on my part, since the aim of the inquiry was to also understand the perspective of young people in the local community and not only of YPMP themselves. All participants lived in a town in Suceava County that was known for its transnational connections to Southern and Western Europe. The workshop took place in the town's cultural community center (*cămin cultural*). Participation was voluntary and consent was sought from the parents or legal guardians of under-age participants, as well as from the participants themselves when they were of age.

The workshop was composed of several units that involved different practices: photovoice ([Wang/Burris 1997](#)), Forum Theatre (Boal 2002/2008; for social research based on Forum Theatre, see Wrentschur 2008) and qualitative research methods (e.g. interviewing) as well as ethics training. Alongside these practical activities, I also designed a collective reflective space in the form of a focus group and an individual reflective instrument in the form of an online diary that participants filled out after the workshop. The participants were also motivated to conduct interviews with locals about their experience with migration and with migrating family members in the form of a youth-led participatory action research project ([Ozer 2017](#); [Ozer/Piatt 2017](#); [Ozer et al. 2013](#)). However, this was only partially realized because of the pandemic-related lockdowns that followed shortly after the workshop was completed.

At the onset of the photovoice workshop, participants were asked to document how migration is visible in town. As part of the discussions and the training for the photovoice workshop, the participants were also given ethical prompts (such as explicitly asking for consent to photograph people) that might have led to a focus on sites and objects rather than people. Moreover, technically they were instructed by Mugar Ciumăgeanu – a psychologist and a skilled (but not professional) photographer – on how to use their smart-phone cameras to document certain elements visually, as well as how to frame pictures so as to convey emotions. The photovoice training took place on

the first day of the workshop and young people were encouraged to upload a photograph every day for the next three days to a dedicated closed Facebook group that was only visible to group members. The photograph was to be captioned in such a way as to capture the connection between the image and migration. In this chapter, I have included an analysis of the caption in relation to the objects represented in the pictures.

The focus-group interview took place at the beginning of the training sessions and documented the starting point of the process of collaboratively investigating migration in the local community. As a form of structured dialogue, the participants were invited to reflect on their experience of and contact with migration and the migration-related stories of their families, peers and neighbors. In the following, I discuss the results of the photovoice workshop and the focus-group interview, since these are the most relevant to the present research question.

4. Results

4.1. Run-down buildings and expensive cars: migration as materialized absence (results of the photovoice workshop)

Two central motifs emerge from the 21 photos uploaded to the closed Facebook page of the group: run-down buildings (15) and vehicles (6 photos). The run-down buildings represented are former sites of employment (the previous bank, an abandoned factory), deserted housing (either half-way built or traditional houses left to decay) and a deserted school. Vehicles appear in two different forms: buses appear as the vehicles of departure while expensive personal cars appear as the vehicles of return, as well as the object of desire driving a problematic motivation to seek work abroad.

Run-down and abandoned buildings are by far the most frequently represented objects in the photographs that made up the photovoice workshop. By looking closely at the abandoned buildings, it is apparent that the central motif they stand for is the loss of local employment opportunities. The most frequently presented building by individual participants is that of a former bank that was described as follows:

This building functioned as a bank in the past and it was an important source of employment opportunities for the people of this town. Today it is emptied of money and filled with history.

A building beautiful on the outside that hides so many tears and that left so much pain in its wake.

The former bank of [name of the town – removed to preserve anonymity] where the research was conducted] – a ruin of faded beauty. I wonder how many of its employees were forced to leave their homes, migrating to other places on this earth.

The bank represents the town's impressive history and the economic prosperity associated with it. The fact that it is now closed and abandoned stands for the end of this epoch. Migration appears as a phenomenon that occurs after everything has ended, a postscript to the economic history of the town, driven by the absence of employment opportunities that were once housed in such imposing buildings.

Another frequently represented motive is that of closed factories (Figure 1). Like the bank, they represent the economic depression of the community. Yet, additionally, they also stand for the change in the lives of working-class people:

A right place for the working class that is now abroad.

A true pride of the town, now in ruins... The pride it once represented, transformed into "an insufficiently high" source of income that determined migration and brought the building into this state.

Am I the only one who thinks about how many people could have remained with their loved ones if it had not come to this? [emoji removed]

Figure 1: Photograph by participant. Caption: "A right place for the working class that is now abroad".



As can be seen from the descriptions above, for the young people, the industrial past is linked to the present, characterized by migration through the notion of "ruin". Abandoned buildings appear as an afterword to the dignity of labor, a characteristic

of the state socialist working ethos. This is most clearly stated in the first quote, which addresses the working class that is now abroad, as well as in the second description that addresses the tension between the (industrial) pride of the town and the problem of insufficient earnings related to industrial activity there. Here, we can also see rhetorical questions about an alternative present in which employment opportunities would continue to exist in town, as well as the motif of families separated by the search for work abroad.

Another frequently encountered motif is that of abandoned houses:

Driven away by material and financial deprivation, more and more people chose the road of migration hoping for a better life, leaving behind houses and pained families.... After more sacrifice, some come back to consolidate what they have, with great difficulty, put aside or to build new houses, in which they put their dreams and hopes that tomorrow will be a better day but which they, in turn, leave empty because nothing has changed: the problem of lack of employment opportunities persists...

These thin threads are the last borders that separate past centuries that are on the verge of falling apart. [The photo contains an image of an ancestral home; "For sale" is written on its' walls with paint, the gate is kept from falling apart by threads that are tying it shut]. Beyond the barbed-wire fence is the story of a house that was once filled with joy, inhabited by a family who gradually declined due to emigration. Presently, it is providing shade to the overgrown weeds all around it.

A mere building that initially expresses nothing. But behind it is a tragic truth, families forced with bitterness in their hearts to leave town without the hope of a more secure and better way of making a living.

Migration. People leave behind souls or material things just to make a better living in their country, which they come to visit more and more rarely. Despite all of this, many build houses, thinking of coming back but come to leave these houses behind as abandoned construction sites.

As becomes evident from the quotes above, houses appear in two different ways: they are referred to as investments in a better home, in both a material sense and as an emotional investment in the hope to eventually return to one's native town. Both investments remain unaccomplished, houses remain left behind and construction sites abandoned. Secondly, houses (especially the "ancestral" home) appear as a link to a romanticized past of community belonging and life in a united family.

Finally, only one post has as its object a different kind of a building: a school.

Romania is losing its people, especially young people. The limited employment opportunities caused by the closing down of old factories have also led to a decrease in the number of children and, consequently, to the closing down of many schools and kindergartens. More and more parents and young people choose schools abroad; they choose a better system, so what remains are buildings in ruins... What a pity!

The abandoned school appears to be an effect of migration: the lack of employment opportunities creates a transnational circuit that allows parents to choose a different educational system for their children, a choice that some young people are also allowed to make. Thus, not only factories and houses remain in ruins but kindergartens and schools too. Migration appears to affect all spheres of life – the photographs taken during the photovoice workshop seem to suggest a ghost town. Yet, the town where these images were taken is far from being an abandoned one. What creates the impression of a ghost town is the epistemology of visualizing an absence – migration appears not only as an absence but as the active material decay of the space and infrastructure of the community.

Figure 2: Photograph by participant. Caption: “And the question is: Will they return?”



Apart from abandoned buildings that constituted the central static motif in the photo-voice workshop, participants also proposed a dynamic complementary motif: vehicles. Vehicles appeared in two forms: the bus as the collective vehicle of departure; expensive cars as the individual vehicle of occasional return home or as the object of desire and motivational driver of departure or investment of earnings. Buses invoke a form of nostalgic sympathy for those leaving (Figure 2):

I ask myself: How many of those who are leaving still recognize the term home-coming?

And the question is: Will they return?

We leave our country to have a more prosperous life and others come to our country for the same reason.

The presentation of expensive cars is neutral and sometimes even critical: the expensive car appears as a scanty priority pertaining to those who choose to leave in order to be able to afford one:

The logic of people moving abroad (mainly the guys). They want to come home with something valuable to show others that their work is worth more than three pennies. Unfortunately, most Romanians who left [to go] abroad prefer to use the money earned to buy an expensive car and not to invest in their health, the education of their children and the comfort of their home.

Beyond static (abandoned buildings) and dynamic subjects (buses and expensive cars), the descriptions of the images point to another dimension of the understanding of migration: a nostalgic pathos ridden with rhetorical questions about potential return, as well as the dis-connection from a more glorious past that appears through the repeated word "ruin". Moreover, a dimension criticizing some of the drivers of migration is also apparent, especially with regard to aspirations for short-term gains. This dimension is characterized by two elements: a general axiological criticism of choosing expensive cars over family life at home, as well as a rejection of the separation of the family unit through migration. Interestingly, migration appears as an opportunity only in one image, namely that of the ruined school, where migration is presented as an educational opportunity for the children of emigrants.

This points to the ways in which the local imaginary of transnationalism is associated with the post-socialist decay of local economic and industrial infrastructure and with it the forced separation of families in the light of economic precarity. Yet, migration is not presented as a route to transnational upward social mobility but, rather, as associated with the need for economic survival and the potential for short term, limited material gains.

4.2. Telling the tale of one's own relationship to migration (results of the focus-group interview)

The focus group represented a framework in which participants could discuss their relationship with migration especially concerning parents or other people who left for work abroad. The vast majority of the participants had an indirect experience with this phenomenon: they talked about cousins, grandparents and neighbors. A small number of participants had parents who had departed. The places that their families or neighborhoods were connected to spanned different European countries, ranging from Greece to Italy, Austria and Germany. The situations related to migration that concerned the participants included: (a) the departure of parents, (b) the departure of grandmothers to care for elderly people abroad and (c) the departure of young people who choose to migrate after completing Grade 12 education but without completing the final national examination (which allows entry to further- and higher-education programs). I expand on these situations below.

(a) The departure of parents

The departure of parents is presented as a form of rupture in nuclear family relations, yet the rupture is not permanent since, in some instances, parents may return and rebuild their parenting relationships:

I have a very good friend. When she was a little girl she was left in the care of her grandparents. Both her parents left for Greece, since you could earn more money there. They said: "Why not?" They left her with the grandparents and there was one very important episode that radically changed their lives. When the mother returned and called my friend to her: "Come my darling" – from what my friend told me, she did not recognize her and asked "Who are you?" And then her mother had a nervous breakdown and said "I shouldn't leave any more" and she stayed in the country – both parents remained in the country.

In other instances, the closure of the stories does not come from sudden change but through the acceptance of being part of a transnational family:

In my case, both my parents are away. It's been like this for three–four years and it is hard, but... they are away for money; here there is no place to work and salaries are not as good as in other places. [Follow-up question by facilitator: Have they been away long now?] They come for the holidays, they usually stay one month and a half; they don't stay longer.

The departure of parents for work abroad is seen by some of the young people as a stepping-stone to downward social mobility, based on the assumption that it has an impact on a young person's participation in education:

If the child is left at home at a young age and has not spent time in an environment where s/he can receive affection and can develop nicely, then s/he cannot develop nicely, cannot cope with school.

The lack of care is seen as having a negative impact on the educational pathways available to YPMP. Older siblings are rendered responsible for the care of young siblings, affecting their education negatively and pushing them into a direction that reproduces the migration-oriented life trajectory of their parents – implicitly associated with long-term economic precarity:

Older siblings take on the role of a parent in many cases; they come to eclipse the parents, they raise [their younger siblings].

In most cases, the older children turn into parents [approving murmurs from other participants] but they also have not benefited from the affection of a parent; they are like a dog chasing their own tail.

In a village close by there is a family with 20 children and the older ones, once they turn 18, having no education, leave for abroad. [Meanwhile] They help the younger ones grow. Continuously. Those who turned 18 went abroad and sent money home. [...] they finished high school but did not sit their final examinations.

These processes are understood by the young people as being connected to structural conditions and individual choices, as well as the predispositions of the next generation. Even if YPMP experience similar situations, they might not reproduce the same trajectories, as is visible in this conversation extract from the focus group (the quotes in this section make up a conversation):

[Young man:] There are children who see how their parents act and say “I will do the same”. But there are also children who look and say “I won’t do the same”.

[Young woman who mentioned that her parents work abroad:] Or they just simply realize that there are hardships in the world and learn, from this, that they have to study in school, go to university, work for all the things that they have.

[Same young man:] Maybe children will learn and go to university so that they do not end up in a situation where they are forced to leave and go abroad for their material goods like their parents but prefer to work hard in school, at university, so that they have a better-paid job and can stay close to the family.

[Another young woman:] Depends on the impact that the [parents’] departure had on the person.

Transnational biographies appear in the discussion among young people as inherently precarious and exploitative, whereas regional or national educational opportunities

such as studying at university appear as routes to upward social mobility and employment security. Nevertheless, attending university may also involve moving to a different city or commuting for several hours a day to the nearest university town, a point that is nevertheless not discussed in terms of migration, nor in terms of the economic resources needed to embark on this path. Keeping this in mind, it remains unclear whether migration is an outcome of the lack of economic resources needed for educational participation and attainment or whether it is a pathway to downward social mobility.

(b) The departure of grandmothers for work abroad

Another story that concerned young people is the departure of grandmothers for care work abroad, mostly coinciding with their retirement. The grandparents who should be the receivers of care leave the local setting in order to become precarious care providers in Western European countries and be exposed to health-damaging forms of exploitation:

My grandmother leaves for Germany from time to time, not very often, two–three times a year and I don't think she should. I don't like that she is away. I know she is a sensitive person [...]. She takes care of an elderly man or woman, [...] but the people there don't treat her right, they are not really respectful towards her [...]. She was supposed to take care of an elderly lady in the house, help her out with chores. They made her cut wood and other very hard work. They were aware she was elderly; she was 65 years old and they put her to physical work and she came home with back pains. [Follow-up question by facilitator: What made your grandmother leave for abroad?] Mainly, money.

Thus, the loss of care does not happen only because those members of the community and family responsible for caring are moving abroad (like in the case of migrating parents) but also because the intended objects of care (the grandmothers) migrate.

(c) The departure of young people abroad before completing school

When discussing young people in similar situations to their own, the imaginary of working abroad (earning a lot of money for work that is assumed to be easier than school or final examinations) is contrasted with their friends' life situations in which precarity and loss of educational opportunities are phenomena associated with migration:

Recently, friends of mine, who graduated one or two years ago from high school – many without completing the final examinations, saying that they will not need them abroad – went abroad and worked for some months and said "It's not good. [...] The work is too hard".

They are not interested, they think they will go to another country and they will make money easily, so why should they care about school? They chose the easier route, there is no point in continuing with school [approving murmurs from the other participants]. Yes, they get more currency for the same work they would do here. They prefer this over having an advantage later on. [They are] people who reach 18, the age of maturity. They want to see the world and yes, having more money in a better currency, euros, dollars, pounds [is something they want] and they think in the short or even medium term that this will help.

Work abroad as an alternative to school appears as an illusion that has real negative effects on the lives of those who believe in it, even trans-generationally:

Many people come to the point where they can no longer continue their studies and the work abroad is not doing them any good. They remain people with jobs that do not pay well and probably also less-educated people and may be, if I may say, from poorer families who also have more children and these children may take the same path since the situation at home will inspire the child when s/he becomes an adult.

Here, again, transnational labor-related migration is seen as a route to downward social mobility with long-term consequences and is juxtaposed with the opportunities for upwards social mobility associated with educational attainment in the local education system.

Summing up, young people discussed migration mostly in contexts connected to the precarity of local and transnational situations. Moreover, migration appears as a phenomenon of loss: a loss of care for both children and young people (who remain in town while their parents leave in search for work) and grandparents (who become providers of care abroad, in lieu of being receivers of care in the local setting). Similarly, migration appears as a loss of educational opportunities which would, in turn, lead to social mobility. Transnational migration appears as a route into downward social mobility and long-term precarious and exploitative working conditions.

However, it is unclear to what extent socio-economic vulnerability erodes care and education patterns by pushing people into bad employment and educational conditions, irrespective of their migration trajectories. Yet, as I have shown, transnational biographies are associated with precarity and medium- and long-term downward social mobility, whereas educational attainment in the local and regional settings is presented as a more viable alternative. This may point to an intersection between migration and downward social mobility in the concrete setting of contemporary Suceava County as a location on the economic periphery of Europe. These findings may be true of other post-industrial post-socialist regions on the peripheries of the common European labour market.

5. Conclusion

As I have shown in this chapter, young people in an economically peripheral European town strongly characterized by the out-migration and circular migration of parents to other European countries are connected to migration even when they themselves remain in place. Yet, this connection happens not only through their parents' departure but also through that of their grandparents, peers and neighbors. Young people begin to narrate migration as being connected to the economic depression of their community. Ruined and abandoned buildings and former or potential places of employment or housing appear as a form of anti-monument to a phenomenon that separates the past and the present, as well as families. Migration is also mediated dynamically by vehicles: buses as vehicles of a precarious and indefinite departure and expensive cars as drivers of emigration, as well as the scorned vehicles of a scantily triumphant occasional return.

Young people's narratives of migration also directly connect it with precarity, as well as with a loss of educational opportunities and of caring relationships. Educational opportunities are lost through entering labor relations abroad early, without completing their high school and university education. Care is lost when people with care responsibilities migrate for labor (as in the case of labor-mobile parents). Yet, care is also lost when the intended objects of care, such as elderly grandparents, migrate and do not receive the care that they are perceived to deserve in their local setting, while being subject to exploitative labor relations abroad.

The present inquiry has painted a somewhat gloomy picture of the ways in which transnational migration is seen by young people on the European periphery. This points to differently structured and situated experiences of transnational labor, care and education pathways in the European Union and their corresponding imaginaries of what intra-European mobility means.

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