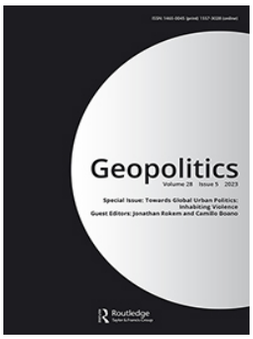

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Endurance Lost and Found: Unwanted Return and the Suspension of Time

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ABSTRACT

Involuntary returns of migrants from North Africa and Europe to West Africa have recently multiplied as part of an increased use of both deportations and Voluntary Returns by European states. This article explores male migrants' temporalities after homecoming to Senegal in a context where, according to European states and the IOM, their time is 'up' and they should 'reintegrate'. After an unwanted return to Senegal, migrants are sometimes exhausted and can no longer imagine leaving again. However, despite the suffering experienced and the time lost, many display endurance and hope for a new departure. In this context, they are not waiting on states or families to move forward. I argue that, in persevering, returnees resist the temporality imposed on them by European states in order to solve another temporal struggle – that of entering male adulthood. Ultimately, these observations question the 'effectiveness' of Voluntary Return programs as part of externalisation policies.

Introduction

Migrant returns from Europe and North Africa back to West Africa have recently multiplied due to an increased use by European states of both forced removals and Voluntary Return programs. This essay explores the temporal sensibilities of returnees to Senegal in a context where, for European states and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), migration should end and returnees should 'reintegrate'.

Over the last decade, European states and the US have continued to forcibly deport unwanted migrants to West Africa, including to Senegal. For instance, in 2017, shortly before this study was conducted, the US deported over 130 migrants by charter flight to Senegal according to reports from the Senegalese printed press.[1] European states have also forcibly removed unwanted Senegalese nationals from their territories. Furthermore, they have increasingly used Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR) or Assisted Voluntary Return

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and Reintegration (AVRR) programs coordinated by the IOM. These returns have indeed been considered less controversial and cheaper than forced removals (see, for example, Webber 2011). In recent years, European states have also used AVR/AVRR to Senegal as part of their externalisation of migration management to North African countries. Under the combined effects of externalisation measures (e.g. coastal and land surveillance, push-backs, etc.) and the political instability in North Africa, many sub-Saharan African migrants have been stranded in countries such as Niger and Libya. They have also been systematically detained and mistreated, for instance in Libya, Morocco and Algeria,[2] as well as being subject to forced or very low-paid forms of labour in the region (e.g. Brachet 2017). In this context, many migrants have been offered to take EU-funded and IOM-coordinated Voluntary Return, or they have had to come back by their own means. As migrants have often accepted to come back via these programs to avoid further mistreatment and/or detention, or because they were unable to continue their journey, their voluntary character has been challenged (e.g. Alpes 2020). These returns have been framed in humanitarian terms by European states and the IOM (Alpes 2020; Rodriguez 2019a). This has made them relatively more acceptable to both African states and their populations than deportations and, importantly, has helped secure the cooperation of African states to implement them (Mouthaan 2019). In Senegal, many migrants have returned as part of these programs: between 2017 and 2018, the period just preceding this research, 5,198 migrants came back in this way – mainly from Niger, Libya, Morocco and Mali and, by June 2021, 7,647 migrants (of which 95% were men) had done so (IOM 2021, 7, 19).[3]

Historically, in Senegal, internal and transnational mobility has been key for economic, social and personal advancement. Since the early 2000s, with the scarcity of formal employment caused by neoliberal economic reforms and related difficulty of becoming a breadwinner, as well as the growing importance of material wealth for status (Rodriguez 2015), transnational migration has been an important model of success for both women and men (see, for example, Buggenhagen 2012; Rodriguez 2017, 101–125; Tall 2008). For men, mobility has been particularly key for entering social adulthood as it has allowed them to provide materially for their family and to marry (Buggenhagen 2012; Sinatti 2014). In contrast, female adulthood has remained largely sanctioned by marriage in spite of the reality of women's economic contribution to family expenses. In the last fifteen years, Europe's tightening of its visa policies and border control (e.g. the fencing of the Ceuta and Melilla borders), together with the 'bottlenecks' of Senegal's development (Melly 2016), have left many young men in spatial, temporal and existential limbo as they have been waiting for a job or a migration opportunity to become full adults and move on

with their lives (Rodriguez 2015). Some youths have fashioned present-focused masculinities around the activity of killing time through tea-making and socialising (Ralph 2008).[4] Alternatively, youths have turned to riskier migration paths, attempting to reach Europe via the sea in wooden-boats at the cost of their lives (Melly 2011).[5] Many of them have been deported back by European states, either individually or collectively by charter flights, although deportations have been highly stigmatised in Senegal. European states have in parallel further externalised their border control to North and West African states (Andersson 2014a). Since the mid-2010s, many young men, as well as to a much smaller extent women, have taken the overland road through North Africa, crossing the Sahara and sometimes post-war Libya. The mistreatment of migrants in the region and the obstacles put on their path have forced many of them to come back.

This essay explores the temporal sensibilities of male migrants who had to return to Senegal. The temporality imposed by European states on African migrants is a 'timespace trap', Freemantle and Landau (2022) argue, as African migration is defined as conditional on development and left to the distant future (see, also, Landau 2019). This is particularly apparent in policies of return where European states and the IOM's expectations are for migration to end and for returnees to 'reintegrate'. Practically, European states' temporal power on migrants also involves a 'politics of exhaustion', that is 'the stretching over time of a combination of fractured mobility, daily violence and fundamental uncertainty' (Ansems de Vries and Guild 2019, 2157). This comprises the maintenance of migrants in temporal limbo and prolonged waiting (see, for example, Andersson 2014b; De Genova 2016; Griffiths 2014; Griffiths, Rogers, and Anderson 2013; Hasselberg 2016; Khosravi 2021; Lindberg 2022; Wyss 2022). This paper thus asks: What are migrants' temporalities after homecoming? Does return represent a 'return' to the local present and to 'reintegration' as European states and the IOM would wish or, in contrast, the beginning of a new period of waiting to catch up on lost time? Does the temporal power of European states 'exhaust' returnees or is it being resisted by them?

In the following sections, the methodology used in this research is outlined, as well as key debates in the field of time, temporality, return and migration to which the paper aims to contribute. I then provide ethnographic insight into the trajectories of two returnees, one who took Voluntary Return from North Africa and another who was deported from Europe shortly after arrival. This leads me to discuss the question of endurance. I then recount the story of a migrant who was deported from Europe after a long stay. Eventually, I address the subjects of loss in perseverance and of exhaustion following return. I conclude with the implications for the study of time, temporality, waiting, return and migration.

Methodology

This essay is based on ethnographic fieldwork I conducted in Dakar from September to November 2018, as well as follow-up conversations led during later fieldwork (January to March 2020).[6] The research took place in various neighbourhoods of the city, including in its suburbs. After the study was explained to potential participants and informed consent granted, I undertook informal and formal interviews (in French and Wolof) with about thirty migrants who came back from North Africa or Europe to Senegal against their own volition between 2013 and 2018, as well as participant observation of returnees' lives post-return. Interlocutors were found through my pre-existing network of contacts as well as through a standard snowball technique. As will become clear below, involuntary return is a sensitive issue and largely a hidden phenomenon in Dakar, which complicates access to returnees. For this reason, sustained contact with a limited number of interlocutors was favoured over one-off contacts with a larger group of returnees. My identity as a white foreign researcher could have further limited access; however, this turned out to be an advantage as the returnees I met felt that they were able to talk openly precisely because I was an outsider.

I was able to meet migrants who had experienced various kinds of return: migrants who had been forcibly deported from European countries (Belgium, Spain); had accepted Voluntary Return from European countries (Belgium); had come back as part of Assisted Voluntary Return from Niger, Libya and Tunisia – including one person who had accessed an IOM-coordinated 'reintegration' project; or had returned by their own means from Libya or Morocco. My interlocutors were all men in their twenties, thirties and forties. Although all residing in Dakar at the time of the research, they were originally either from the city of Dakar, from its suburbs or from rural areas of the country. In addition to interviews with returning migrants, I also explored the subject of involuntary return through conversations with female and male non-returnees in Dakar. Some explanation is required regarding the nature of the evidence given here. The endurance of my research participants was largely demonstrated by the suffering they had gone through, as well as their practices, social interactions and plans for the future in spite of what they had experienced. The endurance of some of them was also evidenced in their bodies; some of my interlocutors insisted that they show me the scars they kept from mistreatment inflicted on them or from bullets fired at them. I have chosen not to describe the abuse experienced by returnees here; this has been done by human rights organisations as well as journalists and risks distressing the reader. The ways in which endurance is evidenced, including the

fact that it is often not directly conveyed through speech, means that the ethnographic material presented here includes few direct quotes on endurance per se. Asking interlocutors to speak directly to that would have been an unreasonable demand on people who experienced trauma.

Time, Temporality, Return and Migration

Recent scholarship on the lives of aspiring migrants, those 'stuck in motion' (Lems and Tošić 2019) as well as irregular migrants in Europe highlights the temporal limbo, permanent waiting and inability to move forward many are faced with under restrictive migration policies. Time is often experienced by migrants as circular or slow (Lems 2019; Schielke 2019, 2020), though it unfolds in different rhythms and sequences (Griffiths 2014; Griffiths, Rogers, and Anderson 2013). In this context, many deportable migrants 'wait out' the end of their existential immobility (Hasselberg 2016; Karlsen 2021). Some migrants more actively 'wait for' a change through 'appropriating' time or doing something productive (Bendixsen and Hylland Eriksen 2018; Griffiths 2014), by preparing to leave (Achtnich 2021; Elliot 2016a) or by maintaining a state of 'wakefulness' in waiting, that is, by hoping for a different future (Khosravi 2021). Irregular migrants also deploy 'endurance', for instance by moving to other European countries (Wyss 2022). Emerging studies of time after a deportation or an involuntary return emphasise returnees' experience of being 'back to square one', as well as their feelings of time being broken (Khosravi 2018a), wasted (Silver et al. 2021) and 'stolen' (Khosravi 2018b). In some cases, deportation leads to a new circulation and thus further waiting, Khosravi (2021) argues. The frequency of re-migration following unplanned return and the related idea of an 'autonomy of deportation' (De Genova 2018) have been emphasised in the broader literature on life post-deportation/involuntary return. However, aspirations for re-migration have largely been linked to the social stigma and related despair experienced by migrants upon return as they often come back empty-handed, lack economic reintegration opportunities on return, are unable to continue supporting their kin and, from previously being providers, become dependent on them (e.g. Bob-Milliar 2012; De Genova 2018; Drotbohm 2015; Khosravi 2018a; Kleist 2018; Kleist and Bob-Milliar 2013; Schuster and Majidi 2015; Sørensen 2010). Re-migration has also been analysed as a way for returnees to assert and restore masculinity (Kleist 2017).

This essay aims to add to the above debates on time, temporality, return and migration. As will be seen, after returning, migrants are sometimes exhausted and can no longer imagine leaving again, for example after a long stay underground in Europe. That is, the 'politics of exhaustion' of European states do exhaust some migrants. However, despite the suffering experienced and the time lost, many migrants display endurance after homecoming, as opposed to moving on and fully 'reintegrating' into local society. They again found the stamina, that is, the mental

and physical strength to imagine a new departure. Also, they still hope that they can succeed through migration. Unlike aspiring migrants or those in Europe, these returnees are not waiting on others to move forward with their lives. I argue that, through their perseverance, they resist European states' 'timespace trap' in order to rise to the temporal challenge of entering male adulthood.

Falou and Ndiaga's Trajectories of Endurance

In Dakar, the stories that I heard of migrants' travel throughout North Africa and Europe were stories of mobility, of alternated spatial stuckness, as well as of constrained returns. But they were also stories of endurance, of perseverance lost and then renewed. This was apparent in the trajectories of returnees I met like those of Falou and Ndiaga.[7]

Falou was a 26-year-old shoemaker from Yeumbeul in the Dakar suburbs. I was given his contact by another returnee. Falou was eager to talk to me which, he said, he had not done to many others before. In 2012, Falou left for Mali. Falou spent two years working there in his profession. After having left his earnings with his boss, Falou left for Niger, passing through Niamey and Agadez, and then for Algeria where he also worked as a shoemaker. Falou then travelled to Libya, where he was forced into labour by armed men. In Tripoli he attempted the crossing to Italy three times without success. Every time, Falou was captured, sold and detained by officials and non-officials. In detention, Falou was tortured and shot in the leg. He saved his life by working as a translator-middleman and as a cook in prison. Falou paid large sums of money to be released from detention and to cross to Italy, using the money he had left in Mali. For three years he had provided no news to his family. Early 2016, Falou's parents organised a funeral for him after they received a text message from a fellow migrant saying that Falou had drowned off the Libyan coast in an attempt to make the crossing. In the end Falou managed to escape detention, leave Libya and reach Tunisia. In April 2016, Falou returned to Senegal in a flight organised by the IOM.

Falou was well known in the Dakar neighbourhood where he worked. When I met him in 2018, some knew that he had 'travelled'. However, they knew little more than that. Falou had only recounted his story to family members and close friends, and was not the only one to keep his homecoming and the difficulties he had encountered private. In fact, when I mentioned to acquaintances that I was researching the recent unplanned homecomings of migrants, I was initially told that many migrants had recently come back, whether from North Africa, Europe or the US, but that I would not meet them. 'They are hiding', I was repeatedly told. Some would say pre-emptively that 'Personally, I don't know any returnees or deportees', or warn that 'Some of them cut ties with their families on return'. Others would more openly explain that 'Those who come back do not talk about it. It is others who come to the conclusion that they have had to come back', thus

hinting at the observations and guesswork taking place around returns. For Falou and others, sharing with parents what had been experienced en route meant reliving traumatic events and causing pain to others. But also, and importantly, departures had often been undertaken against parents' advice, and had put families in considerable financial trouble. Returnees like Falou had typically spent up to CFA 700,000 (about £900) en route. To allow them to pursue the journey and cross borders, as well as to leave detention centres, parents had often sold sheep and goats, sometimes even the family house. Debts had also been run up. In fact, the guilt, together with the need to generate an income, convinced many returnees like Falou to establish themselves independently in Dakar on their return, or in the houses of friends or other kin, as opposed to rejoining the family home.

Outside the family, discretion was also necessary for Falou because of frequent social disapproval of overland migration and the risk of being asked questions such as: 'Why did you leave? Are you mad?'. When Falou's friends were taken into confidence about returns and journeys, some showed understanding and said things like 'It's hard!', 'You are lucky not to have died' or 'It is God who wanted you to come back!'. Also, saying 'I have done Libya' (J'ai fait la Libye) was sometimes followed by the response: 'You are a man!'. However, for returnees like Falou sharing that they had to come back and what they had gone through more often led to challenges to their masculinity than to acknowledgement of it. Some youths would say to them 'You came back because you were scared'. Others simply did not believe what was recounted. Many returnees I met themselves thought that, as men, migrants should be strong and not fear hardship or obstacles. They pointed out Wolof sayings highlighting that a man should not avoid difficulties and that hardship only affects men. As for girlfriends, Falou reckoned that experiences en route could not be shared with them, and that even return was better not mentioned as families would not be interested in a (moneyless) returnee.

In fact, in his daily interactions with others, Falou did his best to reintegrate into Dakar's social fabric and give the impression that he had not left in the first place. Or, he would say that he had been away travelling to a neighbouring country, for instance to Guinea Bissau. His focus was largely on generating an income. To accumulate resources, Falou went back to his previous income-generating activity, working as a shoemaker. Others I met who had come back from North Africa had similarly returned to low-paying jobs such as being a labourer on building sites or a street-seller. Maintaining a social life for them, including thinking about marriage prospects, was considered secondary. But also, despite the abuse endured, their minds were focused on new plans for leaving. Like many who had had to come back from Libya, Falou talked of his wish to 'leave legally' by plane if he managed to obtain a visa. Otherwise, he said, he would 'try [his] luck' (tenter [sa] chance) via

Morocco'. Others I met who had returned from Libya or Niger now considered taking the sea with a wooden-boat. Falou was hopeful that he could succeed if he persevered. Referring to his belief in God, he would say that 'One needs to believe in something' (Il faut croire en quelque chose). God had maybe wanted him to return, but this did not mean that He could not help him in future travels. But also and importantly, Falou would observe that 'Even if ninety per cent fail, there are still ten per cent who succeed'. When I mentioned to him the obstacles put in migrants' path by European externalisation policies on Senegalese coasts and in North Africa, he brushed this away with a movement of the hand and a Wolof proverb: 'Here one says that "everything that is done by the hand can be undone by the hand" (Lépp loxo def, loxo mene ko dindi): [for instance] when someone has received a spell (a été marabouté), it is still possible to find a stronger marabout to remove the spell. [Despite the restrictions] it is always possible to find a way through'. Falou and the others would indeed regularly refer to themselves as 'prisoners' in Senegal who had to 'find little doors' (trouver des petites portes) to come out. All Falou needed now was to keep going and a bit of a 'luck'.

The migrants I met who had come back from North Africa often appeared to have found strength again for a new departure. But similarly, those who had been deported from Europe shortly after arrival also hoped to be able to leave again. Take the example of Ndiaga, a man in his thirties from the region of Kolda, divorced with two children. I was introduced to him by an acquaintance who worked with him, who was himself looking to leave and to whom Ndiaga had ended up telling that he too had tried the journey. In his twenties, Ndiaga lived off the land, cultivating groundnut and millet in his village. He then decided to go to Mauritania to work as a watchman on construction sites. Whilst there, Ndiaga tried four times to leave by wooden-boat. Every time he was intercepted by patrolling Spanish helicopters and brought back to Mauritania. On a fifth attempt in 2013, he finally managed to reach the Canary Islands by wooden-boat. Twenty-five days later, however, he was repatriated with the sum of CFA 10,000 (about £13) and a sandwich. After shortly returning to agricultural work in Kolda, Ndiaga went to Dakar to work. When I met him, he worked as a watchman in a second-hand furniture store. Few people around him in Dakar knew of his attempts to leave. In spite of the money he had lost and the fact that he was keen to avoid travelling again in a wooden-boat if possible, Ndiaga was trying to find an opportunity to leave. He explained to me why he kept trying as follows: 'What happened to me is linked to God (Ce qui est arrivé est lié au Bon Dieu). (. . .) In Kolda, people believe in God. They think that, if you come back, it is because you have been unlucky (A Kolda, les gens croient au Bon Dieu. Ils pensent que si tu reviens, c'est parce que cela n'a pas été ta chance)'. He continued: 'For me too, as long as there is life, there is hope (Pour moi aussi, tant qu'il y a de la vie, il y a de l'espoir)'. Ndiaga was

indeed still alive. In comparison to the risk of dying that he had taken and was ready to take again, the risk that he might have to come back once more did not appear very significant. Ndiaga would just contend that 'with a little bit of luck' he would finally be able to make it like others he knew in Kolda who had been repatriated but were now in Spain and had become successful back home.

Endurance, the Suspension of Time and a Masculine Ideal

The trajectories of my interlocutors who came back from North Africa, or were deported shortly after arriving in Europe, highlight migrants' encounters with the 'politics of exhaustion' of European states. The obstacles placed in their way and the abuse perpetrated against them in North Africa caused significant psychological and physical distress. Falou was subject to forced labour and then was sold, detained and tortured. Three times he unsuccessfully attempted the crossing between Libya and Italy. During three years he provided no news to his family. Ndiaga also risked his life and went through the trauma of the crossing by wooden-boat. The returnees I met also lost considerable financial resources as well as time. Falou paid large sums of money to be released from detention and for the crossings to Italy. Ndiaga attempted five times to reach the Canary Islands by wooden-boat and, when finally successful, was deported back.

Despite the hardship experienced and the losses incurred, my interlocutors who came back from North Africa, or who were deported after briefly arriving in Europe, displayed endurance as opposed to showing exhaustion or despair. Their endurance differs from Hage's (2009) notion of endurance as 'waiting out' the crisis or as heroic resilience in stasis, that is, as a form of self-government where taking more revolutionary pathways to change things is avoided. My interlocutors' perseverance involved an active and future-oriented hope (Zigon 2009) and a dynamic process of 'place-making' (Lems 2018). After having found their mental and physical strength again, they imaginarily 'emplaced' themselves outside Senegal (usually in Europe) and worked to get there, as opposed to projecting themselves locally and 'reintegrating' as European states and the IOM would have liked them to do. My research participant who had benefitted from an IOM 'reintegration' project was no exception in this respect; he was also hoping to leave. To gather the necessary resources for a new journey, Falou, Ndiaga and others focused on work and income-generation. In contrast to Dakar youths who normally invest considerable amounts of time in both work and socialising, they spent little time hanging out, not to mention trying to find a potential marriage partner. They also stayed alert to travel opportunities that might arise in their social networks. In this context, they displayed a 'judicious opportunism' (Johnson-Hanks 2005) as opposed to following strictly pre-established plans. Their life was thus active and productive similar to the 'wait' of African

migrants stuck in Libya (Achtnich 2021); it did not resemble an empty time. Simultaneous to their imaginary emplacement elsewhere, my interlocutors tried to appear to others in their Dakar environment as locally 'emplaced'. This involved keeping discreet on the subject of suffering experienced abroad, on returns and, importantly, on new plans for departure. For instance, Ndiaga's work colleagues did not know of his migration past nor of his future plans. In fact, when they could, my interlocutors did their best to appear as if they had not left in the first place. This was often possible as departures themselves had been kept private.[8]

Returnees' endurance cannot be separated from the existential limbo they faced before departure and that was left unresolved upon return, nor can it be separated from a specific ideal of masculinity. As discussed earlier, in the near-absence of decent income-generating opportunities, migration is a way for many young men in Senegal to become breadwinners in their families, marry and, in this way, become full social adults. With the difficulty of affording a visa, for many young men with little education or from rural and economically deprived urban areas, reaching male adulthood and avoiding being stuck existentially in Senegal has come to increasingly involve overcoming risks (see also Melly 2011). This was reflected in the narratives of youths I met, on their readiness to travel by sea or through the desert in spite of their knowledge of the dangers of these roads. This was also reflected in returnees' use of Wolof sayings emphasising that men had to be courageous and not fear hardship. Youths around Falou sometimes thought that to have gone to Libya was a proof of masculinity, but equally considered that those who had returned from North Africa should have shown more courage to overcome obstacles en route and not come back (see, Kleist 2017, for similar perceptions in Ghana of returns from Libya). This equation of masculinity with mental and physical strength and risk-taking is, however, contested in Dakar. Taking overland and sea migration routes and drawing new plans for departure have become challenged in recent years. New narratives on what is humanly acceptable in mobility is conveyed by senior people, some young women as well as members of the middle-class. Their argument is that those who take the overland road take too much of a risk (see the comments made to Falou that he was 'mad' to have travelled to Libya); perseverance, they argue, should rather be used to succeed now at home and migration plans abandoned. Over the last few years, with the mediatisation of the abuse perpetrated in North Africa towards sub-Saharan African migrants, the increasing instance of unplanned returns, together with the urgency to provide for families, new practices have also emerged in Dakar. Many middle-class urban young men have started to focus again on making a livelihood and succeeding locally. For instance, fieldwork undertaken in 2018 and 2020 highlighted that some of my young male acquaintances, who years earlier largely focused on trying to leave the country, were now practically and mentally invested in developing income-generating

activities in Dakar and not actively pursuing plans to leave. My interlocutors' discretion upon homecoming cannot be separated from this debate on the necessity versus the irrationality of risk-taking in migration.

Moreover, the hope of the returnees I met was fuelled by the idea that migration is an unpredictable lottery in which success and failure are related more to 'luck' and an ability to find ways around migration policies than to the fair application of such policies (on similar perceptions in relation to the legalisation process and deportation system in Europe, see, for example, Alpes 2017; Belloni 2016; Karlsen 2021; Wyss 2022, 99–126). This was apparent in Falou and Ndiaga's narratives on the 'little doors' they had to find and on the fact that they needed to keep trying to succeed. My interlocutors' perseverance was also supported by their religious faith and the idea that, as Sufi Muslims, they should actively work to improve their fate (see also Di Nunzio 2015; Elliot 2016b; Gaibazzi 2015).

By projecting themselves elsewhere, focusing on income-generation rather than on social life, finding a way to leave as well as keeping discreet about their migration past and future, my interlocutors tried to avoid being again temporally suspended and unable to access social male adulthood. That is, they considered dealing with the uncertainties, the waiting and the potential spatial and temporal immobilities of the European migration regime, including the risk of being returned and 'back to square one', as necessary to solve the limbo linked to gender and age they faced at home.

Many aspiring migrants in Africa wait on states to grant them a visa, as well as on families' resources, blessings and/or connections to travel (Elliot 2016a). Irregular migrants in Europe are also nowadays often forced to wait on European states' decisions to carry on with their lives (e.g. Bendixsen and Hylland Eriksen 2018; Griffiths 2014; Hasselberg 2016; Karlsen 2021; Lems 2019). In contrast, my interlocutors were not waiting on others to move forward. They were not counting on states' response to visa applications – the cost of a visa being beyond the reach of many youths in deprived areas.[9] Nor were they counting (anymore) on families' approval or support in a new departure or to continue their journey; rather, they felt the urgency to redeem themselves for the loss in resources they had caused them. Before their initial departure, many of my interlocutors had already 'distanced' themselves from their communities by leaving without their parents' backing. With the rise in obstacles to movement and dangers on the overland road, departures from Senegal have indeed been increasingly undertaken without or even against parental consent, and financial support only negotiated when en route (by which time parental refusal is nearly impossible). Additionally, costly journeys had often put families in great financial trouble, including in debt. Under these circumstances, although their families might have still hoped that they would eventually succeed through migration, my interlocutors were 'lone' entrepreneurs of their mobility.[10] More broadly, life after return was a lonely

experience. Abuse endured en route, the difficulties encountered abroad and the need to come back were experienced as highly distressing. Returnees did not downplay the impact returning had on them, unlike, for instance, undocumented Zimbabwean migrants in Botswana who consider deportability and deportation as unfair and painful but also part of normal life (Galvin 2015). Although kin were usually aware of returnees' aborted travels, sharing the suffering experienced en route with them was often not possible. Should returnees' social position upon homecoming as neither here nor there be associated with a state of 'liminality' (Turner 1967)? Similar to rites of passage, the 'betwixt and between' position of returnees was potentially transformative with arrival in Europe allowing for transition to male adulthood. However, unlike in many rites of passage in which time is linear and the end of the intermediary phase well-defined, in the current migration context time is non-linear and the end of returnees' liminality highly uncertain. The social position of returnees can, perhaps, more usefully be seen as being part of the migration journey.

Falou and Cheikh's Challenged Endurance

Tired and broken by his stay in Libya, Falou eventually came back from Tunisia as part of an Assisted Voluntary Return program. Only well after his homecoming did he again find the strength to imagine a new departure. However, not all who lost stamina en route come back. In Dakar, the situation of Senegalese migrants ostensibly on their way to Europe in Tangier, who had been 'stuck there' for years (*coincés là-bas*) but were unable to come back, was a recurrent subject of conversation among non-returnees. Senegalese migrants in Tangier were typically described as tired of trying to make ends meet in Morocco and of failing to make the crossing and, simultaneously, as being too ashamed as men to come back. Moreover, among the migrants who returned that I met, not all found the courage to imagine a new departure. For instance, Cheikh's endurance appeared durably challenged.

Cheikh had been deported from Belgium in 2016, after spending 17 years working as a street-seller across Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands. Despite the shame of not having brought back anything substantial after many years in Europe and his feeling of despair, Cheikh had ended up resigning himself to making a living locally. Cheikh recounted his return to me in this way. On his return, he went to find a close friend and stayed with him, until he found the courage to join the family house in the Dakar suburbs of Thiaroye. His homecoming, accompanied by neither money nor suitcases, provoked a crisis. When he explained to his family that he was undocumented and had been caught by the police in the street, they initially did not believe him, partly because all these years he had sent CFA 100,000 (£134) a month to his parents, the equivalent of a reasonable local salary. In the end, he told me, his mother asked him not to

reveal his deportation to anyone outside the family. People in the neighbourhood, however, quickly started asking her questions: 'Your son came back, what has he brought back for you?'. She would just reply 'He has come back. He is going to leave again'. To try to avoid being asked questions, ultimately being considered as failures (ratés) by others, being avoided by all and 'fled' (fuits) by women for having no money, other deportees would dress well and reveal the reason of their homecomings to no one. Or they would go and live somewhere where no one knew them, where they could start anew and maybe find a wife. To have entered Europe but come back with nothing substantial was too shameful. So, the view of those who had to come back from Europe was often that it was better to leave it to people's imagination than to reveal the real circumstances of homecomings. Coming back to the case of Cheikh: the truth about his return became rapidly known in his neighbourhood as compatriots in Belgium passed on the account to their families, who quickly passed it on further. Two years on, Cheikh admitted that 'People [in the neighbourhood] have understood what happened, but I am still ashamed. People say "You spent 17 years of your life in Europe and you haven't got CFA 100 in your pocket!"'. The family compound remained an assemblage of little wooden shacks, as opposed to having become a solid house during Cheikh's years abroad. After his return, Cheikh's mother had wanted him to go back to Belgium. One of his deported friends had also managed to travel back to France after his siblings clubbed together to pay for the journey. Cheikh's father, however, thought that, after all the time that he had spent in Europe, he should rather search for opportunities locally. Since then, for a living Cheikh sold second-hand mobile phones in a local market. He had also managed to marry someone who did not mind that he had been deported. Thanks to his activity, he was able to earn CFA 6,000 to CFA 7,000 daily, which allowed him to contribute CFA 4,000 to his parents' and wife's day-to-day expenses. Sometimes Cheikh would meet with other deportees and together they would, as he put it, fondly 'remember' life in Europe. On some level, he was contemplating leaving again. However, this seemed more of a far-away dream than a concrete plan. Also, he thought that, after all, maybe God had wanted him to return.

The Intermittence of Endurance and the Eventuality of Exhaustion

The cases of Falou, Cheikh and the Senegalese migrants stuck in Tangier all highlight that migrants' endurance is not continuous; it changes, fluctuates over time, as opposed to staying constant. Echeverri Zuluaga (2015) convincingly argues that the movements of West African migrants nowadays are 'spasmodic' in nature and follow 'uneven rhythms' between moments of waiting and rushing. I contend that returnees' temporal sensibilities are similarly discontinuous. Between the moments of waiting and rushing, endurance can be kept intact, but it can also fade. However, a loss in stamina does not necessarily lead migrants to backtrack. The idea that men should be able to

overcome obstacles on their way, plays a key role in keeping migrants on the roads. This is illustrated by the case of the Senegalese migrants in Morocco who, as men, are unable to return in spite of their fatigue. Therefore, relations between migrants' temporal subjectivities and spatiality are complex and challenge the assumption that on the move endurance is necessarily kept and, conversely, that in spatial immobility despair inevitably takes over.

Also, migrants' endurance is not infinite, but can be exhausted. That is, the 'politics of exhaustion' (Ansems de Vries and Guild 2019) of European states end up wearing down some migrants. Migrants facing deportation in the United Kingdom who cannot bear to wait any longer for a decision on their case or bear the state surveillance practices come to 'want' to be deported, Hasselberg (2016, 96–124) points out. Illegal migrants in Norway similarly 'wait out' the crisis, that is, for something to happen and for the limbo linked to their situation of illegality to end (Karlsen 2021). However, migrants' exhaustion is not caused only by their wait for European states' decisions (i.e. to stay, be able to work or study or to access specific services) or their temporal limbo in Europe. Their inability to keep going is also related to the little progress made abroad relative to their temporal struggle back home. Some of the returnees I met had been deported after having spent many years underground in Europe. They had worked there intensively (albeit without legal documents) and thus not lived in complete stasis. However, they were physically and mentally drained by the effort, time and resources they had put in relative to what they had achieved in their families. Cheikh, for instance, had spent nearly two decades living and working undocumented in Europe and during this time had not managed to improve the family house or become financially secure. These migrants had lost hope of succeeding through mobility. Importantly, their families' hopes that they would succeed in this way were themselves shattered. Under these conditions, migrants had ended up resigning themselves to making a life locally. The role of families highlights that returnees' resignation to stay 'put' cannot be reduced to their individual experiences of the 'politics of exhaustion'. It also hints at the pressure (to keep going versus to give up) that families' expectations and migration policies together exert on returnees. Ultimately, the phenomenon of exhaustion brings some nuance to the idea of the 'autonomy of deportation' (De Genova 2018, 149), that is, the idea that involuntary return is necessarily followed by a new departure or an intention to leave.

The 'emplacement' in their families and communities of returnees who had been deported after a long stay in Europe, or even had come back from there as part of a Voluntary Return, was particularly challenging. These returns were initially camouflaged to avoid the shame of coming back empty-handed (see, also, Alpes 2017). However, their circumstances were hard to conceal due to the time spent overseas by deportees as well as others' knowledge of their lives in Europe. (This is in contrast with deportations occurring shortly after arrival

in Europe, or returns from North Africa, where migrants' movements were usually kept private or within the family). Returnees thus experienced feelings of estrangement and social isolation similar to those often described in the post-deportation/involuntary-return literature (see, for example, Bob-Milliar 2012; Drotbohm 2015; Khosravi 2018a; Kleist 2018; Kleist and Bob-Milliar 2013; Schuster and Majidi 2015; Sørensen 2010). My interlocutors also knew that, in the opinion of others, their time was 'up' in the sense that they had missed their chance to succeed in Europe. Their focus was usually on the present, as well as on a nostalgically viewed past in Europe. Cheikh's temporal struggle was made a little easier by the fact that he had been able to marry and, through that (i.e. by showing that he could sustain a family), to become a man.

Conclusion

European states currently govern unwanted migrants through a state of uncertainty, a 'politics of exhaustion' as well as the imposition on them of a particular temporality. The temporal sensibilities of involuntary returnees to Senegal highlight that, after being returned, migrants are sometimes exhausted and can no longer imagine leaving again, as for instance after a long stay underground in Europe. They have lost their mental and physical strength, but also their and their families' hopes – that they can still succeed through migration – have been shattered. However, despite the suffering experienced and the time lost, many returnees display endurance after homecoming, as opposed to moving on and fully 'reintegrating' into local society. Supported by a masculine ideal of risk-taking, they have again found the stamina to imagine a new departure. Moreover, they still hope that, luck allowing, they can succeed through migration. Their perseverance is a driving force because, unlike aspiring or deportable migrants, returnees are not waiting on others – whether states or families – to move forward with their lives. Through this endurance, European states' 'timespace trap' (Freemantle and Landau 2022), their 'politics of exhaustion', including the maintenance of migrants in a temporal limbo and the theft of their time (Khosravi 2018b), are being resisted. However, in persevering, the returnees I met do not attempt to counter European temporal power for its own sake, but rather attempt to meet the temporal challenge of entering male adulthood. In other words, they deal with the temporal uncertainties coming with migration to Europe to avoid being again suspended in youthhood at home. This highlights that the ways in which migrants interact with the migration regime cannot be separated from the other temporalities migrants live in. Returnees' endurance also suggests that temporalities post-return can be part of non-linear migration journeys rather than being distinct from them. In other words, migration and return might be more productively analysed together than as separate categories.

Ultimately, these findings question the 'effectiveness' of Voluntary Return programs as part of externalisation policies. IOM-coordinated 'reintegration' following these returns is based on the idea that African youths should in present times stay sedentary and 'develop' their country and that migration should be left to the distant future (Freemantle and Landau 2022). However, for the returnees I encountered, 'development' is more likely to be achieved through remittances than what they often see as hypothetical 'reintegration' projects (see, also, Alpes 2020). Also, 'reintegration' cannot be taken for granted when for many 'integration' in the local labour market never took place, and when social life before departure was marked by a protracted youth status. For many returnees, the surest way to contribute to local development is therefore to migrate in the present time, rather than leave it to a far-away future. Under these conditions, Voluntary Return programs might provide some assistance to migrants who are stranded and/or face human rights abuse en route, including as part of the out-sourcing of European migration management to third states. However, rather than resulting in returnees staying 'put', they have become part of increasingly protracted migration journeys. In this respect, they have much in common with other externalisation measures such as 'information campaigns' and sea and border surveillance (see, among many others, Andersson 2014a; Rodriguez 2019b).

Notes

1. See, for instance, Le Quotidien. 22/02/2017. Expulsion – Séjour irrégulier, délits financiers, traffics, … : Donald Trump, 137 Sénégalais, https://lequotidien.sn/expulsion-sejour-irregulier-delits-financiers-trafics-donald-trump-137-senegalais/ (Accessed 21/06/2023)
2. See, for instance, https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/12/mena-governments-must-end-discriminatory-crackdowns-and-abuse-of-migrants/ (Accessed 26th April 2022)
3. This figure is for worldwide returns to Senegal in the period 2017 to June 2021. It comprises both Assisted Voluntary Returns and Reintegration (AVRR) and Voluntary Humanitarian Returns (VHR) (e.g. returns operated to evacuate people following the 2011 conflict in Libya).
4. Bored youths in others contexts have similarly created masculine identities through practices and temporalities of 'timepass' (see, for example, Jeffrey 2010, on India; Mains 2011, on khat-chewing in Ethiopia; Masquelier 2013, on tea-making in Niger).
5. While transnational Senegalese migrations outside Africa were for a long time directed mainly towards Europe and the US, new directions have also been taken to regions such as the Gulf states, China and Latin America.
6. Ethical approval for this research was obtained from the University of Oxford Department of International Development's Departmental Research Ethics Committee (DREC).
7. All names used here are pseudonyms.

8. Migration plans in Senegal, as in other African contexts, are usually maintained confidential until arrival at the final destination to avoid the jealousy of others and any attempts at preventing departure.
9. Obtaining a visa through an intermediary, together with a plane ticket, costed about CFA 3 million (£4,000) in 2018.
10. Returnees were 'on their own' in the sense that they usually were not able to count on their parents to help them leave. This did not mean that they could not count on the support of other migrants in their travel and its organisation.

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