

Panel 75: Migration reshaping the landscape of African development: bridging the theory-practice and sending-receiving gaps.

The Migration and Development nexus in Burkina Faso

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A current research project of the OECD is called gaining from migration which I think captures nicely the core of the present debate on migration and development. In the following case study, I will attempt to show how this discourse on gaining from migration resonates within current development politics in Burkina Faso. What is there to gain from migration in this particular country? What is the focus of Burkinabè policy in contrast to the policy programme of the European Union? And is there a chance to find a common approach?

Concerning my background and my particular approach to the topic: I am a Social Anthropologist writing a PhD-thesis on the conflicts and reintegration of Burkinabè migrants coming back to Burkina Faso from Côte d'Ivoire, the so-called "rapatriés". But I am also working part-time for the German development cooperation on issues of migration and development. Therefore, I'm very aware of - and maybe even a bit too absorbed by - the international and the European political debates on migration. However, when looking at my field site in South-Western Burkina Faso, I feel estranged from the discussion at the European level, because that discussion does not sufficiently take into account the life reality of the people concerned, namely in this case potential or actual migrants and their families from Western Africa. Therefore, in the following I will not get into the details of the European debate but rather focus on what is going on in Burkina Faso in the area of migration. The material I am going to present here is nothing particularly new or innovative, but rather a collection of public information on activities going on right now and interviews I carried out last year on a fieldtrip to the country.

A few introductory words on European migration politics: Implicitly, much of the migration and development debate is about South-North migration, because the EU, who

is one of the main players in this debate, is faced with the problem of irregular migration from North and West Africa via the Mediterranean and from the Middle East and Central Asia via South-East Europe. Therefore, the reduction of irregular migration is the main focus for the two central political documents shaping EU policy on migration, namely the Hague Programme from 2004 and the Global Approach to Migration from 2005. Although development cooperation in these documents is presented as integral part of a coherent approach to worldwide migration, it very often appears rather as a carrot on a stick: An offer meant to induce countries of origin to comply with the readmission and control policies of the EU. Regional or internal migration, that are very important for most developing countries, are mentioned now and again, but they are certainly not the focus of the whole debate.

The migration and development agenda consist - from a European perspective - in two parts:

- 1) **Reduction of migration pressures** through what is called “fighting the root causes of migration” like e.g. poverty, unemployment and conflict. If life perspectives are missing and income gaps are wide, migration is very likely to occur. Therefore, the fight against poverty is said to reduce the propensity to migrate, and people would stay where they are. This part of the agenda could be equated with the aims of development policy as a whole. The migration hump theory that more development might initially induce more migration - has not entered and certainly not altered the discussion on this often voiced link.
- 2) **Enhancement of positive effects** of existing migration (like remittances or diaspora engagement) and **minimization of its negative effects** (like lost labour or brain drain). This part is pretty much played down to a solely technical problem within development cooperation which could be solved with a little more commitment on the side of donor agencies and a successive spreading of best practices in developing countries.

How is this political set-up mirrored in the countries of origin? In the following, I will look at the example of Burkina Faso. What are the implications of migration for development in Burkina Faso

Situation in Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso has a very **high emigration rate**. Although numbers are hard to obtain, estimates range from 3 to 6 million Burkinabè living outside the country which itself has a population of about 13 million inhabitants. There is a general picture that *contrary* to nationals from other West African countries like Ghana and Nigeria, Burkinabè migrate only to a small degree to Europe or the US (roughly 5000 Burkinabè are counted on each continent)¹. The largest group of migrants certainly remains within the West African region. Due to migration patterns enforced and established during colonial times, 70% of the international migrants used to go to neighbouring Côte d'Ivoire. These were mostly young men seeking wage labour on coffee, cocoa and rubber plantations. Over time, their settlement became permanent, and from the stock of roughly 2.3 Mio. Burkinabè counted by the end of the 1990ies in Côte d'Ivoire, 53% had already been born there (Ministère de l'économie et du développement 2006:8). When the Ivorian conflict broke out in 2002, nearly half a million Burkinabè returned to Burkina Faso. Therefore, when it comes to migration issues, the link between the two countries, their (former) economic symbiosis and the current flux and reflux is what currently affects Burkinabè politics and every day life most markedly.

There is also a large quantity of **internal migration** within Burkina Faso, mostly from the densely populated central plateau towards the South and South-West of the country. It is mainly rural-rural migration in search of available non-degraded plots of lands. Urbanisation remains quite low (about 15.5% of the population live in the two main cities Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso), but there is also a certain degree of rural-urban migration. Its most interesting feature is, that in 70% of the cases it is undertaken by

¹ « Du côté de l'Europe, ce sont la France (2 280), l'Italie (1 263), l'Allemagne (1 172) et la Suisse (118) qui sont les pays de choix des Burkinabè au 1er janvier 1998 (cf. Eurostat, 1999). L'émigration burkinabè qui a connu un regain ces dernières années va aussi se diriger en Amérique du Nord, c'est-à-dire au Canada et aux Etats-Unis. 4 905 Burkinabè y séjournent régulièrement (cf. INS, immigration statistical yearbook, 2000). » (aus : Kindo 2005)

women who seek work as peddlers or house keepers (Ministère de l'économie et du développement 2006:10).

Burkina Faso comes in fourth last position in the Human Development Report 2006, meaning that it has one of the lowest life expectancies, literacy rates and GNP per capita world wide. According to these standards, EU migration policy should be much more concerned with development issues, because there migration is seen as a result of and closely correlated with poverty. In Burkina Faso, however, migration is not simply seen as an outcome of poverty. Instead, migration figures as an important livelihood diversification strategy, as **a strategy to fight poverty**: It allows to supplement subsistence economy and to have access to money, therefore, migrants can support their families' education, health or construction plans.

The **migration hump** theory suggests that an increase in wealth would initially raise emigration levels as travel becomes more affordable. This is mirrored in economic studies about intercontinental vs. regional migration from Burkina Faso (Wouterse and Berg 2004): Only the better-off can afford intercontinental migration to Europe or the US, whereas the poorer migrants stay within the region. But because gains from intercontinental migration are expected to be much higher than those from regional migration, the former type is the general aspiration.

Between 1980 and 2001 Burkina Faso has received an average of 45 billion Fcfa as **remittances** per year (which equals approximately 69 Mio. Euro) (source: interview with CSBE). The amount was equivalent to between 3 to 4% of GNP but has been declining in recent years, particularly in 2003 due to the return migration from Côte d'Ivoire and the associated loss of income for migrants. Negative repercussions of this decline of remittances on the Burkinabè economy as a whole or on the health and educational situation of single families can be assumed but to my knowledge, there has not yet been research on the exact link between remittances and development in Burkina Faso that goes beyond the general but unsatisfactory statement that more money would allow for more development.

Practical aspects

In the following, I will introduce the organisational structures in Burkina Faso that are concerned with migration. Apart from the International Organisations like ILO, IOM and UNFPA there are quite a few national organisations dealing with different aspects of migration in the country.

Conseil National de la Population (CONAPO): The National Advisory Council on Population (CONAPO) is an inter-ministerial structure attached to the Ministry of Economy and Development) and is responsible for activities on population related issues. It has also been the driving force in organizing last year's big conference on migration and development, which was prepared through a series of base studies on various aspects of the topic. Their outcome was discussed at the conference and concrete recommendations formulated. I will come back to these briefly at the end of my talk.

Conseil Supérieur des Burkinabè de l'Étranger (CSBE): The Superior Council for Burkinabè Abroad is in charge of keeping in touch with the Burkinabè diaspora abroad. With information sessions about investment and business opportunities in Burkina it aims mainly at highly educated, well-off migrants. Particularly, investment in housing is offered at good conditions, for example 185 buildings in the prestigious "Ouaga 2000" quarter in the capital were constructed for and by Burkinabè abroad. The council's aim is also to attract the highly skilled Burkinabè from the Diaspora back to the country, if only on a temporary basis. Here, they cooperate with IOM's MIDA programme. Furthermore, CSBE supplies Burkinabè abroad with documents like passports or ECOWAS free movement cards which are distributed during so-called "missions consulaires" to states, where there is no Burkinabè embassy.

Conseil National de Secours d'Urgence et de Réhabilitation (CONASUR): The National Council for Emergency Assistance and Rehabilitation is in charge of humanitarian aid in the case of drought, flooding or other crises. It was also assigned to execute the National Help and Rehabilitation Plan in 2003 to come to terms with the

massive return of Burkinabè from Côte d'Ivoire (Belem, Zerbo, Ouédraogo, Kini, Millogo, Ouédraogo and Kabré 2003).

The idea of the National Health Plan was to distribute food and seeds to the many Burkinabè migrants returning to the country from Côte d'Ivoire with not very much more than the clothes on their back. The government wanted to raise over 7 billion Fcfa (roughly 10 million Euro) from donor agencies and supply all returnees with shelter, blankets, food for a couple of weeks, a starter kit for the next agricultural season, vaccinations etc. etc. However, as the government refused to proclaim, that the massive return was in fact a situation of national emergency and only proceeded half-heartedly in assisting the returnees, not many donors felt inclined to contribute to the plan. Critics say that state response to the massive return failed completely and that the only reason, that hunger did not break out, was the huge solidarity of the Burkinabè people towards its returning “brothers and sisters”. It is indeed amazing that no refugee camps were set up. People seem to have been soaked up in the countryside by friends and families.

But this is of course too romantic a picture: Conflicts between returnees and local population are numerous and seem to be mounting. The main problems lie in the access to land and other resources. Traditional and modernized modes of land distribution exist at the same time and often produce conflicting outcomes. Some authors even fear the rise of a situation similar to that which led to violence in Côte d'Ivoire (Zongo and Mathieu 2006). There, people felt, that immigrants were “robbing” them of their ancestral land, although they had acquired it in complete legality and – at the time - even with the explicit support of the Houphouët-Boigny government.

Conclusion

Politicians and decision-makers in Burkina Faso but also potential and actual migrants have different ideas about what is necessary in the field of migration and development the European Union.

- 1) First and foremost, **reducing migration is certainly not an idea that is being propelled.**

- 2) The **protection of Burkinabè nationals abroad** is of utmost importance and Burkina Faso was amongst the first countries to ratify the UN convention on the rights of migrant workers and their families which has not been signed or ratified by any European or other country of destination.
- 3) **Regional migration** is a very delicate topic, which no one really has made an effort to tackle yet. However, this could be very important not only for the countries concerned but also for the EU. Several studies have shown, that the expulsion of Ghanaians from Nigeria in 1983 has triggered mass emigration of Ghanaians to Europe (Nieswand 2005). The same could happen now with Burkinabè who feel the route to Côte d'Ivoire is no longer safe. The topic has been taken up by ECOWAS, but remains in the background while ECOWAS is busy with its internal restructuring process.
- 4) Other activities that came up during the conference last year are:
 - gather data about and observe migration activities in Burkina
 - implement the agrarian reforms and make sure, access to land is safe
 - prevent conflicts that arise from migration pressures in certain regions
 - reinforce infrastructural development in the cities
 - and protect rights of people working in the informal sector

I still have no clear picture on how to better combine policies on migration with development policies. All I wanted to demonstrate here is a) that the two issues are in fact closely linked and b) that perspectives differ a lot between Europe and West Africa and that therefore a common approach will be hard to find.

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