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Afrostars and Eurospaces
West African movers re-viewing «Destination Europe» from the inside

Abstract
In order to destabilise the persistent normalisation of specific labelling that affects migration studies and migration policy so profoundly, this paper looks for similarities across presumably different categories of travellers. In so doing, I start from the im/mobility experiences of the Eurostars, being portrayed by Favell (2008) as the mobile EU citizens that were the pioneers in the creation of an integrated EU. I mirror these im/mobility experiences with that of the Afrostars, i.e. the West African un/documented migrants whose intra-EU im/mobility trajectories I am following through time and space. To analyse the parallels between the Euro- and the Afrostars, I construct a comparative lens along three analytical lines: the changing of aspiration and destinations, the confrontation with migration-related bureaucracies and the relationality between mobility and place attachments. The insights leads to two concluding observations that help us to re-view mobility/migration in Europe. First, there is a misleading separation of the academic debates on Euro-mobility, on the one hand, and the secondary movements or onward migration of non-EU citizens on the other. This distinction in migration studies reinforces categorical lines that are mostly induced by migration apparatuses. Secondly, and in relation to the former, there is a remarkable difference in terms of the position of mobility vis-à-vis the nation-state. As Favell so strongly shows, the Eurostars are praised for their construction of a post-national, and integrated Europe. While the treatment of the Afrostars rely so much on a discourse of re-nationalisation, i.e. national integration or assimilation. Thus, integrating Europe and integrating migrants are two worlds apart.

Keywords: mobility, Europe, Favell, African migration.

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Introduction

Almost a decade ago, Adrian Favell (2008) has constructed a pioneering ethnography on the pioneering mobility of EU citizens at the time internal borders of the EU vanished. He managed to create a highly informative portrait of the *Eurostars* that «stepped of the national path to follow an uncertain future in an integrating Europe» (2008, p. xii). While reading his work, you gain first-hand knowledge about the pleasures and pains related to mobility and the extent to which the mobility of EU citizens contributes to a further integration of European space. His informants learn to adapt and change while crossing intra-EU borders, and they also encounter cultural barriers and find ways to transcend them. These mobile pioneers «keep the dynamo of an integrating Europe alive» (Favell, 2008, p. 223).

At first sight, the privileged mobile lives of Favell’s Eurostars in Eurocities are rather disconnected from the bordered journeys and un/documented lives of the West African movers in Europe that I investigate. Despite, or actually because of this, I aim to mirror the mobility trajectories of the Eurostars with the mobility trajectories of the Afrostars living and moving in the same European space. There are two interrelated reasons behind this. First, both mobility trajectories deviate from the classical departure-arrival logic that reconstructs migration as a manner of single departures from the country of origin and permanent settlement in the country of origin. The mobility of the Euro- and Afrostars are shaped by multiple moments of departure and several places of arrival and as such they destabilise «traditional concepts of [departure], transit and settlement» (Mainwaring and Bridgen, 2016, p. 244). By comparing and mirroring these mobilities, we do not only gain further empirical insights into an emerging debate on intra-EU mobility of different groups of migrants (e.g. Burrell, 2008; Schwarz, 2016; Ahrens, Kelly and Van Liempt 2016; Schapendonk, 2017a) we also build an empirical bridge that binds together mobility and migration studies (see also Hui, 2016; King, 2015; Kalir, 2013).

Second, looking for similarities across different categories of travellers help us to open up discussions on the way mobility regimes (Glick-Schiller and Salazar, 2013) actively produces differentiation in terms of travel opportunities and travel experiences. In so doing, we are also able to re-think the persistent normalisation of specific labelling that affects migration studies and migration policy so profoundly. As Janine Dahinden has put it, «if migration appears as an anomaly in the ‘national container’ and becomes the most important category of difference therein, then it is not astonishing that specialists and social scientists are required to describe, investigate and theorize this ‘difference’» (Dahinden, 2016, p. 2210). The challenge for Dahinden is to discuss migration without following the normalization discourse that is anchored in the vocabulary of migration apparatuses of the nation-state. As a way of overcoming this normalisation, Schapendonk, van Liempt and Spierings (2015) have argued that we should not only pay attention what differentiates different forms of movement. In fact, by looking at similarities we prevent ourselves from creating clear-cut demarcation lines and typological fixities (i.e. normalization) that do not help us
to understand the mobile world we live in. I take this argument as an important starting point for this paper.

Mirroring the Eurostars with the Afrostars implicates that I deliberately do not pay explicit attention to the experiences of suppression, risk and exclusion that are important parts of my respondent’s narratives, as I have illustrated elsewhere (see Schapendonk, 2017a) and as it is emphasized in the important work of many colleagues (e.g. Cross, 2013; Lucht, 2011; Schuster, 2005). In fact, this paper can best be seen as a provocation for its predominantly positive perspective on the mobile lives of the Afrostars in Eurospaces. It focuses on those West Africans – the Afrostars – who are actually capable of moving around, and it unpacks the way they navigate European spaces. Although we should never downplay the importance of thread, trauma and trouble experiences, a more positive light shows that the lives of Afrostars do have a brighter side and that most of the people are not permanently stuck in trouble. Hence, this paper can be seen as an attempt to look at the lives of African migrants in Europe beyond a sense of victimisation. Inspired by the work of Kothari (2008), I challenge the reader to forget the mediatized message regarding African migration to Europe for a while and think about the possible ways the Afrostars co-produce Europe through their networks, movements, imaginations. What kind of openings would this bring? Could we re-view Europe with the help of the Afrostars?

After a more detailed portrait of the Euro- and Afrostars and a brief methodological note, I construct a comparative lens that is built along three analytical lines. The first is shifting horizons and dives into the changing motivations and destinations that drive the intra-EU mobility under study. The second dimension concerns the system and refers to the ways the Euro- and Afrostars are confronted with migration apparatuses (see Feltman, 2011) and bureaucracies as well as to the ways they navigate them. Finally, the third dimension relates to discussions on mobility and place attachments. The latter may vary from questions related to practical concerns (e.g. Brown and O’Hara, 2003) as well as to questions of belonging and identity (e.g. Vertovec, 2001).

1. The Eurostars and Afrostars: A mirrored portrait

No! I see myself as an expatriate – not a migrant, not at all. It depends on your perspective if your perspective is global, then you are not a migrant. You are a mover, your mobility is much higher.

(Eurostar Saskia, responding to the question: are you a migrant? (Favell 2008, p.44)

I am sitting here in Bergamo with Mohamadou. His Italian residence paper had recently expired, and he is making a living by selling books as a street vendor. But in the last ten years, he has travelled to China, South Africa for ‘business reasons’, and he has worked in Paris, Barcelona and Sardinia. His next aspired-to destination is Taipei, where his brother lives, or the United States. He certainly does not consider himself an immigrant of Italy.

(Reconstruction based on diary notes, Bergamo, June 2016)
When one reads Favell’s portrait of the Eurostars in Brussels, Amsterdam and London, one comes across middle-class European professionals who live denationalized and multi-local lives. They are pioneers of movement, border-transgressors, mostly urban oriented, adventurous and risk-takers. But at times, they feel in doubt, as if they are «not-there-yet», and they feel disintegrated as they hardly connect to the social infrastructure of their living places. Interestingly, one of the simple questions Favell used in his study was whether his respondents would see themselves as migrants. «The most frequent answer to this question was an emphatic, sometimes bemused, “No!”» (Favell 2008, p. 101). In line with Saskia’s self-reflection, the Eurostars tend to frame themselves as expats or movers since they consider their mobility is much higher than that of the migrant. One Eurostar gave an illustrative image of the migrant, by saying: «I think of a migrant as someone who making one big move» (Favell, 2008, p. 29). According to Hein de Haas there is another logic at stake here. According to his analysis, the term migrant is more and more associated with low-skilled people from less wealthy areas. Consequently, the term expat has in this sense become a class marker (see also Leinonen, 2012), a form of terminological gymnastics with which privileged movers distinguish themselves from «other» groups of movers, notably the migrant1. In this light, the work of Sophie Cranston (2014; 2017) is of particular importance here as it shows how the expat identity is actually produced and shaped by a global mobility industry.

The public discourse in Europe tends to frame the African mover as the prototypical poor and desperate migrant – who has not only passed through a risky journey but who is also confronted with the burden to integrate within specific national frameworks (Dahinden 2012; 2016). While at first sight, the image of the Senegalese man Mohamadou, being a street vendor in the Italian city of Bergamo, confirms this prototype, I soon learned that this image is highly misleading. Mohamadou is part of a family history with a strong transnational character that is shaped by entrepreneurial, social and religious networks (see for more information on Senegalese transnationalism (Riccio, 2001; 2008). His mother has been a voyageuse between Senegal and the Middle East for years before he and his brothers started to move across borders. Mohamadou first travelled up and down to China and later to and from South Africa. When I sit together with him drinking coffee in Bergamo, he called his family brother in Taipei. While he rang his number, Mohamadou proudly stressed that his brother spoke English very well. The day after, he spoke about his business of exporting tea from South Africa to Senegal and his telephone shop in Dakar. Thus, in line with Kothari’s (2008) work in the framework of the notion of «cosmopolitanism» and Riccio’s (2001; 2008) work on Senegalese transnational networks, we may refute the Eurocentric notion of cosmopolitan identity – as if a global and cosmopolitan imagination is reserved for a selected few. In fact, if we follow the definition of the expat outlined by the Eurostar Saskia in the above vignette, Mohamadou fits very well the image of the expat as his mobility history truly meets

the global perspective Saskia referred to. Moreover, like so many of Favell’s Eurostars, Mohammadou felt disintegrated from the local community in the city of Bergamo and he certainly considered him as in the middle of something, as not-there-yet. Despite the fact that his documents had expired, he already started to figure out a strategy to obtain a visa for the United States or Taiwan.

The term Afrostars in this paper is not used as an empirical generalisation (as if all African migrants move around in Europe), but like Favell’s term of Eurostars, it is rather a linguistic illustration of a type of mover that transcend national frameworks through their mobility dynamics. It underlines that mobility, or rather mobilities, are significantly transforming notions of society, belonging and citizenship (e.g. Urry, 2007; Blunt, 2007; Spinney et al., 2015). It also functions as a lens that helps me to go beyond analytical starting points that are directly deriving from nation-state frameworks or policy-induced categories (e.g. Dahinden, 2016). Obviously, we cannot isolate people’s movements entirely from the control mechanisms of mobility regimes (Glick-Schiller and Salazar, 2013), border industries (Anderson, 2014) and migration apparatuses (Feldman, 2011) that do their very best to differentiate travellers. Despite this highly unequal terrain, however, there are still important parallels and similarities to be found across different segments of cross-border mobility. The term Afrostars does justice to the various mobility tactics of African movers and it shows that different movers may acquire mobility skills and capital (e.g. Moret, 2016) that help them to become experts in the navigation, and sometimes inversion of, highly oppressive systems (see also Schapendonk, 2017b). Finally, the term Afrostars is useful to stress that specific characteristics and identities (e.g. mobility, cosmopolitanism) are not only attached to the ‘usual suspects’ in terms of class, place of origin or legal position.

2. Methodological note

The Senegalese man Mohammadou that is introduced above is one of the informants in my project that aims to understand the intra-EU im/mobility of Africans once they have reached Europe. The project has started in 2014 and lasts until mid 2018. In terms of methodology, it has generally speaking three locational entry points, Lombardia in Italy, Catalunya in Spain and Randstad in the Netherlands, but my access to my informants also relied heavily on my networking practices (finding new respondents through the connections in the field). On the basis of informal conversations, in-depth interviews and observations, I reconstruct the diverse mobility pathways of my informants, who are predominantly West African men (with a specific focus on people from Senegal and Nigeria). These practices form the basis for my second methodological step, which is staying in contact with a selection of my informants to gain longitudinal insights into the un/expected twists and turns of their im/mobility. Hereby I rely on telephone and internet conversations. This translocal component enables me to put my third methodological step into practice, namely, the re-visiting of my informants in the different places they end up in. During my
re-visits I combine again interviews, informal conversations and observations to understand migrants’ changing, and sometimes remarkably stable, situations (Schapendonk, 2017a; 2017b). The latter means that I do not restrict myself to specific nation-states to understand the mobility trajectories. Moreover, it implies that I move beyond the urban domain, which is so often taken as the entry point to understand migrant lifeworlds (e.g. Van Nieuwenhuyze, 2009). For this reason, I slightly adjusted Favell’s term *Eurocities* and transformed it into *Eurospaces* for the title of this paper. To tell the stories of the Afrostars, I particularly, but not solely, draw upon my fieldwork practices with a young Gambian man, Lamin (not his real name, all names are changed in this paper), who arrived in Italy in 2013 after a perilous boat journey (this is the period before the so-called «Hotspot Approach» was designed and implemented). From there, Lamin entered the asylum procedure in Italy, and as we will see, his mobility trajectory evolved. In addition to this «recent arrival» we dive into the lifeworlds of three Gambian friends who have entered Europe in unauthorized ways in different years, between late 1990s and early 2000s. For them, different periods of regular and irregular stays exchanged each other due to short-term residence papers and fragmented labour contracts (see also Schuster, 2005; Tandian and Bergh, 2014). I met the three friendly men in the city of Lleida (Spain), but as we will see, from there the geographical scope of my research expanded. In addition to these key informants for the purpose of this paper, I include the experiences of some of Lamin’s friends who arrived in Italy on the same day and with the same boat. Moreover, I also include the story of a Cameroonian woman who has entered Germany with a valid student visa some 15 years ago. From there she has moved between Italy and Germany for diverse reasons. Finally, I make use of my ethnographic engagement with Cedric, a Nigerian man who has moved recently from the Netherlands to the UK.

### 3. Shifting horizons

We just enjoy the surface of this town. I can’t tell [how long I will be here]. I could leave in three months, I could leave in three years. If something is coming up that’s attractive, you just move away. I met so many people who just moved away. It’s a different kind of life, it’s really different.

(Eurostar Caterina talking about Brussels, Favell, 2008, p. 105)

[Y]ou know, to see places is good. People say it is good around here [in Switzerland]. And I have a good brother here in this area. He is a Swiss guy, and he told me about his country, and I say OK let us see. That is our way you know, you don’t wait you just go out and see. You just try.

(Afrostar Lamin, talking about his move from Italy to Switzerland, January 2016)

One of the striking parallels between the Eurostars and the Afrostars that I was able to observe is that much of their mobility is based on a kind of openness to possibilities. As Favell framed it: «Many of the migration stories seem to
suggest that the moves were a shot in the dark, adventurous, speculative, “see what happen” types of move» (Favell, 2008, p. 94). The Eurostars seem to be extremely open to emerging opportunities, partly because a special kind of mentality emerged with a first departure. One Eurostar emphasized that people cannot imagine to go away from their family, and she «lost this thing of fear» (Favell, 2008, p.66). Others stated to have step-by-step logic in choosing their pathway. For some, the drive for a mobile life was often related to a form of frustration about the lack of career possibilities back home.

The openness towards possibilities appears in similar ways in the European life of Lamin. I met this intelligent young man from the Gambia through the social networks of my respondents in Italy. In fact, Lamin belongs to a group of six men whose im/mobility I have followed during the course of this research (see also Schapendonk, 2017a; 2017b). These six men all have entered Italy with the same boat that departed from Libya in the Fall of 2013. After this period in time, their trajectories continued in diverse directions. After two transfers of the Italian asylum system, Lamin ended up in the region of Genova. There he received his five years residence permit, and he managed to find work in a local bar. At the end of the tourist season, his horizon opened up and he considered a move outside Italy. I visited him in the time he just arrived in Bern, the Swiss capital. We met in the city centre, which was still an unexplored place for him. Our search for a convenient place to sit down actually failed and we kept on wandering the city. Lamin is generally positive about Italy, as he stressed that «life is good in Italy» and that he was «happy to find a job». Thus, his move to Switzerland cannot be explained by a push out of a precarious condition, as Lamin explained further: «I don’t like staying here [in Bern] for too long. I come here to see and enjoy myself, maybe I find some work, but if not I try to enjoy myself.» At the same time, his presence in Switzerland opened up new possibilities to explore other places. Some two months after my visit in Switzerland, he planned to go to Germany for the second time during his stay in Switzerland.

Yea yea ya …. I am thinking like maybe next Monday I am in Germany, Monday evening, for visiting a friend for two or three days.
Me: Is it? So you go to Germany again?
Yes I want to visit and to analyze the situation down there, I want to really understand what is going on there. ... because people are just making people to travel they say OK you have to come here or you have to make here asylum.

With analyzing the situation, Lamin referred to a form of exploration of opportunities outside the current living place that was quite common among my informants. Exploring places here implies that one evaluates the place according to one’s aspirations for a daily living. One Cameroonian woman, named Nadine here, phrased it as going for «more or less holiday», she explained this expression as follows:

More or less holiday is like you go to see, you go for holidays but at the same time you also want to inquire or have an experience how it works [in that place].
After having spent five months in Switzerland, Lamin returned to Italy in May 2016. Soon he would re-start his work in the bar as the tourism season was about to flourish. Just after his return to his former living place, I re-visited him. In his mind, Italy was again a temporary stop along a wider trajectory of movement. He stressed to go back to Switzerland in September or October, as this was the ‘fiesta time,’ and he had high hopes to reach the Netherlands one day.

Interestingly, the classical work of Priore (1979) already outlines that migrants who are in the early stages of the migration process fall into two groups: the free-floaters and the destination-oriented migrants aiming for settlement. According to Priore’s categorisation, Lamin would definitely fit the first category. Or, to put it in the words of my informants, Lamin is still «fresh». This emphasis on the fact that recently arrived migrants are «still searching» for their living place is a critique to my work that I have heard oftentimes during seminars and conferences. The point of critique is that the migrants I talk about have just not settled yet. In the following, I attempt to illustrate why this critique misses the point of how the Afrostars move within the EU. We turn to three «veterans» who all three have lived more than 15 years in Eurospace.

The three Gambian men live in Lleida – an important urban center in the middle of Catalunya’s agricultural industry. There I met them in April 2015 in the apartment that they shared. They all had worked in different places in Spain, mostly in the agriculture and construction sectors. At this specific moment in time, Moustapha was the only one who did not possess the right papers. He lost his permission to stay in Spain after he and his Spanish wife divorced. Babacar and Pape both hold a renewable residence papers. When I arrived in Lleida for the first time, the «frutta season» was about to start, and therefore the city of Lleida started to attract a lot of temporary workers from all corners of Europe (see also Bos, 2017). Babacar and Pape also started their work soon after my arrival. Moustapha went to the Aragon region and found work there. From September onwards, the period that the frutta season closes, the three Gambian men started to become mobile. Babacar went to the Gambia to spend time with his family. In the meantime, he had bought a van and started a taxi business in his country of origin. Pape went on a European tour and visited friends in the Netherlands and Germany. He was rather familiar with the latter country, as this was the country from where he was involved in transnational trade for five years. While still being based in Spain, he moved to Hamburg frequently to ship second-hand electronic goods to the Gambia in order to sell it there. As he stated: «I go there [to Hamburg] and come back after. If I don’t have work, I can easily travel so I go there many times for this business.» The longest stay in Germany lasted eight months. During the most recent trip in 2015, he stayed rather briefly in Germany in order to move to the Gambia soon afterwards. Moustapha, whose «regularisation» was in process, tried his luck as well. He first reached Italy where one of his brothers is living, but he had to return to Spain to meet his lawyer for the «paperwork». As Borri and Fontanari note (2016), much of the intra-EU mobility of non-EU citizens is related to paperwork. After the paperwork was done, he decided to move back to Italy, but this time he
was unlucky as there were intensive border controls and he was caught just after he crossed the Spanish-French border. A hectic period of detention followed that touched him deeply, but that did not prevent him from reaching Italy again.

In April 2016 – one year after my first visit – I returned to Lleida. There I re-connected with Moustapha and Pape. Anyone who would not have followed their movements, would easily have thought that not much had changed in Lleida in a year time. Moustapha and Pape were living in the same house. Babacar had also returned to Lleida two months before them in the hope to establish an income there. However, after the news that there was no work yet, he decided to move to Italy to visit a good friend. In Milano I met him again in May 2016. His friend there had taught Babacar how he could make money out of street vending. In this way, a foreseen brief visit of some weeks extended to a stay of a couple of approximately five months. He only returned to Lleida in June 2016 to start his agricultural work.

Through their movements the horizons of the Afrostars, like the horizons of the Eurostars, are likely to shift. New opportunities arise, and new locations provide access to new information that may change initial plans. As a result, timeframes are not always clear-cut in the sense that a planned short stay may easily transform into longer sojourn (see also Favell, 2008, pp. 50, 65, 113-114, 184). At the same time, as with Babacar’s return to Spain after his stay in the Gambia, a planned stay may be abruptly change in another period of movement when opportunities do not appear. While some authors stress the structuralist perspective by seeing the African movers as a group of cheap labour that is always available (see Cross, 2013, p. 150), I rather would like to point to the see-what-happens mentality and the persistent aspiration to explore new places that is an important driver for these individual mobilities. This mentality, as it is argued by Favell, is also an important characteristic of many Eurostars. As one Eurostar phrased it: «The more you travel, the more you want to see... anywhere» (Favell, 2008, p.104).

4. The system

The system lets you be, and lets you get away with many things; but when it decides to control, it is arbitrary and rough.
(Favell’s reflection on the character of the system: Favell, 2008, p.108)

No I am outside every system here in Swiss. Nobody knows that I am here.
(Afrostar Lamin, referring to his stay in Switzerland, January 2016)

In the stories of the Afrostars, the system is multifold and almost omnipresent. It mostly refers to migration apparatuses (Feltman, 2011), but it may also be related to cultural habits, the health care system, tax-payments and labour markets. Despite its omnipresence, the system is seldom seen as a determining structure. You may escape it, live outside it, or you can be part of it without really noticing it. Many of the African informants use the system terminology in order to articulate their surprise regarding how things work in Europe or to highlight
the discriminatory mechanisms of European societies. With regard to the latter, especially in Spain, some West Africans define Europe as a «Babylon system», a powerful, corrupted, unjust and oppressive society (Joosten, 2017). Sometimes, these two dimensions – surprise and discrimination – are inherently related. One illustrative example of this comes from Lamin and his friends and is related to how they perceive the migrant reception system in Italy and the paperwork that is attached to it (see Sanò, 2017 and Campesi, 2015 for excellent ethnographic insights regarding the Italian reception conditions). After Lamin and his friends got transferred to Napoli, they all faced another transfer to different parts of the country. Some were sent to Lombardia, others to Liguria and some of them were sent to a form of accommodation in the city of Napels. This geographical diversity contributed to discrepancies in terms of living conditions (e.g. daily income) as well as legal outcomes of their asylum procedures. This was all well noted by my informants and communicated through their social networks. In this framework, Lamin was relatively well informed about many of his co-travellers that arrived with the same boat. All «team members», except one, received some kind of documents within four years, although the term of validity of them varied greatly (from one year to five year residence permit). The least fortunate Gambian man in this case is Shakur. As Lamin noted once we discussed his situation: «Oh, Shakur, I feel sorry for him. He is the only one of our team of maybe 23 people who has no paper.» When I talked to Shakur himself, he expressed his deep frustrations about his situation by complaining about the system:

They don’t follow their own system, they, decide what they want, they don’t follow their own system. You know, even my brothers in Napoli, we were in the same boat, as I told you. These brothers there, they got the paper of five years! They get the five years paper!! And they did not go to school, they did not have language classes. So what is this system? (see also Schapendonk, 2017a).

The Italian migration apparatus is not only shadowy for people who arrived irregularly. The Cameroonian woman Nadine, to whom I referred to in the previous section, had a hard time with the Italian bureaucracy when she intended to register one of her children after her move from Germany to Italy, as she stated:

In Germany, it was like totally clear, you just have your termin, your appointment, and when you come, maybe like for five minutes you are there, if you have all your documents that they ask. They just print the visa, and place it in your passport in your out! In Italy there is a whole jungle ... [M]y first son stayed like three years without documents .... I could not do nothing, but the whole procedure is soooo complicated, first of all you go to Questura and then you get like an appointment, and the appointment is not easy. You just go and you think you are back in Africa, because you are getting to one office, and there are thousands of people waiting, fighting, just to get a number. And that number does not guarantee you to have a document. So we went there DAYS on DAYS with my little ones. I had two kids at that time, so it was not that
easy to get there. It was really horrible. I think that aspect you can say, uhmm, Germany is really like organized. In issuing your visa and stay permit, Italy is really difficult, to have the stay permit. It is not a matter of having the finance, but the procedure is almost impossible. Some people just get stranded in Italy not because they want to be illegal ... but just because you don’t even know where to start.

This snapshot of the recorded conversation with Nadine reflects very well the observation of Anna Tucket regarding the Italian immigration bureaucracy, as she writes (2015, p. 113): «Experiences with the bureaucracy of Italian immigration law are characterized by long waiting times, mix-ups of information, the issuing of expired permits, endless queues, chasing up ‘blocked applications and documents being lost».

Papers, however, are not the only concern that is created by the system. Yahya, another friend of Lamin, was particularly concerned about the way migrant reception was liaised with the production of cheap labour. In his case, Caritas was responsible for the migrant shelter he was transferred to. After he obtained his first residence permit, some Caritas staff functioned as a broker in finding access to the labour market. But this had some important downsides as they cut 300 euro from their monthly salary. According to Yahya and his friends, this money went directly to Caritas, as some of them stated: «We are working for them.» In line with Yahya’s observation, Dines and Rigo (2015) write about the phenomenon of asylum seekers and international protection holders forming a cheap labour force for the Italian agriculture sector. Similarly, Hannah Cross states that illegality is a «structural factor in the Spanish labour markets» and that Spain’s political economy «creates “illegal” migrants» (Cross, 2013, p. 144; see also Tandian and Bergh, 2014). This indicates once more that the Afrostars belong to a rather different segment of society when compared to the Eurostars.

While I strongly value this «gaze of power» (Fontanari, 2017; Borri, 2017) in the context of African mobility, it is still worthwhile to discuss some of the striking similarities between in the world of the Eurostars. One important similarity is the issue of registration. Favell states that very few Eurostars declare themselves as residents in their new living places. Like Lamin and many of his friends, they are masters of beating the particular system of state surveillance (Favell, 2008, p. 107). Usually, everything is going fine, but very small things can create intense disasters. There is the example of an Irish worker who has lived and worked in Brussels for six years, until the moment he had to unlock a wheel clamp on his car. Other Eurostars, like the Dutch couple Joanne and Stephen, have been deported from Belgium, which Favell frames as «somewhat absurd, given that in Schengenland you can just walk back over the border without being checked» (Favell, 2008, p. 109). These cases remind me of the Afrostar Saihou, a Gambian young man who belonged to Lamin’s social network. Saihou had moved without documents from Italy and Switzerland. After a random check by the police, just on the streets, his undocumented stay had been noticed, which is related to the highly racialized lines of mobility control (Schwarz, 2016). After a period of detention in Switzerland he was deported back according to the Dublin
regulation. But he did not stay in Italy. He had an intermediate stay in Germany, and at this time of writing he is back in the country he got once deported from.

Although many Eurostars do not register locally and prevent bureaucratic slaloms, some find no way to escape it. One German IT consultant faced problems when he switched social security systems. In Favell’s book, he phrased his experience in strikingly similar ways as the Afrostar Nadine did:

The impact when you move out of the social system in Germany into the social system in Belgium as an individual is an extremely big hassle. I was not aware [before]. .... No normal person understands how the reallocation works. It takes years to find out if it is possible, and how, if not why not. You have to bring this paper and that paper. It’s too complex. The problem is sometimes you don’t know. You only realize it on your first pay slip what happened (Favell, 2008, p. 217).

In addition, like several Afrostars, some Eurostars felt they are faced with some financial un-fairplay, as was illustrated the Caritas case of Yayha. One of them stated:

They [the Dutch, in this case] always say you are all equal [as a foreigner here]. That it’s very easy to integrate, you get the same conditions as them. But it’s just not true. I earn the same as my Dutch colleagues, but I have to pay so much more rent (Favell, 2008, p. 191).

Evidently, the socio-political settings differ considerably. Being cut from social services is something entirely different than being unable to regularize your children (as in Nadine’s case) and paying more rent than your peers is not the same is the feeling of being cut in terms of income by the system. Moreover, it is important to note that some systems actively contribute to the production of illegality and vulnerability. For the Italian case, for example, it is observed that the official expulsion letter (foglio di via) handed over to migrants in Italy who are not granted a residence or protection status actively produces an undocumented and marginal population (D’Angelo, 2016) that is likely to move between places. In a slightly different context of humanitarian protection status, Borri (2017) convincingly shows us that it is in many cases the lack of a stable social and legal status that actually produces mobility between European countries. What these parallels between the stories do indicate, however, is that dealing with the system requires patience and persistency in order to understand rules and regulations that are for a large part alien to the mover. Among both the Afro- and Eurostars, «the system» in the Netherlands is particularly infamous as different «bureaucratic systems... are hooked up, so that you have register correctly with all agencies to get access to any» (Favell, 2008, p. 193, see also pp. 193-196).

Finally, the example of the social security system also indicates that systems are not only entities movers would like to escape from. In many occasions, it is top priority to be actually present in a system. For example, the three
Gambian veterans in Lleida, who had all passed the age of 40 years, were already thinking ahead about their pensions. Pape was the most explicit about it when we discussed the possibility of living in Italy, like he did before.

Ya... even now living in Spain now is better for me than Italy, I love Italy, but I have Spanish paper... so if I stay in Italy and work black what we normally do, there is no increase for me, if I stay and work [here in Spain], even for one month, I get a contract, and I have a more future than having these black jobs. Because like Spain here now, when they are 75 years they take pension. The money, they give it to the old men.

Me: and then they count the years...

Yeah... because I work here more than 15 years, so when I get 75 years, with any time I get my papers, they can give me 120 every month for the rest of my life.

Me: And that is why it is also important that, even when you have a three-month job, they give you a contract.

Yes, because [then] I am INSIDE THE SYSTEM [he laughs].

Thus staying in the «right system» can be of particular practical concern of the movers. This is exactly the reason why it, as the example of Pape illustrates, can be inefficient if one decides to register as a migrant in your new living place. As Favell notes in the light of the Eurostars (2008, p. 102):

Danies, Swedes and Dutch, especially, face .... problems when internationally mobile. These tightly coordinated pastoral nation-states, with highly developed welfare systems, track everyone through computerized personal identification numbers, and force non-residents to de-register and give up certain rights. They are also highly aggressive in hunting down taxation. Membership comes with a price – and free movers don’t fit the nationalized system.

In stark contrast with the Eurostars, however, the labour rights of the Afrostars are strictly tied to the nation-state. The Spanish residence papers of the veterans do not allow them to work in Italy. Similarly, Lamin’s permit that is valid for five years only grants him the right to work in Italy. This was exactly the reason why Lamin started questioning «the system», he proposed an alternative:

I think they should create a system that allows us to work outside this country. Because even with this resident paper, I am not allowed to work in the Netherlands. So why are they not inventing a system that gives us the right to work in different countries?... then we can pay Italy like a double tax. So you keep on paying your tax for Italy, while you are not there, so you pay in Italy and in Holland. So it is a double tax.

Although it is questionable whether Lamin’s proposal would work out positively for the movers, the fact that he thought about alternatives suggests that we may actually invite them to help us to re-think Europe.
5. Movement/settlement

I feel free to come and go, so I stay.
(Eurostar Nathalie, talking about her life in London, Favell, 2008, p.111)

Whatever may be the case, I am thinking if I am fortunate to get the passport, I can be able to gather the money and with the passport I think I relocate because Nederland is so tough... But I don’t know if it should be Germany or Belgium or of course maybe UK.
(Afrostar Cedric, talking about his life in the Netherlands, June 2014)

The third dimension of my comparison is related to a more conceptual discussion on the relation between mobility and locality (e.g. Bærenholdt and Granas, 2008; Dahinden, 2010a, 2010b; anonymous, 2012; Bos, 2017). The question is as follows: what is the role of locality (or «place») in this context of movement? How do movers attach to places, and to what extent do these attachment facilitate or prevent further movements? In light of this discussion, Dahinden (2010a) has outlined four prototypes of mobility-locality relations in the context of transnational mobility. The first type combines low transnational mobility with a high level of local embeddedness in the destination country. The second prototype is a migrant who is locally embedded in both the country of origin and destination and who moves in between these localities. The third is the transnational nomad – a migrant that does not aim of settling in a country but instead tends to stay mobile in order to improve his/her quality of life. Dahinden refers here to highly skilled professionals, but not exclusively so, as she acknowledges the importance of nomadic entrepreneurs, suitcase traders and shuttle migrants. Finally, there are transnational outsiders who experience a low degree of local anchorage and a low degree of transnational mobility due to the many barriers they face. One might expect the Afrostars belonging to the fourth category and the Eurostars to the third. However, when mirroring their lifeworlds we do not only see differences but also many parallels.

A first similarity is that some of the two types of movers hardly connect to the social infrastructure of their living places. Their social and cultural interactions are for a large part restricted to their own migrant bubbles. One of Favell’s British respondents in Belgium reacted illustratively on the question whether he considered himself as integrated. He started to laugh and say: «Not at all, not at all. Has anyone [of your respondents] replied positively on that?» (Favell, 2008, p. 134). Indeed, Favell pictures social lifeworlds that are centered around work floors. These social worlds may be cosmopolitan in terms of the diverse nationalities of colleagues and friends, but they hardly reach out to the «local population». Afrostar Lamin probably would recognize this situation. After his stay in Switzerland, he returned to his former living place not far from Genova, Italy. Some two weeks after his return (May 2016) I re-visited him there. When we saw each other on the train station, we greeted each other happily, and he almost shouted: «Welcome to my home!» However, his home was not really home-like in the social sense, as he emphasized some minutes later:
You can live here for fifteen years but then still you can have no Italian friends. I tried it even with my former work, I like those guys there, and we had a good time... but they never go out with me, or come to my place to chop food. Of course there are some open minded people, but very very few.

As a consequence, «local footholds» (Dahinden 2010a, p.61) are highly dependent on migrant networks, which can be observed in the lives of both the Euro- and Afrostars. Some specialized local zones are important in this respect to build social capital. For many of the Afrostars these are the work sites, migrant neighbourhoods and migrant reception centres. These are the places for social interactions, sharing of information and building friendships. In a way, the latter is not very different from the situation of Eurostar Valerie, who spent a considerable time in a specific hostel in London. She stated: «It’s really a family. Everyone knows each other. It’s also a network for information, jobs, visiting places» (Favell, 2008, p. 183). Thus, social connectivity is an important way to find yourself in place. To illustrate this further for the Afrostars, we return to the veteran Babacar. In a timespan of one year he moved respectively from Spain to the Gambia, back to Spain and from there to Italy. Although he envisioned a short time visit, he entered the informal economy of Milano as a street vendor. His friend that I call Doudou assisted him in this activity. He gave him five bags to sell and he showed him some tips and tricks as well as the Chinese shops where he could buy his goods to sell. In the meantime, Babacar stayed in close contact with his patron in Lleida in order to be informed about the exact time he was expected to be back. That appeared to be June. Whereas Babacar navigated his economic activities in-between Lleida and Milano, Doudou had his own reasons to cross borders. While he was for most of the year based in Milano, where he had a steady income from a job as a security guard, he had a relationship with a Gambian woman living in the city of Leiden (the Netherlands). In both cases, strong social ties in Europe facilitate a form of local embeddedness in Eurospace.

Like the Eurostars, the Afrostars are generally not placeless movers and not every aspect of their lives turns out to be mobile (see Adey, 2006 for a conceptual discussion). There are important anchor points in their movements. For Lamin this is the place located close to Genova, for Babacar, Pape and Moustapha this is Lleida, and for Doudou this is Milano. Furthermore, most of them feel strongly attached to the country they left – the Gambia. The three veterans in Spain, in fact, all have their wives and children in this country. Evidently, their families are important anchor points. Only Moustapha have not been able to visit them in the last few years due to his undocumented status. However, in case we would lose contact, he advised me to contact his wife as she always is informed about his whereabouts.

However, when we look at the emplacements of the Afrostars in Europe that are discussed in this paper we see that their place attachments do not translate in localized, sedentarized lives. In other words, settlement in these lives does not so much mean a form of permanent groundedness. Quite to the contrary, as Dahinden also shows in her work on cabaret dances (Dahinden, 2010b), settlement creates the perfect conditions for being mobile. The best indication
for this comes from Cedric, a Nigerian man who was about to become a Dutch citizen. Where the Dutch state considers Cedric to be ‘one of us’ at the moment he receives his Dutch passport, Cedric in fact did not translate this passport to a form of national belonging (see also Schapendonk, 2017a). For him the passport was a «stronger» travel paper with better labour rights. As a Dutch citizen, he moved to the UK (see van Liempt, 2011 and Moret, 2016 for Somali cases that have striking similarities with the story of Cedric). It follows that the Eurostars and Afrostars that are analyzed in this paper are a bit of both worlds – they are movers and stayers, sojourners and settlers.

**Conclusion**

In line with Favell’s storyline, I emphasized movement, mobility, dynamism and multi-locality in the stories of the Afrostars. Although there are important parallels, it is not my intention to equalize middle class problems with the problems of African migrants. One of Favell’s Eurostars reflected on his privileged mobility by saying «it’s ten times as hard if you are coming from Africa» (2008, p. 210). I would like to add here that this calculation is probably an underestimation. Nevertheless, mirroring the lives of the Afrostars with that of the Eurostars has important value as it creates important new openings for a profound discussion on the positioning and differentiation of different types of movers/migrants. As a way of conclusion, I would like to point to two fundamental questions that are strongly interrelated.

First, the above discussion points to a remarkable distinction in migration studies. On the one hand we discuss Euro-mobility in studies on European citizens moving around in post-national spaces. At the same time, when we discuss the mobility of non-EU citizens we tend to frame it with concepts such as «secondary movement» or «onward migration». As if mobility is something that citizens do, and migration is something that the «other» does. The above discussion shows that migration research is indeed deeply «entangled with a particular migration apparatus» (Dahinden, 2016, p. 2208) and as such it follows a specific form of politicisation of movement that lacks any empirical or analytical foundation. The question is, of course, why do we position the Eurostars, and other EU citizens, in a discourse of mobility in a post-national Europe (e.g. Jensen and Richardson 2004; Burrell 2008) and the Afrostars in a discourse of migration, onward movement and therefore hinting at settlement and incorporation (Lindley and van Hear, 2007; Ahrens et al., 2016; see for a Latin American case: Giralt, 2016)? Why do we tend to analyse the Eurostars with a mobilities lens and the Afrostars with a migration lens? The above indicates that it does make so much sense to position the Afrostars in the same post-national space as the Eurostars, and as such we could critically de-migranticize their lifeworlds (Dahinden, 2016). This implies that we should look for openings that move away from the «master narrative of migration», as Favell outlines:

Above all it is important not to see these aspects of spatial and temporal volatility in a negative light, as is often the case when they are looked at from
the classical nation-state centred perspective of integration. This is the master narrative of immigration, wielded by receiving societies, which assumes that all legally welcome immigrants must be on some kind of track to full integration: to inclusion, incorporation, permanent settlement, and one day becoming a citizen among others (Favell, 2008, p. 101).

This former point strongly relates to my second question. The Eurostars are praised for their contribution to the integration of a post-national Europe. Nothing can be in more contrast with the political discourse concerning the mobility of non-EU migrants and especially refugees and asylum seekers. Their movements are politicized for its presumed destabilising effects. Their movements are restricted by the Dublin convention until the outcome of their asylum procedures. Once they have granted refugee status or once they obtain their residence permits, they are still very much restricted by national boundaries, especially in terms of labour rights (see also Borri, 2017). Thus, as Favell so strongly shows, the Eurostars are the pioneers that construct a post-national, and integrated Europe, while the treatment of the Afrostars rely so much on a discourse of re-nationalisation, i.e. national integration or assimilation. With that I mean that regarding refugee rights and migrant integration agenda very little hints at the existence of a post-national Europe; it is all about fitting within the national system. In that sense, there is a striking difference between the agenda of integrating Europe (the presumed task of Eurostars) and the agenda of integrating migrants (the presumed task of the Afrostars). This distinction follows highly racialized lines (Schwarz, 2016). Interestingly, the Afrostars live the European dream of an integrated space so clearly, exactly because they have never been really attached to the national frameworks. In that sense, and ironically so, they can be seen as the ideal EU-citizens as their networks, transactions, linguistic gymnastics and mobilities so naturally transcend the logics of national frameworks.

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