

**Stuck between the Desert and the Sea:
The Immobility of Sub-Saharan African 'Transit Migrants' in Morocco**

Joris Schapendonk
Department of Human Geography,
Radboud University

Introduction

As a conclusion to GLOMIG's sixth framework project, this paper does not focus on the Eurasian region and Eastern Mediterranean migration but instead provides some comparative and hopefully useful insights and perspectives from another 'hot' migration region: West Africa. More specifically, this paper deals with transit migration from West Africa to Europe.

Traditionally, migration-related research has been conducted on the two 'ends' of migration. On one end (the pre-migration phase), the decision-making process involved in migrating has been investigated intensively, and on the other end (the post-migration phase), the impact of migration on the host and sending societies has also been a regular topic of social science research. Paradoxically, migration as a process of moving has not much been studied in great depth (International Migration Institute, 2006). However, with the emergence of transit migration this has changed slightly, and the trajectories of migration as well as migration means have gained more attention in the last few years.

The basic argument of this paper is that migration projects are influenced, changed and re-defined in 'the transit phase.' It underlines the notion that migration is, at least for a considerable group of people, not a simple movement from A to B. Rather migration must be understood as a process of continuous movements and temporal or semi-temporal settlements. Some migrants end up in perceived transit areas; others end up leaving desired destinations to migrate to other places. Consequently, the conceptual dividing line between transit migration and multiple or repeated migration is blurred (Düvell, 2006).

This paper analyses the immobility of sub-Saharan African migrants heading for Europe. Many migrants cross the Sahara desert in order to reach North-Africa, from where they try to enter Europe. Because of its geographical proximity to Europe and the presence of the Spanish exclaves Ceuta and Melilla, Morocco has been an attractive transit zone for African migrants. However, the borders of Europe in North Africa are closing rapidly; the height of the fences around the Spanish exclaves has recently been doubled and equipped with ultramodern detection means. In addition, the Atlantic and Mediterranean waters are constantly monitored by European border guards. As a consequence, transiting to Europe from Morocco has become extremely difficult, and migrants, in turn, often 'get stuck' in this perceived transit area, which has far-reaching effects on migrants' lives and Moroccan society.

This paper aims to explore the dynamics of this group of migrants' immobility. Immobility, here, means the incapability of individuals to continue their migration to Europe. Investigating the reasons that these migrants are stranded, the locations and survival strategies of these migrants, and their changing aspirations, this paper is divided into the following four parts:

- 1) Part 1 outlines the basic conceptual framework that will be used, explaining the concept of transit migration and the importance of studying immobility in migration research.
- 2) Part 2 discusses some figures and basic misunderstandings of sub-Saharan African transit migration to Europe.
- 3) Part 3 presents the research design and findings of my latest research. The findings are based on two periods of fieldwork. In 2007, fieldwork was conducted in Spain, Morocco and Senegal in order to understand the broader framework of West African transit migration. In January 2008, some 33 in-depth interviews were held with sub-Saharan African migrants in Morocco.
- 4) Part 4 outlines the most important preliminary conclusions of this research project.

Transit Migration and the Importance of Studying Immobility in Migration Research**1. Transit Migration**

Transit migration is often understood in a simple way: as migration from country A via country B in order to reach country C. However, a closer look at this concept shows that transit migration is far more complex than is assumed and that there are several epistemological, methodological, and empirical difficulties related to the concept. Düvell, for instance, outlines the unclear dividing line between transit migration and repeated or multiple migration. According to him, many authors interpret migrants who move on to another country as transit migrants, even after a long stay in their (former) host country. Sometimes researchers categorise people that have lived 12 years in a refugee camp as transit migrants (Roman, 2006). However, this is inconsistent with several evidence-based migration theories (cumulative causation, culture of migration), which prove that “once someone migrates, the more he or she is likely to continue migrating” (Düvell, 2006, p. 16). Another interesting difficulty outlined by Düvell is the difference between actual transit migration and mental transit migration. The results of often-used interview methods in (transit) migration-related research cannot automatically be taken for granted because there is always a distinction between persons who are indeed transiting the country and people who only intend or wish to transit the country.

De Haas (2006) argues against a simple understanding of transit migration for another reason; he states that the term ‘transit migrant’ is often misleading not only “because many migrants and refugees consider North Africa (particularly Libya) as their primary destination, but also because a considerable proportion of migrants who fail to enter Europe prefer to stay in North Africa as a second best option” (p. 4).

As a result, there is growing agreement in the literature that transit migration must be considered as a phase in the migration process for different types of migrants, rather than as a migration category as such. Regular and irregular migrants, as well as refugees and asylum seekers, can all have a transit phase in their migration process. In order to fully understand this transit phase, it is important to understand the so-called migration-asylum nexus (Papadopoulou, 2005). This nexus emphasises that different types of migration (for example, migration for political reasons and migration for economic reasons) overlap in various ways: in other words, the causes of migration are interrelated. It should also be noted that economic migrants and political refugees use the same migration means, and more importantly, that individuals can jump these static migration-asylum categories over time. Asylum seekers may become economic migrants and economic migrants may turn into political refugees. This will later be underlined by empirical findings.

2. The Importance of Immobility in Migration Research

Migration research has traditionally focused on the mobility of people living in an international context; however, it is now widely known that only 3% of the world’s people are living outside their country of birth. From this perspective, international mobility is still the exception and immobility the rule, and it explains why some migration scholars have recently raised the question: Why are there not more international migrants? (Hammar et al. 1997; Faist, 2000; van Naerssen & van der Velde, 2007). In other words, in order to explain migration, it is necessary to take into account why people stay in their home country.

There are several reasons explaining why most people are relatively immobile. The most important is the local attachment of people: the majority of people voluntarily prefer to stay in their ‘home area.’ In addition, voluntary immobility can also be analysed in terms of a ‘threshold of indifference’ and related economic advantages (van Naerssen and van der Velde, 2007) although it goes beyond the scope of this paper to outline these theories in detail.

In addition to those who voluntarily stay in their home country, there is also the issue of those who are involuntarily immobile. Particularly in underdeveloped areas, the aspiration to migrate is high, but the capability to do so is low, partly because of European border closings and the extreme poverty in these regions. In any case, the result is a high number of would-be migrants. Carling (2002) has conducted an excellent study of this issue by outlining involuntary immobility on the Cape Verde Islands. Because of the high number of border closings and other restrictive migration initiatives, some researchers appropriately analyse the globalisation era in terms of social closure instead of social openness (Shamir, 2005; Turner, 2007). In addition, more and more researchers, in line with Zygmunt Bauman (2008), argue that mobility is a crucial polarising factor.

Besides those who are forced to stay involuntarily in their home country (the would-be migrants), there are also people who get 'immobilised' on their way to Europe, as was mentioned above. Here this is called 'stranded migration,' referring to the (temporal) impossibility of leaving the transit country in order to reach the intended destination. Van Naerssen and Van der Velde (2007) have analysed this immobilisation with the help of so-called 'trajectory thresholds' in their attempt to model individual spatial migratory behaviour. This paper aims to deepen our understanding of the consequences of these trajectory thresholds. At the same time, it attempts to understand the migration-related dynamics that emerge because of the involuntary immobility of individual migrants in so-called transit zones. Consequently, the starting point for this paper is Ahmet İçduygu's (2000) study on transit migration in Turkey, in which he states that it is important to include the transit phases of migration in migration research so that the migration process can be understood in its totality. Before starting the analysis, some clarifications should be given regarding the magnitude of transit migration from Sub-Saharan Africa to North-Africa and Europe.

Counting the Uncountable

Several researchers and policy institutions have made their best efforts to estimate properly the number of migrants on the edge of Europe who are waiting to enter their 'El Dorado.' However, their estimations differ slightly because migration figures are lacking. The most important reasons for why there is a lack of information about migration include the following:

- 1) Population censuses are limited in West and North Africa.
- 2) Migration often occurs without passing any form of administrative authority. For instance, the ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) allows people to move freely across member states (with very few administrative restrictions), and moreover, people from several West African states (i.e. Mali, Senegal, the Ivory Coast, and the Republic of Congo) do not need a visa to enter and reside in Morocco.
- 3) Transit migration consists of a large number of people ranging from 'legal' migrants (including recognised refugees) to irregular migrants (*sans papiers*). Since the majority of migrants seem to be irregular/illegal, counting the legal migrants is not sufficient. In addition, when one counts the regular migrants, he is also potentially counting those who are currently 'in transit' but who are actually planning on staying in their 'transit' country. Counting the 'illegal' migrants, besides being close to impossible, is not perfectly useful for similar reasons: a considerable number of these irregular people will never reach Europe because they will get stuck. Furthermore, calculations about transit migrants are based on questionable methodologies, often deriving from apprehension data which pose problems for researchers. For instance, many migrants are double-counted (a considerable group of migrants have been arrested 6 to 8 times by the Spanish or Moroccan authorities), and conversely, many irregular migrants entering Europe are not counted at all.
- 4) As stated earlier, when one speaks about transit migration in transit areas, he is focusing on migration intentions or migration aspirations and not on the 'migration that is actually occurring.'

Thus, when the number of transit migrants at the shores of Europe is counted, it is an estimation of the number of migrants expected to enter Europe (Düvell, 2006).

5) A related issue is how to distinguish south-south (intra-African) migration from transit migration to the north (Europe). As De Haas (2006, 2007) argues, there are probably more sub-Saharan Africans living permanently in the Maghreb than in Europe. Therefore, it is a general misunderstanding that the majority of sub-Saharan African migrants living in Morocco are heading for Europe. Historically, it is also inappropriate to categorise trans-Saharan migration to North Africa automatically as transit migration to Europe since interregional mobility is common for Africans of all ages.

Probably the best method for estimating the number of transit migrants in Morocco is surveys, and in particular, the extensive surveys focusing on migration aspirations which are routinely conducted with regular and irregular migrants. Estimations reached by this method place the number of African transit migrants in Morocco between 8,000 and 15,000 (Khachani, 2003; CIMADE, 2004; Collyer, 2006b; AMERM and CISP, 2007; Lahlou, 2007). At the same time, it is also important to note that a higher number of migrants is estimated in other Maghreb countries, particularly Libya. Altogether, it seems reasonable to estimate that sub-Saharan transit migration to Europe via the Maghreb countries involves a number of people in the tens of thousands instead of in the hundreds of thousands. The analysis of Hein de Haas (2007), which combines several estimation methods and adds a critical perspective, shows that an estimated 65,000-120,000 sub-Saharan Africans reach the Maghreb every year, of which around one-third reaches, or at least attempts to reach, Europe.

The Case: The Immobility of Migrants in Morocco

The kingdom of Morocco is a country in North Africa with a population of around 33 million people. Although African countries have interacted for ages, the current migration trend from sub-Saharan Africa to North Africa is a particularly hot topic of debate today. In 2003, the Moroccan government implemented a new law (Loi, 02/03) addressing migration and, in particular, the entry and stay of irregular migrants in the country. It is widely acknowledged that this law was designed and implemented in order to meet European demands for the creation of a migration 'buffer zone' (Khachani, 2007).

Figure 1: Morocco, Rabat, Oujda and African Migration Routes



Source: BBC News

My fieldwork regarding African immigration in Morocco was conducted in two important locations: Rabat and Oujda. Rabat, the capital of Morocco, accommodates a relatively high number of African migrants and is home to the UNHCR office. Oujda is a main (irregular) entry point into Morocco, and in fact, the CIMADE survey indicated that 90% of the undocumented migrants in Morocco in 2004 had entered the country via Oujda. Predictably, Oujda is also where the majority of migrant deportations (executed by Moroccan authorities) are carried out.

The aim of my qualitative research is to gain greater insights into three aspects of the immobility phase:

- The characteristics of the immobility phase, including its length and reasons for migrants' immobility
- The location and survival strategies of sub-Saharan African migrants in Morocco
- The role of the transit phase in the migration process, particularly in changing migration aspirations

1. Research Group: The Diversity of Transit Migration

As noted before, transit migration is not a distinctive category (such as refugee migration or irregular migration) but instead refers to the stepwise character of the migration process of a whole range of people. My fieldwork in January consisted of 33 interviews with people whose country of origin, sex, age, and status varied. In addition, my notes from several field-study trips are used to complement the interviews. Some of the characteristics of the respondents are detailed below.

Table 1: Country of Origin

Country of Origin	Number
Nigeria	13
Democratic Republic Congo	10
Cameroon	4
Senegal	2
Liberia	1
Guinea Conakry	1
Guinea Bissau	1
Mali	1
Total	33

Table 2: Sex

Male	Female
27	6

Table 3: Age

Age (Average)	29,3
Age (Range)	18-42

Table 4: Status of Migrants

Legal Migrant	Recognised Refugee	Asylum Seeker	Sans Papier
2	4	2	25 (of which 4 were rejected asylum seekers)

In order to contextualise this group within a wider research population, a recent survey conducted by AMERM (l'Association Marocaine d'Etudes et de Recherche sur les Migrations) can be considered. The AMERM survey shows that 797 of the 1000 respondents were male and that the average age was 27.7, with a range of 15 to 47 years (AMERM and CISP, 2007). This indicates that my research group fairly reflects the wider migrant community. Nonetheless, generalisations are not possible since my research group is simply too small.

2. The Length and Reason for the Migrants' Immobility

Nineteen interviewees —the majority— had been in Morocco for a period of between 1 and 3 years. Only 5 had been in Morocco for a year or less, and 9 people had been residing in Morocco for 3 years or more, of which two had been in Morocco for a relatively long period of time (7 and 9 years).

The respondents emphasised that their immobility and inability to reach Europe was the result of their lack of financial resources. There are several reasons for this lack of money, the most important of which are:

- In Morocco, where the unemployment rate is approximately 15%, there are few job opportunities for migrants, and most jobs are underpaid.
- Rent prices for migrant houses are relatively high, especially in Rabat.
- The journey to Morocco is relatively expensive, and migrants usually arrive 'broke' in Morocco since smugglers have to be paid and border officials have to be bribed en route.
- Contrary to what is stated in the majority of transnational migration literature, a considerable number of people migrate without comprehensive transnational support or any form of network, which makes them ('the non-network migrants') completely self-dependent.

A second reason why migrants get stuck in Morocco is the physical danger of getting to Europe: illegally migrating often involves a potentially life-threatening sea-crossing in fragile boats, as widely reported by different media. Furthermore, migrants also get stuck in Morocco because the fences of the Spanish exclaves are extremely difficult to cross and because Spanish and Moroccan border guards often use violence when migrants attempt to climb the fences. According to *Medicins sans Frontieres*, around 2200 migrants needed medical consultations between 2003 and 2005 after being subjected to excessive violence, mainly at the hands of government authorities (*Medecins sans Frontieres*, 2005). Several respondents referred to the physical challenges of getting into Europe and stated that this was an important reason for not going.

A third explanatory factor of migrants' involuntary immobility is the difficulty of arranging of an 'in-between-person.' Although it is often stated that it is easy to contact the 'right persons' when a migrant has enough money, the arrangement of a trustworthy smuggler is important and can take some time.

A fourth and perhaps more controversial factor of migrants' immobility is social attachment. Sub-Saharan African migrants get attached to their lives in Morocco for several reasons: some start a successful business; others give birth to a baby or fall in love with someone. All these personal factors change migration perspectives and make (some) migrants decide to stay where they are (in this case, Morocco). Hein de Haas (2005) has called this 'staying as a second best option.' The fact that people's social lives are embedded in Morocco does not mean that they have integrated successfully into Moroccan society; rather, their attachment is often only to the Sub-Saharan African migrant community.

3. Location and Survival Strategies

The second aim of this research project is to identify the location and survival strategies of migrants in transit. Location strategies are analysed on three different levels, namely the:

- Macro level (country)
- Meso-level (city)
- Micro level (working places and living places within the city)

The Macro Level: Morocco

On the macro level, a distinction must be made between intentional and un-intentional movements to Morocco. One group of migrants intentionally chose Morocco because 1) they perceived Morocco as a 'safe haven' 2) Morocco functions as an important transit area for reaching Europe and 3) Morocco is known as a country with slight job opportunities.

The other group of migrants did not self-consciously choose Morocco but just 'ended up there' through unintentional movement. Of these migrants, two basic groups can be distinguished. Firstly, some migrants have no clear destination in their head when they set out to emigrate; they migrate more 'spontaneously' (for instance, in the case of an emergency). During this group's migration process, new goals are formed and migration projects concretised, which explains why for some Morocco was not the intended destination beforehand. Secondly, some people are misled by their smugglers/ traffickers. Migrants are sometimes told that they are being brought to Europe, only to be subsequently and unexpectedly left behind in unknown places. As a result, some migrants involuntarily end up in Rabat.

The Meso-Level: Rabat and Oujda

The migrant's location strategy on the meso-level concerns the city he or she is living in. In Morocco, there are several reasons why migrants choose to go to the capital city of Rabat. The most important factors are:

- **Migration Strategy:** Many migrants go to Rabat for migration strategy-related reasons (Alioua, 2003; Lahlou, 2007). Rabat functions as a so-called 'dealer city' where smugglers can be contacted and travel to Europe can be arranged. In addition, a strong migration strategy-related pull factor is the UNHCR office in Rabat; many migrants go to Rabat in the hopes of getting refugee status. In 2006, this office received 1650 asylum applications, and 350 of them were provided refugee status (Johannes van der Klaauw, personal communication, 2007). Once people have refugee status they feel more at rest, and at that point it is possible to make new migration plans.
- **Security:** Security is an important reason for going to Rabat, which is perceived as a safe place to live. National and international media are present in the city, as well as some very active national and international NGOs. Moreover, the population is, according to many respondents, more 'open-minded' than that of other Moroccan cities (see Aliou, 2003). Finally, the risk of deportations is limited: while in Oujda and the region around Ceuta and Mellila migrants constantly risk permanent deportation, in Rabat this occurs infrequently since the authorities in general show more tolerance towards Sub-Saharan African migrants.
- **Socio-economic Factors:** There are large migrant communities in Rabat, and these communities provide a form of (social) security for migrants. Furthermore, many migrants looking for work believe that they can be more successful in a larger city than in a town.
- **Integration/Sedentary Factors:** Migrants also choose to go to Rabat since it is possible to find apartments in one of the bidonvilles. Several respondents stated that "Rabat is a city where you can live a normal life, people go there to stay." While this factor may seem inconsistent with the migration strategy factor above, interviews indicate that social mobility and integration are in fact possible for limited numbers of migrants in Morocco. The situation usually unfolds in the following manner. At first, undocumented migrants live in informal camps. After they have saved some money, they go to a city (Rabat) and begin to live in a very small room shared with many others. After a certain period of time, they are able to rent a more spacious room and gain a more comfortable existence. From this perspective, one can say that Rabat is a place for the more successful migrant with some financial means. At the same time, one interviewed migrant said that those who settle down in Rabat are cowards: "They don't have the courage to live their dream; they forget where they are going."

The city of Oujda lies near the Algerian border and is an important entry point for undocumented migrants. The reasons why migrants go to Oujda differ, but the following are the most important:

- **Migration Strategy:** Oujda functions as a transit zone for people planning to go to Melilla or trying to cross the Mediterranean from Nador. In this way, it is a dealer city like Rabat. One interviewed migrant said: "People who are trying to fulfil their migration project are waiting in Oujda, in Rabat they are not ready to go."
- **Forced Stay:** Many migrants stay in Oujda involuntarily since they have been deported to Oujda or since they have walked back to Oujda after being deported to the Algerian side of the border. It is extremely difficult to leave Oujda without being noticed by the authorities; the train station is permanently observed and there is constant police surveillance. Therefore, rather than catching a train from Oujda, migrants who want to go to other places in Morocco often go to more rural areas in order to 'jump upon a train.'
- **Orientation:** A third reason for being in Oujda is that it is the easiest way for many migrants to arrive in Morocco for the first time. The research of CIMADE (2004) suggests that about 90% of SSA migrants enter Morocco via Oujda. Migrants stay in Oujda in order to gain important information, create new networks, etc., with the result that the city functions as an orientation place for Morocco.

The Micro Level

On the micro level, mobility is an important strategy for migrants. Migrants are usually not constrained by family considerations, they have few obligations towards their temporary employers, and if they want to, they can leave their apartment at any time. On the micro level, this high degree of mobility constitutes an important strategy for migrants. Three examples are given below:

- **Mobile Tranquilos:** Many informal camps are set up by migrants themselves, mainly in the forests, and are known as 'mobile tranquilos.' These camps have a strong nomadic character since migrants change places regularly in order to avoid being traced by the authorities. The number of people living in each of these mobile camps varies from 10 to 35.
- **Trial-and-Error:** When their migration aspirations are very high, migrants move around very frequently in order to find the best place of departure. For example, migrants who do not succeed in Nador may try again in Laayoune, a city in Western Sahara. In addition, migrants who have just arrived in Morocco often first try their luck by attempting to enter one of the Spanish exclaves.
- **Commuting:** Although the border between Algeria and Morocco is officially closed, there is some cross-border mobility between the cities of Oujda and Maghnia. In Maghnia, Algeria, the construction sector is growing, and many migrants try to find a job there for a short period of time. However, since the general perception among migrants is that Algeria is a very hard place to live, Oujda is more popular as a place of residence. Some interviewed migrants stated that they sleep in Morocco and work in Maghnia.

Thus, while the respondents in this research group are technically labelled as 'immobile' (since they cannot move in the ultimate directions that they would like to), many of their daily lives are not characterised by immobility or confinement. At the same time, it should also be noted that some respondents reported being highly immobile in their daily patterns, particularly women, who are constantly forced to stay in their homes (see van Brabant, 2007). Women stay at home mostly for security reasons; they feel that they and their children are safest at home. However, sometimes it makes economically more sense to stay at home since some of the economic activities take place inside their homes (e.g. hairdressing). Some women only go outside their house to visit the church in the city centre or to buy some necessary products on the markets.

Another important factor explaining migrant's immobility on the micro level is the frequent incidence of intervention by the authorities. Many migrants are deported to Oujda and forced to stay there; others are locked up in so-called reception centres. At the local level, these forms of immobility lead to frustrations. Female (and even some male) respondents declared feeling very restricted in their movements. To quote one respondent: "Here in Morocco, you are not free; it is like a prison!"

To conclude, mobility is an important strategic factor for many migrants in Morocco — although this does not mean that all migrants feel free to go where they would like to go. In addition, among the migrants 'stranded' at the local level, mobility seems to be an important polarising factor.

4. Survival Strategies

Besides location strategies, migrants develop other methods to adapt to the difficult living conditions in Morocco. Here, two types of strategies are outlined: economic strategies and social-security strategies.

Economic Strategies

In taking account of the economic strategies of so-called transit migrants, it is important to note that many migrants find work on a temporary basis en route to their planned ultimate destination. It is believed that cities like Dirkou and Tamanrasset are going through a time of economic prosperity partly because the migrants who are passing through function as cheap labour (Bredeloup and Pliez, 2005).

In Morocco, African migrants have several economic strategies. Firstly, migrants can find jobs catering to the migrant communities. In the Taqadoum and J5 quarters of Rabat, one can see various businesses set up specifically for African people, such as 'Afro barber shops.' Another service that has emerged is the selling of 'smuggled goods.' Migrants who commute between Maghnia and Oujda buy MP3 players, mobile phones and other technology in Algeria, then they try to sell it (mostly to fellow migrants) in Oujda for little profit.

Secondly, at various markets in Morocco, migrants offer additional services to the informal economy. For instance, sub-Saharan African migrants do activities such as plucking chickens, carrying goods to market and cleaning fish. Some Africans even sell goods from their own stands and have their own shoe repair shops. Moreover, there are examples of migrants working in the migrant education sector, as ICT staff or as mechanics. It is also reported that some female migrants work in the domestic service sector.

Finally, in many cases prostitution and begging are the last options for migrants to earn money. Other research has focused on female prostitution in Morocco, which is especially associated with Nigerian women, and it has found that prostitution is often embedded in larger criminal networks (Alioua, 2003; van Brabant, 2007). In addition to the sex trade, begging is an important means of income generation for many sub-Saharan Africans in Morocco. It is reported that many people can earn more money by begging than they can earn in the construction sector in Morocco.

Social-Security Strategies

Besides the above-specified strategies to earn money, migrants have also developed social security systems to help protect them against the hostile environment in which they live. Firstly, migrants create collectives en route to Morocco or in Morocco in order to ensure their security for a particular

step of their journey. This is best described by the example of the university campus in Oujda (see Box 1).

Box 1: The Campus in Oujda:

On the university campus in Oujda approximately 300 migrants are living on the university campus in Oujda. The campus is a relatively safe place to live in since it is a traditional 'no-go area' for the police. The campus grounds are more of a construction site than it consists of they are an area of houses and apartments. The grounds are divided into an Anglophone and Francophone part. Within their linguistic division, migrants live in small communities (8-15 members) based on nationality and ethnicity. Each community has its own chairman, often a person with experience in migration or someone who has held a high function in the home country. The community chairmen are directed by a national chairman, and the different national chairmen are controlled directed by the grand chairman of the campus. With the help of this hierarchical structure, information is shared, conflicts are solved and individuals are protected. However, people do not always benefit from this structure. It; it sometimes creates power conflicts and often facilitates forms of patronage, abuse and corruption (Schapendonk en Van Moppes, 2007).

Based on several interviews, it seems that there is widely-felt solidarity among the collectives; migrants keep each other updated on security issues, transport opportunities and the availability of jobs. However, the solidarity among the migration collectives is not unconditional, and particularly when it comes to information about the possibility of making the 'final jump' to Europe, great secrecy and even competition exists. According to local humanitarian organisations in Morocco, migrants are very reluctant to share information about this issue, fearing the competition of other migrants. The greater the number of other people who know about an opportunity to go to Europe, the less chance an individual has to make use of that opportunity since fellow migrants may 'take his place.' Therefore, many migrants arrange their 'final jump' without informing their fellow migrants (Schapendonk en Van Moppes, 2007).

Another interesting strategic development is that formal and semi-formal migrant organisations are emerging in Morocco. Currently, various Congolese organisations are fighting for refugee rights in the country, and even more surprisingly, migrants without residence papers are trying to 'sensitise' Moroccan society to their presence. There is a Cameroonian organisation of 'sans papiers,' an African migrants' platform, and a migrant human rights organisation, all of which collaborate to some level with Moroccan NGOs.

A third social-security strategy involves searching for transnational support. Many migrants look for financial and social support within their own (transnational) social network; however, these networks and resources are often not sufficient to complete the migration process. Therefore, migrants also look for support outside these networks. Often, internet forums and chat rooms are used in order to attract the attention of the outside world and create international solidarity concerning their 'inhumane living situation.'

The Role of the Transit Phase in Migration Process

In migration literature, there is growing consensus that the term 'transit' is not suitable as a collective categorisation of the migrants in North Africa. A large number of the migrants are no longer 'in transit' because they have chosen to settle in the Maghreb countries. Others are not technically 'in transit' because they did not have a clear plan when they left their country. And finally, many migrants residing in Morocco with the clear aspiration to go to Europe have not always had this aspiration from the beginning of their migration process. Indeed, a 2004 survey among

African migrants in Morocco shows that only 27% of the respondents had the intention to go to Europe before they arrived in Morocco, but once they had come to Morocco this share was around 90% (CIMADE, 2004). Other, more in-depth research draws the same conclusion (Collyer, 2006a; van Brabant, 2007).

This part of the paper focuses on the changing migration goals of the interviewed migrants. The findings show that migration aspirations are flexible rather than fixed: in other words, migration plans change over time. Table 5 shows that of the 33 respondents, only 16 had left their home country in order to reach Europe. In the countries they crossed en route to Morocco, their plans did not change; however, once in Morocco, four of them changed their migration goal: three decided to stay in Morocco and one person stated he had plans to go home. Five respondents stated that they were aiming to go to Morocco when they left their home country, and this migration goal did not change in the third countries they passed through; however, once in Morocco, four of these five migrants decided to continue on to Europe. In addition, six respondents originally sought to reach ‘a third country’ in the South (for instance, Congolese migrants who intended to go to Congo Brazaville, Cameroonian migrants who wanted to reach Nigeria, etc.). During their migration process, the plans of these migrants changed, and now all six of them have aspirations to go to Europe (see Table 5). Finally, four migrants left their home country without a clear destination. Two of them, while they were in so-called third countries, decided to go to Morocco as their destination; today, however, these two respondents want to go to Europe.

Migration Goals at Different Stages of the Migration Process			
Country of Origin	Third Countries		Morocco
Europe (16)	Europe (16)		Europe (12)
			Morocco (3)
			Return (1)
Morocco (5)	Morocco (3)*		Morocco (1)
			Europe (4)
Third country (6)	Third Country (2)	Morocco (2)	Europe (2)
	Morocco (2)		Europe (2)
	Europe (2)		Europe (2)
Unkown Destination (4)	Morocco (2)		Europe (2)
	Unknown Destination (2)		Morocco (1)
			Europe (1)
* two respondents went by plane (no third countries involved)			
	Result		
	Constant migration goal (13)		
	Migration goal changed once (12)		
	Migration goals changed more (6)		

As a result, only thirteen respondents reported that their plans had never changed, that they had had constant migration goals. Some 12 respondents changed their migration goal once; the other six

had several moments at which they re-defined their migration plans.¹ Thus, what is often interpreted as transit migration did not necessarily start as transit migration at all. On the other hand, what started as South-South migration often turned into migration aspirations for Europe, with more or less unexpected forms of transit migration occurring.

Another striking element of this research is the abstraction of migration goals. Almost all interviewed migrants had what is here called abstract migration goals, meaning that they were not heading to a specific city or even to a specific country; instead, they were heading for 'Europe,' or they were looking for 'a good place to live in.'

To concretise: for a considerable group of migrants, the transit phase still means a waiting period in which the next stop of their journey is arranged. However, in those cases where 'transiting' cannot be achieved in a certain period of time (say, for instance, two years),² it is here suggested that we analyse the situation as 'stranded migration' since the fulfilment of the original migration goals is temporally impossible. In other cases, where 'transiting' a given country was not a migration goal beforehand, we should not speak about a 'transit phase,' but rather about 'multiple migration' or, if we are to use the safest designation, 'step-by step migration.'

Conclusion

This paper has analysed the immobility of Sub-Saharan African migrants in Morocco, and it has shown that the migration of Sub-Saharan Africans is too simply categorised as 'transit migration' since the findings indicate that their migration often has a stepwise character and that their migration aspirations change over time. Transit may turn into voluntary or semi-voluntary settlement, transit may turn into return migration and transit may indeed turn into further migration. What is important here is that migration perspectives change over time. Altogether, the transit phase is not always a waiting period; it is rather an indefinite period of insecurity.

As stated above, migrants react to this environment of insecurity by creating migration collectives, security mechanisms and international alliances. Closely related to these security and humanitarian concerns are concerns about immobility. On the micro level, most migrants live relatively footloose lives as 'modern nomads.' However, others, mainly women, are involuntarily stuck in one place, and this immobility at the local level leads to different kinds of frustrations.

Altogether, migration, and especially south-north migration, cannot be analysed as a simple movement from A to B. Restrictive migration initiatives attempt to discourage migrants from entering Europe, and this can go as far as putting migrants in so-called reception centres, the purest form of immobilisation. On the other hand, migrants have the abstract but enduring dream of finding a good place to live. Although this place might not be in Europe, the European promises of welfare and job opportunities are increasingly attracting migrants from underdeveloped areas. This trend will persist in the near future and will have far-reaching consequences for the individuals as well as for the societies of North Africa. Within the framework of migration regimes, individual migrants, and the conflicting interests of both parties, it is important to include notions of voluntary, semi-voluntary and involuntary immobility in migration research in order best to understand migration as a whole.

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2 The issue of time-dependent demarcation is important for discussion; however, it is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss it extensively.

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