

## Chapter 4

# “The adventure is not easy.” – Narrating forms of suffering in deportation experiences<sup>1</sup>

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“The adventure is not easy” is a mantra for many former migrants who have become deportees, likewise for potential migrants and those stuck in transit. Suffering, in fact, is omnipresent in their narratives, in phrases such as “it’s always the same suffering” or “it’s hard to forget the suffering.” To summarize the experiences of their migratory journey and eventual deportation, they link different forms of suffering in evoking the specific ambivalence of the entire “migratory adventure,” which was the starting point for this book. This chapter is now set to dive into situations after deportation, but it focuses first of all on deportees’ experiences of actual deportation processes and deportation regimes to aid our understanding of what happens to them as a result. What does deportation do to them? How do they change (physically, emotionally, and socially) as it impacts their situation and the situation of their social surroundings afterwards? From a theoretical point of view, the chapter centers on specific patterns in the accounts of suffering that emerge from the experiences depicted in deportees’ narratives. As an intensely rich emic and theoretical concept, suffering can be seen as culturally, socially, and historically contingent, and, as a theme, it will accompany the analytical discussion throughout the book. This chapter provides a conceptual and empirical basis for deportees’ narrative accounts and reconstructions of suffering.<sup>2</sup> The experiences and memories of migration and deportation have often left literal marks on deportees’ bodies, and this damage may continue to be part of their everyday experience. Suffering also represents how people deal with the situation after deportations.

The forms of suffering that appear in deportees’ narrative presentations of deportation can, in the terminology of Kleinman and Kleinman (1991), be deemed to be both “suffering resulting from extreme conditions” and a “routinized form of

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1 Parts of this chapter have been previously published in Schultz, S. U. (2021b).

2 The richness of local perceptions of and allusions to suffering found in Mali will be revisited in Chapters 5 and 6.

suffering."<sup>3</sup> Suffering and hardship are most often discussed with respect to structure and agency (Bruijn et al., 2007)<sup>4</sup>, subjectivity (Jackson, 2005a; Foucault et al., 2005; Boskovic, 2001) and concepts such as social navigating (Vigh, 2006) – defined as a "motion within motion" (p. 14), building on De Certeau's work on strategies and tactics as "the art of the weak" – and future-making (e.g., Kleist & Jansen, 2016; Chabal, 2009). Both these latter concepts are to be further discussed in subsequent chapters. Here, suffering is understood as both structural and agentic: structural in being inflicted by EU-driven deportation regimes and externalized border controls, which are extreme yet routinized at the same time; agentic in being part of the subjectivities that people develop within their local spaces to make sense of expressions and experiences of suffering.

This interrelation is well captured in the concept of social suffering, which focuses on the group dimension of suffering across contexts. Individuals are generally always social, but the Malian and West African context is particularly characterized by a dense web of social relations, as previously described. Social suffering "results from what political, economic, and institutional power does to people and, reciprocally, from how these forms of power themselves influence responses to social problems" (Kleinman et al., 1997, p. ix). In this sense, social suffering is caused by the impersonal forces inherent in deportations and bordering practices, as people suffer from the implementation of deportation as a political, legal, and administrative instrument of state power (cf. Drotbohm & Hasselberg, 2015, p. 559). At the same time, the social, political and institutional nature of deportation influences the agentic responses to it, which range from silence and endurance to social navigating (cf. also Kleinman et al., 1997, pp. xiiiif). As products of constraints, these agentic responses may be highly ambivalent. Kleinman et al. (1997, p. x) claim that social suffering may even ruin the collective and intersubjective

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- 3 Kleinman and Kleinman distinguish "*routinized forms of suffering* that are either shared aspects of human conditions – chronic illness or death – or experiences of deprivation and exploitation and of degradation and oppression that certain categories of individuals (the poor, the vulnerable, the defeated) are specially exposed to and others relatively protected from," and "*suffering resulting from extreme conditions*, such as survivorship of the Holocaust or the Atom Bomb or the Cambodian genocide or China's Cultural Revolution" (1991, p. 280; emphasis added by the authors). They also define as a third category suffering due to "*contingent misfortunes* such as serious acute illness."
  - 4 Without claiming to enter any further into in-depth discussion of the wide topic of structure and agency, it is important to emphasize that agency is not equal to action, but rather the "self-reflective beliefs we have about our abilities and capacities (our self-efficacy) to act" (van Houte et al., 2016, p. 4). In the case of Malian deportees, I prefer to speak of imaginations and aspirations rather than beliefs. Van Houte et al.'s discussion of agency in the context of return migration is helpful as it places desires and capacities as "intermediate factors" between structure and agency. An actor's agency is then "determined by these desires and capacities, and is both shaped by and shapes structure" (2016, p. 4).

connections of experience and gravely damage subjectivity. From the point of view of sequential analysis (see, e.g., Rosenthal, 2006), suffering also needs to be seen as a narrative style or even strategy, given the position and power discrepancies inherent in our particular interactions with Malian respondents. Finally, too, it has to be acknowledged that suffering is barely graspable by researchers in an adequate way (cf. Jackson, 2005a).

After deportation, forms of social suffering may continue or even intensify over time through negative administrative or social treatment in the country of return. Deportation not only constrains deportees' agency but may create or even "enforce" new ways of thinking about and going on with their lives after it has happened.<sup>5</sup> In some senses, social suffering may even be a motor for change and new activities, not least since suffering needs to be overcome so that life can go on, as the saying goes; a correlation to be discussed in Chapter 6.

In what follows I will first carefully reflect on deportees' narratives of their interactions with state, legal, and bureaucratic practices and their emotional and embodied outcomes in terms of social suffering. I will show what this suffering constitutes for them. Experiences of violence, shock, alienation, fear, and stress, traumatic accounts, and anger are to be shown, as well as spatial and temporal disorders. This helps shed light on the social organizations supporting former deportees and on reactions among the wider Malian public. The last subsection reflects on the powerful symbolism surrounding the states (those of the EU and North Africa, and Mali itself) that initiated or go along with the deportation and externalization regime. Thus the chapter goes beyond the embedding context previously outlined to revisit the specific social suffering and deportee experiences caused by the deportation regimes that run from Europe through North Africa, and the localized and more agentic forms of narrative created around social suffering in bringing the deported actors of this study in focus.

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5 Like others, Henrik E. Vigh considers the role of agency to be key in (social) suffering but pleads for a more flexible conceptualization of structure and agency in order to be able to focus on social processes. He highlights the fact that even if there is "a close correlation between impairment of agency and suffering" (Vigh, 2006, p. 113, n.9), suffering should not be confused with constraint, but agency and suffering can be analyzed carefully in their complexity and relationality [of structural coexistences and simultaneities.

## Experiencing North African deportation regimes

The deportation regimes of North African countries, facilitated and progressively reinforced by the externalization of EU borders, constitute a particular case of creating hazards and suffering in deportation experiences. In our field conversations, deportees describe being spat at in the street, harassed and persecuted (cf. also Tyszler, 2019). This built on the widespread racism of the populations in Maghreb countries, culminating, for instance, in raids on sub-Saharan migrants and their mass deportation on the occasion of the Libyan national holiday in order to please the local population ?.

Dave, a humanitarian worker from a deportee organization, who speaks self-confidently about "the migrants" and deportees he provides assistance to, hesitates to go into details about his own deportation and the distress he survived: "It's not so easy to tell this, Susanne," he admits in a restrained manner. In rough sentences, he describes his withdrawal from Ceuta, the Spanish enclave in Morocco, in fear of death if apprehended by the police:

When I saw these guys jump, it's really horrible. This barrier is made of wire. It cuts. I could not do Ceuta, because I told myself that I had not gone out to die because this is a sentence of death. So I went back to Morocco to Casa. That's where I was taken by the immigration services and thrown out in the desert. [...] So yes, it was I who decided to return – after having been thrown into the desert. (Dave, 10-21-2014)

"Throwing out in the desert" is a standard procedure for the authorities deporting migrants from Morocco and very similar to practices reported from other Maghreb countries, especially Libya (cf. Lemberg-Pedersen, 2017; Lecadet, 2013, Trauner & Deimel, 2013). People, including many women and children, are apprehended, taken away and detained, forcibly crowded into a truck, driven to the Algerian border for days without food and water, and dumped in the desert. Literature on the United States and Latin America in particular talks of deportees as disposable "human rubbish," undergoing "waste removal" (De Genova, 2018, p. 253) or as "trash" (Nyberg-Soerensen, 2010) in the context of mass deportations on a literally industrial scale, above all under the Obama administration (cf. e.g. Kanstroom, 2011). What the externalized borders of Europe are increasingly producing is comparable. Dave would have preferred an IOM-assisted return program, which was not available at that moment: "Now I am a *refoulé*." Importantly, however, Dave describes himself as having decided to step back from a new attempt to cross the Algerian–Moroccan border. He thereby demonstrated some agency, even if this agency was clearly provoked by EU policies and thus quite ambivalent.

In this respect, deportations from within the African continent are not reported by former deportees to be any less violent, unjust, or disturbing than those from

Europe. On the contrary, Libya in particular has become known for its rigorous attitude and policies and developed into a “demon” with regard to the treatment of sub-Saharan migrants in its territory. Since the Libyan civil war, conditions have become anarchic, as described in Chapter 2. Deportees’ accounts, having left this “hell,” are shocking. Salif, for instance, two years after leaving and earning a living and making a failed attempt to reach Italy, spent a total of six months in three Libyan prisons. As if haunted, he recalled the unbearable conditions in words that burst out under pressure like a stream of tears:

Last, I was in Sabha. It was the worst and most dangerous of the prisons. There were hundreds there. There was almost no food. Every morning, one loaf of bread for 6–8 persons, no tap water, no clothes. Nothing else. Telephones, everything had been taken from us. And every morning the Libyans came in and beat us. Just like this... There was no communication between the Arabs and the Blacks. Like animals. That’s also what they called us. Between ourselves, the black among “us,” there were no problems. Everyone was afraid. That was just the feeling against the Libyans. And there were little bugs everywhere, which bit: in the clothes, which were so dirty because of the salt, in the bed sheets, which were on the mattresses, where we lay. Many people died there. Only someone who had a mobile phone number in his head could call to get help, to get someone to send money to buy something at the small kiosk: drinks, small things, cigarettes. You did not really know what was going on, how long you had to stay in there. Then, the transfer from one to the next prison. Just like that. Without notice. We were packed into a truck – like a black barrel, you did not see anything – and transported somewhere else. Then all you saw was prison again. (Salif, 11-29-2015)

Salif’s references were very graphic, literally evoking the physical abuse they underwent. He touched his body, lowered his head, sighed and stared at me alternately while speaking, underlining this horrendous depiction. In the end, he was repatriated with 150 other Malians by airplane. Still, he spoke about his returning with “empty hands” as the central impression of his return, the symbolic meaning of which I will explore further in the next chapter:

It is disturbing, because when you leave, it was the joy, and upon return it’s a shame (*honte*) because you return with empty hands, as if one entered Bamako without clothes or shoes. In the prison you do not wear any shoes or anything and they deport you like that. (Salif, 11-1-2015)

Besides having lost money and suffered from emotional and physical destitution, Salif describes himself as debased as it is possible to be. He had to arrive without clothes, dishonored, stripped of human dignity by this anarchic administrative treatment. These deportees seem literally to be reduced to “bare life” (Agamben, 1998) and “naked” (Arendt, [1943] 2018). Many, particularly those who left during

the Libyan civil war, arrived wounded, shot, with broken arms, or sick. In such cases, recovery after deportation is not only emotional and moral in nature, but may require weeks or months of medical treatment, causing additional insecurity and trouble for the family and sometimes the payment of large sums of money. Some returnees remain physically impaired. This is particularly visible in some villages where the majority of the men, young and old, returned from Libya (before, during, or after the civil war in 2011). One former deportee could not use his hand for more than a year before being able to help again on the family farm. Another still had a bullet in his back when we met in 2016. It restricted his ability to engage in heavy physical work. His family was unable to pay for the required surgery. All these injuries became bodily inscribed memories of migratory control and war. We can speak too of the "language of the body" (cf. Sayad, 2004, pp. 210ff). The body speaks and remembers. It puts experiences of continued social, physical, and emotional suffering and destitution on display.

Among the Malian population, these violent practices and the large numbers of deportees from Libya were met with widespread irritation and anger, even riots from the 2000s on when Libyan deportations increased (see Sylla, 2019, 2014): "The people were upset that this could happen and compatriots were treated like this," Salif said. This needs to be considered against the background of previous close Libyan–Malian (migration) relations and guest worker agreements as described above. It constitutes a collective, though desperate, agitative act against the constraints caused by deportations.

### **Within the externalized transit corridor**

Many deportees never get beyond the vast transit corridor through North Africa to the Mediterranean and the Atlantic, fragmented and shaped by the EU's externalized borders. The accounts of their turbulent journeys – journeys that in many cases are reversed – express a spectrum of aspects and forms of suffering. The trajectories of many are arbitrarily shaped; they pass through long phases of waiting, standstill, and mobility in many countries, undergoing multiple deportations and re-emigrations. At the same time, this is what people describe as being captured by the notion of the migratory adventure.

### **"Having something in the head." – Stress, violence, and pain after deportations**

As recounted in the previous chapter, one of the most striking impressions from the beginning of my field work was of a certain restlessness I encountered in deportees, generally shortly after their deportation (though sometimes even many years after).

These people seemed anxious, delusional, and urgently searching for something in a rather desperate state of “stress, between hyper mobility and waiting” as Streiff-Fénart and Poutignat (2006, p. 137) aptly describe situations of transit – a mixture of pressure, bewilderment, resignation, commitment, conviction, consciousness of any horrors one may have seen and expectations that remain unfulfilled. Either directly after being deported or in retrospective narration, such “insanity” became visible as embodied memory, when former deportees like Salif stopped talking, and stared into space in the middle of a conversation, or touched their heads. “There is something in my head”; I heard that said many times – for instance, by Madou, who left for Mauritania from his village near Kita, describing his feelings after his ship was wrecked crossing the Atlantic: “At that moment, the idea of a journey had taken over my mind. Either, I went on an adventure or I would die, because there is so much poverty in Mali.” Flown back to Bamako, he re-emigrated directly from his uncle’s house with some money he had received from his brother. He did not care that the uncle was against it. The mission had to be accomplished, and he did not see any immediate alternative to doing just that.

Souleymane very much embodied a combination of recklessness and seriousness that might be called quite “adventurous.” He was deported, sent back, stuck on the way, imprisoned, then re-emigrated many times on literally “fragmented journeys” (Collyer, 2007), “turbulent trajectories” (Schapendonk, 2012) and “fragmented stays” (Stock, 2019) between Mali, the Maghreb states, and Spain. With €50 received from the Spanish authorities on one deportation, Souleymane immediately made his way north again, leaving from Bamako airport in the direction of Libya. Like Madou, describing his restless commitment, he recalled: “It was not my idea to return home at this stage .... I wanted to go to Europe to make a living there!”

One of the ARACEM workers said: “The migrants are people that I don’t know how to describe, how to characterize them, it’s a bit like they tell me their ... part of their way, some of their way, then it stops there, and from there they don’t tell you anything else” (field notes, 11-7-2014). Among all the sub-Saharan Africans passing through the organization, there are many Malians as well. They may return to their villages, but they may instead go on right away. For many deportees in Mali and elsewhere, deportation is just a moment of transit, a rupture, and a stage in a (new) migration cycle (cf. Kleist, 2017a; Cassarino, 2014; see Chapter 1). Many say their first thought is to leave again directly, being unwilling to confront the people who are socially close to them. Others prefer to remain in transit, at the border or in a town on the way, such as Gao, Agadez, or Tamanrasset.<sup>6</sup> Lucht (2017) depicts deportees stranded in Niger as preferring to die rather than return empty-handed

6 For literature on this historical transit space, see, e.g., Brachet, 2018; Lecadet, 2013; McDougall & Scheele, 2012; Boesen & Marfaing, 2006.

and face potential social death. He frames it as an "eternal existential unrest" in the "human struggle that migration represents in the globalized world" (p. 155). Hence, as long as the adventurers keep going and try to make it, they see value in their lives for they can still achieve something better for themselves and their kin.<sup>7</sup> According to one of the AME staff, "if the people find something to do, they will stay; but if not, the deportee always wants to re-emigrate. That's the big problem."

Staring eyes and nervousness may accompany accounts of deportation experiences many years later. The post-deportation condition may be prolonged for individuals, their social circles, and entire communities. Not everything can be expressed in words (cf. Vium, 2014). To cite Michael Jackson (2005a, p. 152), "it may be more realistic to admit that suffering brings us to the limits of language." Particularly, the experiences of violence and hardship before, during, and after migratory adventures may become more graspable through gestures, sighs, and silences. From the perspective of trauma theory, silence is fundamentally important to enable the sufferer to recover again as a self. Afflicted by "deeply painful memories" (Eastmond & Mannergren Selimovic, 2012, p. 524), the shattered self needs to place the cover of silence over the painful and shameful past, all the humiliations experienced and difficulties seen. Hardships and violence obviously do not start with deportations; the journey itself is often depicted as an encounter with tremendous suffering, physical distress, and death, the opposite pole to learning, getting to know the world, and eventually becoming "a man."<sup>8</sup> All this is substantially shaped by administrative control through visa regulations, illegalization, detention practices, and the use of force.

"Having something in one's head" is thus like an emblematic winged word, recognizable among those who have experienced deportations and those who know such people and work with them. There is a specific "air" particularly around those who have just returned. Some take increased migratory controls and violations as reason enough to stay after their return, sometimes ending up in social isolation and precarity in the anonymity of the city, as I will shortly revisit. Through these violent, physical, and emotional interventions, deportations change people. Some report having been literally driven crazy. Such insanity may entail a split in personality that cannot be recovered from. But, despite all the different stories, there are patterns in the aspects of suffering, embodied and memorized, that characterize those who have come back.

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7 Bredeloup depicts shame as "an extremely effective emotion driving migrants to take enormous risks, to cross deserts and the sea, to push their boundaries beyond previous limits in order to avoid social death" (2017, p. 145). These interrelations will be further explored in Chapters 5 and 6.

8 The latter will be particularly explored in Chapter 6.

## Shock, alienation, and the luck of survival

Deportees' narratives explicitly describe it as a shock, when they are deported – the kind of shock and experience of violence that may eventually bring them to a halt, even if many continue oscillating in their minds between returning and leaving again, potentially alienated and estranged from their social circle, at least at first. In view of the manifold processes of violation and humiliation that may accompany situations during or after deportation, the grades of alienation from society experienced may differ widely.

Brahima, whom I met in the Bamako market place when buying credit for my mobile phone and described in the previous chapter, was only 18 when he was deported from Tenerife in the Canary Islands after only “40 days.” “Honestly, the fact that I was deported shocked me very much. I did not imagine that somebody could deport me!” (Brahima, 12-5-2014). Deportation came unexpectedly, and as an instance of unjust administrative treatment with severe economic as well as social repercussions. All his money, he said, was “wasted [*gaspillé*]. This discouraged me a lot.”

Since his parents sent him to Bamako to earn money at the age of ten, Brahima had spent many years saving for the journey by sewing shoes and doing other jobs. As one of a group of youngsters, he took a bus to Mauritania. By bush taxi and boat, after several stopovers, a lot of negotiation, intermediaries, hazards, and exhaustion, the group headed for the Canary Islands. Brahima recalled the voyage, which took an entire week to cross the 200 km strait<sup>9</sup>: “During this week, honestly, we were very exhausted.” “You’ve endured some suffering!,” Birama, my co-researcher, exclaimed. “Too much,” said Brahima with conviction, “I do not want to live through that again. Really!” The 70 passengers arrived alive, but several were sick when they reached Tenerife. Having just escaped death at sea, they were immediately arrested, held for three days at a *Guardia Civil*<sup>10</sup> police station, then detained for another 40 days in a reception and deportation center. While some were allowed to continue “to Madrid or even Malaga,” others had to return. He did not have family members in Europe to be “reunited with.”<sup>11</sup> A charter flight brought

9 From Tripoli, Libya, to Sicily, Italy, is about double the distance.

10 The *Guardia Civil* is the oldest law enforcement entity in Spain organized as a military force charged with police duties under the authority of the Ministries of the Interior and of Defense. In collaboration with FRONTEX, the *Guardia Civil* is charged with the protection and security of the external Spanish and EU borders.

11 Family reunification is one of the major reasons for immigration to the EU and also a widespread migratory strategy, particularly for minors. It is one of the few and most frequently used legal pathways possible, besides seeking asylum, notably for persons from the African continent; see online: [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/legal-migration/family-reunification\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/legal-migration/family-reunification_en), accessed 31 October 2021.

them back to Bamako airport. He called his family upon arrival: "They were not happy at all. They cried on the telephone" (Brahima, 12-5-2014). While others, like Souleymane or Madou, hid away or left again the next day, Brahima could be seen as courageous in reporting his supposed migratory "failure" (cf. also Bredeloup, 2017, p. 147). But he was deeply demoralized: his objective had not been attained.

Souleymane's "hyper mobility" (Streiff-Fénart & Poutignat, 2006, p. 137), traveling back and forth and waiting in the vast externalized European border space, as described above, was eventually stopped by another deportation. He worked in Libya on a construction site where he was detected during a raid, detained in dire conditions and deported to Mali. This time, he decided to stay there. He described his appearance upon return: "Everything was flapping around. I was barely recognizable." And he had been "SUFFERING!" in the prison, he exclaimed. He returned, with the help of a patron, partly on his own resources, through the Sahara, southern Libya, Niger, and Gao to Bamako. He remained in the capital afterwards, refusing to return to his village close to Kita. Through the network of the same patron, he soon found a job as a security guard, a relatively recognized and safe occupation. His turbulent journey was interrupted and, at least for a time, stopped. The memories of the suffering remained, however, or became revitalized by our conversation.

After arrival, Malian deportees, in most cases that we found, sought shelter with a relative in the capital or in a bigger city to take a first breath before either continuing to their family's village or making a new attempt. Brahima used the €50 from the Spanish authorities, which Souleymane took to leave again immediately – "it was the European Union who financed this" – to pay for some food and water. But he spent an "uneasy time," as all his money was *gaspillé*. Moreover, he was met with general mistrust: "The people are afraid of deportees"; "they don't know you at all." He appeared like a stranger, alien to them. Upon arrival, deportees often need to become recognizable. They may look different. Academic literature speaks of deportees as "estranged," a "deportspora" (Nyers, 2003)<sup>12</sup>, "unclassifiable" (Douglas, 1966), and "ghostlike" (cf. Coutin, 2013); in extreme cases they may behave like the returning son described in Kafka's "Homecoming," mentioned in Chapter 1, who shies away to verify his estrangement, the alienation he feels. (Long) periods of absence, the world abroad, potentially hazardous and violent experiences and treatment shatter, impact, and can alienate returnees from those who stayed. In addition, they may be suspected of wrongdoing. While the previous practice of detaining deportees in Bamako after arrival based on accusations of illegal migration (see Chapter 2), may have encouraged people to consider deportees as criminals, the AME's and others' activities opposing this practice and its abolition after 1997 have substantially changed the public discourse in this respect, even though deportees

12 According to Nyers (2003, p. 1070) a "deportspora" is an "abject diaspora," "oscillating between re-departure and re-deportation," in a "global circuit of deportation" (Khosravi, 2016, p. 178).

may still be received ambivalently. In other countries similar detention practices continue today (cf., e.g., Alpes, 2018). Deportation literature in this regard speaks of multiple forms of “punishment” (Bosworth et al., 2016) – the administrative act of deportation and a potential stigmatization and exclusion afterwards – or “double abandonment” (Lecadet, 2013), as deportees may be “expelled from one country and outcast in another” (Khosravi, 2018, p. 2). In cases of (post) deportation affecting mostly Latin Americans from the United States, stigmatization and potential exclusion mechanisms take an even more extreme form. There it is not the country of reception that criminalizes the deportees, but the country that deports them. In the US, migrants without papers from countries such as El Salvador, the Dominican Republic, or Cape Verde in particular have been often convicted for, mostly minor, criminal offences, and subsequently deported (e.g., Radziwinowiczówna, 2019; Golash-Boza, 2015; Coutin, 2013, 2004; Drotbohm, 2012; Nyberg-Soerensen, 2010; Brotherton & Barrios, 2009; Peutz, 2007; Zilberg, 2004). The stigma of being criminal may be reactivated, (re)produced and deeply inscribed after arrival and often over time (e.g., Golash-Boza & Navarro, 2020). Eventually, this underlines a specific symbolism with respect to the deporting country, which I will briefly detail further.

Brahima’s experience of alienation was increased by the fact that he was “the only one to remain.” Many of his traveling companions left again during the following months. Their parents paid. Brahima stayed behind with his uncle in Bamako, unwilling to go to his village. The different economic and social backgrounds, financial resources, and the influence of their family networks divided the young men on arrival in Tenerife and after their deportation back to Bamako; their trajectories were deeply shaped by these differences, which offered them unequal chances. What started as a – as I term it – “collectivity of travel,” enduring the hazards of the adventure together, was lost at that moment. Belonging to a group of adventurers is a centrally important reference in the accounts of former deportees, enabling survival and keeping them grounded. Souleymane smiled somehow proudly, when he reported: “We’ve done Libya together.” These are emblematic expressions acknowledging memories of joint journeys and belonging. Brahima felt alone, once back. Detached from his collectivity of travel, he was particularly alienated, “estranged,” and moreover economically deprived through his deportation.

In this way, deportations often constitute a literal existential rupture in a migrant’s life and his social lifeworld in multiple respects and at multiple scales. Many deportees are “thrown” into the situation post deportation, involuntarily, without the envisaged objective having been attained, thus completely unprepared (cf. Casarino, 2004) to face their socially nearest whose expectations are unfulfilled. From the perspective of existential philosophy, this corresponds to the initial position of any human being: “we find ourselves thrown into the midst of a world where things often seem strange or confusing, and where we need to get a handle on what is go-

ing on around us, if we are to be able to function" (Guignon & Pereboom, 2001, p. 184; cf. Kleinhans, 2007, pp. 11f). In a similar sense, the deportee can be seen as being existentially and involuntarily forced into making sense of this situation, despite all the irritation, violence, and constraints he or she has lived through. Like, to use another literary reference, Samuel Beckett's "L'expulsé/The Expelled" (1984), who is unexpectedly thrown out of his house into an unknown street in an unknown town, Brahima was existentially thrown into a space of "cultural in-betweenness" (Collinge-Germain, 2009), even though he knew the society he was thrown back into. Others were able to make it, but, for him, there was a dichotomy between the in- and the outside, rather in the sense of the stranger described by Alfred Schütz (1944, p. 502), who has to reorient from his "relatively natural conception of the world."<sup>13</sup> Left to his own devices, he needs to recover and overcome humiliations in order to be accepted again and eventually "reinitiated."<sup>14</sup> Such experiences of alienation and estrangement are specific forms of suffering brought about by the ruptures of deportation, which one has to cope with.

Even though, it appears, risk, death, and deportations may not deter people from re-emigrating, as the cases of Madou and Souleymane show (cf. also Alpes, 2017; Dougnon, 2012; Hernández-Carretero & Carling, 2012), others prefer to stay, even if in the capital, sometimes after several attempted crossings. Abdoul, for instance, was quite outspoken about the hazards of the trip. He was repelled by the clandestine journey and his deportation from France. It was not only the violent administrative treatment but the physical and psychological distress that terrified him and convinced him to stay, refusing to live in constant fear again. He provided an emotional plea for staying:

I've seen people that just died like that. Often I see their images when I sit like this. Yeah. That's quite sad. But I, I don't wish anybody to do adventures like this. Even if you gain a 100.000, here you can do something. You can do a little business, and if God wills you can make it, you can go [*incomprehensible*]. Just stay at home. That's better! That's why I prefer never to go on an adventure again. (Abdoul, 11-21-2014)

13 Schütz follows the idea of Max Scheler's "relativ natürliche Weltanschauung" (1926; cf. Schütz, 1944, p. 502).

14 "Reinitiation" links in the concept of the migratory adventure as a *rite de passage* building on former rituals of initiation: the returnee needs to be reinitiated and re-incorporated into the community. Victor Turner (1969) built his theory of "*rite de passage*" on Van Gennep's ([1909] 1981) three phases: separation, liminality, and incorporation. Accordingly, "liminae personae are no longer/not yet [...] neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention" from a marginal position in society (Turner, 1969, p. 95). Rather than a phase of transition, Khosravi (2018) sees liminality as a being stuck in the case of deportees (2018, pp. 7f). In line with my argumentation, I would dispute this point as a "failed" migratory adventure might function as transition and transformation too. This will be discussed in the following chapters.

Abdoul even considered himself lucky: “The adventure is over. I’ve had luck. All my friends with whom I went away, they are all dead” (ibid.). Such existential memories were present in all his accounts. He had been interviewed for an anti-migration awareness-raising campaign for the youth on television, as he mentioned by the way. This presentation may have had a substantial influence on the way he presented himself in our interview. Most importantly, though, Abdoul had survived, which gave him strength, enabling him to go on. But he still has difficulties getting through. Due to the Malian crisis, he cannot work at his job as tourist guide anymore as the country gets barely any tourists. He occasionally works as a guide for the UN mission or sells wooden Dogon statues at his cousin’s boutique.

Even though some hesitate and stay away, many former deportees eventually do return to their villages (often in the absence of any alternative). This has been increasingly the case in recent years. Others, such as Souleymane, Brahima, and Abdoul, prefer the geographical distance, anonymity, and potential autonomy of a bigger city. Often people continue to oscillate, torn between leaving and staying in light of their supposed “failed” adventures, representing the dilemma of migratory cultures in a world of constrained mobilities. This is how the young men agentically go about dealing with being thrown in. A similarly restless continuance has been described with regard to many young men in Africa more generally in light of the overall crisis: a lack of prospects, coupled with the pressure to do something, become someone, and take care of things (cf., e.g., Weiss, 2004). I will say more about these everyday patterns of being thrown in and going on in the chapters that follow.

## “Legal violence” in European deportation regimes

Deportations from Europe seem to constitute a very particular case, causing severe social suffering, principally in the form of incomprehension, loss of control, and anger. This could be called legally produced violence, the term that Menjívar and Abrego (2012, p. 1380) used to capture the “normalized but cumulatively injurious effects of the [immigration and criminal] law” as experienced by migrants with precarious legal status.<sup>15</sup>

Lamine, whom I met for the first time two days after his deportation from France in the rooms of the AME, appeared clearly disoriented and lost (see Chapter 3); speaking as if hunted, fast and nervously in excellent French, searching for help and repeating “I don’t know what’s going on” (“*Je ne suis pas au courant*”) – apparently unable to grasp what had hit him. In fact, the entire process of his re-

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15 Coutin (2013, p. 334) applies the concept to the case of deportations, which reproduce the “legal violence” of emigration “generationally.”

turn appears to have been deeply unfortunate, frustrating, and disturbing: he had been picked up by a street control in France, detained ("*c'était dur, c'était dur là-bas, franchement*") and deported despite the Malian embassy's refusal of consent, and the support of a lawyer, an NGO in France, and many friends of the family.<sup>16</sup> He was returned without any official order – just "something that the police had written." The Malian officials at the airport were irritated; so were the representatives of the AME, which was where they sent him. Lamine had been about to sign a contract for an apprenticeship, which would have eventually regularized his status. His entire family was in France. After all that, the "unjust" deportation appeared to him to be "incomprehensible" and "bizarre." He described his deportation flight, during which he barely talked to the police officers:

At Charles de Gaulle airport already they put me in handcuffs and I said "I am not a criminal!" I said, Susanne, "I am not a criminal... I never hit anybody I never stole, I just don't have an identity card ... I am not a criminal ... You don't have the right to keep me like this." He said, "But we are obliged to, we don't have any choice, we are obliged." (Lamine, 10-14-2014)

The deportation regime became materialized in the handcuffs he was forced to wear, his being treated like a criminal. Lamine vehemently protested against this condemnation, affirming his innocence to me, as if I might have considered him a criminal, too; obviously feeling the need to demonstrate this confirmation in our interaction. Others in the detention center in France had committed "real crimes" and were released. Face to face with the policemen, he claimed the justice that was due to him. They did not have the right to put him in handcuffs and treat him like this. But when the policemen alluded to a higher state authority that obliged them to carry out the deportation: "Well ok, it's not a problem," he eventually said resignedly. "It's for that reason that I was not happy" (Lamine, 11-3-2014).

Lamine's approach provides an example of what deportees report as blatant legal injustices in deportations – from European countries in particular, as people expect to be treated more justly there. Anger, anxiety, and outrage resurface when the events are recounted. The legal processes may not have been fully understood, or people may not have been informed about them. This lack of knowledge creates additional anxiety and sometimes deep uncertainty (cf. Hasselberg, 2016; Coutin,

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16 The refusal of the Malian embassy in such cases needs to be seen as collaboration with the potential deportee, and the Malian diaspora more broadly, in order to prevent his deportation, in contrast to the phenomenon that has been discussed as "estranged citizenship" referring to a "disrecognition" of deportees' citizenship (cf., e.g., Khosravi, 2018, p. 2f).

2015; Boehm, 2009).<sup>17</sup> These too are forms of the social suffering caused by deportation presented in deportees' narrative accounts.

The violent destruction of deportees' individual and social lives through the bureaucratic execution and standard administrative routine of the act of deportation might, moreover, be covered by Hannah Arendt's concept of the "banality of the evil" (1963), which Nicholas De Genova aptly applies to challenge "such otherwise routine 'administrative' punishments." Individuals are dehumanized and reduced to "functionaries and mere cogs in the administrative machinery" (De Genova, 2018, p. 255).<sup>18</sup>

In the end, however, instead of opposing the perceived injustice he suffered at the hands of the police, Lamine sees himself forced to back down, eventually consenting to the exercise of force. He is "not happy," and in saying so sounds quite reserved in the way he characterizes his reaction to this violent act. Though he refused to collaborate in his return at first, he eventually gave in to avoid being imprisoned and banned from French national territory for years.<sup>19</sup> Yet, after all that, he was so full of anger and hatred that he thought of murdering a person just because they were French.

I was hogtied all the time ... Yes, all the time hogtied ... My hands were tied like this, and even my feet ... This was ... hard, you know ... That's why I say, when I find a Frenchman, I will kill him, I will not regret it. That's it. (Lamine, 10-14-2014)

This expression of hatred was in other respects a deeply agentic act, one might say, produced by and in reaction to the post-colonial deportation regime (cf. De Genova, 2018, p. 256): an instance not of giving in, but of existentially protesting.

## Accounts of trauma and self-organized groups as intermediaries

Within this setting, talking about trauma time and again plays an ascriptive role as well as a narrative one. The self-organized groups of former deportees, such as the AME, ARACEM and others, serve as intermediaries between the structures that produce violence and suffering and those who experience and narrate deportations.

17 I will explore the concept of uncertainty after deportations more generally in relation to future-making in Chapter 7.

18 "As well as the reduction of others into the mere objects of its power – that Arendt deemed to be not only 'the essence of totalitarian government' but also, remarkably, 'perhaps the nature of every bureaucracy' (Arendt [1963] 2006)" (cf. Genova, 2018, p. 289; cf. idem, 2014).

19 European countries usually issue a re-entry ban, denying return to the country after a deportation: <https://www.service-public.fr/particuliers/vosdroits/F2782>, accessed 31 October 2021. In France this period is usually three years after a deportation, while the UK requires up to ten years. This does not necessarily stop people from re-emigrating as this book underlines.

Being themselves products of existing deportation regimes, the organizations have developed an approach and procedure to ease the hardships and suffering experienced, and to facilitate arrivals post deportation. Dave, the worker with another assistance organization whose deportation experiences I reported on earlier, described the situation:

At such a moment, I have to go quickly to see him [the returnee I am dealing with] so that he can wash himself and eat under good conditions to regain confidence. Otherwise, the next day you cannot tell him anything. All of this is done so that he can forget the suffering he has experienced on the road. (Dave, 10-21-2014)

The AME has two rooms to receive deportees, which were used increasingly often from 2015 on after the silence and emptiness caused by the Malian crisis at first. It provides a space of orientation.<sup>20</sup> Its representatives' own deportation experiences help build connections. "Even if one has no money, one can help them morally" (Dave, 21-10-2014). Some of the professional migrants maintain a certain distance from the deportees they care for, adopting a rather paternalistic approach. This may be necessary to enable them to do their job in the first place:

Sometimes I call this a trauma; because they come traumatized because of all that they have lived through on the road. That's why we have to leave them time when they arrive before we welcome them. There are some who come without clothes and for these it is necessary to find clean clothes, to set them up and to give them something to drink and to eat. People are DIRTY! That's it... (Dave, 10-21-2014)

"Traumatism" is not a term one would necessarily hear from the *refoulés* themselves – only if they consciously aim at placing themselves in a political context. It is a common marker and ascription in organizational speech, not least because some organizations have received funding for deportees' psychological counselling.<sup>21</sup> The number of such programs has increased through the renewed assistance approach financed by the more "humanizing" EUTF for Africa, described in Chapter 2.

Abdoulaye was one of the few cases to receive psychological treatment within a limited program run by the AME. He had been living in Paris for two years, in uncertain conditions of "migrant illegality and deportability" (De Genova, 2002), without papers doing "undignified" little jobs in a restaurant. One day, he had a motorcycle accident. Whiplashed, he needed medical treatment, and his arm was

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20 According to AME, ARACEM and other organizations, three days is the length of time recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) for those in mental distress to recover after a traumatic situation of shock and disorientation.

21 There is a large body of literature on trauma and post-traumatic stress syndrome in relation to flight, migration, and beyond, which needs to be discussed elsewhere. For some ground-work literature see, e.g., Fassin & Rechtman, 2009.

badly injured. He received a three-month residence card, but his request for an extension was denied, although the treatment needed to continue. One day, a police control did not release him, as it had repeatedly done before: he was detained and deported to Bamako immediately. Apparently, he was lucky: the AME received him at Bamako airport. The retrospective report by their staff sounds dramatic. It reveals deep shock and irritation that left Abdoulaye apathetic and disturbed. The diagnosis: “acute post traumatic syndrome” (AME, internal report). After two years, he was presented as a “complete success.” The psychiatrist released him as able to deal with his life on his own.

In Abdoulaye’s own account no psychological treatment was mentioned. He spoke in a matter of fact tone. His arm was injured and treated, though it was never completely cured. It was the “unexpected betrayal” and rupture in a situation where he had managed to live well by his own account – even without papers – in the Promised Land of France that was the most important thing. He returned to this incident over and over again when speaking. Even if he did not explicitly accuse the French state or European migration policies for being deported, he named its administrative implementers, the prefecture and the police, as responsible and was very upset about them. In this sense, Abdoulaye’s “illegal” situation became existential and pathological as it not only determined his state of health but brought it into relation with the administration of the immigration state that controlled and eventually excluded him by deporting him to Mali, – it turned him into a deportable commodity, no longer worth providing for. His body was only partially cured. He kept talking about Paris, but was in Mali for the time being doing little day-to-day jobs: “*je me débrouille*” (“I’m getting by”), he repeated. Still, he continued to be unable to do any “hard” work. The deportation left a physical imprint; an embodied memory of the sufferings of the migratory journey, his stay abroad, and of being deported.

## Spatial and temporal disorders over time

The deep anger and violation caused by perceived unjust administrative treatment and the feeling of powerlessness may endure after deportations. In many instances the actual deportation experiences dated back a long time, but quickly became current when deportees renarrated their stories in our conversations. Some experiences seemed to cut particularly deep. In European countries, it appeared to be very unfortunate incidents that provoked deportations just before a person was regularized, as demonstrated in the cases of Lamine and Abdoulaye: the police not recognizing one’s papers or acting arbitrarily. Many people were apprehended in the street and deported straight away. People were often furious, when they described their deportation to me and the conditions that occasioned it – their voices

were frantic and quivery. At the same time, I represented a supposedly powerful addressee potentially able to influence the situations that formed the subject of the conversation and thus the content of their narrative as well. Susan Coutin (2013) describes deportees' narratives of linear time resulting in "spatial disorder" if they are divorced through deportation (p. 334). A spatial and temporal disorder is the more disturbing the longer one has been abroad, most importantly if deportees emigrated as (little) children.<sup>22</sup> Not even able to take one's belongings with one after all the years of transnational life, one may have arrived in Bamako with entirely empty hands. Such incidents can fundamentally disrupt someone who is being "disappeared from [his own] life" (Turnbull, 2018, p. 48) and "dispossessed of the time, [they] had before removal" (Martin, 2015; cf. Khosravi, 2018, p. 7). These people are indeed deeply "estranged." Being unexpectedly thrown back, as described above, constitutes a disconnect (Alpes, 2014) at multiple levels for those who aspired to and moved towards global connectedness (Geschiere & Nyamnjoh, 2000).

Lamine, back in Bamako, lived with some acquaintances of his mother's (from France). He reported feeling very uncomfortable at being thrown into something entirely unknown. Unlike his family, who had been legally living in France for years, Lamine had grown up with his grandmother in Mali. She died when he was 15, and he immediately left the village for Bamako "to feed himself." By chance, he met a friend of his father's, who set up contact with the family in France. Through their support and a tourist visa for Spain, he was eventually able to join them. Lamine's subsequent deportation cut a deep hole in his family's daily life: "My little brother is always crying on the phone. He does not understand, what has happened." His narratives kept up this presence far away (cf. Coutin, 2013, p. 334), and illustrated the spatial as well as a temporal rupture in his life in Bamako.

Maher speaks of a "third space of forced return" (2015, p. 37) in which people are obliged to live. Another "spatial disorder" phenomenon may come about when deportees are arbitrarily flown to the "wrong" place such as Ouagadougou or Abidjan instead of Bamako, where I met some people who had had this experience. Such treatment is likely to increase insecurity, disorientation, and distress post deportation even more.

Even so, Lamine appeared calmer, when we met three weeks after his deportation from France. The AME tried to support him in appealing his case at the French embassy, demanding a new visa and family reunification. The process was said to be going to take two to three months. We met a couple of times during these weeks and also talked over the phone. We planned a visit to where he lived. Nothing moved. One day, I was unable to reach him anymore. Eventually, and after talking to a representative of the AME, I realized that he might have re-emigrated, either

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22 Drotbohm, for instance, develops an analysis of cases of deportation to Cape Verde (2016), Coutin for deportations to El Salvador (2013) and Peutz for forced returns to Somalia (2006).

clandestinely via the dangerous and deadly desert route, or suddenly through a forged visa obtained by the family. Clearly, he was unwilling and unable to continue waiting “powerlessly,” being restless to go on. Re-emigration is an agentic reaction, besides potentially influencing the restriction of restrictive policies as well.

## Symbolism of the state

Despite the apparent ingrained symbolism of the state exercising its sovereignty through deportations, in some of the deportees' narratives, the state's role remains interestingly undefined or only broadly addressed, while others accuse it quite aggressively. The state is mostly represented by the police officers responsible for carrying out the deportation or the reception afterward, as in Abdoulaye's and Lamine's accounts – but may also be personified in the staff of a prefecture, lawyers, social workers, or employers. Allusions to representatives of the deporting state are often pejorative, ranging from accusatory to hate-filled – like Lamine's, who wanted to kill the next French person he met. Anger can sometimes be the only possible form of revolt against the experience of subjection to unjust treatment, violation and criminalization. State bordering practices are seldom criticized as structural injustices but rather referred to as instances of individual suffering or individualized in some state's personnel. The social nature of suffering originating from politico-institutional interventions is not identified.

At the same time, for the respondents in Mali, especially potential (re-)emigrants, European states served as broad screens on which to project a safe haven of security, justice, and economic potentials. “Europe is much better than Africa,” I was told in a multiplicity of ways. Through the media, transnational (migratory) contacts, and networks, people are well informed about the world abroad; consequently, harsh conditions are also well-known. At the same time, “it was the European Union, which financed” the €50 return assistance for Brahim and Souleymane. Against this background, deportations may be experienced as particularly arbitrary and incomprehensible.

In the case of deportations on the African continent, such as from the Maghreb countries, human rights violations take place out of official and often mediated European or international sight, even though, or perhaps because, they occur within the framework of the EU's externalized mandate outside European territory. Legal standards seem to count for less there. Indeed, deportations from North African countries seem to be valued less by deportees themselves, considered less drastic in terms of global social inequalities and unjust treatment, even if some of the accounts, as in the case of Salif, report extreme violence. Moreover, although African nation-states have been deporting people in large numbers since their independence and are now increasingly being “paid” by the EU for deporting

African citizens to keep them away (as developed in Chapter 2), the externalization of deportation practices from European shores to North and West Africa has resulted in a new collectivity of return, which seems to play a role in social and symbolic terms as well, making a return potentially less severe and shameful for the individual. Involuntary return from a European country, by contrast, is usually a lonesome experience. Deportations, even in cases involving a charter from Spain, or previously France, seldom reach numbers comparable with those for intra-African deportations and repatriations. Moreover, deporting European states do not return entire villages or city districts, as people are usually caught randomly and individually.

Brahima, Abdoulaye, Souleymane, and many others, who were deported from European countries, France, Spain, and increasingly Italy, were outspoken about preferring to stay in Bamako when they got back to Mali. From many accounts, a return to the village is more difficult after a deportation from Europe. The "estrangement" between life in a European city and in the Malian hinterland can be particularly enormous – the more so, the longer one has been away. And, several of these men had been living in Bamako before they left. More importantly, in small villages, the unfulfilled expectations relating to travel to Europe are impossible to hide (see Chapter 5). Brahima, Abdoulaye, and others reported on contacts with other adventurers, who had been deported recently by the same charter or whom they met on their reception by the *protection civile*<sup>23</sup> or at the AME. Some met with fellow returnees randomly in the streets, as I met them. With increasing numbers of deportees since the refugee crisis, these experiences have become ever more collective.

The differences in the perceived gravity of deportation from Europe as opposed to North Africa hint at a critical symbolism regarding which state deports. It makes a fundamental difference whether people reached a European country before being deported or if they were forcibly returned en route. In the former case, re-migrating was not a simple matter, but a costly, hazardous, and potentially impossible endeavor in a time of constrained mobilities. Spatial and temporal disorders caused by deportations contribute an added symbolic charge to migration to, and likewise deportation from, the European continent in comparison to migrations within Africa.

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23 The General Directorate of Civil Protection of Mali (Direction Générale de la Protection Civile, DGPC), created by order n°98-026/P-RM of August 25, 1998<sup>23</sup> is a central Directorate attached to the Ministry of Security and Civil Protection. The DGPC, among many other things, oversees welcoming the groups of deportees upon their arrival at Bamako airport. This institutional assistance structure consists, however, in a very minimal reception in the premises of the civil protection (cf. Lecadet, 2011).

The symbolic potency of Europe can also become a value for someone who has already been “there.” Brahima, who stayed “only 40 days” in Tenerife, was called “the Spaniard” and used to greet me with “Hola, ¿como estas?” It gave him an air of sophistication and, what I term, “adventure-hood,” a combination of the terms adventure and adulthood, related to the particular experience of the migratory adventure (see further Chapter 6). Beyond the specific experiences of the migration and deportation themselves, the symbolic meaning of the destination from which one was deported seems to impact on a person’s return and conditions post deportation to a considerable extent as well. The means of transportation used by the specific deportation regime are of importance too: whether it is a deportation by air or over land, by plane, bus, or truck. Former deportees somehow proudly emphasize that they have been deported by plane. Being deported by airplane from Europe appears to carry a particular value in many deportees’ eyes.

Interestingly, (Malian) nationality serves for many as an identity anchor during turbulent migratory journeys. Depicting places of transit, for instance, former deportees may compare themselves with migrants from other countries, who may not have the same qualities, particularly as courageous adventurers.<sup>24</sup> This underlines the meaning of the collectivity of travel, which becomes a collectivity both of transit and potential return. The group of adventurers may be a source of security, protection, and confidence in all these hazards and sufferings. Although earlier deportees were detained upon arrival, in respondents’ narratives the Malian administrative forces, such as police officers, airport staff, and the civil protection service are depicted as neutral or positive in their reception and facilitation activities. One’s citizenship may keep one grounded to some degree amid the insecurity of being thrown into conditions post deportation. Clara Lecadet (2013) has analyzed the interrelations within deportations in transit, such as through the organization of collective groups in “ghettos” according to citizenship, and also after their return, when “citizenship can be used as a temporary response to the politics of rejection by foreign states.” It “offers a form of opposition to the state’s practices and politics which may seem minimal, but is nonetheless symbolically powerful in this context” (p. 145). In this same vein, citizenship serves as a positive anchor for individual and collective agency in light of rejection and abandonment by the state (p. 157).<sup>25</sup> From

24 A related phenomenon is the organization of one’s group in the form of a national “ghetto,” as with the Cameroonians in the Bamako market hall (see Chapter 3) or the Congolese, Ivorian or Nigerian ghettos at the Mali–Algerian border analyzed by Lecadet (2013). This established practice has become mediatized with the so-called ghettos on the route to the Mediterranean, most notably in Oujda or Maghnia, Algeria and Morocco (cf. also Andersson, 2014).

25 Lecadet (2013, p. 157) follows “the idea of Abdelmalek Sayad that, if the issue of citizenship has had different meanings and had been subject to changes over the past century, it was still the only means of affirmation and recognition of a political and civil existence.”

this point of view, involuntary and forced return to one's place of citizenship may have aspects of being taken to a safe haven as well, and be a fundamental source of individual and collective agency.

## Concluding remarks

This first analytical chapter has shown how deportations rupture the sociopolitical realities of migrants' lives and illustrates the damage inflicted by European as well as North African deportation regimes that are reinforced by externalized controls – controls that condition substantial aid payments to countries like Mali and enforce cross-border expulsions there. It has done so by describing what such deportation experiences do to deportees, personally and through broader societal responses, based on narratives of deportation experiences detailing violent, traumatic, and unexpected returns. Repeated *refoulements*, living long years in transit situations, or hiding undocumented in Europe have impacted peoples' bodies, their very appearance, and their sense of self. These embodied memories of various forms of social suffering eventually become part of the notion of the (failed) migratory adventure. Many live through numerous deportations and phases of hyper mobility and waiting before they can return to their own country and, potentially, to their village at last. For quite a number of them, deportation constitutes only one moment in their migration cycle. The destinations of deportations, and the specific migratory journeys and back-and-forth experiences produced by the violent structures of North African and European deportation regimes, may differ, but, as the chapter shows, there are similar patterns in almost all accounts of deportation, and the social suffering that results is both collective and individual. Specific emotions noted include alienation, stress, disorientation, fear, and anger, and a deep sense of social injustice. Many former deportees appear restless, disillusioned, and distressed, especially shortly after the deportation experience; they sense that they have "failed" in their "existential quest" (Hage, 2005; cf. Stock, 2019). People may be "doubly abandoned," "estranged," and stigmatized, facing even more difficulties "at home" upon their return than they faced before – mental, physical, economic, and social. And many are immobilized afterwards. Suffering is the expression of how people experience and deal with these situations. This chapter has shown the spectrum of suffering undergone by deportees depicted in their narrative accounts, shedding light on this macro-, meso-, and microcosm of deportation experiences and thus what impacts conditions post deportations. It has, moreover, served to further introduce the people whom this whole study is about.

Using Kleinman & Kleinman's terminology, forms of suffering "caused by extreme conditions," which are at the same time, or may become, "routinized forms" of suffering through and after deportation as they continue impacting on depor-

tees' memories and their representations, are what is at issue here. The concept of social suffering was introduced to best capture these entanglements. Throughout this chapter, I have highlighted expressions of agency by former deportees, self-organized groups of deportees and other actors as well as the broader population. Former deportees express different forms of agency despite their subjection to deportation practices. Even in the most destitute and desperate situations agency and subjectivity are possible. Nicholas De Genova (2018) speaks of the "autonomy of deportations" (p. 262), for example, and I have shown that mere survival can express agency, in the shape of a restless going on, as can the decision to leave again. Even a decision to stay expresses agency – likewise collective forms of travel, transit, return, and protest and demands for more social justice above all. Organizations of former deportees help – or at least try – to bridge the space between structures and agency, capacities and desires (cf. van Houte et al., 2016). While the Kleinmans define agency in terms of suffering from the marginalized positions of individual people, the chapter has indicated, how all these experiences and memories of deportations have become increasingly collective. I will draw this point out further in the last analytical chapter of the book, Chapter 7. The central question being whether, in the longer run, people consider themselves as suffering (cf. Bruijn et al., 2007) after deportations or not, will be one major aspect to be discussed in Chapter 6. A potentially "failed," ambivalent adventure and the suffering related to it may, in the end, become part of suffering as a condition of life.

