Chapter 2
Contextualizing and historicizing deportations and situations post-deportation in Mali

To understand and situate situations and conditions post deportation it is indispensable to sketch the specific historical, social, economic, political, and cultural context around mobility, immobility, and deportations in Mali. This chapter provides an overview, first by presenting some basic facts and figures about Mali, then by describing the history and setting of migration, plus the role that deportations play – taking into account aspects of pre- to post-colonialism, the Malian crisis and current situation, and the latest developments in EU border externalization up to the recent Valetta process and the new reality of transit returns. Juxtaposed with this, I sketch out the particular space in which the political and social dimensions of (post) deportation in Mali are contested and handled both from an official state perspective, and, more importantly, from that of civil society actors and former deportees. Finally, I offer a more detailed description of the areas of Kita and Bamako, the sites of my field research, with respect to their political economy of mobility and immobility histories.

Mali, migrations, mobilities, and immobility

Mali is a semi-arid, landlocked country in the Sahel zone with an estimated population of about 21.1 million[1] covering an area of 1,240,192 sq. km. It has a very young population, with a median age of 16.3 years and life expectancy of about 58.9 years, and a high population growth rate (2.97% in 2021 estimated)[2] but with a decreasing fertility rate of 5.9 children per woman in 2021. It is also a low-income

1 See online: https://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/mali-population, accessed 31 October 2021.

2 See online: https://www.migrationpolicy.org/country-resource/mali, accessed 31 October 2021.

country with a multidimensional poverty rate of 68.3%.[3] While the political crisis in the north of the country (ongoing since 2012) has had a substantial impact on its economy, Mali's Human Development Index (HDI) of 0.434 has been slightly, but continuously, increasing since democratization in 1990, though with a short period of stagnation during the outbreak of the crisis. Ranked 184th out of 188 countries in total by HDI, it is considered one of the poorest countries in the world. Its economy is chiefly based on agriculture, largely at subsistence level, and mainly in the south of the country, while the dry north is a region of cattle breeding. Mali is rich in resources, above all gold, which creates employment in the service sector, although the income is mainly exported abroad and the population has little benefit from it. Droughts and climate change pose major risks for the country's agriculture sector and food security. Further, the economy is vulnerable to raw material price fluctuations in world trade and exchange rates (World Bank, 2021).[4] Industry is rather weakly developed and even decreased after the overthrow of the first Malian president Modibo Keita (1960–68). Of the overall population above 15 years old, 64.2% are employed while 65.3% of all workers are employed in the agricultural sector. The largest share (90.5%) of the non-agricultural economy is to be found in the informal sector, which has developed since the first Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) were set up by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in the 1980s (Brand, 2001, p. 43). Youth unemployment (15–24) stands at 24.8% and the proportion of young people who are neither in school nor employed is 34.0%.[5] The average schooling expectancy in Mali is 7.6 years, with a low average literacy of 33.1% (2018). The illiteracy rate is thus almost 67% and is higher among females than males. Mali is an ethnically highly diverse country (CIA, 2020)[6], most of whose inhabitants belong to the regional Mandé family of ethnic groups in Western Africa who speak any of the many related Mandé languages of the region.[7] About 94% of the population is Muslim, about 3% Christian, and 0.7% Animist by belief.

3 See online: http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/MLI, accessed 31 October 2021.

4 See online: ttps://www.worldbank.org/en/country/mali/overview#1, accessed 31 October 2021.

5 Vulnerable employment constitutes a total of 89.6% of all employment.

6 Ethnicities are distributed as follows: Bambara 33.3%, Fulani (Peuhl) 13.3%, Sarakole/Soninke /Marka 9.8%, Senufo/Manianka 9.6%, Malinke 8.8%, Dogon 8.7%, Sonrai 5.9%, Bobo 2.1%, Tuareg/Bella 1.7%, other Malian 6%, from members of Economic Community of West Africa 4%, other 3% (2018 est.). See online: https://www.migrationpolicy.org/country-resource/mali, accessed 31 October 2021.

7 Besides Mali, various Mandé groups are found in Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, and Sierra Leone.

Histories of migration, mobility, and immobility

Migration in Mali has grown (historically) and been characterized by circular migration cultures, nomadism, and ritual journeys (Hahn & Klute, 2007; cf. Massey et al., 1993), together with the migratory adventures and emerging, dynamic transnational spaces of today (Manchuelle, 1997). The high mobility of the population (cf., e.g., Hahn, 2004) is thus embedded in a large number of circular migratory patterns within the region and far beyond. According to Mirjam de Bruijn et al. (2001):

> These mobilities encompass all types of movement including travel, explorations, migration, tourism, refugeeism, pastoralism, nomadism, pilgrimage and trade. In these forms, mobility is essential to many people and is even a means of survival for some. It is culturally and socially embedded in society and in each individual's actions. Being mobile, or living in a culture where many people are mobile, is a fact of life and with it goes an enormous cultural, social and economic flexibility.

Reasons for migration are many and complex; migration, as repeatedly shown by research, is to be seen as a process (Faist et al., 2021; Stock, 2019, Carling & Schewel, 2017; Castles, 2010; Carling, 2002).[8] While in most Malian social groups male-dominated migration formerly meant pilgrimage into the wilderness, during French colonization "migration for prestige dominated, where cultural values prioritized imported items like umbrellas, cloth, perfume." This was followed by "survival migrations" after two major droughts (1973 and 1984) when people had to leave in order to earn their living abroad; first within the subregion, largely to urban areas, later to Europe (Dougnon, 2013, p. 37). Children, particularly boys, are trained from early on, first of all through (often internal) labor migration (Dougnon, 2012, p. 144). Many young boys in Mali grow up with the desire and expectation of leaving home, both to study and also, potentially, to support their family (Hertrich & Lesclingand, 2013, p. 181). Today's migrants, still mostly men, are driven by the desire to go "on an adventure" (Bredeloup, 2008), catalyzed by a lack of prospects at home and the search for a better life (Jónsson, 2007). Although female labor migration can also be a path to adulthood, it is rather seen as a personal project involving strong expectations of learning and obtaining life skills (Hertrich & Lesclingand, 2017, 2013). A negative social judgment, which used to attach to solitary adolescent female migration, seems to be weakening in places where "girls take the lead"; moreover there

8 As Carling and Schewel (2017) explain, it is well-nigh impossible to say what drives a migratory decision or aspiration to leave: it might be individual desires or particular constraints, while an expressed preference for staying may even be an adaptive psychological mode or a proactive acceptance (p. 14). In any case social and cultural approaches to migration should not neglect the structural factors which lead to widespread forced migration, (im)mobilities and expulsions (Khosravi, 2018; Sassen, 2016; Hammar et al., 1997).

seem to be new lines of solidarity emerging between female generations (ibid.). Their urban experience may entail a new scale of worldliness and consumption against the experiences and values brought by male labor migration (Hertrich & Lesclingand, 2017, pp. 81ff). On an international scale, women mainly follow the paths taken by their husbands (Konaté, 2012). However, there are reported cases of single female adventurers as well (see further Chapter 6).

Two patterns of Malian migration were central under French colonialism. With the regional establishment of the colonial regime in the second half of the 19th century (cf., e.g., Amselle, 1987), *navetanes* were often forced, regular and seasonal, circular and above all rural-to-rural migrants who went to large-scale sites of peanut production in the Senegambia; *tirailleurs*, on the other hand, were French military personnel recruited during the two world wars to serve in the fight against Germany – "cannon fodder," as one prominent postcolonial critique put it (Lecadet, 2016; Mann, 2003). The *navetanes* became an established migratory form over all of southern Mali and beyond during the 20th century, building the basis for other types of mobility and labor migrations (cf. Dougnon, 2012; Koenig, 2005a; Amselle, 1978). In this sense, colonial (coercive) labor migration policies built on existing, comparatively large-scale migration for employment in all British and French colonies of West and Central Africa, rather than initiating it. The emblematic expression of "returning empty-handed" dates back to those seasonally or circularly migrating *navetanes*, expressing their fear of returning "*avec les mains vides*" (with empty hands) and without success to their communities (Gary-Tounkara, 2008, p. 87), not fulfilling the expectations they had raised. Back then already some extended their stays until they had earned enough, while others never returned (cf. Pollet & Winter, 1976, p. 138).

After World War I, self-initiated migrations by young men and the practice by families of sending off of a son to supplement the household income from elsewhere in the region increased, though it was soon criticized by the colonists bemoaning a shortage of labor in some places. From the 1930s on migrations became more urban and of longer duration (cf. Koenig, 2005a; Clark, 1999). Some people settled in other countries and, for example, became major actors in the diamond and the business sector in Congo Kinshasa, Congo Brazzaville, Cameroon, and Angola, subsequently setting up bases to build up real recruitment networks for new migrants.

The dominant intraregional mobility pattern in West Africa was, and still is, a North–South movement from the landlocked Sahelian countries of Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali to the more prosperous agricultural or urbanized zones in the southern or coastal states (Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Ghana, Nigeria), or to Senegal and the Gambia in the West. After independence in the 1960s, economic development, infrastructure works, a growing transportation network and an increasing demand for labor – likewise for cash – influenced the labor migration to rural and

more importantly urban areas, often along the coast (van der Land, 2015, pp. 64f; cf. Konate & Gonin, 2016; Hummel et al., 2012; Bakewell & de Haas, 2007; Hahn, 2004).

By the beginning of the 1970s, the Congos, and Cameroon had become hubs of Malian immigration in light of economic constraints caused by cyclical droughts (1973–1984) and the repressive political regime under Moussa Traoré (1968–1991) that forced many people to leave seeking alternative possibilities of earning an income and greater freedom. Together with large numbers of migrants from the Sahel and other West African countries, Malians became extensively engaged in Côte d'Ivoire in the trade in kola nuts thus linking the Malian savanna to the Ivorian (rain) forest (Lovejoy, 1980, p. 125). With economic and political crises in several West African countries (Ghana: 1966; Senegal: mid-1970s; Nigeria: 1973), during the 1980s and early 1990s Côte d'Ivoire became the main migration hub in the region and has remained one of the countries hosting the largest share of Malian immigrants ever since.

It is important to mention at this point the Soninké, an ethnicity originating from the upper Senegal river and living mainly from the production of grains, who developed an "entrepreneurial spirit" (Meadows, 1999, p. 209) in their (economic) way of life in precolonial times. As a result of extensive archive visits,[9] François Manchuelle (1997) gathered evidence to show how their labor migration had roots in old patterns of trans-Saharan trade with Western Sudan established at least since the thirteenth century. It was the gradual disappearance of the locally rooted slave trade in Senegambia, which sparked off a system of seasonal migration or outmigration to complement and enable their agricultural production (Manchuelle, 1989). Abundant literature exists investigating their "traditional" migratory networks and the dynamic transnational spaces encompassing not only the subregion but also other African countries as well as the Global North (e.g., Lima, 2015; Cisse & Daum, 2009; Rodet, 2009; Quiminal, 2002; Manchuelle, 1997, 1989; Chastanet, 1992; Pollet & Winter, 1971). Since the 1950s, 85% of all Black African migrants to France have originated from the Soninké ethnic group (Meadows, 1999, p. 208). In Mali today, the majority of Soninké still live in the administrative region of Kayes, of which the circle of Kita is part, the area in which a large part of the research for this present book took place (see the penultimate subsection of this chapter). Even in the present day the Soninké serve as an almost mythical model for other migratory groups and individuals in Mali and beyond.

From the administrative and political point of view as well, migration increasingly became a central theme in Mali and within the region. While the first Malian president, Modibo Keita, followed an external policy of African Unity, opening the

9 Even if he has been criticized on the grounds that his "use of evidence is both impressive and problematic" (cf. Meadows, 1999, p. 208).

borders to other incoming nationals, his policy for his own population was one of "back to the land" (cf. Gary-Tounkara, 2008, see further Chapter 6), aiming to restrict its mobility. Under the following president, Moussa Traoré, migration was re-evaluated and integrated into the national policy and identity, making migrations agents of "national reconstruction" (cf. Lecadet, 2016). In the 1980s, Malian ambassadors and consulates started to organize a category of Malians abroad (*Maliens de l'extérieur*) – about a decade earlier than other migrant origin states – defining conditions not only for Malians who wanted to return, but also for those who remained abroad with respect to integrating them into the "nation," most importantly through consular identity cards that granted a number of rights. In 1982 the fifth conference of Malian ambassadors was held in Bamako, partly on the question of the conditions of stay for Malians abroad but also in order to think about measures for those wanting to return (ibid., pp. 175f). In the face of increasing deportations, however, post-return measures such as training for reintegration or the allocation of land proved insufficient. Some development projects by Malians abroad for their home communities went "beyond mere satisfaction of domestic needs" (Keita, 2013, p. 217) by contributing to community infrastructures. In 1991, after the transition to democracy, the High Council for Malians Abroad was created to show appreciation and support for the economic and political implications of this migration, its settings, and to institutionalize development associations (Gary Tounkara, 2013, p. 48). These efforts were also supported by France, although at the same time they became increasingly subject to restrictive measures.[10] Since then, Malians abroad have represented an essential economic and political complement to Malian realities and engaged in the mobilization against deportations as well.[11]

In 1975, the long history and practices of mobility, seasonal migration, and nomadism in the Sahel region were institutionalized in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), an area of free mobility and circulation of cross-border ethnic groups (Camara et al., 2011). The liberal immigration policies in this context supported regional migration (cf. van der Land, 2015). With the worsening of political and economic situations and insecurities in the 1980s, as well as the civil wars in Sierra Leone (1991–2001), Liberia (1989–1996 and 1999–2003), Guinea (1999–2000), and Côte d'Ivoire (2002–2007 and 2010–2011), new destinations, such as Gabon, Libya, Botswana, South Africa, other Maghreb states and

10 In the early 1990s, France developed a scheme to assist development efforts by Malian (and other) migrants and migrant associations that has been known as *codéveloppement* since 2002. Gradually this assistance became linked to two procedures: stopping migrants from leaving and giving incentives to irregular migrants to return home. An office of the French OFFI (*Office français de l'immigration et de l'integration*), was established in Bamako, assisting returning migrants and their projects. This program is said to have never worked well or had the intended effects on a broader scale (Dünnwald, 2017, p. 90; Daum, 2005).

11 See further subchapter "Reactions to deportations and returns in Mali".

increasingly European countries, became more and more attractive (ibid.). Since the 1990s migrations from everywhere in Mali have been directed to the Maghreb and Europe in particular. Furthermore, this has been fueled by economic cuts experienced through the SAPs, the devaluation of agricultural products, and the increasing globalization of technology (Bruijn et al., 2001). But the conflict and civil war in Libya in 2011, the Malian crisis, the recent refugee crisis and the Valetta process[12] that followed have again changed migration patterns.

Today, Mali is considered to be a country of emigration, transit, and immigration. Three to four million Malians are said to live abroad (about one-quarter to one-third of the population), most of them in West and Central African countries – which makes them a substantial share of the population of their respective host countries (about 70% within West Africa alone; Ballo, 2009). Statistics from the Malian department responsible for migration issues reveal that 5,474,048 Malians were living in African countries other than Mali itself in 2015, which represents 96.68% of all Malians abroad (DGME, 2015).[13] Immigrants to Mali originate mainly from other West African countries too, principally from neighboring Guinea Conakry, Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, and Senegal; many transit migrants pass through or stay temporarily on their way to Europe, and many of them are from Central African countries (field notes).[14] Mali's net migration rate (2015–2020) is -2.1 migrants/1,000 population.[15] Remittance inflows constituted 5.9% of gross domestic product in 2019 and totaled about US$ 1,022 billion.[16] Even so, most mobility takes place within the country and the region. The urban population today is thought to be 43.1% of the total population (2019), with a 4.86% annual rate of change (2015–20 est.; CIA, 2020). According to the UNHCR report September 2021, however, 401,736 persons were still displaced internally due to the conflict that has been going on in the north of Mali since 2012; 606,617 have returned. In addition,

12 The Valetta process was a direct follow-up to the European "refugee crisis." Inaugurated by the EU and international organizations, it aimed to develop strategies for managing migration with African countries. Since then migration has become an ever more restricted issue, and deportations, above all in the form of transit and emergency returns, have risen substantially, see the section "Recent deportation regimes and reactions"(pp. 64ff).

13 It needs to be added that these data may not include irregular migrants without papers, so the number of Malian migrants, particularly in European countries is most likely higher.

14 See online: https://mali.iom.int/fr/rapports, accessed 31 October 2021.

15 See online: https://mali.iom.int/en/facts-and-figures, accessed 31 October 2021. Nevertheless, numbers differ and the migration policy institute puts the net migration rate at-3.17, estimated for 2021, based on the CIA World Factbook: https://www.migrationpolicy.org /country-resource/mali, accessed 31 October 2021.

16 See online: https://www.knomad.org/data/remittances?page=15, accessed 31 October 2021.

140,098 fled to the neighboring states of Burkina Faso, Mauritania, and Niger and of these 82,507 have returned.[17]

Overall, only a relatively small percentage of West Africans migrate to European countries (about 25%), and some go on to North America and increasingly to Asia (SVR, 2020; MIF, 2019). The number of migrants entering Europe is thus very small. With increasing migratory restrictions, migration towards the North has become largely irregularized; in many cases migrants are suspected of travelling to Europe long before they ever reach European shores (see, e.g., Karakayali & Rigo, 2010). More than half of the sub-Saharan Africans apprehended at the external European borders in 2014 came from West and Central Africa (Carling, 2016). Moreover, 73,000 West and Central Africans applied for asylum in Europe in the same year. Malians constituted the largest number of people crossing borders undocumented[18] (9,789, ibid.) and accounted for more than 10,000 asylum applicants between 2008 and 2014, the highest number, with Nigeria and Gambia, and after Gambia the largest number relative to the overall population (Carling, 2016, p. 32f; see also Dembele, 2010). This was also represented in the Mediterranean shipwrecks, which increased in number in 2014 and 2015 and eventually set off the "refugee crisis."[19] Among the 800 people lost at sea on April 19, 2015, were 184 Malians. However, refugees from Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia have altered the composition of the migrant population crossing the Mediterranean in recent years.

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, West African and Malian migration and deportations can only be thought of in relational terms. Socially, culturally, and historically engrained, migration and mobility constitute a substantial part of family livelihoods for some groups, as well as an option to leave uncertainty behind and to seek more generally for opportunities (Kleist, 2017b; Gaibazzi, 2015a, Hahn & Klute, 2007, Bruijn et al., 2001). Thus, seasonal and circular migration and moving with cattle still constitute (coping) strategies for rural households to diversify and secure income in Mali and a strategy for (flexible) adaptation to environmental and climatic conditions as well (van der Land, 2015, p. 59; Hummel et al., 2012; Bruijn et al., 2001). In this sense, migration and mobility have been shaping the country

17 See online: https://data2.unhcr.org/en/country/mli, accessed 31 October 2021.

18 Many migrants do not reveal their nationality or do not carry any documents with them.

19 Deaths of migrants have been recorded since 1993, with the loss of 34,500 lives up to 2017 (Dubuis, 2017). The post-Gaddafi period was one of the deadliest with 13,545 lost at sea alone (see IOM, "Missing Migrants" project). The figures for shipwrecks in the Mediterranean are often vague, thus simply indicating the actual number of fatalities. The blog "Fortress Europe" offers an unofficial estimate of the number of missing persons lost in the Mediterranean since 1988.

as motors for social change and vice-versa (cf. Castles, 2010).[20] It is due to their economic significance, that migrants are constructed as "local builders" (Soukouna, 2016), "adventurers" (Bredeloup, 2008), and eventually "martyrs" in the context of recent shipwrecks (cf. also Sylla & Schultz, 2020). At the same time, migratory and mobility constraints, and particularly deportations, have been shaping people's lifeworlds in essential ways, as this study will show.

Histories of African deportations

Most Malian migrations took and take place within the African continent; the same holds for Malian deportations. Since the first days of Mali's independence and even before, its people have faced deportation from other African states, European states, the US in part, and again and again on a massive scale from Saudi Arabia (Lecadet, 2011, p. 118; cf. also Boyer, 2017). Conversely, Mali itself has never officially implemented large-scale deportations until today (Sylla & Schultz, 2019), even if it started to engage in transit returns of other African nationals to their countries of origin under the aegis of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in recent years (Alpes, 2020).[21] At the same time, Malian society has shown a tremendous capacity to reintegrate its citizens.

Deportation has become an instrument that has enabled African states to express and confirm their national sovereignty since independence. It is thus a constitutive part of all new African postcolonial nation-states (Sylla & Schultz, 2019), insofar as it decides who belongs to a particular state and who does not (cf. Anderson et al., 2013). This has to be seen within the context of a new demarcation of national boundaries, the emergence of independent nation-states and the setting up of regulations governing immigration, as well as, initially, the different employment opportunities offered by different countries and, later, the general economic recession (Adepoju, 1984, p. 427).[22] In total, the period 1960–2000 accounts for 44 events of expulsion in Africa, with about half of all sub-Saharan African countries expelling their immigrants en masse at least once (Adida, 2010, p. 86).

20 The link between social change, transformation, and migratory behavior should not be neglected: "the whole notion of mobility as presented here turns the supposedly rupturing effect of travelling on its head: through travelling, connections are established, continuity experienced and modernity negotiated" (Bruijn et al., 2001, p. 2).

21 Moreover, since 2018, single cases of international staff have been expelled from or asked to leave the country due to critical political statements, cf. e.g., https://www.jeuneafrique.com/868300/politique/mali-expulsion-du-francais-christophe-sivillon-chef-du-bureau-de-la-minusma-a-kidal, accessed 31 October 2021.

22 In countries like Congo Zaire, Côte d'Ivoire and Uganda deportations of non-nationals were common practice (Adida, 2010, pp. 86f).

Importantly, during the colonial period, the French empire, after annexing the territories of French Sudan, was already deporting resisting community leaders to other territories under its rule.[23] Unlike deportations in the post-colonial period these deportations were targeted at political figures who opposed colonial practices, not at migrants, and they were carried out within the borders of the same colonial empire – in this case the French – with a view to containing or transporting rebellious initiatives against the established order.

The first Malians were expelled from neighboring Senegal (which, together with Mali, constituted the French colonial territory "*Fédération du Mali*" from 1958 to 1960; cf. Rodet & County, 2018), and from the former Belgian Congo in 1964[24]; other countries took up this practice: Ghana in 1969, Nigeria in 1983, Angola in 1996, Libya from 1990 to 2000, Equatorial Guinea starting from the 2000s, and not least Gabon, which carried out deportations of several hundred in 2015 (Daou, 2016; field notes).[25] From the mid-1980s on, these expulsions increasingly took place in the context of economic crises and were legitimized for xenophobic and domestic political reasons as well as to assert the foreign policies of the states involved. Ghana and Nigeria can serve as examples of countries that, in time, introduced anti-migration policies against so-called 'illegal migrant workers' or 'aliens.' Particularly notable were the deportation of 500,000 "aliens," among them Malians, from Ghana in 1969 (most of those affected were Nigerians, cf. Adepoju, 1984, p. 430) and the expulsion of more than two million "illegal" immigrants from Nigerian territory within a few weeks in January 1983 (Gary-Tounkara, 2015).[26] Since Malians for the most part did not possess any papers, they could hardly be detected and even less deported. With the economic crisis in the 1980s the Ivorian economy too faced a severe recession, which led to the hardening of the conditions of residency. In the wake of the conflict of 2002, the concept of *ivoirité*[27] was particularly propagated and more than 200,000 Malians were repatriated as a consequence of

23 This was the case of Samory Touré who was deported to present-day Gabon, Cheick Hamala Hamahoulah deported to France (Hamès, 1997), and the Canton chief Siaka Traore of Sirakélé (present-day circle of Koutiala) also deported to France.

24 By a Decree-Law of 19 August 1964, Congolese authorities forced thousands of West Africans, who had become fundamental part of the diamond sector, to leave.

25 See online: https://maliactu.net/mali-immigration-illegale-le-mali-accueille-ses-129-rapatries-du-gabon/, accessed 31 October 2021.

26 At the peak of the wave 1.5 million people were deported, including 700,000 Ghanaians, 180,000 Nigerians, 150,000 Chadians, 120,000 Cameroonians, 5,000 Togolese and 5,000 Beninese from Nigeria (Gary-Tounkara, 2015, p. 30).

27 Since the mid-1990s, *ivoirité* has been aimed at the comprehensive political and material exclusion of a large part of the population living in Côte d'Ivoire, disenfranchising them on the basis of their national, linguistic and religious affiliations. This exclusion policy has since been pursued by various governments.

armed rebellions (Sylla, 2019; Calenda, 2014a; Outarra, 2010; DGME's databases). These policies clearly contradicted the often-propagated notion of West African integrity, institutionalized through the ECOWAS and UEMOA (*Union Economique et Monétaire Ouest Africaine*).

Despite the high numbers involved in the West African case, deportations from European countries, particularly from France, carry a specific symbolic value, that weighs far more even if the numbers involved are far smaller (for more on this topic see Chapter 4). The first "European" deportations of Malian nationals took place from France in the 1980s, to be followed by deportations from Spain in the 1990s. Since 1945 the French National Office of Immigration (ONI) had been recruiting mostly unskilled migrant workers as a "cheaper workforce" for the country's reconstruction after World War II, not least as a kind of "dividend" for the French colonies' participation in the war. But following the economic crisis of 1973 undeclared foreign workers in France were no longer able to obtain residence permits, and a selective regularization procedure was introduced (Siméant, 1998, p. 27). The official labor immigration of Africans into France stopped in 1974. Increasing deportations were one of the consequences. In 1986, 101 "undocumented" Malian immigrants were deported from France on a charter flight, causing serious disturbance among the population in Mali as well as in France (cf. Lecadet, 2011). In summer 1996 almost 300 undocumented migrants, mainly from Senegal and Mali and many of them minors, took refuge in the Church of St. Bernard in Paris. The situations of some of whom were not even irregular (Siméant, 1998; Lecadet, 2011). The brutal clearing of the church and subsequent deportations (Garot, 2016) gave birth to a strong international movement against the "inhumane conditions of expulsions and deportations." The figure of the *tirailleur* was reactivated in this *sans-papiers* movement that cumulated in the protest at St. Bernard's church. The deportees were constructed as a direct colonial continuity, recalling the war debt owed by the West to its former colonies (Lecadet, 2016, p. 174f.).

The case of Libya and progressive EU externalization

Libya has been the country most prominently involved in deportations of Malians on the African continent. When it nationalized its oil companies in the 1970s, the country urgently needed workers. The recruitment of Malians began under an agreement signed in 1980 (The Employment Convention of 12 December 1980 between Mali and Libya), making Libya an ever more attractive destination in light of the economic slowdown in West and Central African countries (Sylla, 2019).[28]

28 These Malians originated mainly from the Sahelian and Saharan regions with cultural affinities with Libya, such as the Tuareg.

Some migrants saw the country as an "easy" means of entry to the European continent, as became particularly evident with the strengthening of EU border controls from the 2000s. Under these circumstances, Libya increasingly began to act as an outpost of EU migratory control executing forced returns at its land borders and imprisoning migrants suspected of intending to continue on to Europe. On the basis of agreements between Libya and EU member countries, principally Italy, in the context of FRONTEX (*frontières extérieures*) operations, about 2,670 Malians were deported between 2002 and 2008 (Ballo, 2009, p. 120). In Mali, the Libyan position was perceived ambiguously. While Libya had otherwise been acting as a strong promoter of the African Union, it now was criticized for its discriminatory treatment of its "African brothers."

Libya had, in fact, been using expulsions of migrant workers as political and diplomatic instruments in its relations with other African states (Sylla, 2019) since 1985. Some 80,000 Tunisian and Egyptian migrant workers and about 7,000 Malian migrants were expelled between 1985 and 1987 (Bensaâd, 2012, p. 88; Jamana, 1987). Although these expulsions were intended to destabilize African countries with a differing political outlook, they were less discussed and mediatized than those of the 2000s. Most significantly, the earlier deportations were not carried out with the support of external, non-African international actors (most importantly the EU), which made a great symbolic difference.

In 2006 FRONTEX, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, began one of its first operations, stopping and "pushing back" small vessels departing from the Senegalese or Mauritanian coasts for the Canary Islands (Dünnwald, 2012).[29] The Cotonou Agreement with the African, Caribbean, and Pacific Group of States (ACP countries; 2000) had systematically introduced the issue of migration (including return) into cooperation between, among others, the EU and African states. Moreover, the Rabat Process, implementing the new Global Approach on Migration (GAM, 2005)[30] and constituting the framework for the EU's cooperation with third countries in the area of migration and asylum, had a clearly restrictive agenda, even though it included a link between migration and development. Since the early

29 The Council Regulation (EC) 2007/2004 of 26 October 2004 led to the establishment of the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union (Frontex), a regulation, which has been amended since, most recently in 2019. The agency's mission is to promote, coordinate and develop European border management in line with the EU charter of fundamental rights and the concept of Integrated Border Management. See online: https://frontex.europa.eu/about-frontex/who-we-are/origin-tasks/, accessed 31 October 2021.

30 After the revision of the GAM in 2011, the European Commission issued the Global Approach for Migration and Mobility (GAMM) with a further emphasis on strengthening the external dimension of EU migration policy. See online: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/orphan-pages/glossary/global-approach-migration-and-mobility-gamm_en, accessed 31 October 2021.

2000s, return policies have become an integral part of the policy instruments of the EU and its member states for combating unauthorized migration (European Commission, 2005, p. 2). Return has likewise been defined as "the process of going back to one's country of origin, transit or another third country" (European Council, 2002, p. 29). Migrants' conditions post-return or post-deportation were not taken into account. During this normalization process, "mixing return with expulsion or readmission has become commonsensical" (Cassarino, 2016, p. 219). In the course of it, migrants have been increasingly dispossessed of their rights and aspirations (Cassarino, 2004). Moreover, a previously discussed paradigm of return migration linked to development has been neglected. But with the recent Valetta process and the increasing incidence of "assisted voluntary returns," above all in the form of transit and emergency returns from North African countries (Alpes, 2020; Zanker & Altrogge, 2019), this has been changing – as I will shortly show.

In view of the growth in north-bound mobility from the late 1990s, the political instruments described above have been used to transform parts of North and West Africa into transit zones en route to EU territory. Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Mauritania, and Senegal were enlisted to prevent unwanted irregular migrants from reaching Europe, and eventually to return them (Gary-Tounkara, 2015; Bredeloup, 1995). Consequently, a large number of deported Malians returned from the countries bordering the Mediterranean. Malian migration statistics estimate that 91.8% of the Malians expelled between 2002 and 2012 were removed from other African countries, while deportations from Europe represented no more than 6.6% of all deportations during the same period (MMEIA, 2014, p. 55). This possibly reflects "the strong vulnerability of Malian migrants to regime instability in the region" (Calenda, 2012, p. 12). The following table shows the continuation of this pattern:

TABLEAU SYNOPTIQUE DE RECONDUITE DES MALIENS DE L'EXTERIEUR PAR PAYS AFRICAINS DE 2002 A MARS 2014																		
Année	Afrique																	Total
	Libye	Maroc	Angola	Mosambique	Algérie	Guinée Equatoriale	Côte d'Ivoire	Mauritanie	Kenya	Gabon	Zambie	Centrafrique	Tunisie	Congo Brazza	RD Congo	Rwanda	Guinée Konakry	Afrique du Sud	
2014	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	1797	0	0	0	0	0	0	1807
2013	255	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	0	0	0	24	0	0	0	1	297
2012	426	1	86	2	0	45	0	120	8	9	0	0	0	0	19	2	26	0	744
2011	23 042	9	19	1	1 346	0	1 881	0	5	9	0	0	6 831	20	0	0	0	1	33 164
2010	192	4	2	0	351	14	0	0	1	20	0	0	2	11	0	0	0	1	598
2009	228	9	28	18	559	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	848
2008	664	0	12	127	0	0	0	2	3	73	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	881
2007	864	152	19	3	0	7	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1 047
2006	49	8	0	0	0	0	0	76	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	133
2005	689	1 289	78	0	276	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2 335
2004	308	6	501	0	410	152	17 561	11	2	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	18 956
2003	29	0	22	0	0	0	22 676	0	0	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	22 732
2002	67	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	67
Total	26 813	1 478	775	153	2 942	218	42 118	209	25	138	3	1 797	6 835	55	19	2	26	3	83 609

Table 1 (see p. 54) presents an overview of forced returns of Malians abroad from African countries from 2002 to March 2014. (Source: DGME/MMEIA; taken from PONAM [2014])

As the table shows, the repatriations and forced returns in the context of the crises in Côte d'Ivoire (2002-2004) and in Libya (2011) stand out dramatically, even if numbers are to be taken with caution and to be seen rather as indicators than as strictly accurate. Simultaneously, the EU policies of externalizing migration and border controls gave rise to a further phenomenon whereby many of the candidates for emigration to Europe were kept in a situation of "forced" or "involuntary immobility" (Jónsson, 2007), either in their respective transit zones, or back in their Malian villages after deportation, or before they even left.

Under the authoritarian Libyan regime of Muammar Gaddafi from 1990 to October 2011, practices such as imprisonment, extortion of property, the use of migrants in militias, and expulsions became an everyday phenomenon. But the collapse of the regime in 2011, ongoing war and partly anarchic conditions, brought the numbers of involuntary and forced returns to an unprecedented peak (see Table 1). While local human rights organizations and journalists have been documenting abuses for years, it is only recently that international organizations and Western media have revealed the ever more brutal practices of human trafficking on migratory routes and torture (cf. Schultz, 2018). It was CNN broadcasts of images of Libyan "slave markets" during the summit of the African and the European Unions (AU–EU) in Abidjan in November 2017 that sparked off a bulk push of so-called "Voluntary Humanitarian Returns"[31], though these were not necessarily perceived as voluntary (cf. Alpes, 2020). Simultaneously, these detention centers provided an important financial windfall for brokers and heads of networks facilitating irregular migration. With the 2019 bombing of a detention camp that killed 60 jailed migrants (Macé, 2019), the centers more and more became symbols of a protracted conflict.

Reactions to deportations and returns in Mali

In contrast to the deportation practices that characterize other African states, Mali has directed its diplomacy towards the realization of an ideal of African unity and citizenship since its independence and, until the transit returns of today, has never carried out large-scale returns itself, and has devised its own methods of managing incoming deportees. Its cautious attitude towards deportations results in part from its dedication to Pan-Africanism and African socialism, but there is a fear too that the communities of Malians living abroad would suffer the countereffects

31 See online: https://www.iom.int/news/voluntary-humanitarian-returns-libya-continue-reintegration-efforts-step, accessed 31 October 2021.

of deportations, as would the Malian economy (cf. Sylla & Schultz, 2019). Last but not least, the history of the policy of hospitality towards strangers implemented in Mali for centuries has had, and still has, a considerable impact (Lecadet, 2016, p. 178). At the beginning of the 1970s, for instance, a group of Malians living in the former Belgian Congo was forcefully returned, and the then president Moussa Traoré offered them the choice of a place to settle. They elected to stay in Badinko, a village about 150 km southwest of Bamako located on the railway line to Dakar, with fertile lands. Since then, the small train station has changed significantly due to the settlements that followed and the investments and remittances sent by the population abroad, the descendants of the former migrants. Today, the modern city clearly differs from other surrounding villages (field notes, 11-3-2015).

Possibly, this example was inspired by the model of integration of migrants from Paris, who returned in the 1970s, though "voluntarily," to set up agricultural projects supported by the French government in light of sudden migratory restrictions.[32] This included grants for business start-ups as well as training in the management of agricultural cooperatives and agricultural innovations (see Nouvel Observateur, 1983; cf. Sow, 1987). While these reintegration processes were carried out on the basis of the monopolistic perspective typical of the French and the Malian (welfare) states, those undertaken in democratic and liberal Mali after 1990 adopted the perspective of the civil society actors who were replacing the state in the domain of social assistance. The voluntary or rather "constrained returns" from France (Quiminal, 2002) that were increasing during the 70s were more and more supported by the migrant development associations that started to emerge at that time. Since then, returning pensioners have become an ever larger phenomenon; officially they receive support from the French state, but this, however, is only partially realized (ibid.).

A clear differentiation was and is made between so called "high-skilled" and "low-skilled" migrants: while the high-skilled, who may have migrated legally, are regarded as contributing to the development efforts of the state and are dubbed, or raised to the rank of, "local builders" (Soukouna, 2016), low-skilled migrants are more often perceived as receivers of public goods (cf. Zanker & Altrogge, 2019). Highly educated Malian emigrants living in Europe, North America, and Japan, for instance, are encouraged by the Malian State to come to teach in public universities

32 Similar initiatives were undertaken by the French government to encourage first- and the second-generation emigrants to return to their "fatherland" during the economic crisis in the mid-1970s as a complement to the new restrictive migratory measures.

as part of an inter-university exchange program called "*Programme Tokten*"[33]. Contrariwise, deportees who are mostly "low-skilled" can potentially end up in severe social, economic, and institutional conditions after their return. Trajectories after deportations are thus deeply impacted by the policies and practices of the state that deports as well as the one that receives.

Meanwhile, the (re)integration of former deportees into society is above all a task for different civil society associations in Mali, though new initiatives by the state, the EU, and above international organizations such as the IOM, have been introduced lately, in the context of the Valetta process, that again engage the state. The AME (*Association Malienne des Expulsés* – see Chapter 1) was founded in 1996 as a consequence of the *sans-papiers* movement at St. Bernard's Church in Paris and 10 years after the "Charter 101" of the first large deportation from France – a connection which was constructed by the AME as a direct continuity and legacy (cf. Lecadet, 2016, p. 180). In addition to dealing with humanitarian assistance to the small but increasing numbers of returnees from Angola, Gabon, and Mozambique, as well as from Asian and American countries, it protested against the treatment suffered by Malian migrants abroad during the process of expulsion and on their return and reception in Mali. From the start, the AME's activities were thus politicized – pioneering interventions in the management of post deportation and the integration of deportees (Sylla & Schultz, 2019; Dünnwald, 2017; Lecadet, 2016, 2013, 2011; Gary-Tounkara, 2013). For instance, before, deported Malian migrants were imprisoned upon their return and accused of "illegal migration" by the Malian public authorities.[34] The protests, organized by the AME and other associations, are said to eventually have led to the abolition of this practice. While the contemporaneous context of democratization in Mali provided the political base for civil society organizations to intervene increasingly in social and economic domains, it favored a soft disengagement of the State (cf. Kasfir, 1998; Ceesay, 1998). In addition to the growing co-development activities of migrants' associations abroad, which will be further discussed elsewhere (Keita, 2013), these associations have played, and continue to play, an important role in mobilizing against deportations as well.

33 TOKTEN (Transfer of Knowledge through Expatriate Nationals) is a program that was established in 1977 by the United Nations Development Program in Turkey and operates in dozens of countries. It was launched in Mali in 1998; see online: https://www.globalgiving.org/projects/improve-education-in-mali/, accessed 31 October 2021.

34 This state practice of imprisoning expelled and deported migrants was also a legacy of the socialist regime in Mali which aimed to retain "*bras valides*" (capable hands) in Mali to bolster socio-economic development there (cf. Lecadet, 2016). After its creation, the AME's pioneering act was a support march in Bamako in 1997 to demand the release of 77 Malians expelled from France by the "36th charter Debré" and imprisoned by the Malian government (Lecadet, 2011, p. 120). Cf. http://www.expulsesmaliens.info/Historique.html, accessed 31 October 2021.

Furthermore, the expulsion of about 200,000 Malians from Côte d'Ivoire between 2002 and 2004, partially organized in the form of a massive repatriation by the Malian government, contributed to influencing policy perceptions and priorities as regards return migration. In the course of this, the number of expelled migrants, and the presence and voice of new organizations formed by returnees from Côte d'Ivoire increased notably, pushing the Malian government to take action (Sylla, 2019; Calenda, 2012; Ouattara, 2010). Even if these initiatives cannot be compared to the activist character of the AME mobilizations (Gary Tounkara, 2013), they contributed to setting up more return assistance and reintegration programs, especially during the last Ivorian crisis in 2011. Mostly this took the form of small-scale interventions (Calenda, 2014a, pp. 57f). The Malian population, above all families and civil society, but also the government, were engaged in the task of taking back their people. However, socio-economic reintegration was in most cases difficult or even impossible. Maybe the state was unable to recognize the skills of the returnees sufficiently and to create appropriate training and employment opportunities (Camara et al., 2011). Still, it was thanks to the Malian population's outstanding capacity for reintegration that no social conflict broke out and relations and migratory networks to Côte d'Ivoire have persisted until today. In reaction to the Libyan crisis, more associations formed, which were particularly political (Sylla, 2019, 2014; Gary-Tounkara, 2013). In addition, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), funded by European donors, started its activities in the field of larger-scale reintegration programs in this context (Aghazarm et al., 2012).

The rather "poor performance" (Dünnwald, 2017, p. 91) of Malian state institutions became clear in the incidents surrounding the shooting of migrants in Ceuta and Melilla in 2005 and the massive arrivals of forced returnees from Morocco, a result of the strengthening of the European borders in North Africa at that time. It was civil society and above all Aminata Draman Traoré, a renowned Malian intellectual, activist, and former politician,[35] who offered shelter to the returnees and coordinated public hearings and a protest movement together with the AME, ARACEM (*l'Association des Refoulés de l'Afrique Central au Mali*)[36], another organization of former deportees, and other groups. In spring 2006, moreover, the Polycentric World Social Forum was held in Bamako and brought in numerous activists and organizations from Africa, Europe, and other places. Migration and deportation were

35 She is a prominent critic of globalization and the economic policies of most developed countries. She takes a very critical stance on migration politics in her writings, particularly as regards EU policies against African migrants.

36 See online: http://aracem-mali.org/, accessed 31 October 2021.

central themes. Malian associations used the forum to connect to human rights associations, mostly from France.[37]

With these events, which became the subject of unprecedented media coverage (cf. Stock, 2019; Tyszler, 2019), a new type of response to the EU emerged at the level of migrant-sending countries through the activism of migrant associations, increasingly supported by groups from European civil society (Dünnwald, 2017). Their transnational struggle also built on the denunciation of neocolonial policies in Africa and of the criminalization of migration and mobility after 1990 (Korvensyrjä, 2017). The AME and other organizations in Mali and in other North and West African countries played a central role here. It preceded and accompanied the first wave of the EU externalizing its borders into sub-Saharan Africa and the setting up of the Center for Information and Migration Management (CIGEM) in Bamako (see below). The protests against the signature of readmission agreements with France – protests organized by the AME in collaboration with other migrant and civil society associations as well as with Malians abroad – were particularly significant. It is due to their pressure that the Malian government is said to have twice refused to sign these agreements: with France in 2009 (Soukouna, 2011) and with the EU in 2016/17 (Traoré, 2016).[38]

Recent deportation regimes and reactions

The paradoxical effects of the externalization of EU migration policies seem to have become visible in a very concentrated manner in Mali (Trauner & Deimel, 2013; cf. Dünnwald 2017, p. 89). In 2008 the EU established the CIGEM, its overall objective being to support the development and implementation of a Malian migration policy with particular emphasis on the link between "migration and development" (European Commission, 2011). The Center was the first of its kind on the African continent. The year 2008 also constituted a peak in European deportations, with 1,834 Malians being deported mainly from France and Spain, followed by 765 in 2009, and 335 in 2010 (Calenda, 2012, p. 8, based on Eurostat data). This had been preceded by a readmission agreement concluded in 2007 between Mali and Spain as part of a larger circular migratory agreement. Supposedly this was favored by the fact that Mali and Spain had no common colonial heritage (ibid., p. 12). The

37 A number of new associations were founded in this context, and the AME and ARACEM managed to get stable funding from the French Protestant Church-based CIMADE (*Comité Inter-Mouvements Auprès des Evacués*) and the German NGOs Medico International and Pro Asyl. This contributed to extending and transnationalizing their work quickly, and its gaining wider visibility in certain circles (Dünnwald, 2017, p. 91).

38 The latter refusal took place, moreover, in light of the recent shipwrecks, which became a subject of public debate (first, when on July 27, 2014, between 82 and 87 young Malians drowned off the coast of Tripoli; Coulibaly, 2014).

CIGEM became a center for managing the arrival and reception of deportees. It was a literal "market" of organizations in the field of migration and return (Wiedemann, 2010) that emerged around the funding offered for often newly founded, but eventually short-lived associations (field notes, 11-18-2014).[39] Five years later, they existed on paper only or in the persons, as it were, of a left-over president and secretary.

At the end of the CIGEM project in February 2015, the general impression of AME representatives and EU officials in Bamako was that the Center had "flopped" as regards achieving its objectives (field interviews, Bamako, 22 and 24 October 2014; cf. Andersson, 2014, 241ff). The basic criticism was precisely that it had acted as the receiver of returnees and deportees instead of creating jobs and promoting legal migration as previously announced (cf. also Feldman, 2012). Following the virtual failure of this pioneering experiment in managing migration in sub-Saharan Africa, the EU decided to marginalize the issue of migration as an area of intervention in Mali in its strategic agenda 2014–2020 (European Commission, 2015). After 2008 the numbers of expulsions from outside of Africa to Mali decreased again until rising to another peak with the expulsion of 307 Malians from France in 2016. This was mostly related to new protests at St. Bernard's Church in Paris against the conclusion of the readmission agreement between the EU and Mali in the aftermath of the European refugee crisis (DGME database, unpublished), mentioned previously. The data of the DGME barely show any further returns from European countries in this period, but this needs to be viewed with caution as many returns may not have been included.[40]

The "refugee crisis" of 2015 gave a new impetus to the EU's political orientation on migration in the region. It resulted in the establishment of PONAM, the new Policy on Migration in Mali, which in itself was one of the concrete outcomes of the CIGEM and the directives of the Valetta summit (see below). This renewed EU interest in migration inaugurated an ever more intense phase of externalizing its borders in response to the migration governance established in Mali. This consisted of collaboration between international actors (i.e., the French Office of Immigration and Integration, Technical Co-development Unit, the Spanish, Italian, Swiss, and German representations, the IOM and other United Nations entities)

39 Organizations such as AME or ARACEM refused to receive such funding.

40 Malian nationals who did not identify as such are not registered; moreover, deportations may pass "unnoticed" as states, France above all, are said to send back individual deportees on commercial flights without informing the authorities to create as little "noise" as possible (field notes, 1-8-2016). The same may apply to other European countries. The fact that numbers of deportations on and to the African continent are barely accessible or non-existent is at the same time an indicator of the global structural inequalities inherent in the invisible aspects of the deportation regime.

and Malian state actors, including the Ministry of Foreign Malians and African Integration (MMEIA), the General Delegation of Malians Abroad (DGME), and the Agency for the Promotion of Youth Employment (Diombana, 2009). Moreover, the Malian conflict, which was escalating in 2012 in the North, represented a turning point in the management of deportations and migrations and in their effects on the country. It led to an interim cessation of deportations not only from European countries, but also from the Maghreb, Morocco, Algeria, and Libya, which all acted more cautiously – apart from the fact that in Libya the state was nonexistent by that time.

This conflict needs to be depicted more fully, since a number of factors led to a complicated and protracted political situation, which has still not been settled to date but has even worsened again (cf. Schultz, 2021a; Klatt 2020; Bergamaschi, 2013; Lecocq et al., 2013; Soares, 2013; Hagberg & Körling, 2012): The conflict between the Tuareg (the largest ethnicity in the region of Azawad in the north of Mali) and the government about more autonomous rights had escalated several times since 1963 (1990, 1994–2000, 2006, and 2012),[41] but had never been resolved. This goes back to the division of the mainly Tuareg-inhabited territory through post-colonial nation-building and the definition of state borders without including Tuareg interests. The Malian state has never been able to provide sufficient infrastructure on its territory, especially in terms of education, health, and road construction. In fact, in the north and north-east of the country it was conspicuous by its absence. Terrorists exiled from Algeria found refuge in centers in the north at the end of the 2000s. Weapons came from Algeria, as well as from Libya. With the outbreak of the Libyan conflict in 2011, a spread of Islamist ideas by returning fighters followed. This exacerbated a tense situation marked by increasing droughts, poorer soil for livestock, and high youth unemployment. "Traditionally," Islam in Mali follows a tolerant Sufi direction.[42]

The Tuareg uprising in early 2012 was followed by a coup d'état, in which units of the Malian army revolted against the government of Amadou Toumani Touré in Bamako. The National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (*Mouvement national de libération de l'Azawad*; MNLA) took advantage of the power vacuum to proclaim the independent Tuareg state of Azawad. Within a very short time, the MNLA had conquered the main cities of the north. The intervention of Islamist groups in-

41 See online: https://www.bpb.de/internationales/weltweit/innerstaatliche-konflikte/175842/mali, accessed 31 October 2021.

42 The rise of Islamic organizations such as the very popular, also Sufi-based, movement Ansar Dine led by Chérif Ousmane Madani Haïdara, and the success of certain Islamist groups, shows a diverse, complex, and shifting Islamic landscape in Mali (cf. Soares, 2013). See online: https://culanth.org/fieldsights/islam-in-mali-since-the-2012-coup, accessed 31 October 2021.

ternationalized the conflict.[43] Thousands of people fled to the south of Mali or to neighboring countries. At France's insistence, the UN Security Council provided for an African-led military mission called MINUSMA.[44] When the Islamist groups quickly advanced towards Bamako, however, the Malian interim president Traoré requested an urgent military intervention by France, which started in January 2013 and was successful, though the Islamist fighters were not defeated completely. On international insistence, quick democratic elections were held that made former Prime Minister Ibrahim Boubacar Keita (IBK) president in August 2013.[45] Mali, which had for long been an international "donor darling," celebrated for its alleged successful transition to and implementation of democracy, within short time became the subject of international humanitarian aid actors and military operations (Bergamaschi, 2016, 2013; Lacher, 2013). While, the humanitarian actors have partially left in the meantime, the presence of security and military personnel continues to characterize the country's situation, also regarding migration and deportations, even if France, meanwhile, seems to be on the verge of changing its "counterterrorism" strategy and building local forces towards more autonomy (Tull, 2021).

The official peace process, consolidated in 2015 and signed by relevant groups and parties under international supervision in Algeria, is viewed positively in principle by the population despite doubts about its success. However, the government and international actors have been unable to succeed in pacifying the north on account of the complex crisis and security situation. Since 2015 the conflict has decentralized and intensified: centers of "whites" in Bamako as well as international security forces have become targets of Islamist attacks. Jihadists from the north infiltrated groups of the Fulbe ethnic group who live alongside the Dogon in central Mali, who, in turn, radicalized themselves as a rebel group. In the background are old feuds over land and resources. The conflict has spread across the borders into Niger and Burkina Faso, and now also into western Senegal.[46] Since 2019, ethnically motivated rebels and jihadist groups have increasingly attacked

43 These were mainly Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and Ansar Dine ("Defenders of the Faith" – the latter not to be confused with the religious movement led by Chérif Ousmane Madani Haïdara). The more secular MNLA quickly lost its influence. The Islamists forced their fundamentalist interpretation of the Sharia on the population in the occupied cities. Old cultural goods, religious monuments, and African Islamic writings were destroyed.

44 The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, see online: https://minusma.unmissions.org/en, accessed 31 October 2021.

45 Despite ambivalent performance and increasing involvement in corruption scandals, IBK was re-elected in 2019.

46 See online: https://globalriskinsights.com/2021/01/conflict-moves-west-in-mali-towards-the-senegalese-border/, accessed 31 October 2021.

central Mali's population. In some places, brutal massacres have occurred.[47] In the absence of the state, the groups offer the population protection from Islamist and reciprocal threats. With a disillusioned population, economic difficulties, dehydration of soils, and a lack of prospects, young men in particular are joining the new Islamist and rebel groups in these areas (Benjaminsen & Ba, 2019). Again, many people have been internally and internationally displaced. The situation in central Mali coincides with a dramatic drought and thus a food crisis.[48] The latest survey by the German Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES) in March 2020[49] confirmed security, youth unemployment and poverty as the biggest challenges facing the country. In addition, many are more pessimistic about the coming years than before.[50] In fact, on 18 August 2020, another coup d'état by the military junta CNSP (National Committee for the Salvation of the People) under Colonel Assimi Goita incited the fall of the government under President IBK. It had been preceded by civil society protests since June 2020 expressing people's discontent. The COVID-19 crisis was the last straw (Schultz, 2021a). Since then, the country has been in a transition process toward a new government and supposed political stability, though this was upset by another coup d'état, in May 2021, which brought back Colonel Goita as leader and reinforced criticisms of the military dominance in the process.[51]

This political crisis in the Sahel has heavily securitized migration management and cooperation. All this is mirrored in the current responses and EU instruments, and the increased EU influence on migration, flight, and deportations. Meanwhile, facilitating migration has become criminalized, which has made transit migration more dangerous and the business of migration facilitation more lucrative (Faist et al., 2021, p. 78ff). The UN military forces, the French "Barkhane" mission (since August 2014) and the G5 Sahel Joint Force (Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso,

47 See online: https://www.france24.com/en/20200117-mali-foulani-dogon-ethnic-clashes-jihadist, accessed 31 October 2021.

48 See online: https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/visuel/2021/01/24/dans-le-centre-du-mali-des-villages-rases-par-les-violences-et-la-famine_6067424_3212.html?s=09&fbclid=IwAR203rAXSJHoWoyXIuwHsWXO2U8wtlAIbuxgvKKeopNJg90ijLaTJPpyw-g, 31 October 2021.

49 The FES is a political foundation, close to the Social Democratic Party in Germany.

50 While the peace process, consolidated under an agreement of 2015 and signed by a large number of relevant groups and parties under international supervision in Algeria, is generally seen as positive, the population has little confidence in its success. This may relate to its abstract nature for large parts of the population (Goldberg, 2018). The *Dialogue National Inclusif* (DNI: national inclusive dialogue), a week of workshops and debate in Bamako in December 2019 organized by the Malian president and offering "truth, sincerity and conviviality," was well known by many respondents and seen as a useful instrument for change. See online: http://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20191214-mali-ouverture-dialogue-national-inclusif-dni-ibk-ibrahim-boubacar-keita, accessed 31 October 2021.

51 See online: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-57290761, accessed 31 October 2021.

and Chad), moreover, are fighting against migration in the name of counter-terrorism.[52] Consequently, migration control has been increasingly militarized (see also Müller, 2018).

The European "refugee crisis" and its political aftermath have since reshaped the border, migration, and deportation regimes fundamentally. As part of a second wave of externalization, Mali was chosen as "priority country" together with Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, and Ethiopia to establish a Migration Partnership Framework with the EU (European Commission, 2016). The Valetta Summit, which inaugurated this process to find "solutions" with African partner countries in November 2015, was a turning point in the management of irregular migrants and of "official" development assistance in sub-Saharan Africa (cf. Kipp & Koch, 2018; Dedieu, 2018). It is accompanied by an Emergency Trust Fund (EUTF) of 5 billion Euros (as of September 2021) of which more than 200 million Euros are specifically intended for projects in Mali; while migration management has a dedicated section, it is above all a cross-cutting issue.[53] Moreover, Mali is part of several regional projects on migration management and border control.[54] The logic of the narrative of "root causes" assumes that, if migrants' home territories were developed and able to provide opportunities for potential candidates for irregular migration, the latter would not risk their lives in tragic and deadly migratory adventures. Not only is this questionable because migration cannot be addressed by economic or development scenarios only; but social, cultural, political, climatic, gendered, and other factors make migration a very complex phenomenon.

While the Valetta approach thus does not stand up to a critical analysis of the causes of migration, return has become the paramount paradigm in the cooperation with African states within the European partnership framework (cf. Castillejo,

52 See online: https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy/defence-security/crisis-and-conflicts/g5-sahel-joint-force-and-the-sahel-alliance/; https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/anti-terror-operation-barkhane-umstrittene-mission-in-der.795.de.html?dram:article_id=395933; https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/niger/2017-08-31/europes-migrant-hunters, accessed 31 October 2021.

53 The fund allocated to migration in Mali has a threefold objective: (1) to help immigrants to stay on the spot; (2) to compel the state to regulate the flow of migrants and welcome citizens considered "undesirable" in Europe; (3) and finally to put in place measures of deterrence for potential candidates for emigration. Among others, Mali received roughly 80 million euros for resolving the conflict in the north of the country to be dedicated, among other things, to border control and roughly 18 million euros for migration management in particular, see online: https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/region/sahel-lake-chad/mali_en, accessed, 31 October 2021.

54 See online: https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/content/trust-fund-financials_en and https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/region/sahel-lake-chad/regional, accessed 31 October 2021.

2017), thereby potentially also linking deportations and development. In accordance with that framework, migrants forced from Europe or on the way there are preferably to be returned through "assisted voluntary returns" (AVRs),[55] which are easier for collaborating African governments to accept as they promise a more dignified return, even if they are potentially still unwanted (cf. also Adam et al., 2019). Within this context, the IOM expanded its role becoming determinant in the assistance of "illegal" migrants in transit in Algeria, Libya or released from Libyan detention centers (Trauner et al., 2019; European Commission, 2011). Together with European or African development agencies (e.g., Bartels, 2019), IOM's work consisted above all of facilitating return and supporting economic and social reintegration, not least to prevent people from re-emigrating. By retaining deportees and repatriates as well as would-be migrants on the spot, they are also made development actors in their region or country of origin. In Mali this is done in collaboration with the EU and the Malian Government.[56]

More than that, deportations from European and mainly North African countries rose to a new and massive peak in the last few years: thousands of migrants were set down in the desert and pushed over borders.[57] This added to the rising numbers of so-called "voluntary humanitarian returns" and AVRs, which came as consequence of the images of slavery-like conditions broadcast during the AU-EU summit in November 2017, Alpes (2020) speaks of "emergency returns." Effectively,

55 Built on the self-initiative and participation of returnees in the (post) return process, this political-administrative measure is most often carried out after an expulsion order or where there is no perceived alternative. Others therefore speak of self-deportation (cf. Collyer, 2018), "neoliberal deportations" (Andrijasevic, 2010; see also Bartels, 2019; Plambech, 2018) or "soft deportations" (Kalir, 2017). There is a considerable difference observable between the large number of repatriations and, lately, emergency returns from Libya, which are not necessarily voluntary, and those "assisted returns" accompanied before, during, and after return by the IOM or through the program of the Office Français de l'Immigration et de l'Intégration (OFII). The latter are single cases, however. Whether they remain after their return is another question.

56 Recent Malian repatriates from Niger and Algeria are embedded in health care and housing services, and returnees are eligible for individual and collective reintegration projects. So called "reintegration kits" may include tricycles to undertake an income-generating activity and management training for small and medium-sized enterprises.

57 According to the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), News, and Algerian official counts, Algeria deported 25,000 Sub-Saharans in the course of 2018 alone and about 27,000 Sub-Saharans were deported between 2015 and early 2018: https://www.ecre.org/?s=Algeria+Deports+25%2C000+Migrants+to+Niger, accessed 31 October 2021. Also see the ongoing documentations by Alarme Phone Sahara, an international and local civil society initiative to support those in distress in the desert: https://alarmephonesahara.info/reports, accessed 31 October 2021.

a considerable number of those returning from Libyan prisons emerged out of desperate situations. However, returnees who did not come through IOM channels or were not "on their way" to Europe were not eligible for reintegration funding (Sylla, 2019), thus differentiating between desirable and undesirable ("irregular") migrants. Even so, this new orientation of the European agenda is more humane and development-oriented, in making more flexible measures available to reintegrate returnees. These IOM reintegration activities with their collaborating NGOs-structures have developed into a literal industry of a kind in rural areas. In 2020 alone, IOM assisted 9, 995 people with voluntary returns in Mali.[58] In the course of this, the organization was furthermore assigned to start returning transit migrants from Mali to their countries of origin as well (cf. Alpes, 2020).

In this context, deportations and returns have become an ever more publicly contested phenomenon in Mali: civil society organizations in particular, which were established in the context of "assisted involuntary return," have become louder in denouncing these new measures for all-encompassing return, migratory control, and development, and have fostered a public debate on the subject. Some of them have increasingly become involved in implementing safe migration campaigns and also EU-funded reintegration. This multiplicity of actors and interwoven issues has created new challenges for migrant associations and other organizations around the EUTF, which legitimizes their presence on the one hand, while influencing their agenda on the other. On the way, deportations have become a market for official development assistance, integrating development agencies where "non-deportees" act in respect of deportation often disadvantaging "real" deportees. At the same time, former deportees and potential migrants are made development actors themselves through EUTF-programs, marking a clear nexus of deportation and development. Simultaneously, all this has given space to efforts to Africanize and develop new forms of activism and civil society engagement about migrations, deaths, and deportations (cf. also Sylla & Schultz, 2020).

The case of Kita, reversed migrations and deteriorated developments

The Kita Cercle in southwestern Mali, where I conducted a substantial part of my field research "beyond Bamako," is considered to be an area of international emigration par excellence, (Konaté & Gonin, 2016, p. 25). It is located administratively and culturally in the region of Kayes, where the nexus between migration and development is most pronounced with 70% of its migration being said to leave for destinations outside of Mali (to Africa, Europe, America, Asia). Bordering Senegal, Mauritania and Guinea Conakry, it has been marked by trade and mobility

58 See online: https://mali.iom.int/en/facts-and-figures, 31 October 2021.

(Choplin & Lombard, 2014), emigration as well as immigration, especially to mining regions, but also to agricultural and rural sites as well as cities (Dwell, 2013). The region of Kayes, moreover, is the mainland of the Soninké ethnicity, as explained above, and builds on histories of mobility and migration. For 50 years, migrant associations from the region have been involved in development schemes for their communities of origin, building schools, health centers, and roads (Galatowitsch, 2009; Lima, 2005).

The town of Kita is an urban commune on the Bamako–Kayes (and previously Dakar) railway. The rural hinterland of Kita always had a cosmopolitan orientation toward migrants (Koenig, 2005a, p. 80). There are municipalities where emigrants from abroad developed models of public, political, economic investment as well as connectivity by positioning themselves as the true agents of development. The area is mostly inhabited by Malinke, Kakolo, and Fulani. Its economy is based on the high production and processing of peanuts (with two factories built in 1962 and 1976) and commercial transactions along the railway. Export revenues from peanuts fell in Mali, Senegal, and Gambia by between 50% and 80% from 1960 to 1980 (Badiane & Kinteh, 1994, p. 6). Post-colonial international emigration from Kita was spurred by the "rail crisis" and the closure of the state-owned oil mills between 1986 and 1995 due to a more liberal state economic policy (Lachenmann, 1986). A transfer to the production of cotton, even though supported by the state, created a new pioneering migration front towards Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire (Falconnier, 2016; Mamadou, 2015).

Colonization caused the first displacements of the population, while the great droughts (1972–74, 1984, 2002) fostered the idea among Kita's population of increasing their agricultural incomes by migrating within the subregion as well as to Europe (Konate & Gonin, 2016, pp. 104f). As elsewhere in Mali, due to the possibilities of globalization on the one hand and the political unrest in the 1990s in Côte d'Ivoire on the other, many of Kita's emigrants moved further north (Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Spain, and Italy). Between 2004 and 2008, among Kita's young migrants, Libya outplayed other destinations (Konaté & Gonin, 2016, pp. 117ff; Koenig, 2005a). This coincided with the EU experimenting with its rigorous border management policies there, as described. Lately it has been shipwrecks that have dominated the debate here, in addition to a new rise in deportations: there are villages where the majority of their young men died all at once. In 2015, for instance, about 360 of a total of 372 shipwrecked persons originated from the region of Kayes, where Kita is located.

Individual female migration is less developed in this area, and involves shorter distances, mostly to urban areas as described above (e.g., Konaté, 2012). This is related not least to the role of women, who only rarely serve as heads of household (Koenig, 2005a, pp. 80f; see next subchapter). Marie Rodet (2009), on the other hand, deduces from archival sources, the often overlooked, but economically im-

portant role of women actively migrating to neighboring countries in the first half of the 20th century, but eventually disappearing from statistical sources.

Migration and mobility, furthermore, have contributed to rural social stratification (Koenig 2005a, p. 83; cf. Faist et al., 2021; van der Land, 2015). Mobility usually served those who were already well-off and had substantial transnational networks (Koenig, 2005a, pp. 95ff). In this sense, remittances can better function as investments for affluent households than to supply the basic needs of less affluent ones. In terms of return, migrants from more affluent families are better able to invest as they have often obtained better jobs or education (see further Chapter 5). Usually those with a longer migration history have more powerful transnational social networks and can enable more migration as well. Today this is clearly visible in some areas, particularly in southwestern Mali in the region of Kayes. Sometimes houses change from one village to the next as a consequence of, and thus "showcasing," the impacts of their migratory history and networks, along with their supposed successes or "failures."

Today, many migrants and people in Kita are forced into forms of involuntary immobility. A "successful" return is no longer guaranteed, as it was before. Against this background, migration has also become more permanent in terms of urban–rural mobility, but also intra-regionally and continentally. Schooling and waged jobs have been concentrated in particular zones, often bigger cities, and have kept families or individuals staying there (Konaté & Gonin, 2016; Koenig, 2005a). Although deportations have been known here since the first expulsions of Malian workers from African states, the great numbers built up from the 2000s until today are unprecedented, and seem to have substantially reshaped the entire social composition, particularly of the rural hinterland of Kita. The Libyan crisis of 2011 had a notable impact there. The return assistance programs, which were tested in some villages of Kita by the IOM and the Kita branch of the Association of Repatriates of Mali between 2006 and 2010, were short-lived (field investigations, January 2016), although they received a new push through the activities financed by the EUTF and reintegrating the latest "emergency" and "voluntary humanitarian returns" (Alpes, 2020). At the same time, migrant networks and the roles and functions of emigrants in the development of their villages remained steady in these communities of origin.

Kita research sites

Two villages in Kita Cercle serve as embedding context in the following study. Here, the situation has changed considerably due to the effects of externalized borders and increasing deportations. There are at least two generations of deportees in addition to a considerable number of repatriates and returnees in both villages. In the larger of the two villages they come mostly from the Côte d'Ivoire, but also

from several North African countries and even Europe; in the smaller one, they come mostly from Libya.

The small village has about 500 inhabitants but no separate primary school. Most houses here are built close together, constructed mainly on a simple, rectangular plan and made of mud and straw, which is typical for this region; there are also concrete houses, which indicate some degree of wealth, mostly from migrants' investments (see further Chapter 5). The village is densely surrounded by agricultural fields, where people seasonally grow peanuts, maize, and sorghum, chiefly, and some are involved in cotton production; there are vast garden spaces with large fruit and nut trees as well as vegetables growing. The next small village lies 10 minutes' walking distance, and the district capital is close by. The village has a particularly intense and varied history of mobility, predominantly to Libya, particularly since the 1980s (with some migrants also going on further to Europe). When the conflict in Libya escalated in 2011, almost the entire youth of the village and the older males abroad, returned or were repatriated or deported. It became a real social and public issue here and the presence of former deportees has been an everyday phenomenon since, as I will elaborate later (see above all Chapter 6).

The larger village is a community center at the same time, housing about 2,000 inhabitants. The houses are scattered over a wide space, the sandy roads that cross it are broad. It has both a primary and a secondary school, a marketplace, several little shops, a mosque, and a health center, plus a gardening project for the women set up by a Spanish NGO. The fields around the village are vast, but often dry and used for growing peanuts, maize, and sorghum; some are given over to cotton as well. There are some scattered gardened spaces around. After the rainy season, the village is greener for a short time. This village has a long tradition of circular migration to Côte d'Ivoire and, increasingly, to North Africa since the 1990s and to Europe later on. Several of its inhabitants live in Spain, in Italy, some in Libya. This is visible also in the improvements made to some houses, which have fancy paintings and wall elements, for instance, and roofs made of corrugated iron sheets. People who work in the administration, of whom there are several in this village, usually show some more signs of wealth on their houses (for further information see Chapter 5). Other houses are built of mud and straw. According to the community's administrative assistant, the number of migrants has tripled within the last 20 years, from 1–2% to 5% today.[59] This is more than half of the young (male) population that is able to migrate. It may be related to the size of the village as well as the large spaces it provides, that the villagers do not talk as publicly about migration and deportations they would in the small village. I will provide further detail about these interrelations as well as expanding on the specific socio-economic contexts

59 Conversation with community representative, 1-25-2016.

that embed these situations and post-deportation cases throughout the following chapters.

Bamako – hub of migration, return, and transit

The capital Bamako, where I stayed for a long time during my field research and accompanied many deportees, counts about 2.7 million inhabitants today and is one of the fastest growing cities in the world (in 1950, it had a population of 89,000).[60] This increase is due to rapid population growth and, above all, to rising rural-to-urban internal migration over the last few decades. However, the majority of the Malian population still continues to live in rural areas (about 56%).[61] At the same time, urbanization is not a recent phenomenon in this region, as some of the oldest African cities flourished here from the 9th century CE (cf. Meillassoux, 1968).[62] Bamako has been known since ancient times as a thriving market on the trade route between the Sahara desert in the north and the rainforests in the south.[63] This has created a place characterized by a wide variety of often controversial influences, cultural heterogeneity, and diversity (Steuer, 2013).

The French colonizers introduced a system of wage earning and taxation which centralized the monetized economy in Bamako. By 1987 80% of industrial and commercial enterprises were located in the capital, 75% of the institutions of secondary and higher education and 55% of the salaried workers (Gaudio, 1988, p. 178).[64] Following the severe droughts of the 1970s, people fled for the first time in large numbers to the capital. This rural exodus constituted a new wave of immigration in Bamako. The population almost doubled in the six years between 1968 and 1974 from 182,000 to 317,000 (cf. Van Westen, 1995, p. 88).

In the course of the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) from 1981, many people lost their jobs in the capital, above all in the public sector; salaries were

60 See online: https://worldpopulationreview.com/world-cities/bamako-population, accessed 31 October 2021.

61 See online: https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/MLI/mali/rural-population, accessed 31 October 2021.

62 Such as Kumbi Saleh, the capital of the Ghana Empire, or later Niani, the center of the old Mali empire (Steuer, 2013, p. 77)

63 After the salt caravans at the end of the 18th century, the French colonizers, who occupied Bamako in 1883, built the railway line to Dakar ten years later and expanded shipping on the Niger. The city then became a hub for trade not only from north to south, but also from west to east.

64 Particularly since the 1980s decentralization programs have been implemented, however, creating legal and administrative difficulties between central and local governments as well as community institutions, e.g., over natural resources and land tenure (see Idelman, 2009; Benjamin, 2008).

frozen and public spending cut to reduce the government deficit. Since then, the majority have been employed in the informal sector. After some economic recovery during the transition to democracy, in 1994 the introduction of the FCFA (*Franc de la Coopération Financière en Afrique*)[65] caused the Malian currency to lose 50% of its value (as decided by France for the entire currency zone). Since then, a sense of economic crisis and deterioration has gripped large parts of the Malian urban population (cf. Schulz, 2012, pp. 47ff; see Chapter 5 in particular). Since Bamako was no longer so attractive for incoming migrants, people left for the sub-region and increasingly for Europe, facilitated by the beginnings of globalization.

Since the 1970s and increasingly in the 1980s, rural–urban and also female migration has been directed to Bamako (Brand, 2001, pp. 40ff). The latter, unlike male migration, was oriented toward earning enough to pay for a trousseau (Hertrich & Lesclingand, 2017, pp. 63f) though girls' incomes may have contributed to the household, too. Bamako's neighborhoods still represent patterns of urban–rural mobility and migration, grouping people from certain villages together.[66] Returnees also assemble in particular areas. The city mirrors parts of the country's and region's migratory histories.

Migration and mobility largely continue to characterize the city today. People keep moving between the urban and the rural, and a strong connection to one's village of origin forms people's lifeworld and contributes to a pronounced sense of flexibility (typical of many other post-colonial cities as well; cf. Steuer, 2013, pp. 77f). Furthermore, Bamako is a major immigration hub for migrants from other West and Central African countries, having served for a long time as a transit place for those coming from the villages and moving on towards the north and also to other West and Central African countries (e.g., Dünnwald, 2012, 2011). This, not least, was the reason why the EU selected Mali as the first country to set up the CIGEM. As mentioned above (and further explained below), Bamako is a transit hub for returnees too – Malians who do not want to return to their villages, as well as returnees from West and Central African countries. During the Malian crisis, the number of transit migrants stuck in Bamako doubled temporarily (interview, ARACEM, 10-16-2014). Also, those who were internally displaced largely found refuge with their families or in municipal housing in Bamako. The city is an entire microcosm of migration, immobility, and deportations in particular. As I followed returnees, I did my research in several districts of Bamako in places frequented by deportees and the people socially close to them, as to be detailed in the next chapter.

65 The common currency of several ECOWAS members, which is linked to the French national bank (*Banque de France*).

66 For more detail see above all the works of Meillassoux.

Concluding remarks

This chapter has provided a contextual sketch of the Malian setting as a particular example of the conditions and experiences of migration, mobility, and deportations and their social, economic, and political impacts. Moreover, Mali represents a remarkable case of reactions to forced returns throughout the last decades, starting with the independence and formation of the Malian state and the first African deportations. It has been shown that EU externalization measures add to European deportations and build on the established deportation national practices of African states. Even if lately the situation has become more securitized and complicated, the Malian state follows an ambivalent policy towards European and international actors. At the same time, it has developed very specific regimes and institutions for the return and reintegration of returnees. Civil society actors have been pioneering this arena. The migrant associations, set up both abroad and, in particular, by different returnees and deportees in Bamako and in Kita, in the region of Kayes, can be seen as outposts of externalization and protest against deportations and forced return today. Individual deportees and their social surroundings are thrown into this setting, highly charged by the legacy of migration. It is in this ambivalent setting that the analysis that follows develops. In the next chapter, I will sketch out the methodological approach it takes.