

# The Rise of the Migration-Development Nexus in Francophone Sub-Saharan Africa, 1960–2010

Jean-Philippe Dedieu

**Abstract:** This article aims to analyze the emergence of the migration-development nexus after decolonization in Francophone sub-Saharan Africa. The first section explores the way in which French governmental bodies and NGOs started to frame public policies linking migration and development in the 1960s and 1970s. The second section highlights how developmentalist ideology was mobilized in the 1980s in order to set up return policies in partnership with African governments who were increasingly inclined to control migrants' monetary remittances. The last section emphasizes how the migration-development nexus was orchestrated to control migratory flows from the late 1980s onwards.

**Résumé:** Cet article analyse l'émergence de la connexion migration-développement aux lendemains de la décolonisation en Afrique subsaharienne francophone. La première section explore la manière dont les institutions gouvernementales françaises et les ONGs ont progressivement développé des politiques publiques dans les années 1960 et 1970 liant migration et développement. La deuxième section montre comment l'idéologie développementaliste a été mobilisée dans les années 1980 pour mettre en place des politiques de retour en partenariat avec les gouvernements africains de plus en plus enclins à contrôler les transferts monétaires réalisés par les migrants. La dernière section met l'accent sur la façon dont la

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connexion migration-développement a été utilisée à partir de la fin des années 1980 pour contrôler les flux migratoires.

**Keywords:** Africa; France; migration; development; civil society; hometown associations; HTAs; remittances; public policies; neoliberalism

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## Introduction

The discourses and practices of development that emerged at the end of World War II in Africa, Asia, and Latin America are increasingly viewed as the reconfigured legacy of imperial doctrine. Stressing the “protean” meaning of this concept, historian Frederick Cooper has highlighted the willingness of major world powers and international agencies to provide capital and aid after independence to the Global South, turning development into an international process “negotiated between sovereign nation-states, legally equal but in fact distinguished into those who gave and those who received” (Cooper 2002:91). In spite of the decolonization process, the rise of the development framework in international relations did not lead to radical changes in terms of the representation of local populations (for recent scholarship on the critical history of development, see, e.g., Cooper 2010; Frey & Kunkel 2011; Hodge 2015; Hodge 2016). In line with the development critiques initiated by James Ferguson (1990), Arturo Escobar noted that this “teleology” reframes “endlessly the separation between reformers and those to be reformed by keeping alive the premise of the Third World as different and inferior, as having a limited humanity in relation to the accomplished European” (Escobar 1994:53–54).

The “migration-development nexus” (e.g., Nyberg-Sorensen et al. 2002; Faist et al. 2011) that has become an increasingly prominent theme in national and international debates over the last few decades deserves to be analyzed further in light of the history of world politics, not only in order to illuminate the circumstances in which it arose but also to examine its impacts on inter-state relations and on the agency of populations. Only a handful of studies have historically examined its emergence, despite the flurry of academic and policy-oriented research driven by governments’ perception of migration flows as a “security” issue (e.g., Weiner 1992–93; Sassen 1996; Rosenau 1997; de Haas 2008a) and by supra-national institutions’ consecration of “remittances” as a development “mantra” (Kapur 2004). According to contemporary scholarship, until the recent advent of more hybrid approaches, the debates on migration and development since World War II oscillated between pessimism and optimism along the main faultlines of social theory, from functionalism and neo-classical economics to structuralism and dependency (de Haas 2008b, 2012). In the 1990s, policies linking emigration to grassroots development came to be regarded as “best practices” and were “emulated around the world” (Iskander 2010:305).

In contrast to the situation in Asia, Latin America, and North Africa (e.g., Lacroix 2005; FitzGerald 2009; Iskander 2010; Kapur 2010; Délano 2013), the emergence of these policies in Francophone sub-Saharan Africa has been under-studied, in spite of the ever-expanding depth and breadth of studies on migration and development in Africa (e.g., Black et al. 2006; Adepoju et al. 2008; Bakewell 2011). This article aims to fill this gap in the literature by grounding it in the complex history of Franco-African relations after independence, using Mali and Senegal as its main case studies. Based upon extensive archival research, this article argues that the rise to prominence of the “migration-development nexus” has been progressively shaped by the receiving state in order to control migratory flows and by the sending states in order to capture migrants’ remittances. It identifies the paradoxical engagement of migrants with states’ bureaucracies and their willingness to be recast as development brokers between their communities and the sending and receiving states. Ultimately, this article hopes to shed light on the significance of political history for the analysis of African migrations and to go beyond the populist celebration of the “‘transnational’ community or village,” an approach that has, until very recently, so often neglected “the lasting impact of ‘trans-state affiliations’” (Waldinger & FitzGerald 2004:1182).

The first section of this article explores the way in which French public governmental bodies, international NGOs, social welfare organizations and African migrant associations started to frame policies linking migration and development during the first two post-colonial decades, years which were marked by a rise in migratory flows from former colonies to France and the emergence of authoritarian regimes on the African continent. The second section highlights how developmentalist ideology was mobilized in the 1980s in order to set up return policies in partnership with African governments who were increasingly more inclined to control their expatriate citizens’ financial remittances than their political activities. The third and last section emphasizes how the migration-development nexus was orchestrated to control migratory flows in the late 1980s and 1990s against the background of the disengagement of the state on both sides of the Mediterranean and the promotion of a “civil society” by national and international donors in the wake of the “Washington consensus.”

## **From Mutual Aid to Developmentalism in Post-Colonial France, 1960s–70s**

### *The Growth of Mutual Aid Associations in the Colonial and Post-Imperial Eras*

Since imperial times, hometown associations (HTAs) have played a notable role in cities on the African continent. Initially consisting of informal groupings, their influence was strengthened by the granting in 1946 of citizenship rights to all inhabitants of the French overseas community (Gellar 2005:93; Cooper 2014) and the enactment the same year of freedom

of association in French West Africa (*Afrique-Occidentale française*–AOF) and French Equatorial Africa (*Afrique Équatoriale Française*–AEF) (Mignon 1986). Social scientists who have examined the urbanization of West Africa have consistently noted the enduring social and political importance of these HTAs (Balandier 1955; Wallerstein 1966; Meillassoux 1968; Little 1974). These mutual aid voluntary associations were, primarily, a means by which migrants from rural areas could adapt to their new urban environment and, on a broader scale, to the disruptive social transformations that the African continent experienced due to colonization (Clément 1956). Secondly, these organizations, combining community allegiances and kinship bonds, helped maintain the social cohesion of the village group despite the geographical dispersion of its members. Although young men, particularly the youngest of them, regarded rural-urban migrations as a means of freeing themselves from the tutelage of their elders, these “groupings” counterbalanced this through the powerful social control that they continued to exercise in the towns and cities (Meillassoux 1968). Finally, mutual aid associations were often used to preserve or extend the political and economic power of the village communities. In Senegal, for instance, they made it possible for Soninke migrants to influence the authorities in the local chiefdoms regarding the development of relations with the colonial administration (Manchuelle 1997). The political impact of these associations, set up and administered by the migrants who were the most gifted in human and social capital (Wallerstein 1966:326; Little 1974:92), was so noticeable that some authors recognized in them the foreshadowing of an indigenous African trade unionism (Wallerstein 1966:326; Martens 1980:74).

After independence, the spread of one-party and military regimes in former French African colonies (e.g., Geertz 1963; Schachter-Morgenthau 1964; Zolberg 1966), along with the resulting restrictions to the freedom of association (Bayart 2009:188), did not bring about a definitive demise of the vibrancy of association-led life. As Michael Bratton (1989:411–12) argues, “centralized regimes were not universally successful at discouraging autonomous organisations from taking root within civil society.” Mutual aid associations were able to develop further at that time, especially by coordinating community projects. In Mali, some groups were not only content to organize, as a patriotic duty, the collection of funds to plant national flags in their villages of origin, but also contributed their savings with religious fervor to the building of mosques (Meillassoux 1968:78–79). The socio-economic crisis and the beginnings of the Sahel droughts, which began to confront African countries in the 1970s, accelerated this process. In Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso), hometown associations abandoned their almost exclusively “mutual aid character” and steadily became “development organizations” (Mandé 1996:113). In Senegal, development projects supported by village associations “took the idea of mutual aid to a higher level” (Mainet 1988:303).

Due to a sharp rise in migratory flows from sub-Saharan countries, similar organizational shifts also occurred in post-imperial France, which was at the tail end of a three-decade economic boom later to be referred to as

“The Glorious Thirty.” The decolonization process was a landmark for the transformation of West African migrations. After having long been primarily continental, they became increasingly intercontinental (Manchuelle 1997; Mann 2015). The independence of former French African colonies in 1960 led to multilateral agreements granting the freedom of circulation to Africans, reflecting the desire of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs to preserve France’s commercial, economic, and political interests in its former colonies and to avoid “mass returns” of Europeans settled there (Viet 1998:279–95; Mann 2015:130–35). As a result, the West African population in France climbed sharply to reach an estimated twenty thousand in the mid-1960s.

In spite of the dire living and working conditions in their countries of residence, African migrants started creating their own mutual aid associations. As opposed to other foreign national immigration groups, sub-Saharan migrants benefitted in France from freedom of association for the same reasons that they were granted freedom of circulation. During two meetings in the early 1960s, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs decided to grant this right to all the associations founded by nationals of the former colonies in Africa in order to protect the right to association of French nationals living in those countries (Dedieu 2011). This decision was made despite the opposition of the French Ministry of Interior, as well as that of some sub-Saharan regimes who wanted to control their expatriate citizens’ political activities.<sup>1</sup> As a result, sub-Saharan migrants began setting up development projects in their home countries similar to those that had been set up in destination countries (Mann 2015:130; Grysole & Mbodj-Pouye 2017). The progressive engagement of migrant associations in the provision of aid to their home countries was far from unique. During the first two decades of the post-colonial era, models of public policy-making linking immigration and development emerged concomitantly from French public development bodies and international NGOs, on the one hand, and from social welfare organizations supporting sub-Saharan migrant workers, on the other. Two distinct but complementary models were developed, founded on the possibility of public regulation of development by migration in the first case, and of migration by development in the second.

### *Regulating Development by Migration*

Against the background of increasing Cold War tensions and a major reconfiguration of world politics, the crumbling of the imperial system, the aftermath of the First Indochina War, and the violent repression of Algerian nationalism all led to a deep delegitimization of French foreign policy in the international arena in the 1950s and early 1960s. The seeming neutrality of a developmentalist framework proved to be a highly instrumental tool for the French government in order to depoliticize its efforts to preserve its influence in Africa, to maintain its leadership in the international system, and to appear “free from the hegemony of the United States and

the Soviet Union, and truly ‘non-aligned’” (Martin 1985:206). Dedicated to providing financial and material aid to francophone African countries, the founding in 1959 of the French Ministry of Cooperation allowed the conversion of colonial civil servants into technical advisers, as well as the transformation of the imperial rhetoric of civilizing ideology (Conklin 1997) into the post-colonial discourse of technocratic developmentalism (McNamara 1989:109–10; Diouf 1997; Dimier 2003; Meimon 2005).

Illustrating the widespread currency of neo-classical economic approaches among the French politico-administrative elite, development policies were devised by the Ministry to advocate and undertake the modernization of the African agricultural sector. Among the actions taken was to endorse support for the creation of “peasant organizations” in order to popularize agronomic research and diffuse financial techniques, on the one hand, and to replace French management with an African one made up of either peasants or return migrants, on the other (Commission d’étude de la politique de coopération avec les pays en voie de développement 1964:86–88). Placed under the joint responsibility of the Ministries of Finance and Foreign Affairs, the Central Economic Cooperation Fund (*Caisse Centrale de Coopération Economique*—CCCE) initiated debates on agricultural training (Laurens 2009:103–7). Its Director-General, André Postel-Vinay, later Secretary of State for Immigrant Workers, commented in the early 1970s that “the poor effectiveness of education” on the continent was “a particularly serious problem for all African countries” and “one of the causes of rural exodus, urban unemployment and emigration” (Postel-Vinay 1972:16). In the first post-colonial decade, debates on development were thus structured by frameworks relying implicitly on a “sedentary bias” that had been developed during the imperial era by European rulers (Bakewell 2008: 1343–45) and which continued to circulate within the French politico-administrative elite due to the sharp rise in post-independence African migrations.

In the meantime, international NGOs were also studying alternative approaches to development as it was being practiced. State interventionist top-down policies were progressively superseded in West Africa by participatory approaches whose origins can be traced back to the colonial era (Chauveau 1994). Associations specializing in rural development reframed these methods, most especially the Research Group on Rural Development in the Third World (*Groupe de Recherche sur le Développement Rural dans le Tiers Monde*—GRDR). Representatives of missionary organizations and agronomists who had worked in French colonial West Africa created this group at the end of the 1960s.<sup>2</sup> Its activities were based upon scientific research carried out on the diffusion of innovative practices developed in the United States (Rogers 1962) and popularized in France in the context of the growing modernization of its own agricultural sector (e.g., Mendras 1967; Berger 1972; Bodiguel 1975:7–25). The GRDR viewed migrants as being direct promoters of a modern agriculture in their countries of origin through the mobilization of their “savings” and “technical training” (1970:16).

The recognition of the migrant by the GRDR as an “agent of development” or, in the words of researcher Francesco Cerase (1974:258), an “innovative returnee,” was strengthened by the development of partnerships between the Group and social welfare organizations (Dubois 1971:3–4) which forged even stronger practical links between migration and development.

### *Regulating Migration by Development*

While the idea of the regulation of development by immigration was being framed by French public development bodies and international NGOs, social welfare organizations drew attention to the social crisis which the sub-Saharan migrants were facing in France. They concluded that the origin of this crisis was rooted in the “underdevelopment” of the emigration countries. Supported by the French government, they seized the developmentalist model in order to tackle the problems experienced by West African migrants, proposing the regulation of immigration through the development of the home countries.

The organization Welcome and Support (*Accueil et Promotion*), which was subsidized by the Ministry for Cooperation, had, for example, the stated aim of working for the “development of human relations with those coming from developing countries” and for the “promotion of the professional training of those concerned.”<sup>3</sup> Administered by a board of directors composed of high-ranking officials from the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Cooperation, the Association for the Basic Technical Training of Africans and Madagascans in France (*Association pour la Formation Technique de base des Africains et Malgaches résidant en France*—AFTAM) added to its educational projects a program on the subject of preparing for a return to one’s home country.<sup>4</sup> Committed to left-wing politics, the influential charity organization Cimade (*Comité Inter-Mouvements Auprès Des Évacués*) also created its own development section at the end of the 1960s. This section was headed by a Brazilian refugee, Ruy da Silva, who had been Secretary of Education under the Presidency of João Goulart before the establishment of a military dictatorship in Brazil. In his biography, da Silva refers to a professional “syncretism” which combined both dependency theories developed by Raúl Prebisch and his followers at the Economic Commission for Latin America (for an overview, see Delgado-Wise 2014) and modernization theses elaborated by Walt Whitman Rostow (1970). Under his leadership, Cimade’s development section attempted to boost the efforts already being made in African and North African countries, primarily Algeria and Senegal, and received the support of the French Ministry of Cooperation (da Silva 1992:95). At the end of the 1960s, studies were increasingly conducted on topics devoted to migration and development (Cimade 1971:37). A literacy program was introduced for immigrant workers in order to improve their living conditions in their host country, and possibly even to facilitate a return to their country of origin (Cimade 1971:28). A harmonization of migration and development policies at the inter-State level was

also outlined. In the early 1970s, da Silva reflected on the “impasse concerning the lack of a specific definition for migratory policy, an impasse that involves the governments of the countries concerned and also those organizations interested in the various ways of solving the problems posed by migration.” He argued that the current “integration policy” was “partially-completed” and “selfish.” Against the background of the “emancipatory interdependence” advocated at the time by the proponents of the New International Economic Order (McFarland 2015:218), he recommended that the interdependency of both the emigration and immigration societies should be taken into account, and that a new policy should be developed to become a “tool of international technical cooperation” (da Silva 1969).

### *The Appropriation of Developmentalism by the Migrant Associations*

An even greater legitimization of public policy linking migration and development took shape with the gradual move by the French government to control migratory flows, alongside the appropriation of migration issues by the Ministry of Interior from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, testifying to the “decolonization of migration” and the progressive administrative amnesia of the colonial past (Noiriel 2007:675). The shift culminated in the suspension of immigration in 1974 and the implementation in 1977 of a so-called *prime au retour*, a scheme, denounced by left-wing political parties, that offered migrant workers money to return home.

Before being announced to the public as a measure designed to protect the national labor market, the suspension of immigration was presented by the Secretary of State for Immigrant Workers, André Postel-Vinay, to President Valéry Giscard d’Estaing as a policy intended to defend the country against the rise in migratory flows brought about by social instability in the “developing countries” (Weil 1991:109–12; Laurens 2009:216–20). From the mid-1970s, the CCCE was tasked with organizing vocational training programs concerning the return of migrants to their origin country, these programs having been set out by a government interdepartmental group consisting of representatives from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation (Caisse Centrale de Coopération Economique 1981:8). Public development agencies, international NGOs and welfare associations increasingly insisted during the late 1960s and 1970s that migrant associations, due to the links they provided between country of origin and host country, had the flexibility to find a balance between immigration and development. Several programs aimed at small groups of migrants, whether they had previously grouped together in an association or not, were subsequently implemented to facilitate the migrants’ return to their country of origin.

Two examples that are often quoted in the socio-anthropological literature, as well as in administrative reports, deserve special mention, as they illustrate the increasing enmeshment of West African migrants’ own agency with the structural forces driven by state and non-state actors. Firstly, in the case of Senegal, is the creation, on the initiative of former migrant Jaabe So,



of the Federation of Peasant Organizations in the Bakel Department (*Fédération des Paysans Organisés du Département de Bakel*). The federation gathered together around twenty villages and obtained support from French organizations as well as from American and British charities and agencies such as Oxfam and the United States Agency for International Development (Adams & So 1996). Secondly, in the case of Mali, is the Cultural Association of African Workers in France (*Association Culturelle des Travailleurs Africains en France*—ACTAF) (Quiminal 1991:164–68; Daum 1998:165–66). This program was created not only by Malian but also by Guinean and Senegalese workers. The association received support from the Malian government towards the creation of an agricultural cooperative in Somankidi, even though the migrants themselves were aware of the possibility that their project might be reclaimed politically at a time when pressure was beginning to arise in France for them to return home (Soumaré 2001).

Developmental ideology expanded in a particularly strong fashion among West African migrants as it enhanced pre-existing social practices of mutual aid within their hometowns that had been in place since the colonial era. Against the background of the Sahel droughts and a growing international relief effort (Mann 2015:170–74), the village space no longer engaged only in social production through the bonds of solidarity that united its members, but also encouraged reconstruction through the actions of development organizations, whether public agencies, international NGOs or social welfare organizations. Furthermore, developmental ideology offered a value-enhancing substitute identity to a stigmatized segment of the sub-Saharan working population in France at a time of socio-economic crisis and a sharp rise in unemployment.<sup>5</sup> Organizations advocating development offered migrant workers a statutory promotion and equipped them with practices and discourses that turned them into mouthpieces for the modernization of agriculture, or, as later scholarly and community oriented literature would refer to them, “transnational” actors of community development.

### **Developmentalist Ideology during the French Conversion to Neo-Liberalism, 1980s**

#### *The Laying-Off of African Workers: Return Migration Policies in the Name of a “Disinterested” Developmental Ideal*

The victory of the French Socialist Party (*Parti Socialiste*) candidate François Mitterrand in the 1981 presidential election gave birth in France and on the African continent to the hope of fundamental changes in economic choices, migration policy, and foreign affairs. The first years of the Mitterrand presidency brought the regularization of more than 130,000 undocumented immigrants and an end to the limitations on the freedom of association for foreign nationals (e.g., Wihtol de Wenden 1988:278–305; Viet 1998:395–443; Weil 1991:193–236). In the domain of Franco-African

relations, the nomination of Jean-Pierre Cot as deputy Minister in charge of Cooperation and Development marked a radical shift from his predecessors. The move seemed to herald the beginning of relationships with Francophone countries that would be more respectful of human rights and saw the merger between the French Minister in charge of Cooperation and Development and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (e.g., Whiteman 1983; Bayart 1984; Meimon 2005).

Yet the changes proved short-lived. Confronted with a sharp deterioration in the economic situation in France and a continual rise in unemployment, the Socialist government set up an austerity program and embraced neo-liberal policies that led to programs of privatization and flexibilization of labor markets. It also led to the reconversion of entire industrial sectors, such as the metal, mining, and automobile industries, which had previously employed a significant number of North African and West African workers. On the Franco-African front, Jean-Pierre Cot resigned his post only a year later under pressure from rival bureaucracies and authoritarian African regimes whose leaders felt ‘threatened’ by his reforms (Bayart 1984; Martin 1985:201–2).

Nothing illustrated the continuity between the policies of the previous French government and the new one better than the manner in which new life was quickly breathed into the idea of return programs, despite left-wing political parties, including the now incumbent Socialist Party, having fought at the end of the 1970s against the *prime au retour* (Dedieu 2012). The French government institutionalized on a much broader scale the various scattered experiments that had been carried out during the two previous decades by public development bodies, international NGOs and welfare organizations. It announced the introduction of assistance measures aimed at reintegrating foreign workers who had been affected by industrial restructuring to their home countries, instituting these measures by the decree of April 27, 1984. This public policy, whose primary goal was to organize the return of foreign workers, was not presented as a strictly state-imposed scheme but framed as a participatory program aimed at empowering both African migrants and local populations on the African continent. As stated by French governmental officials, the program aspired to “promote relations between communities and their country of origin in terms of development” and to “stimulate the creation of new networks (local communities, associations).”<sup>6</sup> That the French government’s announcements championed ‘transnational’ civil society illustrates the extent to which participatory development can “end up performing extremely sensitive political operations involving the entrenchment and expansion of institutional state power almost invisibly” (Ferguson 1990:256). It shows how, from the 1980s onwards, participatory approaches were no longer supported merely by international NGOs but were also widely endorsed by governments as well as by international multi-lateral institutions (Francis 2001), all the more so because they had learned to minimize the political and social risks in programs allegedly intended to empower local populations (for

development critiques, see, e.g., pioneering works by Ferguson 1990; Rahmena 1992; Sachs 1992; Crush 1995; Escobar 1995).

In order to determine the number of redundancies of foreign national workers and to plan reintegration programs, a large amount of statistical data was sent for aggregation purposes to the Ministry of Social Affairs by both public and private French companies, particularly those within the automobile industry. This data highlights the extent to which the end of the “workers’ fortresses” (*forteresses ouvrières*) created a vulnerability in an African population whose members were generally in the prime of their lives. For example, at the main French car manufacturer, the Régie Nationale des Usines Renault (RNUR), 70 percent of the Malian workers were younger than forty-five years old<sup>7</sup> and 40 percent of the Senegalese workers were younger than forty.<sup>8</sup> On account of their recent move to France, scores of sub-Saharan immigrants thus found themselves suffering more than any other group of migrants due to the economic crisis that had struck the industrialized countries.<sup>9</sup> Adopting the government’s approach, the RNUR’s representatives made clear in the pages of the company magazine *Avec* that the reintegration operation had not been imposed on the company but that they were enrolling in it in response to the “demands of foreign workers” (*Avec* 1984a). The company was advocating reintegration while, at the same time, one of its subsidiaries, Renault Véhicules Industriels (RVI), was sending food, medicine and water pumps to countries that had been affected by drought such as Mali and Mauritania (*Avec* 1984b). Neither Renault nor the government ever established a link between the fact that these countries were also the countries of origin of the workers who had been made redundant and to whom a return home was proposed.

Only “foreign workers who were waiting for an opportunity to return to their country of origin” were interested in the reintegration projects.<sup>10</sup> The number of applications for reintegration at the RNUR was extremely low.<sup>11</sup> The large discrepancy between the original goals and the actual results of these ‘massive returns’ planned by the French government can be explained by the failure to take into account the agency of migrant workers.<sup>12</sup> On the one hand, the refusal to opt for reintegration demonstrated the strength of their symbolic and material ties to France as well as their early position within their working life-cycle. On the other hand, the economic conditions in their countries of origin and the obligations imposed by lineage debt led the prospective returnees to view reintegration as a particularly risky undertaking. Some of them feared “being dispossessed of their wealth on arrival by the government” or “by their family.”<sup>13</sup> These fears proved to be justified. The fact-finding mission to Senegal carried out by Renault in March 1986 indicated that reintegration had proven to be difficult for the vast majority and that traces of some returnees had been lost completely.<sup>14</sup> This failure did not, however, prevent the reformulation and pursuit of return programs by the French government, with the participation of the African countries (Panizzon 2011).

*Toward “Depoliticized” Economic Control of African Migrants*

Negotiations which were arranged in the mid-1980s with the assistance of the Minister of Cooperation in order to convince the sub-Saharan States of the relevance of reintegration policies proved to be highly sensitive. The return program advocated by the French government clashed with the economic and social situation faced by the sub-Saharan countries. In various memos, personnel in the Ministry of Social Affairs outlined the dire social situation in Francophone countries.<sup>15</sup> Reintegration agreements were nevertheless signed with Mauritania on September 24, 1986, with Senegal on May 7, 1987, and with Mali on December 17, 1987 (Cansot & Vialle 1988).

The signing of these agreements testifies to the enduring inequality in the relationship between former colonies and the colonizing power. The involvement of the African countries in the reintegration policy also demonstrates the diaspora engagement policies that had begun to be developed by sending states (for a theoretical framework, see Gamlen 2006; Gamlen 2014). The financial remittances sent by migrants had become vital for the local economies of Mali, Mauritania, and Senegal. The payment of reintegration subsidies and the financing of the vocational training schemes that made up the return programs were also increasingly viewed by African countries as components of development that should not be underestimated. Although during the two post-independence decades African countries had attempted to exercise political control over their citizens living abroad, from the 1980s onwards it was an apparently ‘depoliticized’ economic control that these countries exerted on migrants. The objective of this control was to “to get hold of the migrants’ savings.”<sup>16</sup>

Senegal was one of the first francophone sub-Saharan countries to develop a transnational state structure, namely the Ministry for Emigrants, which was created in 1983. According to a consultant for the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the ministry was “badly managed” and its resources were too limited to develop a genuine policy regarding Senegalese emigration.<sup>17</sup> However, the Ministry still received financial and administrative aid from the CCCE in order to coordinate the reintegration of migrant workers in partnership with the International Organization for Migration (IOM).<sup>18</sup> In 1987, France and Senegal set up an Office of Reception, Orientation and Follow-up of Actions for the Reinsertion of Emigrants (*Bureau d’Accueil, d’Orientation et de Suivi des Actions de Réinsertion des Emigrés*—BAOS) in order to assist migrants in integrating themselves into the economic sectors of the country (Diatta & Mbow 1999:248).

The relative porosity of French and African policies was illustrated both by the administrative and financial organization of this ministry and also by the need to call on the associations created by African migrants in France to support these reintegration projects, particularly salient in the Senegalese and Malian cases.

The French Minister for Social Affairs and National Solidarity, Georgina Dufoix, traveled to Senegal in 1985 in order to “add value to projects for

the reintegration of Senegalese immigrants while emphasising the voluntary nature of these projects and the ‘psychological’ preparation and approach taken by the French side.”<sup>19</sup> Her official trip was supported by the influential General Union of Senegalese Workers in France (*Union Générale des Travailleurs Sénégalais en France*–UGTSF).<sup>20</sup> The UGTSF had initiated a number of “self-reliant village development” programs in the Matam department in the fields of hydraulics, agriculture, livestock farming, and literacy, corresponding to policy implemented by the French government.<sup>21</sup> Entitled “To live at home is to live better” (“Vivre mieux, c’est vivre chez soi”), the Union’s development projects were continuously supported by the French and Senegalese governments. The projects had the aim of “securing the population” and “preparing reception structures in order to encourage those Senegalese who have emigrated to come home and rejoin their families” (*Actualités-Migrations* 1987).

In Mali, the Association for Training for the Return of African Migrants (*Association pour la Formation en vue du Retour des Africains Migrants*–AFRAM), managed by the Director of the Mali Development Bank (BDM) and having as Honorary President the spouse of General Moussa Traoré, was created in the mid-1980s in order “to deal with operational problems related to the reintegration of migrants.”<sup>22</sup> According to the journal published by the pro-governmental Union of Malian Workers in France (*Union des Travailleurs Maliens en France*–UTMF), the Bank, which was engaged “alongside the UTMF in the various development projects,” should “channel” the “savings of Malians in France” and “all the fortunes scattered around different places” (Coulibaly 1986).

In both cases, migrant associations mainly supported reintegration and development projects advocated by the French government, illustrating the increasing embeddedness between public policies and migrants’ initiatives.<sup>23</sup> Their support was all the more pronounced since developmentalist ideology was also endorsed by the administrations in their home countries. The aim of African regimes was no longer merely to coordinate political control over their citizens living abroad. It was also to assert state control over migrants’ financial remittances and to organize, through HTAs and migrant associations, privileged access to funds allocated by French public institutions relating to reintegration policy and, on a much wider scale, development policy.

## **Controlling Migratory Flows and Financial Remittances, 1990s and Beyond**

### *The Recognition of HTAs in French Public Policy*

From the 1980s onwards, the concept of “civil society” gained increasingly renewed prominence in scholarly and policy debates, which focused on criticisms of the negative effects of state regulation while at the same time advocating the importance of associations in the renewal of democratic practices.

These debates had notable repercussions, not only in Europe (Maier 1987) but also in Africa (Migdal 1988; Bratton 1989). African countries experienced the implementation of structural adjustment programs and political liberalizations (e.g., Harbeson et al. 1994; Widner 1994; Bratton & van de Walle 1997), which led to significant shifts in the relationships between the state and civil society. These circumstances contributed to the increasing influence of NGOs on development policies in the Global South and a greater official recognition of HTAs in migration-related public policies in Western countries.

In France, the struggle for recognition by migrant associations was in line with the actions taken by NGOs to secure a greater role in the policy-making being conducted by the French Ministry of Cooperation. In arguing for this role, the NGOs highlighted their particular expertise with regard to development issues and the relationships they had formed with migrant associations in France and local communities in sub-Saharan countries over the last few decades. This expertise allowed them, they argued, to determine the needs of the communities with greater accuracy than the government networks were able to do, and to deliver aid to them more effectively (for a recent analysis of this assumption, see Bodomo 2013).

A reading of the reports written at the time by several NGO representatives describes the reasoning that justified their backing of migrant associations. Accordingly, Henri Rouillé d'Orfeuil, who headed the Group for Research and Technology Exchanges (*Groupe de Recherche et d'Échanges Technologiques*—GRET), published a document in 1984 that gathered together reports initially destined for the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). This document set out the principles of a cooperation policy that was based on the collective mobilization of the “northern NGOs” to protect “the interests of the Third World” and “the emergence of a Peasants’ Alliance.” Although immigration was not the principal theme of the document, to which organizations such as Cimade contributed, it nevertheless constituted the subject matter for many of the examples given in the text, whether concerning return migrants or regarding groups of migrant workers in France whose remittances strengthened the “community network” (Rouillé d'Orfeuil, 1984:25). In 1989, a coalition of NGOs, the Integrated International Solidarity and Development Associations (*Intercollectif des associations nationales pour le développement et la solidarité avec le Tiers monde*), put forward similar arguments in a joint report that outlined the need to redefine the status and nature of the key players in the French cooperation sector. A short section illustrated, on the one hand, the relationships that NGOs such as Cimade and GRDR had been able to develop with immigrant associations “concerned with their region or village of origin” and, on the other hand, the types of resources and remittances which the migrants possessed or had generated (Condamines 1989:150–51).

The conceptualization of the migrant association as a facility for appropriating and distributing aid reflects the radical transformation in the 1980s of the way in which funds emanating from bilateral and multilateral

organizations and NGOs were allocated. Bearing witness to the imposition of neoliberal doctrines in African countries, local government agencies responsible for the agricultural sector saw their areas of intervention progressively limited under pressure from donors who favored the “private sector” and “professional peasant organizations,” the latter having denounced the states’ “predatory” methods and supported the intervention of international NGOs in the aftermath of the Sahelian droughts (Groupe de Travail Coopération Française 1989:53).

As Jean-François Bayart (2007) argues, despite the concept of co-development having been “born on the left” in order to “involve civil society and migrants in development assistance,” the idea then “turned right.” The autobiographies of former French Ministers of Cooperation under right-wing governments (Aurillac 1987:161–63; Godfrain 1998:239) highlight the desire to convert African countries and their out-of-the-country citizens to economic liberalism and private initiatives, revealing the profound ambiguity of the various and blurred uses of the concept of ‘civil society’. The progressive involvement of migrant associations has led to a major reshaping of neo-liberalism in Sahelian countries, as well as of the porous boundary between civil society and corporate-led reforms in the wake of the ‘Washington consensus’.

### Controlling African Migratory Flows

As had been the case with North African emigration since the colonial era, sub-Saharan African emigration began in turn to be viewed as a ‘public problem’ in the 1990s. Official reports multiplied against a background of housing rights movements and the mobilization of ‘undocumented’ migrants (Siméant 1998; Péchu 1999). During the period 1988–98, the journal *Migrations Études*, edited by the Population and Migration Office (*Direction de la Population et des Migrations–DPM*), contained as many studies on “African,” “Sub-Saharan,” and “Black” immigration as those on “North African,” “Islamic,” “Muslim,” “Algerian,” and “Moroccan” immigration (*Migrations Études* 1999). The conclusions of these studies agreed with official reports that made the connection between development and immigration, highlighting the actions taken by migrant associations to control migratory flows.

The French government’s interdepartmental think tank on immigration from sub-Saharan African countries published a report in 1992 in which the editor, Hubert Prévot, urged policy makers to “encourag[e] the creation of associations working for development in the areas of origin of Africans from all parts of the continent” (Secrétariat Général à l’Intégration 1992:43). Another report produced in 1997 by Sami Naïr, head of the government’s interdepartmental migration/co-development task force, dealt more with the notion of co-development devised by the Socialist Party in the 1970s. “Cooperation policy” was “to make immigration into a vector of development, because this means the stabilization of migratory flows in the

country of origin and the guarantee of integration in France” (Naïr 1997:3). An Interministerial Committee for Codevelopment and International Migration (*Mission Interministérielle au Co-développement et aux Migrations Internationales*–MICOMI) was created in 1998 in order to implement the recommendations of Sami Naïr’s report. It led to the establishment in 2002 of a parastatal organization, the Forum for International Migration-related NGOs (*Forum des Organisations de Solidarité Internationale Issues des Migrations*–FORIM), which was intended to integrate migrant organizations and the various stakeholders of the migration-development nexus under the same umbrella (Lacroix 2009:10–11; Panizzon 2011:188–91).

### *African Political Transitions and the Courting of Migrants*

The development nexus was further strengthened by the political transitions underway in the main sub-Saharan sending countries in the early 1990s. Migrants who had long been ostracized or marginalized by former authoritarian regimes and ruling parties began to be integrated within their home country polity. This recognition aimed to secure migrants’ “economic and political participation at home” and to tap “into existing networks of hometown associations” (Whitaker 2011:755).

In Senegal, similar shifts occurred under the tenure of President Abdou Diouf who served as the country’s second President from 1981 (for an analysis of political transitions, see Diop & Diouf 1990; Diaw & Diouf 1998). Faced with mounting popular pressure, in the early 1990s the government embarked on a series of democratization reforms. The elaboration of a new consensual electoral code endorsed by all parties (Villalón 1994) paved the way for the granting of external voting rights to Senegalese abroad as well as to their representation in parliament. Policies designed to bolster their participation in the economic development of the country were further reinforced. The Ministry of Emigrants was transferred to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Senegalese Living Abroad, which developed new strategies aimed at courting migrants. In 1995, a decree defined the new and extended responsibilities of the BAOS. Henceforth integrated into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Senegalese Living Abroad, the BAOS was aimed at organizing “policies for the promotion, mobilization and transfer of emigrants’ savings as defined by the government of Senegal” and enabling the “mounting of individual or collective projects of emigrants in close collaboration with the competent public or private technical or financial structures” (Diatta & Mbow 1999:250–51). The Support Program for Migrant Workers led by the Senegalese Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Senegalese Living Abroad, with the cooperation of the European Union, the French Development Fund, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and NGOs working in Senegal, provides an illustrative example of projects coordinated between NGOs and multilateral agencies in order to mobilize both local associations and migrant organizations (Diatta & Mbow 1999:251).



In Mali, the overthrow of General Moussa Traoré in March 1991 led to the official recognition of expatriate citizens and their integration into governmental bodies. The Transitional Committee for the Salvation of the People (*Comité transitoire pour le salut du peuple*–CTSP), led by Lt. Col. Amadou Toumani Touré, abolished the exit visa that was required to leave the country (*L'Essor* 1991) and set up a Delegated Ministry for Malians living abroad (République du Mali 1991:23). Held in July and August of the same year in Bamako, Mali's National Conference was organized in order to reconcile a nation that had suffered under almost twenty-five years of dictatorship and to establish political pluralism (Vengroff 1993; Robinson 1994). The final proceedings of the National Conference, in which many migrant associations were officially represented by their leaders, recommended “the integration of Malians living abroad in the process of economic development of the country, the elaboration and the adoption of a code for a better return, and the development of an effective partnership with the Malians living abroad.” (République du Mali 1991:43) After the first free election in which migrants were able to vote, the resultant government further defined the role of the Ministry of Malians Living Abroad by stating that it was responsible for “the defense of the interests of and protection of Malians living abroad”; “coordination of the activities of their organizations towards the development of Mali”; “aid for their employability upon their return to Mali”; and “coordination of humanitarian action and non-governmental organizations in connection with the technical ministries concerned” (*Journal Officiel de la République du Mali* 1992).

These two cases highlight how political and economic reforms have been deeply intertwined in the wake of this new wave of democratization (Bienen & Herbst 1996). Democratic political reforms that were initiated at the time were certainly one of the main reasons for integrating migrants who had long been ostracized or marginalized into the polity of African countries. It remains nevertheless important to stress that sending states' increasing recognition of migrants cannot be separated from the fact that their associations in destination countries were used as a means to channel both foreign-earned savings and aid allocated by bilateral or international agencies and that their remittances also played a key role in the national economies, increasingly outpacing the amount of both foreign direct investment (FDI) and official development assistance (ODA) (Global Commission on International Migration 2005; European Commission 2015).

## Conclusion

In line with the scholarship on origin countries' “diaspora engagement policies” (see, e.g., Levitt & de la Dehesa 2003; Gamlen 2006; de Haas 2007), the study of the rise of the migration-development nexus in the French post-colonial bloc shows progressive implementation by the sub-Saharan states of transnational public policies designed to court migrants and channel their remittances. The neo-pluralist approach developed by David

Scott FitzGerald (2006) allows us to highlight how its implementation was the result of a multiplicity of internal and external factors, evident in its evolving and un-coordinated nature. On the one hand, it stems from the rising dependence of local economies on migrants' financial remittances against the backdrop of Africa's persistent economic crisis exacerbated by droughts. On the other, it was the result of the pressures applied by bilateral and international donors, particularly the French state, upon African governments, reflecting their historical relationship of deeply asymmetrical interdependence. Ultimately, this fragmentary set of institutional arrangements, that combined the participation of migrant associations and international NGOs in local development projects, sheds light on the retreat of the sub-Saharan states from some of their most fundamental functions and the "emergence of nongovernmental politics," that has accompanied the rise of neo-liberalism in Africa (Mann 2015:5).

In the case of the French state, the promotion of this nexus testifies to the fact that providing development aid to Francophone African countries allowed France to maintain its historical dominance over its former colonies and therefore its status in the international arena long after decolonization. The development framework was advanced, in a double articulation, firstly, to attempt to control the migratory flows from the African continent and, secondly, to relegate the social treatment of unemployment in France to local African governments through the 'reintegration' of laid-off sub-Saharan workers to their home countries. International NGOs, French public bodies, and international donors then turned these 'reintegrated' migrants into development agents. As in the African case, the rise of this nexus is strongly correlated with the neoliberal turn of France from the mid-1980s. This has been most clearly demonstrated in the wholesale privatization of the industries that once hired post-colonial workers and the promotion of a 'civil society' that has been progressively incorporated into the implementation of return migration policies.

Finally, as this article has shown, transnational migrants are far from being independent of the internal and international policies developed by sending and receiving states. "Migrants do not make their communities alone," as their associational life is also framed by "state controls" that "operate at internal as well as external levels, seeking to regulate memberships in the national collectivity, as well as movements across borders" (Waldinger & FitzGerald 2004:1178). Migrants' progressive involvement in, and shaping of, the migration-development nexus is the result of their "interpretative engagement" with bureaucracies in sending and receiving states (Iskander 2012:305–6). At a time of major social and economic changes on both sides of the Mediterranean, migrants were forced to redefine their belongings by acting as brokers of development aid between their communities and donors and by endorsing "humanitarianism" as the new "idiom" of their civic engagement (Mann 2015:8). Their incorporation into the development-migration nexus, which deserves further research, has contributed to the transformation of their collective action into an

'anti-politics machine', irrevocably transfiguring the independentist and revolutionary utopias of previous decades.<sup>24</sup>

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## Notes

1. See Letter from Ministry of Interior to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, July 12, 1971 (CAC, 1987 0799, no. 44).
2. See the archives of the Bibliothèque Historique of the Centre de Coopération Internationale en Recherche Agronomique pour le Développement (CIRAD).
3. See note of the Ministry of the Interior on *Les Travailleurs d'Afrique Noire en France*, May 1963 (APP, Ga A10).
4. Quoted in AFTAM. 1964. *Statuts* (ABDIC).
5. According to a study carried out by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and quoted in *Actualité-Migrations* (1982), the unemployment rate between 1980 and 1981 increased to 22 percent for French nationals and 35 percent for foreign nationals, with rates of 33 percent for Algerians, 43.5 percent for Moroccans, 44.5 percent for Tunisians and 63 percent for Sub-Saharan Africans.
6. Note of the Population and Migration Office (*Direction de la Population et des Migrations - DPM*), October 8, 1984 (CAC, 1993 0417, art. 17).
7. Note of the Régie Nationale des Usines Renault, January 1988 (CAC, 1993 0417, art. 22).
8. *Ibid.*
9. This difference is particularly apparent in a statistical analysis of the reintegration dossiers (Moreau and Debart 1985:691): In the first trimester of 1985, the Senegalese constituted the youngest of the "candidates" for reintegration, compared to Algerians and Moroccans, of whom 63 percent were between 10–15 years and 23 percent were between 15–25 years.
10. Including "beneficiaries" and their families, the initial numbers on May 31, 1988 were calculated as being 35,197 migrants from North Africa, and 1,678 from other African countries, of which 667 were Malian and 689 Senegalese (Cansot and Vialle 1988:77–79).
11. On March 31, 1985, 2,359 workers from Sub-Saharan Africa were employed at the RNUR, of whom 1,537 were Senegalese, 407 Malian and 335 Mauritanian.

- As of August 1, 1985, only eighty-four applications for reintegration had been made by Senegalese, forty-nine by Malians and eighteen by Mauritians. See Statistical data communicated by the RNUR to the DPM, August 22, 1985 (CAC, 1993 0417, art.17).
12. For a discussion on the failure of migration policies, see Castles 2004.
  13. Letter for the attention of M. Nguyen, technical adviser to Mme Minister, March 29, 1985 (CAC, 1993 0417, art. 17).
  14. Note of the Direction de la population et des migrations (Population and Migration Office), March 28, 1986 (CAC, 1993 0417, art.17).
  15. See Note of Direction de la Population et des Migrations (Population and Migration Office), *Confidential Note PSA-Talbot*, December 26, 1983 (CAC, 1993 0417, art. 17).
  16. See note by Robert Dhonte, *Réinsertion des migrants maliens et sénégalais*, 1985 (AQO, Fonds 75, art. 1309).
  17. *Ibid.*
  18. See IOM Convention with the Ministère des Émigrés (Ministry for Emigrants), May 7, 1987 (CAC, 1993 0417, art. 22).
  19. Direction des affaires africaines et malgaches (Office for African and Madagascan Affairs), Telegraph, July 19, 1985 (CAC, 1986 0392, art. 3).
  20. Direction des affaires africaines et malgaches (Office for African and Madagascan Affairs), Telegraph, July 22, 1985 (CAC, 1986 0392, art. 3).
  21. "Documentation interne à l'UGTSF," July 1985 (CAC, 1988 0292, art. 11).
  22. Note by Robert Dhonte, *Réinsertion des migrants maliens et sénégalais*, 1985 (AQO, Fonds 75, art. 1309).
  23. For a recent discussion of the often conflictual cooperation of diasporas with sending and receiving states, see, for example, Klinker (2014) and Paulsson (2014).
  24. This expression is borrowed from James Ferguson (1990).

## Abbreviations

ABDIC: Archives of the Bibliothèque de Documentation Internationale Contemporaine

ABNF: Archives of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

AFNSP: Archives of the National Foundation of Political Science

APP: Archives of the Préfecture de Police of Paris

AQO: Archives of the Quai d'Orsay

CAC: Centre for Contemporary Archives