

Facets of African immigrants' mobility in Greece: Between transnationalism and integration

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Abstract

Despite that in the last two decades Greece has rapidly transformed to a destination country for immigrants, the unprecedented crisis has had a severe impact on immigrants' settlement and integration. New migrant flows which originate from Asia and Africa have induced new challenges for the national authorities and policy makers in Greece.

Usually oriented to the countries of Western Europe, migrants from Africa and Asia, are crossing the Greek border in a search for better living opportunities in Europe. In the midst of the economic crisis many of these migrants have never managed to find employment in the country and their greatest care has been to move to the rest of Europe.

This paper presents the findings of a recent empirical research conducted in the period 2011-2013 which aimed at the investigation of the migration process as well as the prospects of African immigrants' integration in Greek host society. In total 532 questionnaires addressed to immigrants originating from seven sub-Saharan African countries were collected, while more than fifty interviews were conducted with second generation African immigrants, state agencies, migration policy institutions and civil society organizations.

The main objective of the paper is to map out the migration process of African immigrants as well as to investigate the various dimensions of their social and geographical trajectories in the country. Looking at seven Sub-Saharan African nationalities, we depict their 'journey' to Greece, their expectations, their routes until the final destination and their integration prospects into Greek society. In the context of economic crisis, the interplay of migrant 'mobilities' and the integration into host societies remains a basic question.

Key words: African immigrants, Greece, mobilities, transnationalism, integration.

Όψεις της κινητικότητας των Αφρικανών μεταναστών στην Ελλάδα: Μεταξύ διεθνικότητας και ένταξης

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Περίληψη

Παρά το γεγονός ότι κατά τις δύο τελευταίες δεκαετίες η Ελλάδα μετατράπηκε σε χώρα προορισμού μεταναστών, η παρούσα οικονομική κρίση είχε σοβαρό αντίτυπο στην εγκατάσταση και στην ένταξη των μεταναστών. Οι πρόσφατες μεταναστευτικές ροές που προέρχονται από την Ασία και την Αφρική δημιουργούν νέες προκλήσεις τόσο για το κράτος όσο και τους φορείς χάραξης πολιτικής στην Ελλάδα.

Κατευθυνόμενα προς τις χώρες της Δυτικής Ευρώπης, τα μεταναστευτικά ρεύματα από την Αφρική και την Ασία διαπερνούν τα ελληνικά σύνορα - ολοκληρώνοντας σταδιακά την πορεία τους - επιδιώκοντας να βρουν καλύτερες ευκαιρίες διαβίωσης στην Ευρώπη. Στο πλαίσιο της οικονομικής κρίσης, η πορεία των μεταναστών προς την Ευρώπη δεν υποβοηθείται καθώς η πλειοψηφία αυτών δεν καταφέρνει να βρει απασχόληση στην Ελλάδα, ενώ παράλληλα γίνεται περισσότερο πιεστική η ανάγκη εξεύρεσης τρόπων μετακίνησης.

Στην εισήγηση παρουσιάζονται ευρήματα πρόσφατης εμπειρικής έρευνας που διενεργήθηκε την περίοδο 2011-2012 και είχε ως στόχο τη μελέτη της μεταναστευτικής διαδικασίας των Αφρικανών μεταναστών καθώς και των προοπτικών ένταξής τους στην Ελληνική κοινωνία υποδοχής. Στο πλαίσιο της έρευνας αυτής συμπληρώθηκαν 532 ερωτηματολόγια που απευθύνονταν σε Αφρικανούς μετανάστες που προέρχονται από επτά χώρες της Υποσαχάριας Αφρικής, ενώ διενεργήθηκαν πάνω από πενήντα συνεντεύξεις με Αφρικανούς μετανάστες δεύτερης γενιάς, φορείς μεταναστευτικής πολιτικής και φορείς της κοινωνίας πολιτών.

Στόχος της εισήγησης είναι η χαρτογράφηση της μεταναστευτικής διαδικασίας των Αφρικανών μεταναστών και η ανάδειξη των διαφορετικών διαστάσεων της γεωγραφικής και κοινωνικής διαδρομής τους στην Ελλάδα. Αναλύοντας την πορεία των μεταναστών από επτά διαφορετικές Αφρικανικές χώρες, εξετάζουμε το 'ταξίδι' τους προς την Ελλάδα, τις προσδοκίες τους, τις διαδρομές που ακολούθησαν όπως και τις προοπτικές ένταξής τους στην ελληνική κοινωνία. Στην πλαίσιο της οικονομικής κρίσης, η σχέση μεταξύ κινητικότητας και ένταξης είναι ένα βασικό ερώτημα στο οποίο θα αναζητήσουμε την απάντηση στο παρόν κείμενο.

Λέξεις κλειδιά: Αφρικανοί μετανάστες, Ελλάδα, κινητικότητα, διεθνικότητα, ένταξη.

Introduction

A number of studies have approached migrants as a labour force that moves in accordance with economic rationales, with migrant employment shaped by structural forces and the migrants themselves having only a limited impact (Silvey and Lawson 1999). On the other hand, the 'new mobilities' literature emphasizes that migration movements are not linear processes in which a person moves from one country / region to another, i.e. the sending country and the receiving country, but instead involves a complex process that connects a plethora of movements in space and time. The concept of transnationalism has been put forward to bridge the various movements of migrants by highlighting the multiplicity of relationships developed by migrants, relationships that transcends geographical, cultural and political boundaries, and integrating migrants into country of origin and destination simultaneously (Schuster 2005, Schapendonk and Steel 2014).

Africa lies at the heart of migration and mobility discourses (Bliger and Kraler 2005). Many scholars have emphasized the complexity and multi - directionality of African migration by analyzing the various routes for sub-Saharan migrants to reach Europe (de Haas 2006; de Haas 2007; Schapendonk and van Moppes 2007). When these routes are solely examined they confirm that migration is a continuous step by step process. However, the various aspects of geographical movement(s) between places is rather obfuscated.

The main objective of the present paper is to map out the migration process of African immigrants as well as to investigate the various dimensions of their social and geographical trajectories in the country. Looking at seven Sub-Saharan African nationalities, we depict their 'journey' to Greece, their expectations, their routes until the final destination and their integration prospects into Greek society.

The paper is divided into four sections: the first discusses the African immigration to Europe and Greece by analyzing the available statistical data; the second, presents the socioeconomic characteristics of African immigrants in Greece based on the analysis from the survey data; the third section highlights the complexity of African migration towards Greece and depicts the various facets of geographical mobility till they reach Europe. The final section contains some major points concerning African migrants' mobility dynamics and integration prospects.

Immigration flows from Africa to Greece and Europe

Especially during the last decade or so African migration has risen to the top of political agenda for the majority of the European countries. Due to the enlargement of 'African diasporas', the management of migration flows between Africa and EU emerges as key issue. Currently, foreign citizens from Africa account for nearly 5 million people and they represent the second largest group of non-EU citizens in Europe (Eurostat online data).

It was estimated that migration from sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) amounts to 3.5 and 8 million people in Europe and is mainly concentrated in seven countries: Belgium, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom. African migrants on route to Europe travel through the Canary Isles, the Spanish areas of Melilla and Ceuta or through Malta and the Italian islands of Pantelleria, Lampedusa and Sicily in the Mediterranean (de Haas 2007). More recently, the number of irregular African migrants increased from 19,000 people in 2006 to 37,000

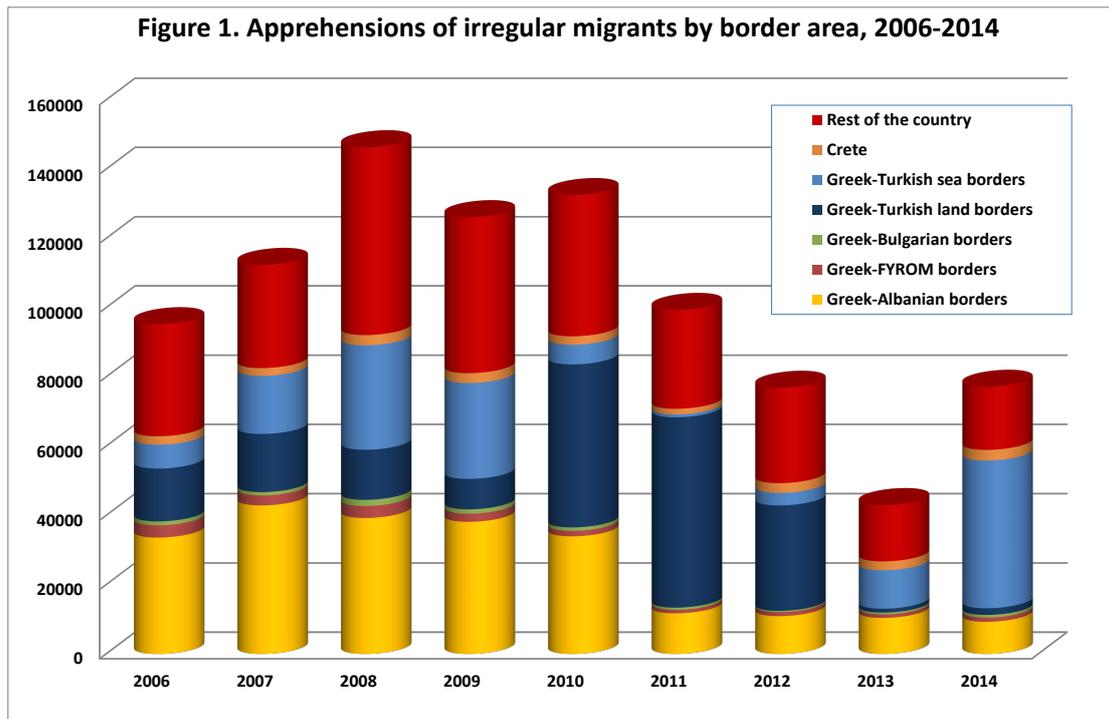
people two years later (Bredeloup and Pliez 2011).

FRONTEX's report stress that since 2011 the number of irregular African migrants increased tremendously in the Central Mediterranean due to the overturn of migration control mechanisms caused by "Arab spring". The apprehensions at the Central Mediterranean increased 13 times (reaching 64,000 crossings) and accounted for 46% of total apprehensions in the EU-27. In 2011, it was reported that at least 1,500 people are known to have lost their lives attempting to cross the Mediterranean (Strik 2012: 3) while in 2014 this figure increased to 3,072 people (Brian and Laczko 2014: 20).

During the 1990s Greece transformed gradually from a country of emigration to a destination country. The collapse of the Central and Eastern European regimes in 1989, Greece's geographic location as eastern gateway to the EU and the rapid economic change since the country's accession to the EU in 1981 shaped new migration patterns and categories often overlapping (Papadopoulos 2011). Between 1991 and 2001 the number of foreign population increased from 167,276 foreigners to 797,091 or 7.3 percent of total population (Population Census). Currently, the foreign population in Greece amounts to 911,929 people of which over half are Albanians (53 percent), followed by Bulgarians (8 percent), Romanians (5 percent) and Pakistanis (4 percent). However recently, geographical proximity with sending countries (e.g. Albania, Bulgaria) is replaced by geographic accessibility for shaping migration patterns in Greece. This transition is related to the pressure exerted by FRONTEX missions on the West and Central Mediterranean sea border as well as the bilateral agreements signed between the South European and the North African countries led to changing directions of irregular migrant flows to Greece (Bredeloup and Pliez 2011). The attempt of the EU to externalize its migration policy beyond its south Mediterranean Sea borders led to the shift of migration flows to the east Mediterranean, where borders have higher porosity due to the policies adopted by Turkey.

On the basis of the apprehensions data of irregular migrants in Greece, the composition of the migrant flows by border gate has significantly changed in the period 2010-2014. The arrests at the Albanian border have gradually diminished to about 12 percent up to 2011. Then the Turkish land border became the main border gate to the country for the period 2010-2012, which then lost its significance due to the building of a security fence along the Evros river. By 2011, over 55 percent of apprehensions have taken place at the Evros river area, while five years earlier only 15 percent of total apprehensions took place at this entry point. By 2014, nevertheless, the irregular crossings via the land border virtually stopped and the apprehensions at the sea border rose again surpassing 55 percent of total apprehensions (Figure 1).

Africans despite their long presence in the country have been a neglected target group in Greek migration research. African immigration in Greece dates in the 1980s and was mainly related with religious affinities (e.g. Ethiopia), Greek Orthodox Church missions (e.g. Kenya), the existence of Greek 'diaspora' (e.g. Eritrea) and the inflow of people for education purposes (e.g. Nigeria, Congo) or for employment through bilateral agreements (e.g. Egypt), however their number remained small. Only recently there have been significant flows of irregular migrants from all African regions. Except from Somalia, Eritrea, Congo and Sudan which face different kinds of hardships in recent years, an increasing number of migrants move from West Africa to Greece. Rising numbers of migrants from Ivory Coast, Senegal, Nigeria, Ghana, Guinea, Cameroon and Sierra Leone are far off their traditional migration routes congruent with their former colonial past.



Source: Greek Ministry for the protection of the citizen, 2006-2014.

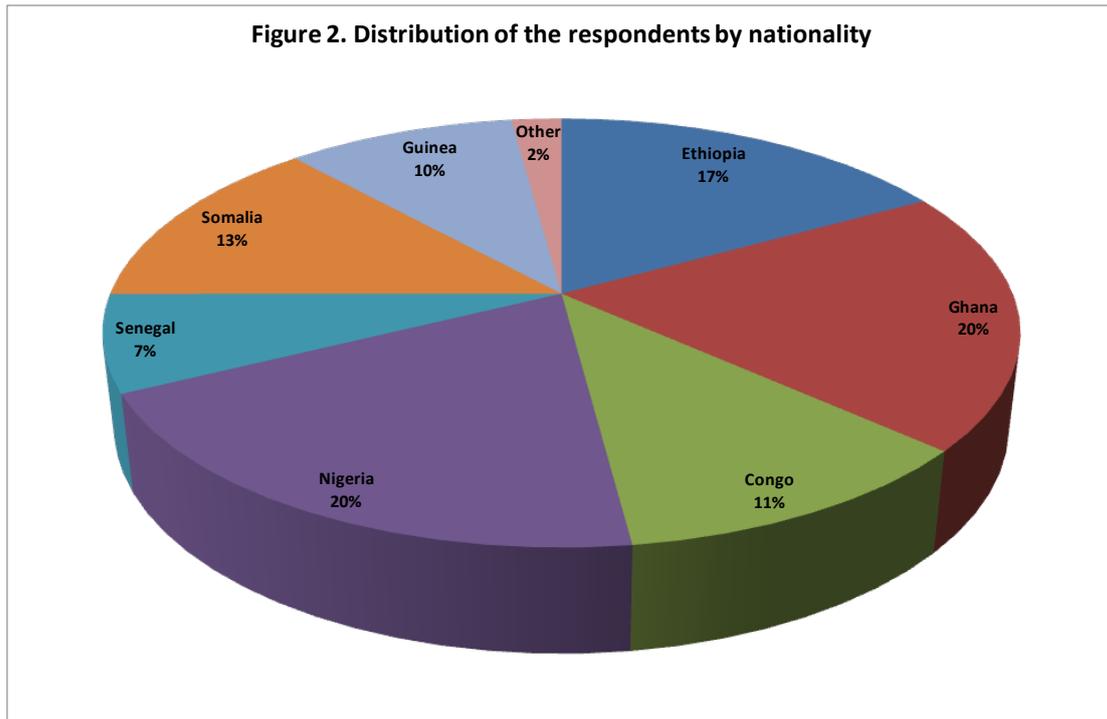
Based on the 2001 census, the SSA migrants amounted to 7,000 people. Additionally by 2010, Africans represented 3.4 percent of valid residence permits, while nearly 5,000 people from SSA countries had valid residence permits (1 percent of total migrants). Over half of them are men, while one tenth are under 18 years of age. The majority of men and women are concentrated in the age categories 26-45. Moreover, more than three quarters of this population is concentrated in the city of Athens.

Research findings on African migrants in Greece

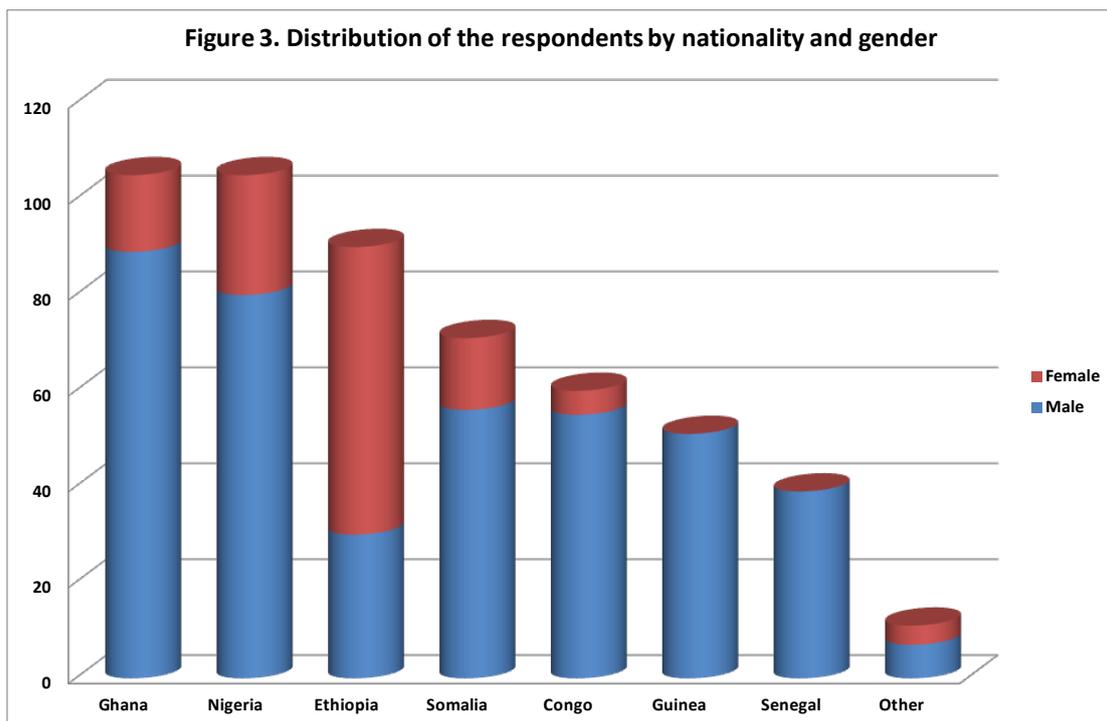
The data presented in this paper have been collected during an empirical research which was carried out in the Athens area during the period June-July 2011. In total 532 semi-structured questionnaires were completed using face to face interviews. Aiming at interviewing both migrants with regular and irregular legal status; the snowball sampling was followed by using multiple contacts and different types of places and networks (e.g. migrant associations, NGOs, acquaintances, friends, relatives, public places, migrant's shops etc.). Seven SSA nationalities were selected; representing the more populous SSA nationalities living in Greece and illustrating older and more recent migration histories: Nigeria, Ethiopia, Ghana, Somalia, Congo (former Zaire), Senegal and Guinea (Figure 2).

In addition to the quantitative research, over fifty qualitative interviews were conducted during 2011-2013 with African immigrants, several state institutions and civil society. Those interviews shed light to migrants' experiences during the migration journey and their aspirations and integration prospects into receiving society.

The majority of respondents are males (76 percent) and one quarter is female (24 percent). Gender distribution differs between the seven nationalities. Women represent the two thirds of Ethiopian respondents, one quarter of Nigerians, one fifth of the Somalis, one sixth of the Ghanaians and one tenth of the Congolese (Figure 3).



Source: Empirical research data gathered June-July 2011.

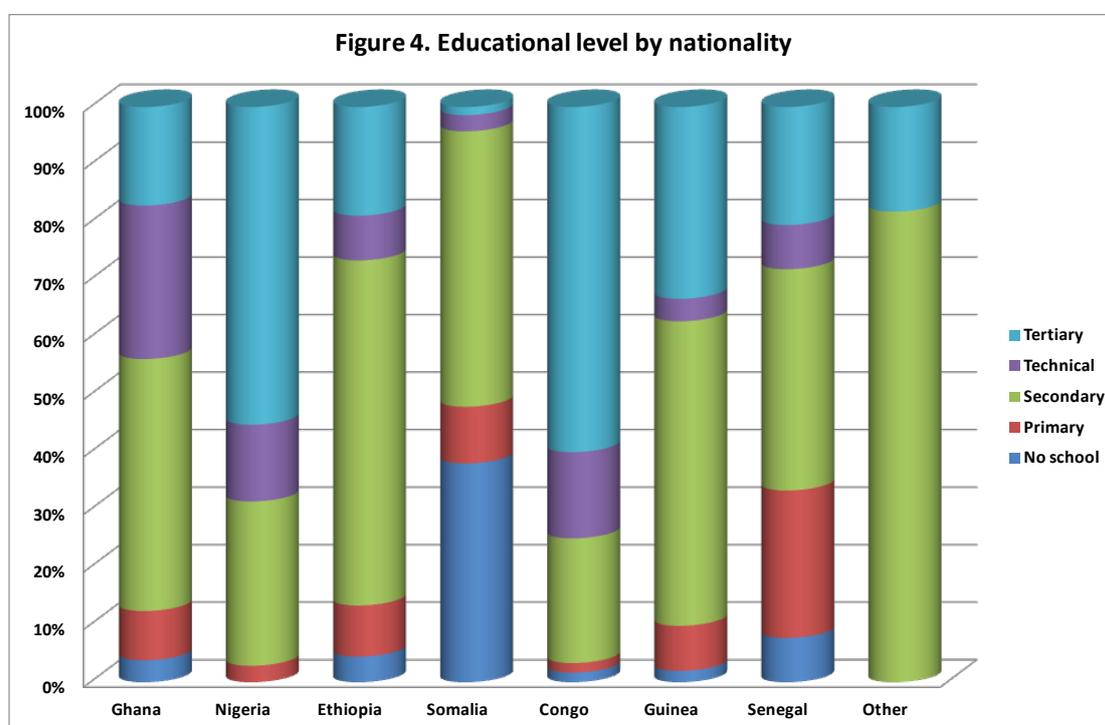


Source: Empirical research data gathered June-July 2011.

Regarding the age of African migrants, they are usually in their 30s (average age 33.7 years - median 32 years old), although there are significant gender and nationality differences. Specifically, one fifth of the respondents is younger than 25 years old, one fifth belongs to the age bracket from 26 to 30 years old, 23 percent are from 31 to 35 years old, one fourth belongs to the age bracket from 36 to 45 years old and a little over one tenth is over 46 years old. On average women are older than men

(average age 35.5 years old against 33.2 years old; median 34 years old against 32 years old).

Contrary to the popular view in which African migrants in their majority are uneducated and unskilled, a large share of the respondents (29 percent) has attained tertiary education, in most cases in their sending countries. Additionally, a remarkable proportion of the respondents - among those with tertiary education - have proceeded to postgraduate studies (4 percent). While it is worth mentioning that a significant proportion has pursued technical education (12 percent). Including also those respondents who are currently university students (in Greek Universities), we realize then that four out of ten respondents (42 percent) have obtained post-secondary education, a fact which classifies sub-Saharan African migrants, on average, among the most educated migrants in the country. As shown in figure 4, only a small share of the respondents has primary education (8 percent) or no education (8 percent). This is mainly due to the Somalis, who have very low education and the Senegalese who have followed only religious primary schools.



Source: Empirical research data gathered June-July 2011.

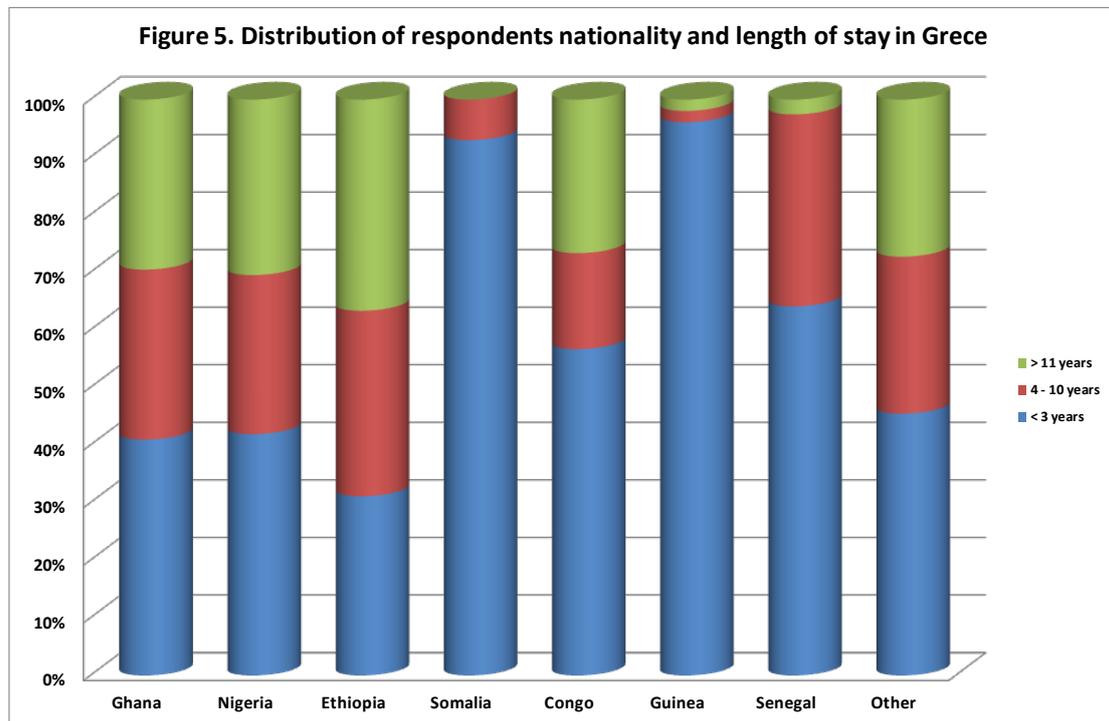
Moreover, males are on average better educated than females. Males with tertiary education are twice as many as females with tertiary education (34 percent against 17 percent), whereas females with no education are twice as many as males with no education (12 percent against 6 percent). Nearly 10 percent of the respondents have received a university degree in Greece, while they have finished their secondary education in their country.

In terms of family situation the sample is divided equally between unmarried and married respondents (44 percent respectively), 8 percent are divorced or separated and just over 5 percent they have not been married but they have children. Of interest is that one sixth of married respondents are married with Greek or EU citizens. The majority of female respondents are married (47 percent), while the figure for male respondents drops to 43 percent. Furthermore, for the majority of respondents their family lives in the country of origin, just over one third live with his/her family in

Greece. For the remaining 2/3 their family is divided between the country of origin and/or other countries and Greece.

Taking into account the length of residence in Greece we can distinguish two basic groups of African nationalities (Figure 5). One group consists mainly of nationalities with significant proportion of migrants who arrived relatively early in Greece (i.e. 7-10 years on average). This first group includes many Ethiopians, Nigerians, Ghanaians and Congolese. The second group consists of these nationalities that came recently to Greece (i.e. less than 3 years on average). This second group includes the vast majority of Guineans, the Senegalese and the Somalis. Moreover, there is a significant difference among males and females due to the fact that the large majority of the newcomer nationalities are males. Moreover, those who live for many years in Greece tend to be married, while those who came recently are in their majority unmarried.

In terms of labor market participation the majority were unemployed during the time of the survey. In particular, more than half of the respondents (52 percent) did not work, some do not belong to the active force (5 percent), while the rest (43 percent) were employed. The majority of the respondents (61 percent) has worked sometime during their residence in Greece, while the rest 39 percent has never worked in Greece. Among those who never worked, the vast majority (88 percent) are men who arrived recently in the country and failed or did not even attempt to find employment. As a result, 45 percent of men and 20 percent of women have never worked in Greece.



Source: Empirical research data gathered June-July 2011.

The main nationalities of those who have never worked in Greece are the Somalis (92 percent), the Guineans (86 percent) and the Congolese (57 percent). The majority of those who haven't found employment in Greece are these who arrived to Greece two to three years before the survey took place (i.e. by 2008 or 2009) (78 percent). At the other end of the spectrum, all Ethiopians and Senegalese have worked

in Greece. In the middle of the spectrum, one may find the Nigerians and Ghanaians of which only 25 percent have never worked in Greece.

African migrants' journey to Greece

This section focuses on SSA migrant's journey to Greece by analyzing their motivations, their aspirations and their future plans upon arrival.

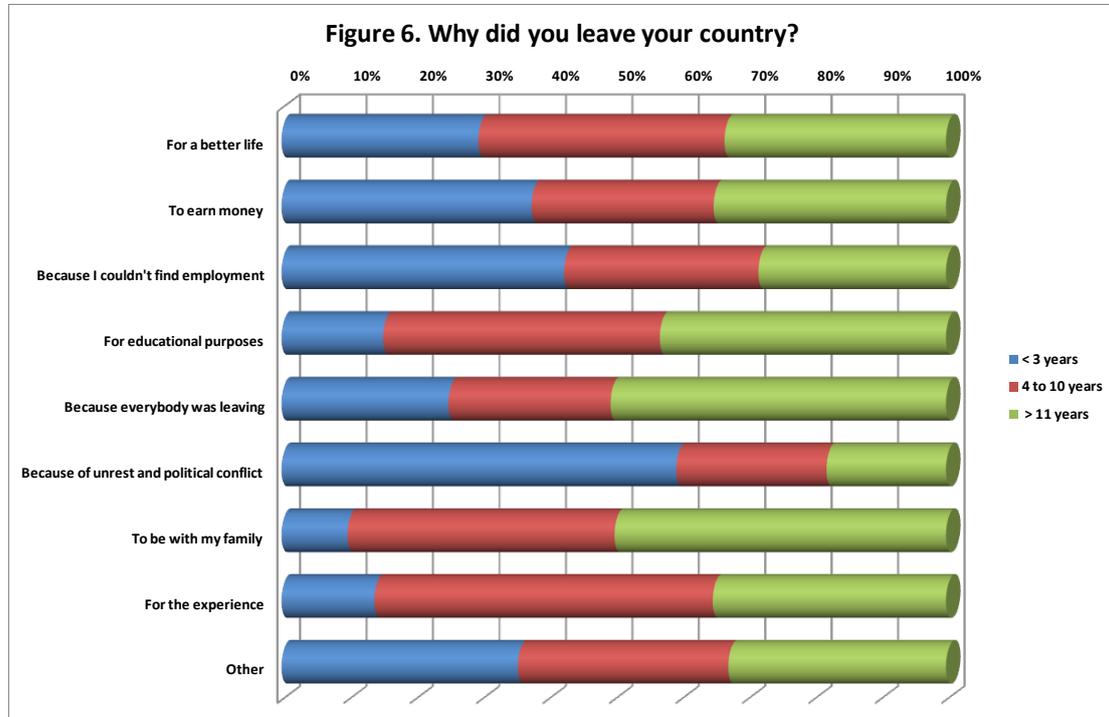
Contrary to the public discourse in which unemployment is the driving force for Sub-Saharan Africans to migrate, unemployment was not the prime reason for African migrants. Actually, the vast majority of the respondents were employed before leaving their country of origin, one fourth were students, less than one tenth were unemployed, and less than 5 percent were housewives. The analysis of the former position in employment by nationality shows that the majority of Senegalese, Ghanaians and Nigerians were employed (92 percent, 70 percent and 67 percent respectively), a relative high proportion of Somalis (20 percent) were unemployed, while a significant proportion of Guineas were students. Moreover, among those who were employed before leaving their country, nearly half (47 percent) had good jobs in the public or the private sector.

Additionally, about half of the respondents originate from families whose father's occupation is middle or higher status, a fact which is congruent with the wider impression that many well educated African migrants were born in middle or higher status social strata and have left their countries because of their high aspirations for a better way of life in Europe. These findings are in line with the arguments posed by the international literature that the more skilled, more educated and higher status Africans tend to have higher migration rates, while their movement may have severe consequences for their sending countries due to the effective brain drain (Asiegbu 2009, Ratha et al. 2011).

One responder stressed during the interviews "*Because those who are the poorest and are truly hungry cannot come*" (interview 1a). However, it is not only the middle and higher status that migrate to Europe, but also those well-educated sub-Saharan Africans who have given up hope due to the harsh conditions in their own countries (e.g. Congo).

The question of "why do people migrate" lies at the heart of migration research. There are various migration theories trying to explain the motivations and the driving mechanisms of migration. Most theories acknowledge that there are several driving forces in the migration decision such as the individual characteristics, the role of the family and of migration networks (see among others Massey *et al.* 1993; Faist 1997; Haug 2008). Those characteristics interplay with the political environment in the countries of origin and destination. That being said, the respondents in our sample designate as basic reason for leaving their country of origin the social and political environment as well as their aspirations for a better life. Specifically, almost 60 percent referred to the social and political conflicts at their country, while the "search for a better life" (53 percent) and the urge "to earn money" (31 percent) followed in the ranking. Nearly one fifth left for educational purposes, i.e. to study in Greece. Unemployment as a reason for emigrating was mentioned by merely one sixth of the respondents. Those figures differ between the SSA nationalities. For the Ethiopians, the Ghanaians, the Nigerians and the Senegalese the 'search for a better life' was one of the basic reasons for leaving their country. The 'unemployment' was primary stressed by the Senegalese and Ethiopians, while, the Congolese, the Ethiopians, and the Nigerians reported educational purposes as a

significant reason. Finally, the Somalis, the Guineans and the Congolese particularly stressed the political unrest and the social conflicts. When taking into consideration the length of stay in Greece, we observe that the more recent flows left more frequently due to social and political conflicts in their country in contrast to the earlier flows which usually are pursuing better conditions of life (Figure 6).



Source: Empirical research data gathered June-July 2011.

The following quote by a Senegalese: "*I was sitting with my friends and the one says 'I will go in a few years in America, the other said I will go in Italy, I said no I won't go I will stay here in Senegal and now ... I am out [i.e. abroad], and everybody else are there [in Senegal]'*" (Interview Senegalese, early 30s) indicates that migrants discuss their 'migration dreams' with their friends and family but their migration decision is not spontaneous at all; they rely on the support of their social environment. Indeed 40 percent of the respondents planned the migration journey for a long time, while 30 percent answered that it was a "decision of the moment". Those migrants who fled their country for political reasons or because of war mainly stress the latter.

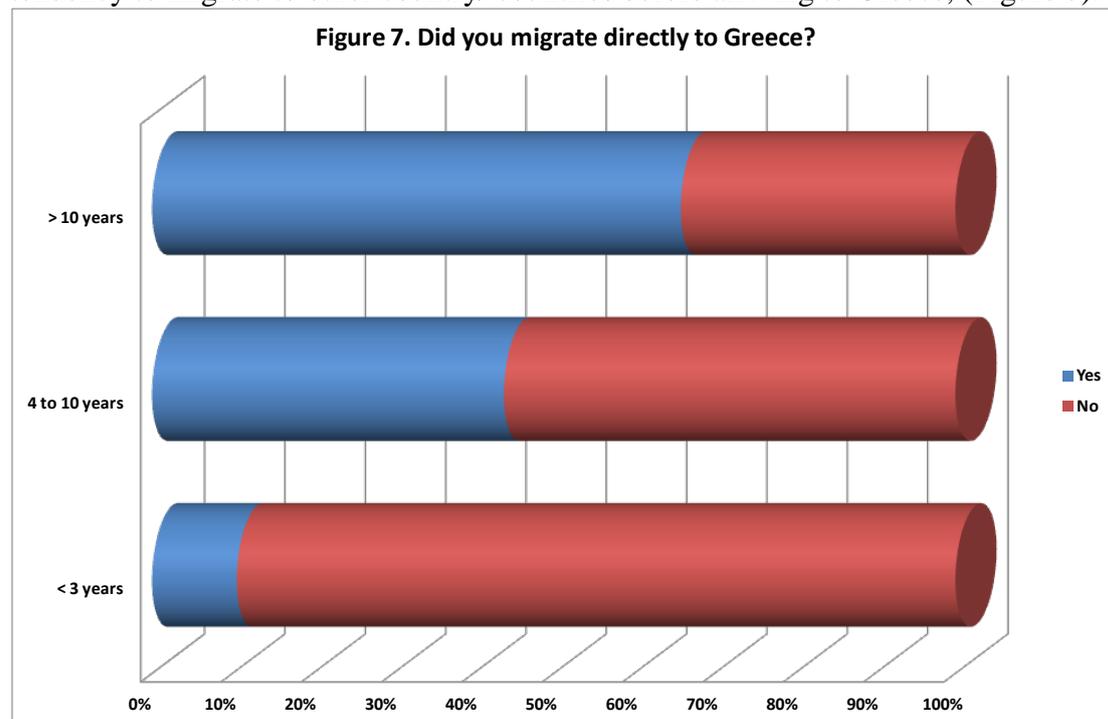
In addition, the majority of respondents highlighted the role of the family in the migration decision process either from the point of view of the family in the country of origin or as a decision to reunify their family in Greece or in EU. For a significant proportion of the respondents (36 percent), the family was involved in the migration decision. The role of family networks and support from the social environment are also important. A significant number of migrants just followed a member of his/her family to Greece and a considerable number of the respondents were encouraged to migrate by his/her friends. These figures are important when we examine the migration decision for males, whereas female migrants more often say that they followed their husbands to Greece.

When the respondents were asked how many members of their family have emigrated two fifths answered that no one from their family has emigrated, one quarter said that some members of the family have emigrated, one fifth that 'a few

members' of their family have migrated and rest that 'many members' of their family have migrated. Taking into account the country of origin, a significant proportion of migrants from Senegal (54 percent), Somalia (48 percent), Nigeria (43 percent) and Ethiopia (43 percent) stress that no family member have migrated. At the other end of the spectrum, 35 percent of the Congolese and 20 percent of Ghanaians answered that many member of their family have migrated.

The vast majority of the respondents emigrated alone from their country, one seventh with friends or compatriots and one tenth with his/her family.

The relevant literature emphasizes that migration is hardly a simplified physical movement from one place to another (King and Skeldon 2010, Cohen and Sirkeci 2011, Schapendonk and Steel 2014). Almost 70 percent of the respondents migrated to other country/ countries prior arriving to Greece. More precisely, with the exception of half the respondents from Ethiopia who arrived directly from Ethiopia to Greece, the majority of Somalis (99 percent), Guineans (98 percent), Senegalese (90 percent), Ghanaians (68 percent), Congolese (62 percent) and Nigerians (57 percent) migrated to other countries during their journey to Greece. Moreover, those migrants who came more recently (i.e. during the last 2-3 years) in the country, when they are compared to earlier migration flows, are considered as 'more mobile' due to their tendency to migrate to other country/ countries before arriving to Greece, (Figure 7).



Source: Empirical research data gathered June-July 2011.

The increased mobility of current migrant flows may be seen as a way of them adapting to the changing geopolitical and economic environment against the legal constraints/ barriers that migrants face during their migratory journey in order to reach a destination country.

As for planning their movement, only 7 percent of the respondents didn't have a specific destination in their mind. In fact, the majority of respondents had a destination goal during the pre-departure phase of their migratory journey. While Greece was the destination country for the 46 percent of the respondents, roughly the same percentage was planning to migrate to another - mainly EU - country. Within the latter group the majority plans included the Western European (i.e. France, Germany, UK etc) or Scandinavian countries (i.e. Norway, Sweden etc.), a significant

proportion aimed to migrate to 'any EU country', while a small number aimed at other southern European countries (i.e. Italy and Spain) and or at non-European countries (e.g. US, Canada, Australia, Middle East).

Disaggregating by nationality of the responder, nearly two thirds of Ethiopians considered Greece as their destination country, whereas the figure drops to 57 percent of Nigerians, 51 percent of Congolese and 47 of Ghanaians. On the other hand, the majority of Somali (45 percent) and nearly two fifth of Guineans aimed at migrating to Western European (mainly France and Belgium), while one quarter of the Senegalese had as their destination a Western European or Scandinavian country and another quarter a southern European country. These figures may echo the role of the already established migrant ethnic communities in earlier stages of the migration process - either referring to the prior colonial historical ties or to the effect of ethnic networks. For instance, there are nearly 50,000 Senegalese in Italy, which is one of the most populous nationalities of African migrants (Riccio, 2008).

Analyzing and categorizing the African migration routes is a rather challenging task as these routes may differentiate between countries of origin, socioeconomic characteristics and time periods. Rather than describing each 'route' towards Europe by country of origin; this section restricts itself to highlight the multiplicity and complexity of trajectories that SSA migrant follow till they reach the European shore. This complexity is reinforced when adding the time spent in each country till they arrived in Greece. Indeed, some SSA migrated in just one country for a long or short time before arriving to Greece; while others migrated into several countries. Following these trajectories the Middle East countries (i.e. Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, Saudi Arabia and Turkey) and North Africa countries (i.e. Libya and Egypt) are among the initial destinations. It became evident from the fieldwork that for a number of SSA migrants, some of these countries were considered as transit countries; where migrants could take some rest in their long migratory journey and could also plan their next movement. Other countries are presented more like 'stepping stones'; where migrants work, collect information and money so they can 'fund' their migration journey.

In more detail, the following excerpts unveil the complexity of their migrant journey towards/through Greece:

"I was in Senegal. With visa I took the plane till Turkey. From there I crossed the borders with boat" (Male mid 30s, Senegalese)

"I couldn't find a way to come to Europe. With student visa from the Turkish embassy in Ghana I arrived in Istanbul and then after a month I took the bus and get to Greece. The visa was only for Turkey but I was lucky and they didn't stop me. In Athens I got pink card (asylum claim)" (Male 30s, Ghanaian)

"From Somalia I went to Ethiopia for a year. Then I went to Egypt where I stayed seven years. From Egypt I went to Syria for six months and then to Turkey for a year and a half. Then I came to Greece" (Male, Somalian 40s)

Those who originate from West African Countries used to pass through northern Africa (i.e. Libya or Algeria) to their way to Europe.

During this journey SSA migrants tend to move not only from country to country but between various legal (or irregular) statuses. In fact, they might have a work permit and to arrive directly to their 'destination' country continuing their journey with a tourist visa to another country and then by "just passing the borders" to

arrive in Greece. In other words, one part of the journey may be 'legal', while another part irregular; passing through one legal status to another as they continue their journey shifting from various statuses of legality (Schuster 2005). When examining the legal documents migrants had to come to Greece, it is evident that the SSA who came to Greece more recently crossed the borders illegally (Table 1).

Table 1. Legal Documents when entering to Greece (Source: Empirical data collected June-July 2011)

	< 3 years	4 to 10 years	Over 11 years	Total
Work/ residence permit	0.70%	1.70%	4.30%	1.70%
Tourist visa	8.20%	24.00%	53.80%	21.80%
Student visa	3.10%	14.00%	23.90%	10.20%
With family reunion	0.70%	5.00%	3.40%	2.30%
I just crossed the border	86.70%	50.40%	12.00%	62.00%
Other	0.70%	5.00%	2.60%	2.10%
Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
N=	294	121	117	532

Specifically, 87 percent of those who came to Greece within the last three years, 50 percent among those who have stayed in the country between four and ten years, but only 12 percent of those who are more than eleven years in the country crossed the borders illegally. Little over one fifth came using a tourist visa and one tenth with a student visa. Depending on the route that the migrant follows there are different costs (which varies from 750 to many thousands of euro) for their migration journey.

Finally, the migratory journey itself may last from approximately one month up to 17.5 years. Nearly one third of the respondents arrived directly to Greece from their country of origin; over a quarter followed a short time route through other countries (less than one month) before arriving to Greece; less than one quarter extended their stay in other countries to a period of a year; and the remaining one tenth spent in other countries over a year before arriving to Greece. Therefore, the duration of the migratory journey shows that there are various migrant groups, which should not be aggregated according to their nationality but they could rather be utilized to discern the dynamics of migrant integration processes and strategies in host country.

Conclusions

Migration flows to Greece have changed drastically, as well as the volume of migrants and the mixture of nationalities within the African migrant flows to Greece. Many sub-Saharan migrant communities consist of a mixture of "old" and "newcomer" migrants (e.g. Congolese, Nigerians, Ghanaians, Ethiopians), while others consist mainly of newcomer migrants (e.g. Guineans, Somali, Senegalese).

There is a great deal of misconceptions about Sub-Saharan Africans migrants in Greece, while their specific socio-economic characteristics are rarely analyzed in detail. Many African migrants have attained high educational level, but their educational qualifications are not taken into consideration for participating in the labour market.

There are a number of reasons why Sub-Saharan Africans migrate; social and political unrest and their aspirations for a better life in EU countries are among the basic driving forces while unemployment is stressed mainly by Senegalese and Ethiopians. The migration decision is a 'family matter' meaning that the family and their social environment play a crucial role not only in the decision process but also in the realization of their migration journey.

The empirical research shows that SSA migrants follow a number of multidirectional trajectories in order to reach their destination country. The recent flows appear to be more 'mobile' as they tend to migrate or sojourn from country to country when they are compared to earlier flows. This pattern of mobility is an indication of the changing geopolitical environment in Northern Africa and Middle East (de Haas 2006), and of the tightening migration policies and controls by EU.

By analyzing the time period that migrants spent in other countries in the course of their migratory journey we may come up with a number of migrant groups, which should not be aggregated by nationality, and therefore discern the dynamics of migrant integration processes and strategies in Greece.

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