

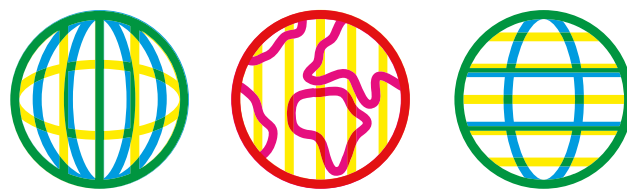
Cross Talk stories

Michel Debruyne ed.



opportunities

for a fair narrative on migration



opportunities

for a fair narrative on migration

Please quote this report as: Cross Talk Stories, D6.1. H2020 Opportunities project



Horizon 2020
European Union Funding
for Research & Innovation

DISCLAIMER This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research & Innovation program under Grant Agreement no. 101004945. The information in this deliverable reflects only the authors' views and the European Union is not liable for any use that may be made of the information contained therein.

DISSEMINATION LEVEL: Public

Date: 14th of February 2025

Project: OPPORTUNITIES- Crises as Opportunities: towards a Level Telling Field on Migration and a New Narrative of Successful Integration

GA: 101004945

Call: H2020-SC6-MIGRATION-2020

Type of action: RIA



opportunities
for a fair narrative on migration

Cross Talk stories

18 life stories from Migrants

Work Package 6 – Deliverable D.6.2

Submission date: 18th of February 2025

Lead Beneficiary: BEWEGING

Authors: Michel Debruyne and focus group participants of 9 countries

Content

1. Introduction.....	5
2. The Cross Talks, an introduction	7
2.1 <i>How the Level Telling Field principles are translated into the Cross Talk methodology</i>	7
2. The assessment of the Cross Talks pilots	9
2.1.1 The nine pilots	9
2.1.2 What we learned.....	10
2.1.3 Afterthoughts	12
3. The stories	14
3.1 <i>Two stories from Austria</i>	14
3.1.1 The story of a pregnant woman	14
3.1.2 The story of a journalist	15
3.2 <i>Two stories from Belgium</i>	16
3.2.1 The story of Jovial.....	16
3.2.2 The story of Rihab	18
3.3 <i>Two stories from Ghana</i>	20
3.3.1 The story of Sampa.....	20
3.3.2 The story of Liberia.....	22
3.4 <i>Two stories from France</i>	24
3.4.1 The story of Hawa	24
3.4.2 The story of Goudiaby	26
3.5 <i>Two stories from Italy</i>	28
3.5.1 The story of Milan	28
3.5.2 The story of Milan-2	30
3.6 <i>Two stories from Mauretania</i>	32
3.6.1 The story of Eduard	32
3.6.2 The story of Mariam	33
3.7 <i>Two stories from Portugal</i>	35
3.7.1 The story of an Angolan immigrant.....	35
3.7.2 The story of an immigrant from Guinea-Bissau	35
3.8 <i>Two stories from Romania</i>	36
3.8.1 The story of a student	36
3.8.2 The story of young boy.....	37
3.9 <i>Two stories from Senegal</i>	38
3.9.1 The story of a candidate to migrate	38
3.9.2 The story of a returning migrant	39

1. Introduction

To hear the voices of migrants as they narrate their stories of migration has been one of the most important objectives of the Opportunities project¹. Voices that have in general been absent from media, policy discussions and official policy making on migration around the world. In all these forums, they talk about - or even for - rather than with migrants, giving them a passive role and tends to recycle existing narrative patterns and templates².

How can we unlock the voices of migrants and create the space to hear them? How can their voices and interests be made central to policy debate, the policy-making process and policy implementation? In OPPORTUNITIES, we think the telling and reading and sharing of stories -visually too, not just textually, storytelling has many modalities- gives everyone an equal place. We call this creating a “Level Telling Field” to hear the voices of migrants. So Opportunities thus, from the beginning, gives a central place to migrants, and their stories, and gives them a fora to bring their stories. These fora are the Cross Talk events³.

During the Cross Talk events we create an encounter with migrants, stakeholders working on migration related issues and members of the public in different participating countries. Such storytelling projects organized by NGOs in Romania, Italy, Austria, Belgium, France, Portugal, Ghana, Senegal, and Mauritania provide the basis for local encounters between migrants, citizens, and stakeholders to engage in practices of mutual story sharing, listening to each other, and allied storytelling. These so-called Cross-Talk events provide a platform for a fair conversation, making use of various forms of life stories, narrative positioning, and perspective taking.⁴

Before you get to the stories, we want to tell you a bit more about Cross Talks. After all, stories are the backbone of this method.

This introductory chapter gives you an insight into what the Cross Talk method is and what we learned from the 9 experiments. It is based on the evaluation of these 9 experiments. You can also find the summary of these evaluations on the OPPORTUNITIES website.

OPPORTUNITIES collects in this storybook some of the Cross Talk stories. In all the above countries OPPORTUNITIES conducted interviews, cocreated stories and hosted the events. We chose to present here two stories from each country. This gives a picture of the reasons, the obstacles, the doubts, the aspirations and expectations, the sense of belonging or not.

These anonymous stories sometimes say more than the many scientific reports. They go on to highlight the lack of legal pathways to Europe, the lack of recognition, the lack of opportunities to participate, ... At the same time, they stress their desire to be able to become part of the country, to be able to contribute.

We also present drawings. The Senegalese partner, GERM from Saint Louis Gaston Berger University, asked young people to draw migration: what does migration mean to them, and what are its causes? These drawings are stories in themselves.

¹ See www.opportunitiesproject.eu

² Gebauer, Carolin, and Roy Sommer (2022). Beyond Vicarious Storytelling: How Level Telling Fields Help Create a Fair Narrative on Migration. University of Wuppertal. p. 5

³ <https://www.opportunitiesproject.eu/resources/manual>

⁴ Gebauer, Carolin, and Roy Sommer (2022). p. 16



We thank all partners for their engagement in engaging with migrants, NGOs and stakeholders, but especially for giving migrants the floor and giving them a forum for their voices.



2. The Cross Talks, an introduction

This chapter aims to explore the possibilities of creating a Level Telling Field between people with a migration background and stakeholders. Stakeholders are people who, through their organisation or institute, can influence the coexistence with people with a migration background.

We call this the Cross Talk methodology.

In this article, we bring together the experiences of 9 pilots in 3 African and 6 European countries and make a number of recommendations based on these. In this article, we bring together the experiences of 9 pilots in 3 African and 6 European countries and make a number of recommendations based on these. The experiences of these pilots were evaluated by the partners of OPPORTUNITIES themselves by means of an extensive assessment. The assessment report on which this article is based can be found on the OPPORTUNITIES website.

First we will look at what the Level Telling Field entails, then we will delve deeper into the Cross Talk methodology and, based on the experiments, we give a number of recommendations. An afterthought concludes this chapter.

2.1 How the Level Telling Field principles are translated into the Cross Talk methodology

The Level Telling Field is, like the ‘level playing field’ in football, a set of principles. These principles can be translated into a process or a method. The LTF is therefore a ‘roadmap and mechanism for an open, constructive and productive debate - the cornerstone of a democratic, pluralistic, secular society. The goal is therefore a fair dialogue in which all perspectives or stories are addressed.

They can best be seen as commitments by all participants in a debate to adopt a shared set of principles, to agree on principles and rules, and to define processes and procedures for conducting debates and documenting results. OPPORTUNITIES has defined the basic principles of LTF: a) a commitment to a democratic worldview based on human rights and a paradigm for human development; b) adherence to generally accepted standards for evaluating assertions, opinions and arguments; and c) sincerity, i.e. a serious commitment to debate as a democratic means of opinion-forming and decision-making. LTF principles include vertical multi-perspectivity, an ethic of listening and the adoption of perspectives.

These basic values are crucial: they are democratic principles like the will to listen, the willingness to take on multiple starting points and perspectives, daring to step into someone's shoes. These ethical principles cannot be questioned. These basic values are discussed during the trust-building process and reiterated at the beginning of the Cross Talk event. The audience guarantees these basic values during the Cross Talk events. The audience therefore plays an important role: it holds the participants jointly responsible for helping to determine a good dialogue. In addition, the audience can be asked to help find keywords or to use suggestions to steer the conversation in the right direction.

An ethic of listening is a prerequisite for any form of fair dialogue. Cross Talk events create narrative scenarios that enable migrants and refugees to share their experiences, and encourage citizens and other stakeholders to listen by involving them in lectures. Cross Talk events ensure that different voices are heard and valued in the conversation, including and especially those of more vulnerable groups. In this respect, an ethics of listening implies an ‘image-other’ (instead of the ‘image-self’) perspective among the participants.



Participants in Cross Talk events who have no migration or refugee experience whatsoever (i.e. NGOs, citizens or other stakeholders) act out or retell testimonies of migration and refugee freedom in order to understand and perhaps even adopt the perspectives of migrants and refugees. This process of re-enactment creates common ground between the interpreter and the migrant or refugee, enabling an honest dialogue between the interpreter, the migrant and the audience.

What did you feel when you heard the stories? One word in English.

Humanity, Struggle, Empathy, Resilience, Hope and struggle, Dignity, Loneliness, Brawery, Uncertainty, Hope, Luck, Resilience, nothing, nest, Suffering, Motivated, Guilty, Scared, ce, semble, fear, pain, rien, empathy, connections. so who is building the barriers?, Opportunité et détermination, Oppression, Battle, Stressful, quilt, être, trust, White privilege, survival, human strenght, Solidarity, Quilt, Safe spaces, Rage, Attitude, Needs for empowerment, everyone has a story to share, privileged, Loneliness.

With the inventory of key words, you can now search for one (or more) common keyword(s). Together a couple of common key words are sought. On the bases of these key words a dialogue on how to live together. The dialogue starts with the question what is needed to overcome negative key words (struggle, angry, oppression, ...) or what is needed to build on positive key words (humanity, empathy, resilience).

In next figure the method is visualized into five steps: (1) building trust for confidential storytelling – (2) migrants tell their life stories (either in oral or written form); – (3) the migrants re-tell their stories, thus ‘re-living’ what has been told; (4) public re-enactment – migrants and stakeholders tell each other’s stories in front of a public audience; (5) dialogue, the public re-enactment of the stories leads to a fair conversation on migration.

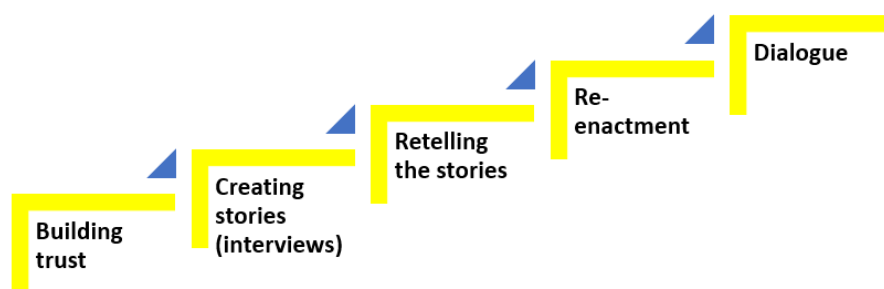


Figure 2 The ladder of the Cross Talk methodology

The five steps are called the Cross Talk methodology, the two last steps the Cross Talk.

2. The assessment of the Cross Talks pilots.

2.1.1 The nine pilots

The partners of the Opportunities consortium organised several meetings with individuals and organisations involved in immigrant communities. They followed the general guidelines of the Cross Talk methodology and adapted them according to their local social and cultural norms and their limited resources. Table one provides a snapshot of the countries and participants of the Cross Talk events.

The following table gives an overview of the pilots in the 9 participating countries.

Country		Participants			
		Immigrants	Stakeholders	Audience	Opportunities' Team
Africa	Ghana	I-6, II-7	I-5, II-6	I-3	2
	Mauritania	I-II 7	9	-	2
	Senegal	I-4, II-5, III-6	I, II, III-10	-	1
Europe	Austria	5	5	3	
	Belgium	5	5	10	2
	France	8	3	3	4
	Italy	5	4	I-8?	3
	Portugal	I-3, II-3	I-8, II-5	7	2
	Romania	3	5	1	3

Table 1 The Cross Talk events by country, participants and their gender balance, 2023

Notes:

I and II refer to the session number.

Figures in brackets, M and F, refer to the gender of participants, based on the available information.

Stakeholders include human right activists, academics, civil society organisations (NGO), government officials and representatives of international organisations.

In each local event the number of immigrants involved ranged from between six and 10 and those of stakeholders and audience (members of the public) between three and 12.

The pilots were organized between spring and august 2023.

2.1.2 What we learned.

2.1.2.1 *Creating trust is a necessity*

Trust is the foundation, this is true not only for the participants but also for the stakeholders. Both must have trust in the method but also in the facilitators and researchers.

In the description of the method we put a lot of emphasis on building trust. After all, participants have to cooperate for a long time, they have to tell and use their life stories, aspirations and expectations in a narrative, and they have to dare to engage in dialogue.

The experiments used several inputs for this purpose: working with NGOs that already work with migrants, with cultural mediators and experienced facilitators, in addition to creating a welcoming atmosphere. The attitude is listening, never judging, just respecting. We take them as they are, people with expectations. Even if participants drop out partially, there must be respect for this decision. This creates a working together on an equal footing. Stakeholders must also trust the method: after all, they need to get beyond their, mostly, institutional position. After all, the dialogue sessions are not about official positions, but about how can we live and work together for a common future. This did not always succeed in the experiments; after all, it is and remains difficult for those in charge of services and governments to go beyond their official position. Therefore, investing in trust is needed. One of the ways is to ensure anonymity. This applies not only to the interviews and stories, but also to the dialogue session. The dialogue sessions were mostly private, with a limited and selected audience. Trust is the basis for a successful Cross Talk: taking time and space for this is necessary.

2.1.2.2 *Preparing for a CT takes time.*

The application of Cross Talk can never be short. There are several reasons for this. The first two steps take up a lot of space: we already mentioned the need to build a relationship of trust; the interviews and their processing must be able to be carried by the participants; and writing the stories requires a lot from the participants. The next steps can be faster, provided that the participants are ready. This is the most important reason: participants, because of language barriers, cultural barriers, education and possible negative experiences and traumas, are the “weakest” in a dialogue. In other words, if we bring them into a dialogue with stakeholders, they must be sufficiently strong in their positions.

Consequently, in some experiments, participants dropped out: the dialogue sessions and re-enactment were too challenging, too heavy for them. Confidence in oneself does not come overnight. In all experiments, therefore, investments were made in empowering migrants.

All this shows that a Cross Talk requires time, space and resources.

2.1.2.3 *Tailoring the Cross Talk*

The Cross Talk is a five-step framework. How these steps will be taken is not fixed, only the goal and the order. This provides many opportunities for the implementer to get creative with it. How trust is created, how interviews are conducted, how stories are written, how dialogue sessions are conducted, ..., all this is in the hands of the implementer.

This freedom should always lead to stronger participants, a good story, respect for dialogue and good dialogue: the interviews, the stories, the re-enactment of the stories by others, the search for common ground, and the dialogue, these are the foundations.

2.1.2.4 *Is collaboration necessary?*

The 9 experiments were based on collaboration with NGOs. In some countries, the implementers are also an NGO already working with persons with a migration background. Additional collaborations were also sought in these countries. Of course, collaborations were sought with cultural organizations or individuals for cultural translation. Few partners have this knowledge and practice in-house.

All collaborations began from the start and even before. NGOs are needed to reach the participants, gain and maintain trust, contacts with institutional parties, and also for the dissemination of the project.

NGOs can also help support the participants: social and psychological support, skills support, support in getting out into society, ...

Working together yielded a plus for all the experiments.

2.1.2.5 *Why is the re-enactment phase so important?*

The re-enactment is the foundation on which the dialogue is built. Without a well-executed re-enactment, an interesting dialogue is difficult.

The re-enactment consists of reading aloud a story of another person; the other person is either a stakeholder or a migrant. By reading someone else's story aloud, this story becomes a part of you: you are forced to step into the shoes of the other.

Almost all attendees at the experiments appreciated this moment: it was emotional, moving, shocking, ... "There were those who said that it was one thing to hear the story, but another one to read it." was one of the comments. Another comment was that this phase could last much longer.

The re-enactment is a phase. It lays the foundation for the search for common ground. And the common ground is then the starting point for dialogue.

2.1.2.6 *How to measure the empowerment of the participants?*

All experiments evaluated participants' participation. A list of possible indicators can be extracted from them:

- Active Participation: A key measure of empowerment is the degree of involvement of participants in project activities (information, participation, promotion, feedback, etc.). This includes their willingness to share personal experiences, contribute to storytelling and thematic discussions, and take responsibility for their role in co-creating stories.
- Self-confidence and voice: voicing their opinions and participating in group discussions; moving from initial hesitation to active engagement.
- Skills development: Participants' ability to acquire and apply new skills.
- Influence on the direction of the project: their input in shaping project activities reflects their growing influence and ability to guide discussions in ways consistent with their own experiences.



- Integration into the community: a proactive desire to become involved in broader societal structures. This shift from self-oriented to community-oriented actions indicates empowerment at the collective level.
- Advocacy and representation: a willingness to act as advocates for their experiences.

2.1.2.7 *Ethics of the project*

Any experiment needs a code of ethics, this is all the more important when vulnerable individuals are participating and facing stakeholders. Participants should come out of the project enriched and not damaged. The code of ethics was therefore discussed with the participants themselves, the NGOs who participated and with the stakeholders.

From these discussions, we learned that not only anonymity is important, but also that participants must be able to draw boundaries, that democratic values are necessary, and that trusted figures who can mediate are needed. All of this protects participants. This code of ethics was regularly brought up again; it is necessary to remind everyone of about it.

2.1.2.8 *Use creative methods*

From the experiments we learned that we need to explore more creative methods that are less rooted in the world of “scientific” workshop/teaching methods. Certainly less language-skilled individuals can be more involved this way, which can produce a more supported outcome.

2.1.2.9 *Communicate about the CT, not just through newsletters*

In several countries, one of the evaluations was to find communication channels to make the results of the CTs known to a wider audience so that the insights from the CTs would not be lost. Thus, a communication strategy is needed to disseminate the results achieved.

Within OPPORTUNITIES, each partner should disseminate at least a policy letter and a newsletter, in addition they were asked to produce a cultural product that can be used at other times. The partners were also asked to pay attention to the CT through their social media.

We introduced these cultural products for the sake of dissemination of the project on the one hand, how do we bring the experiments to a wider audience? and on the other hand in the interest of the project itself. After all, the participants participated for about 2 to 3 years, this is extremely long. The question, then, is how do they stay motivated to participate? The cultural translation of the project is therefore a way to keep them involved in the longer term, it also creates a good atmosphere among the participants and is also an important part in empowering them.

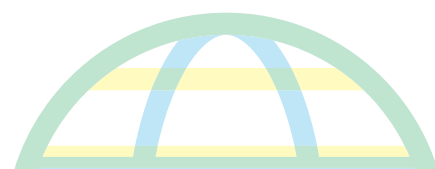
2.1.3 Afterthoughts

Cross Talk is an innovative method based on storytelling and re-enactment. It also follows the guidelines of the Participative Action Research theory. One of the goals is to empower vulnerable participants, not only through training and learning about their rights, but also by discussing the underlying causes of discrimination, oppression and racism with stakeholders.

Cross Talk is always a risky undertaking: it is risky for the vulnerable participants, for the stakeholders and for the organisers. The immigrants have to talk about their lives, their aspirations and the obstacles to these aspirations. This openness makes them more vulnerable. For the stakeholders, they must take a personal stance, away from their official position, and at the same time bring their knowledge of Cross Talk into their work. This is more than a challenge for them. Organisers can become activists and lose their role as a bridge between different cultures. Cross Talk is a promising method. It can also be used in situations of inequality. We have experimented with the help of refugees and people with a migration background, with the help of NGOs committed to a more equal world based on human rights, and with the help of stakeholders who dared to cross boundaries. We are more than grateful to them.

Now it's your turn. We hope you are curious. That is why we invite you to experiment with the Cross Talks. You can find more specific information on our website, where you will find the manual and several reports about the Cross Talks.

Good luck!



3. The stories

3.1 Two stories from Austria

3.1.1 The story of a pregnant woman

When I came to Austria, I was in my third month of pregnancy. Initially, we spent one and a half years in an asylum center, which was unfortunately very poor. When our little one was born, it was incredibly challenging – we had no hot water and were not allowed to boil water either. Our room was very cold. We complained, and we received a hefty penalty. We were moved to another asylum center, which was even worse. But thankfully, after one and a half years, we received a positive decision. Initially, I took a four-month language course and tried to connect with people in society. The language course was always in the evening. At that time, my little daughter was only two years old and needed my presence. We had no family or relatives here. Her voice was always in my head and thoughts during the course. Somehow, I was there, but my mind and soul were elsewhere.

What does “integration” mean? After receiving a positive decision, we took an integration course. We learned about Austria's history and some rules and laws – for example, that we should not be loud after ten in the evening, we must separate trash, and such things. I believe many people have done these things in their home countries as well. And we were not loud after ten in the evening. The course instructor always thought that we knew nothing. That we didn't know what residual waste, organic waste, or plastic were. We had somehow learned these things as a family. Instead, we could have learned many other important things – for example, what to do in a difficult situation. It would be wonderful if refugees had more opportunities for language courses, education, and such things. Many Austrians believe that refugees do not want to work, that they just sit here and do nothing.

I used to think that I didn't belong in this society. When I was in the city, on a bus, or a train, I always felt like I was too much. Many people stared at us. When my child cried, everyone looked, but when an Austrian child cried, no one said anything. In the supermarket, on the bus, on the train, many people said hurtful things to us. Once in a drugstore, I was talking to my daughter, and a woman said that we shouldn't speak any language other than German. I told her someone should speak in their mother tongue with the children. She said, “No, only German.” Such things ruin your day. That's why I always thought I was too much for this society. Once at the doctor's office, the secretary asked me, “Do you work?” I said, “No, I'm on maternity leave,” and she said, “Why aren't you working?” It was so uncomfortable. They believe we've never worked in our lives. I started working at five years old. When many people here were children, taking swimming or skiing courses, we were working. We've experienced a lot. Now I'm very proud of myself. In just four months, I took a language course and found a way to help my family. That's why I have a very nice plan for my future. So that we can have a normal life again, like other people. I'm not saying that many people or Austrians don't have problems in life. Life is difficult for everyone now, but the people here can speak German well. If there's a problem somewhere, they can simply talk and express their opinion. Sometimes we're somewhere, and I always wish I could speak German well. If you can't say something, others think you don't have an opinion. No, we're also human, we also have an opinion. We're always looking for a light so that we can feel better.

3.1.2 The story of a journalist

I grew up in a political family. We were always under pressure – my father and later on, me too. After I began my political activities, I fled from my home in Kurdistan to Iraq. I worked as a journalist there. I was still under pressure, and my family and I couldn't stay any longer. In Austria, we were in an asylum center. When our daughter was born, it was very difficult. There was no hot water in our center, and our room was very cold. We had to wrap our daughter in a thick jacket and socks while sleeping. Our supervisor always turned off the heating at around ten o'clock. After that time, we didn't have hot water anymore. We couldn't bathe our daughter; the bathwater was very cold. We secretly bought an electric heater so that we could bathe our daughter. Later, she took the heater away from us. We filed a complaint and also talked to the child protection services. After they came, our supervisor said that she didn't want us here anymore. We were transferred to another center, but it was even worse than before. I believe they were punishing us for complaining. The asylum center was very dirty. There were many people who drank alcohol and smoked hashish. It's very difficult for a family with a small child in such an environment. My wife often cried, and we had a lot of stress. So, we wrote a complaint again, but it didn't help, and we had to stay there. Thankfully, we received a positive asylum decision and were allowed to leave the asylum center and moved to Salzburg. We stayed with a lady for eleven months until we found an apartment. I registered with the AMS (Public Employment Service) and fought for a German course. "You need to work," they said. "How can I work with A1 level?" I asked. They replied that no German was needed for kitchen work or washing dishes. I studied political science and worked as a journalist for nearly ten years. Continuing as a journalist was challenging. To write reports, you really need to have a very good command of Standard German. So, I decided that it wasn't possible at the moment, and I urgently needed a job to support my family. Thus, I fought for vocational training. There were three options: kitchen, nursing, and cleaning. I chose nursing, completed the training, and now work as a nursing assistant.

During the training, many people helped me look in a positive direction. But I also experienced a lot of racist behavior during the training and in my internship. For twelve hours during one internship, no one talked to me except two or three people. They didn't show me anything or introduce me to my tasks. Normally, as an intern, you are introduced to the team during the handover, and one person from the team is responsible for you. But they didn't talk to me. Thankfully, there were two or three people there who really helped me. The others ignored me. I talked to my supervisor, and she said, "Unfortunately, that's how it is in some departments. You have to fight." It was really very difficult for me. On the other hand, I was under pressure to quickly get out of AMS and complete my training. In such an environment, that was very tough. We really want to work and build a future for ourselves and our children, but there are many obstacles.

We want to have contact with an Austrian family so that we can get to know each other's cultures and improve our language skills. But it's hard when parents at kindergarten or the playgroup see that you're from a different country. When we say "Hello, good morning," there are many who don't respond at all. They think that we came here, lie down, get support from social services, and Austrian people pay taxes for that. That's not true. All the migrants I know work, and nobody wants to lie down, stay at home, and get support from social services. Since I was fifteen, I have always worked. I'm not used to asking someone for support. This half a year was very hard for me. We had to provide the social services with a bank statement every month – what did you buy, what did you receive. At home, I had a good job, earned twice as much as I do now, had a big house with 120 square meters, and had no financial problems. I had political problems; I was under pressure. When you take your daughter to kindergarten, are friendly, want to get in touch with a family, and they don't greet you – how can you integrate into this society? This culture, this mindset must change. Salzburg is a beautiful place. But unfortunately, it's hard for migrants to live here. When I say "Hello, good morning" at the kindergarten, and nobody responds, it ruins my whole day.



People on the bus give you mean looks. I always tell my wife, "You just have to ignore these people. These are not our problems; they are theirs. They need to change."



3.2 Two stories from Belgium

3.2.1 The story of Jovial

I try to be realistic. I tell myself that my life is here so I try to be good where I am. I try not to look at everything that can make me stumble in a certain way and I remain positive because otherwise I don't live; I don't say that everything is rosy but here I try to be positive and I continue.

To be positive for me is also to be lucid in front of a situation of racism. To point out to your interlocutor that it is racism. But also to laugh about it, or let's put it in perspective. I think that speaks louder than getting angry. I know it's easier to get angry. But it doesn't do anything. I don't like anger. I hate frustration. Maybe because I've been through a lot of it and I know how hard it is. I like peace with everyone. I am a pacifist by nature.

I hate it when people equate black people with violence. "Let people say black people are violent. He did this because he's black. That's a serious aberration in my eyes. Even if I think that sometimes the materialization of this so-called "black aggression" is also a distant consequence of the frustrations that are anchored in our bodies because of everything we have suffered and continue to suffer. But anyway, that's another debate...

I like the lightness of things. Maybe because my name is Jovial, I don't know. But I think that laughter or derision sometimes allows to make a person observe his silly side and even a little more, to make him think.

For example, in many of the speeches that are made, we know that foreigners in general are a subject of fear, of panic. You have to be careful with these people. They don't have the same culture as us, they are dangerous. You have to be careful with them, blah-blah-blah.

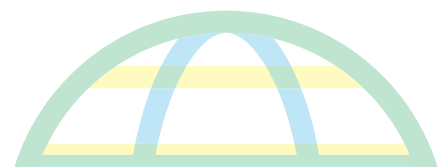
I, who bear the name of Jovial, am told that I am scary, why? well because I am foreign or worse because I am black. And it's clear that if a white person passes me in the street, like at two o'clock in the morning, he won't be quiet because he knows that I'm the bad guy in the case. And at that moment, I'm sure that all the dark images can run through his head, does he have a knife, is he going to steal my smartphone? Is he going to snatch my bag?

I once passed a white woman at night, she totally changed her route. You should have seen how fast she was running. What else could I do? I just nodded and laughed.

Another time after work, I think around 3 a.m., I called a Collecto. It's a shared cab at night. But you have to be at the cab stop or Collecto point to get it. On my way, while I was walking quietly towards my stop, I met a white guy, obviously not very clean. I don't like to talk about black and white, but whatever...He had a beer bottle in his hand. So I asked myself, who should be afraid of the other guy?

In reality, when I walk around Brussels, no matter what time it is, I am never afraid of anything. Because I know that I am the one who is afraid, I am the bad guy. So what would I be afraid of? There is no reason for me to be afraid. While some people who live in Flanders or in Wallonia are always saying: "Oh, I'm afraid to go to Brussels. Brussels is dangerous. Brussels is too crowded".

In any case, I tell them, I am safe in Brussels. It is even one of the safest places for me. I can walk everywhere in Brussels, in Matongé, in Molenbeek, at any time without being worried. Because of course everybody knows that I'm the scary one. Sometimes I even wonder if I am not more afraid of going to the Congo than of staying here?



3.2.2 The story of Rihab

Learning to live in Brussels when you are just arriving is something that takes time. You want to sort out your situation first. Get all the administrative paperwork in order and only then look at where you can meet the right people and build your own network.

You have to do something keep showing up and proving yourself. Otherwise, you stay alone and nobody recognizes you.

During my first few years, I did need some rest from time to time. But my head was full of other priorities. It felt like I was stepping on an escalator that had no end. My energy goes away. And then need energy to recharge.

You feel good with someone or a place where you can be yourself.

Where you feel at home recognized and acknowledged.

How can you give something back, recharge yourself if you haven't been able to make a home out of 'new place yet'?

You walk

You go

You search and hear

Everything around you,

understands nothing

everything is unknown.

I had the chance

To learn the language.

To meet more people.

Because they have been here longer than me

Because they know where you can freely play with their set rules
can play and get around.

Where you can get your groceries nice and cheap.

For that you need connection. People who know what you struggle with

Where you're stuck.

I believe in you? I see you, I recognize you, I support you, here is a space where you can rest....

Support is in simple things to be able to minimize the big problems afterwards.

Not in the sense of denying the problem, no not at all. But to reduce the support burden.

Support is to ensure my well-being well and still live 'sane'.

This is about learning to live with the need for support that you feel

Living in need, most already do.

I call it: living and being.

Being able to go to school, run errands, make friends....

It's really simple.

Knowing rights.

Knowing your own rights

And In the eyes of another do not deny or Deprive my reality

Is this inevitable?

I guess I don't want to lose myself.

I carry my own backpack. My own houses where every room is decorated differently.

About everything I've been through and experienced or survived. And therefore I can familiarize myself faster to a situation , place, person, circumstances or food.
Not always but do my best.
I take what I need from each room.
And use it for myself.

Inclusion

Mainly needs understanding and help.
Not exclusion of agency, group or person.
the problem is not the person's belonging
But the ignorance of the other. And Not wanting to escape from media reality.
Where reality through the eyes of a higher level person does not know my culture and religion.
And so in particular who worst said something and based on what
I am then considered a danger and not a human being who has the right to a dignified existence.
It is understandable that we all want to experience a sense of security and that we need to embrace and accommodate differences. It is important not to necessarily accept everything, but to be able to understand and see what is going on. It is also important to be able to create a home, especially for those who come to Europe for a better life or for their studies.



3.3 Two stories from Ghana

3.3.1 The story of Sampa

I am from Sampa in the Bono Region but I was born in Goasa in the Ahafo Region of Ghana; that is where I grew up. I am currently living in Sunyani. I am the third born in the family of six in addition to my father and my mother. Unfortunately, I lost my father at a very tender age. Also, we are now five in number as one of us passed on about 20 years. Growing up life was difficult for us especially when my father passed on. My mother had to sell ice water so that we could make ends meet. It was challenging so my elder sister had to sacrifice her education and support my mother in selling water to provide food for the family and to support the rest of us in school. My sister traded in Sunyani at a very young age and took care of me and my other siblings. She supported me in a secretariat school in Sunyani after my senior high school education in Goaso. My younger brother was able to further his education to the university level. On my part, I could not further to the University after the secretariat school because I am a woman and they expected that I should get married and settle and also take care of my mother with the support of my husband.

Growing up, my biggest desire was to become a nurse. Nurses has a particular uniform that made that profession attractive to me. I mean the green and white dress. So, my mother always calls me Maame nurse. Though I desired, there wasn't enough money for me to achieve what I wanted. Even after Junior High school I studied Business at the senior high school level because I was not oriented on courses to pursue to be the professional nurse I wanted to be. So, I planned to attend the teacher training college when I pass my WASSCE but that too did not materialize. I ended up at the secretarial school with the help of my sister. Though I don't regret attending the secretarial school and everything about it, I have not been able to get a job relating to what I studied after graduating in 2018. As you can see, I am now learning a skill (Hair dressing) in order to make ends meet. I actually decided to enter into these skills because I heard when you travel to Europe and the U.S.A the accounting, economic and others course don't count but if you have a skill like hairdressing, you can easily get a job to do there.

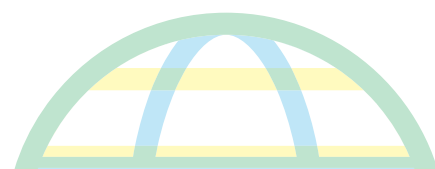
In Bono Region, information on migration or travelling to other countries is a common thing but personally I did not know anyone living outside Ghana when I was young. I always thought that when you do not have a relative outside the country, you won't get the opportunity to go to those countries until at junior high school. I heard a lot of information on migrating to abroad from my friends about how better life is over there. A friend used to enlighten me a lot at junior High school about his brothers that are living outside Ghana and how they send her money. Because there were difficulties in life at the early stage, I was interested in hearing such information. At the secretariat school, a friend of mine also use to enlighten me on some job opportunities in Europe but there is no one who was financially capable to support me to migrate. Currently, I am working towards traveling out of the country. So, I read a lot on migration and issues about it. Another good friend of mine has been giving me advice on countries which offers good jobs to immigrants like Germany, USA, and Canada. I am seriously working towards traveling to Canada. So, currently I am interested in news about Canada. Everything shows that life in Canada is good as compare to Ghana. Few friends who have migrated to Canada confirm this both in words and deeds. The kind of investment that they are doing in Ghana proofs that life in Canada is good. If you see their building and other properties, you will realize that the place is good.

The reason why I want to migrate from Ghana is because of the state of the economy. Cost of living is now high and with the skill I am learning, I am not being paid because I am an apprentice. I am wondering how I can also start my own business after I am done with the learning of the skill. So, I am working seriously to raise money so that I can travel and work in Canada rather than set up my business here. In Ghana, starting a business is difficult if your financial backing is not strong. Besides, competition is strong here. I want to earn something on my own. Even if it's a cleaning job in Canada or Europe, I think the wages will be far better than doing Government Job in Ghana or starting my hair dressing business. I have an old friend who is in Dubai and I can see that things are going well for her. That is the inspiration for me to also move out and she is ever ready to support me with finances just that personally I am looking at going to Canada.

I want to travel through the legal way. I have secured my passport. I am planning submitted my documents for the VISA. Getting bookings for interview takes some time. I here bad stories about people who tried to use illegal ways to migrate to Europe. I do not want to risk my life through the desert because I do not have the required strength. I will die before the journey starts in the desert. Someone passed through the desert and on the sea to Spain in 2004. The person always recounts horrible stories about the journey through the desert. I am planning to use safe means of transport

The main challenge for me is VISA and finances. Lack of money is the main challenge for me. I do not have enough money and it is hard to come by a sponsor. I am very serious to travel and although I have made advances, money is still a challenge. Someone has promised to lend me fifty thousand Cedis, which is about half the money I want to have in my accounts to facilitate my VISA approval but he has not fulfilled the promise yet. Now, I am asking others for help. I believe If I have the financial backing, migrating outside Ghana will be an easy thing. I will surely get out this country.

I am willing to stay and live there until I am 60 or 70 years of age. When I retire, I'll come back to Ghana. Truly, if I imagine how this country will be in the next 20 years, I think staying there will be is the best for me. By the time I reach around 70 years, I believe I would have gotten a lot of money for myself and built a house in Ghana and possibly get 2 or more businesses running in Ghana. Since I wouldn't have the energy to work again at that stage, I will come and oversee my businesses.



3.3.2 The story of Liberia

I had all my schooling in my home town. My brother, sister and my mother are all in Liberia but because of circumstances, I found myself here in Ghana. My father passed on long time ago. During the last war in my hometown, my sister migrated to Ghana and later asked me to come. At the time, things were getting very difficult so her advice to come to Ghana sound convincing and that led to my migration to this country fifteen (15) years ago. But when I arrived here, I realised that getting a job was difficult because I couldn't speak Twi, the common Ghanaian language. In fact, my sister who was even a Senior Nurse then was also finding it very difficult to get a job because of this same language issue. She later travelled to Ivory Coast where she is currently working. It is easy for a foreigner to be connected and to migrate to Ghana but if the person does not understand or know how to speak good English and the Twi, then getting a job becomes very difficult. This is one of the challenges foreigners go through in Ghana and because Ghanaians are very good and nice people, other foreigners keep on coming but they don't get jobs to do. Most of us are limited to trading and people think we are not educated. Most of us are educated but it is the language that is our problem. I for instance when I came to Ghana first, I decided to make some new friends who understand English so that through them I can get work to do but that didn't work. Since my infancy I dislike sitting down idle or not working. So, I have to find a way to do some menial work to help myself because I can't steal or do any bad thing for money.

I informed my mother and because the cost of living in Liberia was very high, she also encouraged me to give it a try. When I came to Ghana, I was not doing anything and I find it more difficult living here. People would have to give me something before I can eat and as for me, I never liked it that way. So, I told my sister that I want to find myself something to do and the only option was trading so I started selling.

The only thing I knew was that Ghana is peaceful comparing to the war in my home country Liberian, so my aim was to take that opportunity of the peaceful environment in Ghana to continue my education.

but there is no opportunity like scholarship for foreigners to further their education and the cost involve is very high. As I was financially handicapped and no scholarship for foreign students, I couldn't pursue my dream of becoming a lawyer. I will say that my coming to Ghana was helpful, though I couldn't achieve my aspirations, maybe I wouldn't have been alive by now if I had not migrated to Ghana. So, I give God all the glory because at least I'm alive, working here in Ghana and I'm able take care of my son's education and support other family members back in my home country.

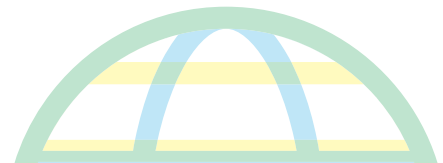
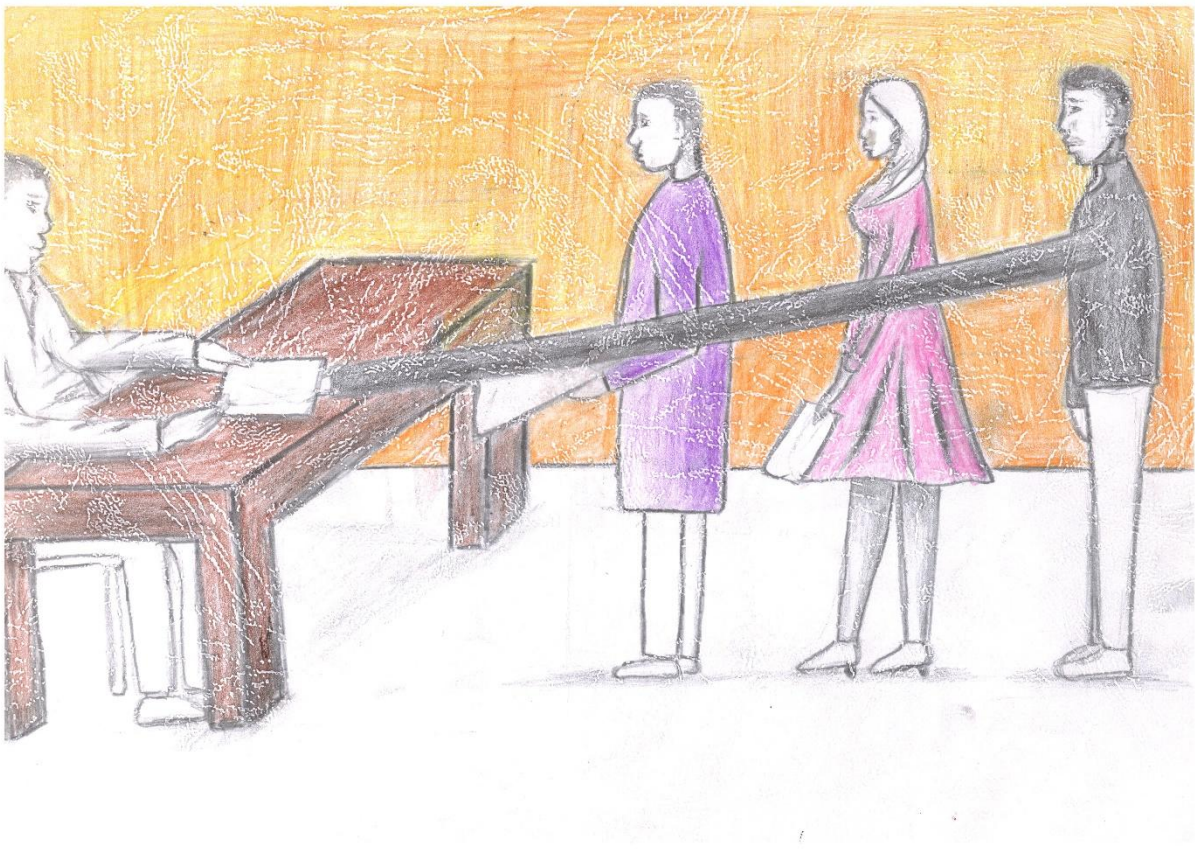
My country is now restored and life is moving on smoothly with my people but I have not heard of any big opportunity that will compel me to go back home. However, as saying goes "home sweet home" therefore I know one day I will go back permanently when I'm getting old but for now, I'm very comfortable living here in Ghana. When I came Ghana my sister had married to a Ghanaian and they were staying in Dansoman. So, I went to stay with them at Dansoman, Ebenezer-Down. After being with them for a while and doing nothing, I said to myself, I can't be idle for them to continue feeding me. I started a business with both dry and fresh green leafy vegetable and some special oil we use to prepare our meals back home in Liberia, these are not available in the Ghanaian market. So, I decided to start that business. So I was the first person to sell those vegetables in Ghana, and now a lot of people have joined.

Sometimes in the market when there is misunderstanding between us and the Ghanaian, they will insult us and say "who sent you out of your country to come and worry us here? Go back to your home town!". Sometimes I'm compelled to reply them Ghana doesn't belong to any of us, we are all passing by. But they don't often understand that we don't have permanent homes on this earth. When my late father was alive, he advised us that if you find yourself as a stranger among other people, you must watch and observe the way they lay their heads, and do just the same and that will enable you live peacefully with all men. So I always try to keep my father's advice.

We have associations for Liberians living in Ghana, and is like all those who come from the northern region of Liberia come together to form one association, those from the southern, eastern and so on they all have their associations here in Ghana. We come together to discuss issues and welfare here in Ghana and also about our

families back home. When something happens to a member of the association, we all come together, contribute to support that brother or sister.

I have now stepped back. In this world, if you are doing something which involves finance, you need to check, if it will yield returns or profit. I have been going for meetings and paying my contributions but I'm not getting anything in return, so I stopped. My fellow Liberian will say cut your coat according to your measurement so that when you set your lapper, it will fit you and you will be able to move freely. So that's why I stopped.

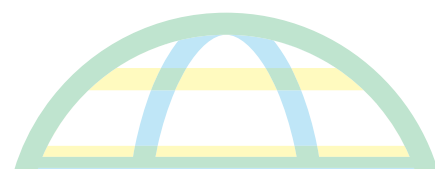


3.4 Two stories from France

3.4.1 The story of Hawa

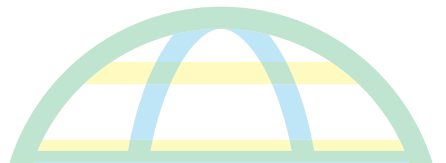
My name is H., I am 27 years old and I am Malian. When I was 11 months old, my mother brought me to France to join my father who was working here. At the time, my parents had three kids but my mother was forced to leave the two older ones in Africa. My parents had other children here and I stayed with them until I was nine. In Malian culture, your child does not belong to you but to the whole community. It was then my uncle, with the agreement of my extended family, who decided that I should return to Mali so as not to lose my Malian roots and culture. It seemed important to return to Mali before I grew up. In my family, children were not given any further explanation. I had a fantastic vision of Africa created by the stories I heard from my parents. In my head, I thought "I'm going to Africa, to the beach, I'm going to have fun, I'm going to build a treehouse", which was not at all what I faced. Once I arrived, I had to learn a new language, because I only spoke French. I had brought all my books with me despite the fact that I was going to live in a village with no school or electricity. Everything was completely different, but as I was a child, the adaptation was natural. I felt like an adventurer, it was like on vacations. When I was 16, I got a marriage proposal, my fiancé was in France. My father, my uncle and my fiancé decided that I should come back to France. I had no choice, in my culture, adults are the ones that choose our destiny. Marriage itself was not a problem, I already knew that you have to marry someone you don't know. The problem for me was reintegrating France. When I came back to France, my parents were complete strangers to me. I was surprised that I had difficulties in speaking and reading in French. I was a village girl rediscovering France, always arguing with my brothers and sisters because they made remarks about the way I spoke and my lack of knowledge in French culture. For 7 months I studied French in a school that my father paid for, until I got pregnant. As a mother, the responsibilities of the home took priority in my life. Afterwards, I had a second child. For 10 years, this reality didn't bother me. I was focused on understanding and following my children's school life. After the arrival of my third child, I felt the need to do some courses and have a professional life. I tried a lot of courses, but since I didn't have a long school education, I was always rejected. The professionals at the neighbourhood centre encouraged me to continue trying, they helped me to write cover letters, but I had no strength left. All these closed doors hurt me too much. I spoke with my children's teacher and I took them out of school for three months. We went to Africa, always between Mali and Senegal, because the father of my children is Senegalese. I needed to cure myself of the depression I suffered in France. Once I returned to my cultural base, I asked myself "What should I do when I go back to France? Of course, I have the African accent which is part of me, I can't leave a part of my culture". I have always tried to have horizontal communication with my children. When we were in Africa, I put them in school, but they complained about the lack of structure and the violence with which the teachers punished the children. I listened to them and realised that I had to set a good example for them. I had to show them that if you come across bad situations, you have to stand up and face them. When we came back to France, I started looking for a course again. I still remember the interview that enabled me to get a training course. It was with a good person; she noted that I had difficulties but that I had good writing. She reassured me that I could learn and improve during the course. I then started a CAP (Certificat d'aptitude professionnelle) in early childhood, I was very happy. A few months later, I discovered that I was pregnant again. I said to myself, "This time I'm not going to stop". After the birth, I continued the training. I attended the classes with my baby in my arms. Fortunately, the teachers were very understanding. At the end of the CAP, I went on to a job. I didn't have the same problem finding the job as with the course. I applied to the school where my children were studying and the headmistress, when she saw my application, said that she knew I could bring a lot to the structure. In my culture, the community has a central role in our lives. There is a specific role for women: "We give birth, we educate the children, we stay at home and we go to work only when the children are independent, after they are 18, 19 years old". So my choice to work was not accepted by the community. I was being judged. It's hard because I knew that other women wanted to work. I listened to a lot of criticism because, for them, leaving my children at the kindergarten meant abandoning them. To my community I was a bad mother. I felt that everyone had plans for me, from the community to the job centre.

When I went to the job centre to look for a course, the counsellor gave me options directly related to cleaning. It was very difficult to make her understand that I wanted to do something else with my life, that I wanted to choose. As an African woman, I was always between the expectations of the institutions and the community. This impasse with the community intensified when I divorced my husband. In a moment, what I wanted for myself and my children was no longer consistent with him and I chose to move in separate ways. Divorce is not accepted in my culture. I was faced with a dilemma. Either I listen to the community and stay in a marriage I don't want to, or I divorce and the community turns its back on me. I made the choice to fight for my values. I did it because of my children. They need to understand that we are responsible for our own choices. For four years I was alone with my children. It was a difficult time, I had to accept that I was dead to my community in order to be finally reborn with my own life choices. I chose to take control of my life. When you arrive in France, there is a great lack of support concerning the administration and the institutions. There is no support, there is no welcome. When Europeans arrive in Africa or in other continents, they are always well received. It doesn't matter where the person comes from, they must be welcomed. I am in charge of reception in a parents' house. We receive a lot of mothers who have just arrived in France and I try to show them that they can be more than mothers. It is as difficult for the mothers as for the children. When you ask a child to look you in the eyes and the child doesn't look straight at you, you have to understand that in some cultures it's not a lack of respect, on the contrary, it's a proof of respect. But what they do is start a discipline procedure, whereas you just have to call the parents and understand their culture better. I have worked in the kindergarten, in the school and now I am in the parents' house. After all these experiences, I created an association that carries out actions related to parenthood and the double culture here in France. I myself have one foot in France and the other in Africa. So I want to develop actions in Africa too. I don't want to go to Africa as a saviour, but to use my experience of double culture to exchange with women here and there. We need to work on the relationship between people in the African diaspora and their families back home so that this relationship goes beyond material support. People in Africa think that we live in abundance, that we are rich, which is not at all the case. It is important that we understand each other's reality. Double culture is a richness and a strength, I don't regret having gone to Africa. I don't regret having come back to France either. I like my story, because thanks to this double culture, I have a double outlook, a double mentality, whether it is on the level of the condition of women or the education of my children, it allows me to be who I am.



3.4.2 The story of Goudiaby

My name is M., I am 79 years old and I come from Senegal. When I was 25, my older brother was already living in France. I told him that I wanted to go to France too to continue my studies and so one day he sent me a plane ticket. At the time, you had to have permission from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to leave Senegal. Fortunately, my other brother had a friend who worked at the Ministry and he took care of preparing my permission to leave the country. I took a direct flight from Dakar and arrived at Charles de Gaulle airport in Paris. My older brother was waiting for me at the airport. When I arrived, I went to the Prefecture of Bobigny with my documents and they gave me a student residence permit. In Senegal, I had been up to the final year of high school, so when I arrived I registered at Paris XI. That's where I got the certificate of capacity in law. I worked four hours a day and then I went to school. I wanted to continue my studies, but I had to work more to pay my rent and help my family in Senegal. I started to grow up and was aware that I had to support my family back home. So I was forced to give up my studies after two years to work. I started working as a salesman and had the same job for forty years, until I retired. I was lucky to have a very good relationship with my boss. I worked for 40 years without even a medical certificate for sickness leave. Since I arrived in France, I have lived in Montreuil. At first I lived in a two-room apartment. Later, when I went to Senegal on holiday, I found a woman to marry. I married this girl and when I came back to France I moved to a bigger flat to apply for family reunification. A year later she arrived and got her residence permit and everything. Now we have five children together, four sons and a daughter. As I was born before independence, I had the right to French nationality through an application for reintegration. I applied for this and was told to apply for nationality for my wife too. Within a year, we were both French. Unfortunately, my wife never got used to life in France. During all these years, she went back and forth several times. She wants to stay next to her mother who is still alive. For me it's different, since I arrived in France I have only been to Senegal four times. My parents and my elder brother are dead, I have no close relatives there. When I go there, I feel like a foreigner, my mentality has changed and so have the people, they think I'm a "toubab", a white man. I can no longer adapt to life there. My wife has chosen to return permanently. She wants to stay in Senegal and I want to stay in France. I am happy here and she is happy there. My life is in France. All my friends are here, we even created an NGO of Senegalese people. In this NGO, I got to know even more Senegalese people who have become very close friends. I have built my life here. My children all live here. I still have a son who is in high school, he lives with me. He studies a lot for his baccalaureate, all day long. I have to be here for him too. My life is beside my children. Among my children, my daughter loves Senegal the most, she even bought a piece of land there. Now she is building a house so that she can spend her holidays there with her family. As for me, I continue to keep up to date with the news and politics in Senegal, even if I don't like what I see. I have the impression that politicians want to impose things on us by force. Here in France, I am also very involved in politics and I actively participate in NGOs that have links with Senegal and not only. I think that when you go to Africa, you have to tell people the truth, you have to tell them about all the problems you have in France. Generally people go there and they talk as if life in France is perfect, that makes young people want to come. But young people must understand life here as it is. Today, I would not recommend anyone to come to France illegally. The road is too dangerous, you can really die. I understand that there are people who have no choice, but I see that today, migrating is too difficult. That's why I always tell people about all the problems of crossing and settling, so that they know, but the choice is theirs to make. The Senegalese prefer to come to France because France has colonised us. When we grow up, we already know France. If there are many Africans here, they are Africans from the former colonies. We were forced to have this link with France, so it's easier to migrate here than elsewhere.

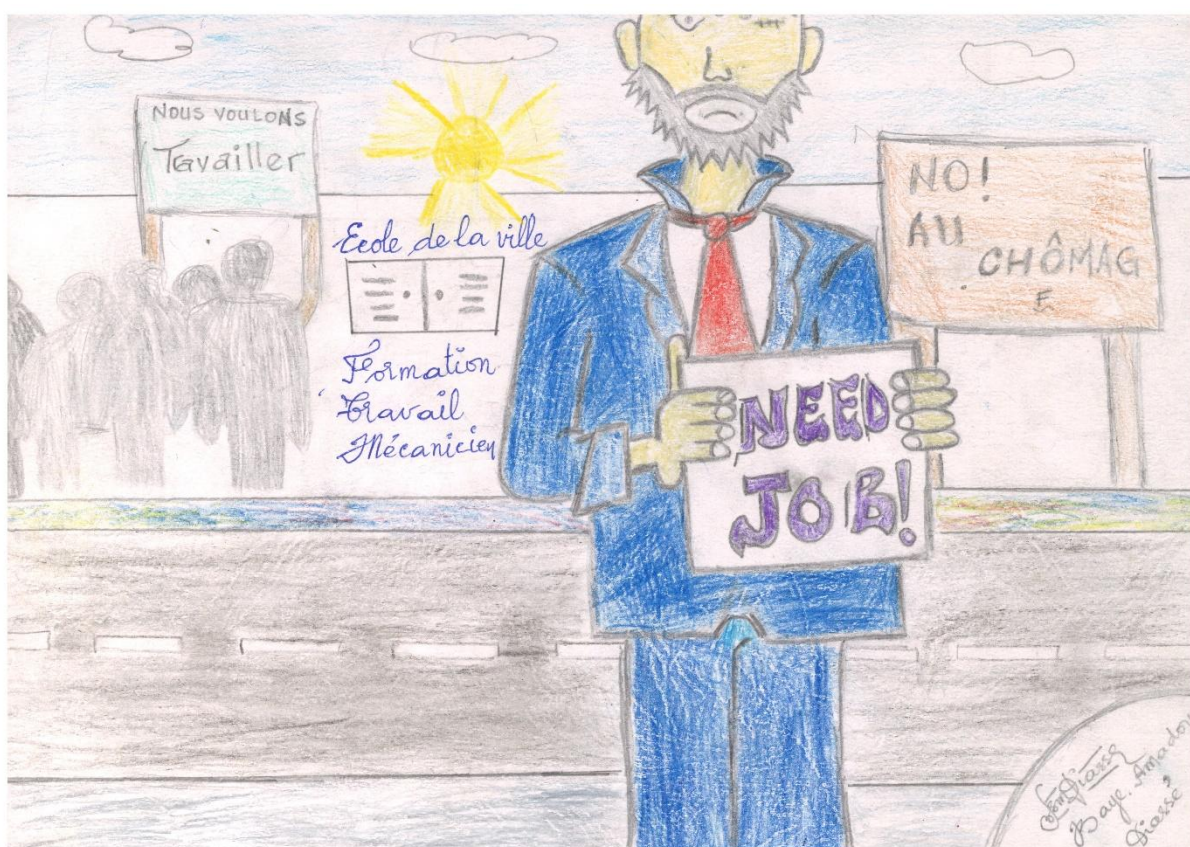


3.5 Two stories from Italy

3.5.1 The story of Milan

I came to Italy one and a half years ago; I am married here. I come from a small city in Pakistan named Gujarat; I lived there almost all my life and I was a student of banking and finance. After graduating, I found a job in a bank. The problem in Pakistan is the salaries: they are very low, the prices of the things go high and the salaries remain low. I thought that starting a job in a bank would be good for my future, but after a year I was doing the same thing in operations: opening an account, depositing money.... it did not feel so good. It felt like you studied all your 17 years only to open an account and to close an account. You can't do anything creative. Mental health is more important for me: I think everyone should take care of their mental health. I then went to a big city called Lahore, where I started working for an American call center; they were paying me \$100 per month. After one year and a half the prices were increasing, and I was going into depression: "How am I going to survive? I have studied 17 years, just to find a better job, but I can't find one". I was proud of the country I grew up in, but at the same time in my heart I was not, because the political situation in Pakistan is very poor right now. I hope in future it will be good, because at the end of the day it is my own country, and I do love my country. In that period I talked to a friend who studied in Germany. He told me: "Here things are good, you can afford a lot of things. Why don't you try your luck over here?". I think that when you want to change yourself, all the things come to you, if your intentions are pure. I was thinking of going to Germany to help my family live a good life. And I was thinking: "What will I do over there? I'll do studies and work at the same time; it's going to be difficult but I am a man, I am young and I have studied, I can survive there". In January, I was playing cricket with my friends, when my father called me instantly and told me: "Come home quickly". I said: "Okay, I'll come after a match", and he said "No, I want you right now". So I just went back home and my dad said "Go and take a shower, someone is coming to see you". I said; "For what?". He replied: "Someone is coming to see you for marriage. They are from Italy and they have a daughter". I never imagined life like this. That I would go to Italy, to another country, better than Pakistan, to work, to find a good job. It was a decision that could have changed life for my parents, my brother, and my sisters. And then my father told me: "You have a day to think about that and tell us whatever you want". It was a really long night. I was just thinking: "How is it going to be?". Marriage happened and I'm very happy. Even right now, I'm very happy with my wife. She is very supportive, helpful and kind to me, and I will try my best to make her happy all my life. When I arrived in Italy, it was tough, because while you wait for your "permesso di soggiorno" you're not allowed to work. But the biggest obstacle was the language barrier: I didn't know anything about Italian when I came here. I think family is the most important thing for a person when you are away from home. So in Italy, I was a little bit sad. I do love my wife's family, they are just like my mother and father, brother, they all are the same to me. But your own family is your own family. Now life is a bit tough, a bit sort of busy. I work a lot and my social life is a lot less than it was in Pakistan. In the future I would love to meet new people. I like to have people that are creative around me; it can be good for your mental health. Whenever I get free, whenever I have a day off, I go with my wife to visit local places. We mostly went to big cities like Milan, Varese, Gallarate, to eat something new all the time. Sometimes we try pasta, sometimes we try pizza. Sometimes when I'm missing my country, we go to Pakistani and Indian restaurants. I think everyone deserves equal opportunities in their life. The color of your skin is just a color and nothing more than that. When I arrived here, I started to work in a pizza shop, and one day a guy told me "What are you going to do in Italy? You just came here. Pizza is an Italian thing, you can never be a pizzaiolo". I took it as a challenge, and after a few months I could make a good pizza. I'm proud that I took it as a challenge and that I proved him down. Since I studied business, my dream would be to open a pizza shop, which also provides halal food to my Pakistani community, since here it is a big problem to find halal food. When I speak to newly arrived immigrants, I always tell them to be patient, to do what they want but to be consistent. If you are learning Italian, you need to be consistent. In every field, you need to be consistent and very disciplined. That will help you get a good life. I think immigrants should be aware of the existing rules, and that the government should support them; most of them are young and the younger generation

can do a lot of great things for a country to grow much further. I think the government should look up to the immigrants because they are very sincere to their own country, but at the same time, they are very sincere to this country. If someone asks me where I am from, first I say I'm from Pakistan, but I then proudly add that right now I live in Italy.



3.5.2 The story of Milan-2

I'm 20 years old, I'm from Afghanistan, I'm a Shiite Muslim. I arrived in Italy one year and two months ago. My family is made of six people: Dad, Mom, two brothers and a sister. The older brother is 18 years old, the younger 7 years old and my sister is 12. My family is very close, but I cannot say that inside our house you could speak freely, because in Afghanistan no girl can speak freely in the family. My parents were like other parents in Afghanistan, only my father was more liberal: for example, I had friends who could not go out, but my father was not like the others, because he had spent 17 years abroad, first in Iran and then in Dubai, dealing with cars. He always came to Afghanistan for the month of Ramadan. I wasn't used to having a man in the house. I was shy. Then, when I was 12, we went to another city in Afghanistan, bigger, because my father had so much land there and he was tired of being abroad all the time. So, he started growing saffron and pistachio. We were fine, nothing was missing. My father was like a friend to me, even though I couldn't speak freely. My mom's not. My mom's sick. She fell in love and married my father when they were 18, but my father was my grandfather's first child, so my mother was the first woman to enter that family as a wife. That's how it works in Afghanistan, if a woman gets married, she must be like a waitress and because my father's family was big, my mother always worked. Living at their house was hard because my father was always away. Then her first daughter died at 5 or 6, and this made her sick. Plus, a sister of my grandfather's, who wasn't doing so well, punched her on the head. Due to this she, since I was 10, started having seizures, epilepsy. The first few times she wasn't that bad, she had a minute or two, but then there were other problems. In Herat my father was a known person, but the Taliban had their eyes on the land where he grew saffron. They said, "This land is ours." Two or three times they took my father, beat him, robbed him of his money and phone. It was very hard for my mother. For the last few years, when she was sick, she had a bloody nose and a bloody mouth. But she didn't want to go to the doctor to get treatment. She always said, "I'm not crazy." She went to the therapist a lot, but then she didn't go anymore. She also had gynecological problems and for this she lost many children. My mother liked having children, taking care of them, but now she can't have them.

In Herat there was a very well-known person: Smile Han. He wasn't of the government, he was like a military commander, a people's leader, fighting against the Taliban. When they arrived, he gave many rifles to my father to fight against them. My father was the leader of the village, and since he was almost killed, we decided to leave. He thought of someone in Australia who wanted to help him relocate there. At that time even if people did not have passports, it was not important in Kabul airport. We went. It was very risky. But we tried... I don't remember what day it was... I remember... I have to remember... that day outside the airport there was an explosion. Many people died. Fortunately, my family and I were saved, but then I learned that my father and mother were injured. My father was bleeding, and my mother had a seizure. I was not sick. We were all holding hands, I was the last one. Then I don't know what happened, I lost them, and we split up. I passed out, and when I woke up, there was blood and the smell of blood, ambulances, people crying, it was dark. I've been looking for days. My phone wasn't working. I couldn't do anything. I had some money and with great difficulty I arrived in Herat, where I had friends. It's 12 to 13 hours away. The Taliban had dictated their laws and a girl on her own couldn't get out, couldn't get on the bus. If they had found me, they would have killed me and they would have hung me out, saying, this person did this thing, don't do like her. Good thing they didn't find me.

I went to a friend of mine, who had no father, no mother, just a brother. They were people I trusted. They had a room underground, no lights, no windows. I lived there with them for two or three months. Even though they were very poor, they fed me, they were good to me. There was an office nearby where the Taliban stayed. And that scared me so much, I was like, "I'm going to die here." It was a nightmare.

I was looking for a way to go, I was googling and then I saw a contact in Italian. Then one night I sent this message to Italy. The next morning, they answered me. I immediately sent my passport, and they told me that maybe they could help me. I am the first person who arrived with the Amad Association.

Later, I tried so many times to call my parents, but they never answered me. I also asked a hospital in Kabul if there were any lists of people who were injured that day. But they didn't answer. I didn't know where they were

for a long time. Then, after I don't know how many months, they called me, and I realized they were safe. They're in Iran now. My father works in a pizzeria. He is working 13, 14 hours a day and they pay him 200 euros a month. We applied for them to come to Italy. Like so many others. Last year, 300 people were supposed to come, but now there are 30 people left, and my family is among them. I'm very confused, even tired... It's hard to wait. I like Italy, but in my opinion the rights for refugees are less than in other European countries. We're here now, aren't we? What should we do? If nobody helps, it's hard.

I started speaking Italian very early, I don't know how I did it. I'm going to college now. When I was in Afghanistan, I was shy, I wasn't talking to anyone, I had no news of the world. The first time I spoke Italian in public was a big change for me. It was the 20th of June last year. I talked about Afghanistan that day. Today I grew up and I realized that I must fight for my country, for the women of my country. We, who are young can change and, even if we are far away, we can do things, we can help to change the way Afghanistan is going.



3.6 Two stories from Mauretania

3.6.1 The story of Eduard

My name is E.S., I am Togolese, and I am 30 years old. I was born in a modest family in a small town called Kpalimé in Togo. I define myself as an entrepreneur, a social personality and with a dream of becoming a politician or a diplomat.

In 2014, I founded an NGO that brings together about fifty girls and boys. We work in fashion, conferences, events and our goal is to reduce youth unemployment and promote entrepreneurship.

For almost 2 years, I financed the association alone. I worked as a volunteer in an ONG and earned some money which allowed me to invest in the association. We have well-trained hostesses and stewards and well-trained models. I give lectures in schools and cover cultural events. During all this time everything was in my charge, I should as a leader find opportunities, find contracts. Being very young people didn't trust me, some people cheated us, sometimes we finished the job and some people gave us 50.000 for a team of 45 people. The young people trusted me, I should do better. I sacrificed everything I had. Even the government didn't support me in my project. People didn't believe in what I was doing, it became very difficult. So I should find other horizons.

In 2017, a friend living in Mauritania came back and offered to work on an educational project in Mauritania. I had no choice, I accepted but with the intention of going to find fashion contracts in Morocco for my models and also to train for my dream. In October 2017, we left Togo for Mauritania by land. During 5 days, we travelled more than 5000 km by car and crossed Burkina and Mali. When we arrived in Mauritania, I discovered that it was not at all the image I had in mind and that my friend had presented to me. But I had no choice, I am also the type of person who adapts, I started working immediately and being a social personality myself, integration was not a problem. I made connections all over the place and moved up the ladder. I joined the NGO of Togolese nationals and became the communication officer, then I supported a candidate to represent Togo in Mauritania on behalf of the Togolese foreign affairs. From there I became the secretary general and then the communication officer.

In 2019, I got a job in a maritime company as an operations coordinator and found stability. I opened a firm in 2020 to support young Mauritanian entrepreneurs, and I was myself a winner of the Tony Elumelu Foundation Young Entrepreneur Award, and then a winner of the YALI Dakar project, a project of President Barack Obama. I had many opportunities in Mauritania which allowed me to leave behind my dream of Europe or Morocco. But Mauritania is an Islamic country where studies are almost impossible for a Christian and also a French speaker like me. Everything is in Arabic. It should also be noted that in Mauritania, it is almost impossible to win projects as a foreigner, priority is given to Mauritians.

Being competent before going on an adventure allowed me to integrate quickly without too much difficulty. But the change of situation in Mauritania with the status of Islamic state is a barrier for many young people. You have to provide for your family back home. You have to take care of yourself and your family.

Leaving Mauritania is not immediately possible but hopes are dwindling. I have to study, return to the country to contribute to its development and become a diplomat.

3.6.2 The story of Mariam

I am M., a Senegalese woman from the village of Guédé. I come from a family of 6 children, my father had other wives with children and I unfortunately lost my mother, which obliges me to take care of my 6 brothers and my 3 children.

I decided to try to find a better life, and in 2003 I arrived in Mauritania without knowing anyone. I left Senegal because I couldn't stand my mother's suffering, our father didn't support us, and my husband didn't have enough money for our children either. I had to find other alternatives.

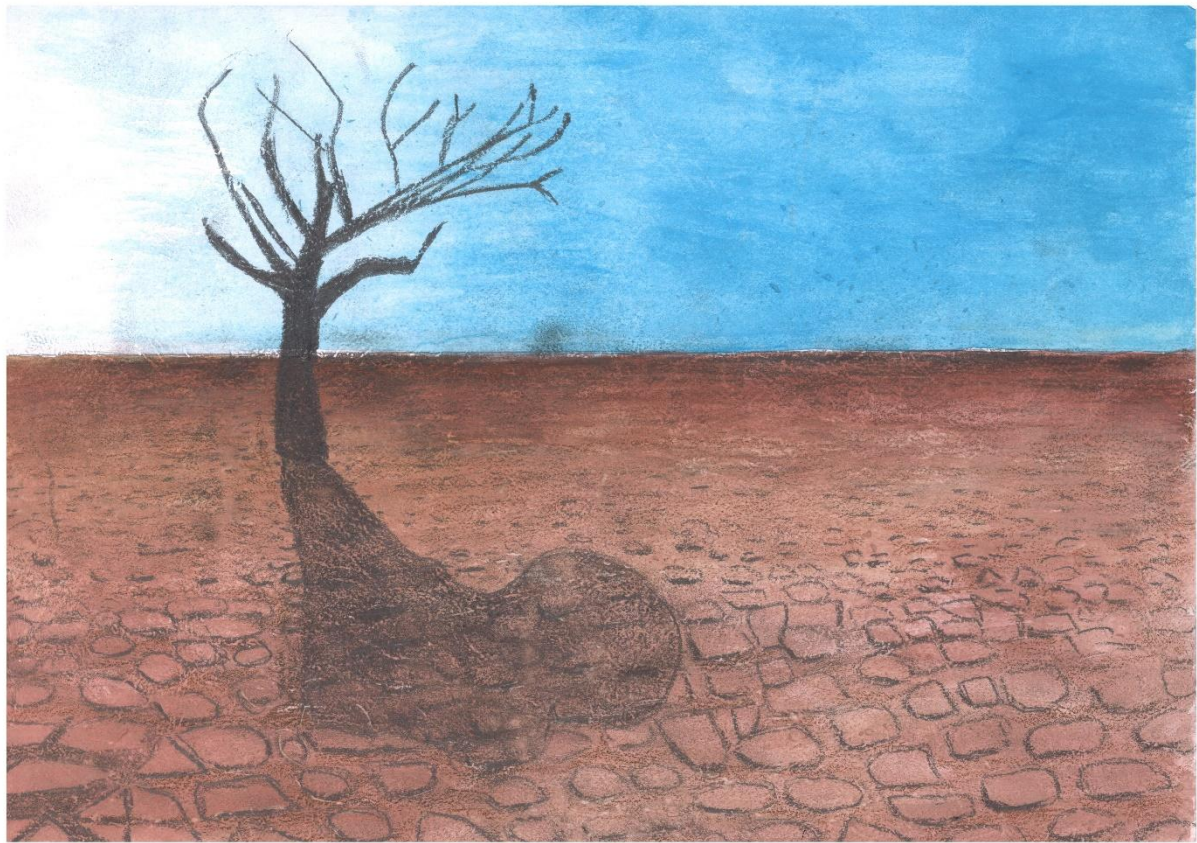
Once in Mauritania, I met a lady who welcomed me and introduced me to a Mauritanian woman who hosted me for three months, a very kind lady to whom I am very grateful. After three months, I found a job as a home help in a Mauritanian woman's house, where I did the laundry and cleaning just to earn a little money to support my children and family. After that I found a better job at the small school where I am paid 5000 MRU, it is not enough but I must accept it.

Then I found a Mauritanian husband who took us in his house, because my husband abandoned me, and I also left Senegal. My Mauritanian husband takes care of us, he pays the house, the rent, the food... I also have to work to help my family and my three children. My husband wants to do everything to find us Mauritanian papers so that my children can have access to education, because until now, my daughter who is 16 years old cannot take the exam, she has stayed at home to cook.

I miss Senegal, and sometimes we go back to visit the family. One day when we went back to Mauritania, because of paperwork problems, the children were stuck on the border. I had to pay 5200 MRU to bring them here. My husband wants to do everything to find us a house so that we can be comfortable. Returning to Senegal right now is not an option, our brother, who has even passed his National Studies (BAC), does not work, he went to university but returned to cultivate the field in the village.

Being a woman it is not easy to do the adventure, you need bravery, you need courage, some are brave, but others are weak. Especially with children, you have to go through difficulties. You must find a husband, stay with him so that he uses you. I want to open a cosmetics shop to find some stability.





3.7 Two stories from Portugal

3.7.1 The story of an Angolan immigrant

I came to Portugal and I'm staying here to finish my law degree so that I can practice my profession and have as many professional experiences as possible. Eventually I want to join a firm and become a lawyer to help those in need, make friends and create a network of contacts. There are other professions I'd like to try out, like being a mannequin, for example. Personally, it is important for me to meet new people from different cultures from whom I can learn more about other countries and cultures.

The big obstacles to my aspirations are, on the one hand, not having Portuguese citizenship yet and therefore not having the facility to travel and work in Europe. On the other hand, racism, and discrimination. Considering my features, I end up being discriminated against and rejected in certain places, however, some people also find me interesting because of my life experience. I have been here for seven years, I have a better command of Portuguese and I behave in a more Portuguese way, but I am still treated as a foreigner. I understand, but it becomes a bit uncomfortable for me because I just want to feel integrated. Although, I already feel better here because people have had the time and opportunity to get to know me.

All I aspire to is to live a peaceful life with financial stability and security. To achieve my goals, I know I must work hard and obtain Portuguese nationality. Once I get it, I know that several doors and opportunities will arise, which will make it easier for me to achieve my goals.

3.7.2 The story of an immigrant from Guinea-Bissau

My aspirations in Portugal are common aspirations of any young person, whether national or immigrant. I want to have job opportunities and feel at home, I want Portugal to be my 'home sweet home' and not to be constantly reminded that I don't belong here. Sometimes I feel that I do belong here, but at other times I don't. And this is the result of the obstacles I face as an immigrant. The bureaucracy and the administrative barriers in legal terms to gain access to the residence permit have been a major obstacle since I arrived here. Racism is also a structural problem. I have felt that I have been ignored and shunned by my colleagues at university for being black and I have been approached in a discriminatory way by the police: they have asked me for my documents just for being on the street. It is difficult. I don't want to be seen as a burden and as someone who comes to steal the jobs from the nationals.

Resilience is the word that defines me. I am very proud of my life story, of all the challenges and difficulties I had to go through to now be living where I wanted to live. My life story inspires me, and I would like to inspire other migrants who are now in the same situation as I was. One of my goals is also to help deconstruct the stereotypes associated with Africans and black people in Portugal. I have a special affection for social work and volunteering, and I aspire to be a reference figure in the fight for migrants' rights. I am here to develop my personal and academic skills, get my master's degree and help others achieve their dreams. My big goal is to contribute to a better society and help other migrants to do the same.

I dream and believe that one day, I will wake up in a world where the term globalisation is not just a political and rhetorical instrument painted in pretty colours but has crooked shades in its valence. And yes, to live in a truly global village where words are accompanied by real practices and to feel like a true citizen of the world.

May border limits serve as an instrument to determine the limit of authority of a state and not as an instrument of segregation between human beings.





3.8 Two stories from Romania

3.8.1 The story of a student

I didn't consider myself an emigrant, to me that word seems a bit harsh, even if that is the reality. I came here for my studies. Studies was one reason, and another reason was the hope that I would have more opportunities for a future in the arts. The final decision was mine, because I chose to go on. Initially I didn't have this plan, I didn't even think about going to Romania as a possible option, but one person who had a big role in this decision was my drawing teacher who told me about this possibility, and then my parents supported me completely.

The only problem I had, were the papers, with Moldovan papers I was allowed to be in Romania only during my studies, with a residence permit, and the thing that made me feel uncomfortable was the thought that when I finish my studies and I don't get Romanian citizenship, I will have to return to Moldova and start all over again. Because with Moldovan papers to work in Romania, in general in Europe, you need a work visa I think, I don't know too many details, but it's quite complicated. But if you have Romanian citizenship, I think there are no differences, just based on the fact that we are Basarabians, because after all that is not what defines us as people and that is not the most important factor.

My opinion is that citizenship does not define a person, yes, it is true that I do not forget where I was born, but in my opinion this factor is just a label, a criterion, but a person is able to become what he wants, to integrate into any space, culture, depending on his preferences, the environment in which he feels fulfilled, his desire to make a

change and his desire to discover cultures, people and to know as much as possible. I think the title of citizen of the world is a very appropriate one.

3.8.2 The story of young boy

Around 2007, two years before I moved, I had discussions with my parents about what kind of high school I should attend. The southern part of Bessarabia, where I come from, is predominantly populated by Turkish people. I had the choice between a Romanian-Turkish high school, with Romanian, Turkish and English or going to Romania. I had some friends who had already gone to study in Romania and I had already received some positive feedback. My father is Turkish and Turkish-speaking and my mother is Romanian. My father didn't care where I went to high school, and my mother, a teacher by profession, was the one who directed, influenced and directed my decisions. When I was 13 or 14, I don't think I was capable of such a decision. It was my mom's decision. I think the discussions lasted about a year. She was aware that it would be better for me here, she probably knew at the time that Romania was more oriented towards Europe. Moldova had no chance to open its doors to Europe and I don't think it has much chance now. Russia's imprint is far too strong. The whole culture there is anchored in and relates to Russia. It took me years to detach myself from Russian thinking and language. I went to school in Russian, poetry, literature, math, etc. 99% of my communication was in Russian and 1% in foreign languages learned at school or if my mother spoke Romanian with us.

In our family there were often discussions about where the country was going. At that time a lot of people I knew went to Poland, Austria, Germany to make money. I realized that first of all I would become independent and then I would be able to create the future I wanted. The support at home was very good, I felt protected, safe, but at the same time I think that at that age I wanted to be independent.

When I arrived here, Moldovans weren't exactly well regarded. Prejudices were created because of them, because of their bad behavior. Most were students, they didn't come here to study, they were looking for something else. I'm not saying, there were some who studied, but they were lumped in with the others. People tend to see more of the bad side of things and not bring out the good side. Some didn't really know what to expect from the group of Basarabians who had just arrived. That school group was much weaker than a theoretical high school, the students were simple people, many from the countryside, who had never seen another nationality before, maybe, they didn't know how to work only with their hands, physically, education was not a priority, for them, we were a kind of zoo. They came to see us as zoo specimens. There was no bonding. The teachers had a different attitude. They treated us as guests and tried to integrate us. They mediated our conflicts quite a lot.

When I first came here, there were gangs, the Basarabian gang, the Roma gang, etc. Not even the community police could cope. These gangs fought all the time. One day a conflict broke out under the bridge in the Bularga neighborhood, involving about 150 people with all kinds of weapons, some improvised, some not. Everything degenerated, many people ended up in hospital, others at the police station. One good thing came out of it. I realized that violence doesn't help anything, on the contrary, and that disagreements should be resolved peacefully. The biggest disadvantage of being from the Republic of Moldova was when an employer tried to hire me and had a lot of procedures to follow. He had to advertise in the newspaper that he was offering a job and prove that he couldn't find any Romanians available. A lot of paperwork had to be done and a certain amount of money had to be paid to the state. So the first time I was hired with a work permit was when I was 28. Until then I was working on a contract, bureaucratically this kind of contract didn't require stressful procedures, I did tutoring, I also worked in construction, I had my own team, I painted apartments. I also worked with a pest control company, we used to kill rats and mosquitoes in basements.

I am now a Romanian, a real Romanian.





3.9 Two stories from Senegal

3.9.1 The story of a candidate to migrate

I am 30 years old. I am single with and do not have any children. I studied up to first grade. My mother and my father did not go to school, unlike my four brothers and sisters.

I am the eldest in the family, an advantageous position, but one which comes with many responsibilities. When you are the eldest in the family, one expects a lot of things from him. The eldest in the family must show the way to the other members of the family. He is the first to show a good example. What we hear from him is to work well, how to help his parents as well as his brothers and sisters as the Wolof adage says "*Guinaw baye, Taw moy dogale*" (*After the father, it is up to the eldest to show the way forward*).

He must be respectful and responsible. He must show good behavior. He must be hardworking and have goals to achieve because his brothers and sisters follow his example.

Socio-professional activities and migration project

My father was a driver and my mother did not work. Currently, I am a carter, a job that is not easy and very uncertain. Every day, I get up at 7 a.m., I take a break at 1 p.m. to eat and work until 7 p.m. It is difficult to say that I am satisfied with this work because what I earn is very insufficient for my personal needs and to maintain my horse. Besides, it is for this reason that I am obliged to do other activities. In a way, I work to live and am not

to be able to save money. I work for my daily expenses (*liggey dounde*). That's why I want to migrate because I don't want to live from paycheck to paycheck.

I don't want my kids to do the same job as me or my dad. Working as a carter will not give me the opportunity to change things. I want to migrate so that my children can attend good schools, so that they can take care of themselves when they are sick, so that they can live comfortably.

Fishing sector

Fishing is like the work of the carter. People who are in fishing live from day to day. They are in this sector to earn enough to live to see the next day because "*Guedj gui amatoul xaliss*" (*fishing no longer feeds the fisherman*). The sea no longer allows people to live decently. This is the reason why many fishermen prefer to migrate. They leave to try their luck elsewhere. They are in a precarious situation like so many other people.

They live in times of precariousness due to the lack of fish caused by climate change and the presence of foreign fishing boats.

In my opinion, the State must ask these foreign boats to leave the Senegalese coast. This is the only way to protect the work of Senegalese fishermen. I think that's the only solution.

Migration

People have chosen to migrate because they have lost all hope. I believe that they are not wrong because I am in the same situation. We prefer to migrate to Spain or Italy because here we cannot earn enough to support our families. In Europe, I think it will be possible for us to earn money and help our parents. In Europe, it will be possible for us, despite the challenges, to earn an honest living.

Border closure

Closing the borders is not the right answer because Europe needs us. We are young and ready to work in Europe in any sector. In restaurants, factories, construction sites, etc. we can make our contribution. Why close the borders when we are ready to work with dignity and contribute to the economy of Europe?

3.9.2 The story of a returning migrant

I am Married, 40 years old and have 4 children. I did not attend the French school but attended the Coranic/Islamic school. As such, I do not have any diploma. It is the same for my parents as well as my six brothers and sisters.

I am the eldest in the family and being the eldest comes with a lot of responsibility. The eldest is the head of the family in the absence of the father. He must be a good example and above all help and support his brothers and sisters. He must exhibit exemplary behavior.

Socio-professional activities

My father worked at the airport prior to his death in 1993. As for my mother, she did not work apart from her household duties.

Before irregular migration, I worked as a driver and earned a good living. I was satisfied with my work and my boss treated me well. He made my problems his own. I did this job for several years. It is only since returning that I have been unemployed. Currently, it's a bit hard for me and my family, which is why every day I visit my former colleagues to find something to live on and feed my family my family. Right now, I'm doing nothing but depending on my driver friends for a living. Some give me 500, 300, 200 Francs CFA and others 150 or 100 Francs CFA.

The future

The future looks bleak, very bleak. A future which is likely to be hard and which could encourage more people, not only young people, to take canoes to go to Europe. There is a lack of opportunities for many locals.



Additionally, in the field of transport that I know best, there are less drivers who have a car in good working condition. Many of them go for several days without driving a car, either because they do not have clients or they share the car with other drivers.

Challenges in the Fisheries Sector

Currently, the observation is that fishing is not working. Everybody talks about it. We now hear that there is less fish than before. I can confirm this because when we took the canoe to go to Europe, we had only been able to catch three fish on the Senegalese coast whereas as we got closer towards Morocco, we were able to catch a lot of fish.

Fishing isn't like it used to be because the State has leased the sea to foreign fishing boats. They plunder our coasts and do as they please. Currently, fishermen face enormous challenges because of these foreign fishing boats.

Life of fishermen before the presence of foreign fishing boats

Before, the fishermen lived very good lives. They hardly faced any financial difficulties, including their families. When they came back from a fishing trip everyone knew about it. Their families had money and gifts were handed out. Their return is especially noticed by weddings, baptisms at every corner of the street. At Guet Ndar (fishermen's quarter, Saint-Louis), marriages and baptisms were postponed until the fishermen's return. When they returned, big parties were organized on every corner of the street. It's as if the families were in competition with each other. Each of them wanted to organize the biggest and the most beautiful party. All that is in the past, now fishermen are going through difficult times because foreign fishing boats are taking all the good fish. They have very sophisticated equipment that catches all the fish. They have bait that attracts fish to them. This is why after they pass through; they leave nothing for the Senegalese fishermen apart from small fish, in small quantities. There are even foreign fishing boats that take these small fish to process them into flour. I heard that some fishing boats come from China while others come from Europe.

Foreign fishing boats in conflict with Senegalese fishermen

There are foreign fishing boats which not only take the fish, but also destroy the equipment of the Senegalese fishermen. Senegalese fishermen complain about foreign fishing boats destroying their canoes. On the high seas, they do not give the Senegalese fishermen a break and woe to the canoes that are in their way. Not only do they break their canoes but they sometimes take their nets with them.

There are fishermen who have created an association and contribute towards buying canoes or equipment, nets or motors. There are others who make bank loans to buy these items. Unfortunately, it happens that these fishermen come across foreign fishing boats who destroy their canoes and carry their nets with them.

Foreign fishing boats

The State of Senegal needs to protect the fishing sector. The Government must review the presence of foreign fishing boats along the Senegalese coast. There are some foreign fishing boats that come to the areas reserved for canoes. Most often at night they come to the coast and around 3 or 4 am, they return to the high seas. I think that the permits issued to foreign fishing boats need to be reviewed and measures should be taken by the Senegalese authorities. I do not know how such regulations will be upheld, because our coastguards are not sufficiently equipped to effectively monitor the Senegalese coasts.

Fishing and gas exploration

With the installation of platforms for gas exploration, it is a bit difficult for fishermen. The fish went to hide under the platforms which have now become their breeding ground. Unfortunately, fishermen cannot access these platforms, owing to their distance. Beacons are put up to signal that fishermen should not approach the platforms. I think that in the future, measures must be taken or else many people will be forced to give up fishing.

Agricultural sector

The agricultural sector is experiencing enormous challenges. Some farmers do not have access to seeds, while others do not have land. We can even say that the fields have become insufficient. Added to this, there is the scarcity of rains. Farmers have no control over the rains. In recent years, the rains have started late in some localities while in others there are floods. There are also other concerns such as the obsolete equipment. Farmers work in difficult conditions. They work hard for low yields. When they sell their crops, they can't even pay their debts. This year, many farmers have gone into debt to find fertilizer. You know, with the war in Ukraine, fertilizer has become very expensive, and all the farmers are suffering from the soaring prices, even though they have nothing to do with this war. They don't know Ukrainians or Russians.

Migration domain

With all the difficulties that fishermen and farmers have experienced in recent years and continue to experience, migration is in their eyes as the only answer to get by.

They are all the same as me. They are confronted with challenges of earning a living feeding their families. Every morning, we all wonder how we are going to pay our bills.

This is what prompted me to migrate. This is what drives people to leave. We tell ourselves that we can find work and a decent salary abroad.

2006 to 2008 – From 'Barca or Barsaax' (Go to Barcelona or die) to now – Roles of parents – Effect of COVID-19

In 2006, people got up and boarded canoes to go to Europe. They were children, young people and adults. They all got up to boarded the canoes. For some of them, parents were behind them, they not only gave their blessing, but they financed the trip. Some parents sold their jewelry, others mortgaged their land. Ah yes, they did not sit by idly. The pressure was so strong on some young people that they had no choice. The only option was to leave.

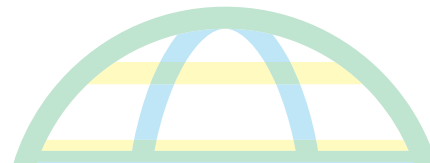
"Barca or Barsaax" (Go to Barcelona or die) is a kind of cry from the heart. I see no difference with what is happening now. Nothing has changed! The people continue to manage as best they can without really being able to live in good conditions. When I talk to young people, it's the same rhetoric. What to do here? They tell me that they all want to migrate. Are young people wrong for wanting to migrate? I don't know. So, I think they're right. Yes. They are right to want to leave because it is hard here. Islam said that the person can be in difficulty until he is allowed to eat from the corpse. We cannot eat dead bodies. We don't want to steal. We don't want to be aggressors. Our parents were good fishermen, and they were satisfied with their work to live with dignity because the sea had fish and enough fish. They didn't need to migrate. This is not the case today. Currently the sea is sold off and it is the foreign fishing boats who make the law.

In the canoe for Europe

When we were in the canoe people were scared. We consoled one other when we were afraid. Me in soul and conscience, I said to myself that if I die during the trip, it is the good Lord who willed it this way. I thought it was my destiny. The only thing that consoled us was that we risk dying while looking for something to support our families. This is how we found strength when we were in the canoe. It is our destiny. It is our destiny. We didn't hurt anyone; we just took our courage in both hands to go to Europe.

Social pressures encouraging travel

In families, parents constantly remind their children and the youth that in order to exist you have to have something in your pocket. It's a way of pushing them to migrate. Currently, in this country, many young people are forced to leave not for themselves but for their parents. They constantly tell them that it is necessary "to have in order to be" and "to be is to have". Currently, in this country if we have nothing we are not respected. It is difficult to say because it is heartbreaking. If you have money, you are everyone's child but if we don't it's the opposite. We are



only the child of his mother, not of his father, but only of his mother. This explains why mothers are back their children's travel plans. Young people take risks because they have no choice. They take risks for a matter of honor. They don't want their mother to be a laughing stock in the eyes of others.

Influence of people who are abroad

It's a shame to say it but it's hard to resist temptation. Every day, friends who are in Europe keep sending us audios, photos to ask us to join them. Oh yeah. Oh yeah. Frankly, I've had enough. All the time, just yesterday, a friend who is in Spain sent me an audio message asking me to join him in Spain. There, I think it's better than here. Oh yeah, it's better than here because here in Senegal you can work for six months to earn peanuts while in Europe it is quite possible to earn 50 euros a day, in the worst case. You can easily make a lot of money. Moreover, it is for this reason that a lot of friends who are in Europe make a lot of money and in a short time they come back to build beautiful houses.

When I was repatriated, what hurt me the most was when the Minister of Foreign Affairs and his agents told us not to take canoes to go to Europe. I said to myself, these people have understood nothing. I said to myself internally "*Kou diar ci weetou armel di yekh  t mo kham lamouy diou*" (Someone who passes a cemetery and groans, knows why he is crying). These politicians did not know why we took so many risks to take the canoes. They ignore our difficulties. They don't know what we live on. A boy of 15, 20, 25 and even 30 years old but who sleeps in his parents' room, it's difficult to ask him not to migrate. He must leave to improve the living conditions of his family. That's the situation.

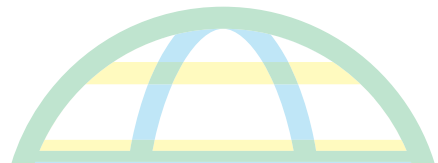
Destinations / countries to migrate

The current wish of young people is to go to Spain or Italy because they are the most welcoming countries in Europe. Everything except France. Migrants are suffering there. Every day on TV we are shown Senegalese who are suffering in France. They have no jobs, they do not enough to live on, and it's too cold. People sleep on the streets. Friends told me that in Spain they live in good conditions. People come to bring them food, clothes, medicine. At Marie Le Pen it is impossible for migrants to live in peace. Everywhere there are police hunting down migrants. We find out before we leave, we watch TV, we send audios and then people tell us about what they are experiencing in Europe. It is on the basis of their messages that we choose the countries where we must go. No, everything except France.

We also don't want to go to Canada, Luxembourg and Switzerland. These countries especially want to welcome graduates, they want to receive people who have degrees. Germany is not bad either because there is work there.

Candidates for migration who are bitten along the way are martyrs

All these people who died during the trip must be considered as jambars (soldiers, martyrs). They died on the battlefield. They preferred to leave to find the necessary means to change the living conditions of their parents. They left to free themselves of the ball and chain attached to their feet. They left to free themselves. They are real martyrs. There are people who say that those who take the canoes are suicidal. No, they are not suicidal. They left to bring happiness to their parents.



The background features a complex, abstract composition of overlapping geometric shapes and lines. On the left and right sides, there are stylized, colorful outlines of globes or spheres, constructed from thick lines in green, blue, and yellow. In the center, a red circle is partially visible, overlaid by a wavy, magenta-colored line that meanders across the lower half of the image. The overall aesthetic is modern and vibrant, with a focus on bold colors and geometric forms.

opportunities

for a fair narrative on migration