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Clara Lecadet

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Chapter Five

Europe Confronted by Its Expelled Migrants

Politics of expelled migrants’ associations in Africa

Clara Lecadet

The spectre of Europe

In a crowded conference room in the centre of Bamako on 15th March 2008, men sitting in the audience raised their hands, asking to be put on the list of speakers, then one after another gave their full name to the moderator in charge of organising the order in which they would speak, stood up and took their place on the platform. They formed a long queue, and each one in turn stepped up to the microphone to express his anger, set out his demand, tell his story or say how difficult he found it to express himself publicly. Together with the militant association members who had organised that day’s event and were themselves speaking, these men shared the experience of having been expelled, some recently, others long ago, from a country to which they had migrated. The meeting was set up as their event, to allow this cohort of anonymous men to say something, however briefly, about the experience which united them all. It aimed, at least symbolically, to convert the taboo and failure around expulsion into a political issue which transcended individuals whilst simultaneously involving them intimately. Each one of these men was to have the chance to transform the wound of personal humiliation into the reassurance of collective protest.
The Malian Expelled Migrants Association (Association Malienne des Expulsés AME), was created in 1996 in Bamako, Mali. Their organisation of events dedicated to giving expelled migrants the chance to speak out, and to setting up a front against expulsion policies, marked the entry of new actors onto the public stage (Lecadet, 2012a). The place taken by AME in social and political life in Mali was in opposition to the progressive implementation of the European policy of returning illegal migrants, and also to corresponding practices within Africa and the rest of the world (De Genova, Peutz, 2010). The media events, demonstrations and debates organised from 1996 onwards by members of this association and its supporters, made expulsion a burning issue and gave expelled migrants the status of an advanced guard in contemporary social struggles in Mali. Their initiative became a popular cause and revitalised the actions of the working class left in Mali from the year 2000 onwards. The legitimacy which they won, and which they had always demanded politically, was based on this process of gathering the experiences of expulsion from individuals who were directly affected by such measures. They had to move outside the traditional framework of mediation and political representation in order to establish their political existence. This positioning and these struggles made political constraints and exclusions imposed by the state into a source of protest and allowed a new collective identity to emerge.

Expelled migrants are in fact the nebula of the European project, its spectral shade. While they are a central concern in the process of building a European migration policy focused on the return of undocumented immigrants, they cease to be a subject of concern once they have been removed. The disappearance of expelled migrants from the national scene and the failure to acknowledge them, are part of the enclosed and united realm of national and European entities, fuelled by the symbolically powerful instrument of expulsion. The way in which Europe
progressively set up its own legal expulsion framework (Carlier 2007) right up to the adoption by the European Parliament in 2008 of “a directive establishing common standards and procedures for Member States, whereby illegally staying third-country nationals may be removed from their territories”, seemed to be oblivious of individuals, even though taking care to guarantee human rights, at least in principle. The gathering of expellees to expose their situation and express claims runs counter to the invisibility that is an inherent consequence of European and national deportation policies. This chapter argues that the “expelled migrants” were given a name through the experience of political constraint and of collective subjectification (Foucault, 1994). Their name, as in numerous other social and political protests, is also the name of the harm that is done to them (Rancière, 2007).

Their organisation as a group made visible a small part of what Peter Nyers has called a “deportspora”, meaning that “abject diaspora” which results from the intensification of expulsion practices throughout the world (Nyers 2003), or what Daniel Kanstroom calls, not without irony, “the new American diaspora”, referring to the unprecedented growth in the number of expulsions from America (Kanstroom, 2012). This diaspora is a logical but unforeseen result. It uncovers a figure from the unconsidered and largely hidden side of expulsion who embodies the outcome of the process of state exclusions and contests it (Lecadet, 2012b). A troublemaker both within and without, this figure uncovers what the expelling countries refuse to acknowledge while redefining the terms of political participation in his country of origin or the country through which he travels.

Expelled migrants thus show a negative picture of European political structures, in both the definition of its methods of statutory membership and its geographical rights. The citizenship which underpins it (Balibar, 1991; Costa-Lacoux, 1992; Hansen, 1999) as well as the control
measures set up at its constantly moving, fragmented and diffuse borders (Andersson, 2014), produce this excessive mass, a cohort of anonymous people sent back to the airports of African capitals on specially chartered planes or individually on commercial flights, and also in police lorries to the desert borders between Morocco and Algeria, between Mauritania and Mali, between Algeria and Mali (Lecadet, 2014a, 2014b, 2013), or between Libya and Niger (Brachet, 2009), a more or less direct consequence of the externalisation of the frontiers of Europe to third countries (Blanchard, 2006; Haddad, 2008; Hyndman, Mountz, 2008). Thus expelled migrants are also figures who embody the questions posed by the demarcation of European space and the extension of its rights beyond European soil. European return policy has indeed been strongly encouraged and supported by a policy of cooperation with third countries, including economic partnerships and shared migration control, norms and legislation. The rise of the expellees was a way of confronting European migration politics inside and beyond its borders.

The campaigns led by AME have enabled the emergence and spread of a critique of European migration policy by expellees, in a period punctuated by the various stages of the European communitisation of a policy for returning illegal migrants, and their corresponding dramas at the threshold of the Spanish enclave of Ceuta and Melilla, in the Mediterranean and in the areas where expelled migrants arrive (Fekete, 2006). This political critique, in conjunction with the stand taken by the Malian left, illegal migrants’ associations and networks for the defence of migrants in Europe, has given rise to a political demand to both Europe and Mali. In the wake of AME, numerous expelled migrants’ associations were created from the year 2000 onwards, not only in Mali, but also in Togo, Cameroon and Senegal, although by no means all of them entered into political confrontation with Europe or their own state. The complexity and heterogeneity of the expelled migrants’ associations in Africa springs first of all from the
diversity of national contexts and the possibility or difficulty of protesting. They are also due, however, to opposing positions taken by associations: while some choose to denounce expulsion and the criminalisation of migration by political confrontation, others adopt more consensual means of protest, favouring the care of expelled migrants by humanitarian organisations or taking part in campaigns for the respect of migration law led jointly by governments, the International Organization for Migration (OIM) and the European Union (EU) (Pécoud, 2012). The response to Europe was thus nothing but homogeneous.

The genetic link between the conditions and places of expulsion and the emergence of protests by migrants themselves allows us to understand the politicization of their experiences and their day-to-day existence. Their groupings in their countries of origin, in those through which they have travelled or in those to which they have been sent, enable us to comprehend the social and political reorganisation caused by expulsion, as well as the different positions to which these give rise. The analysis of the issues raised by the politicization of expellees in Africa is an extension of studies on the progressive institutionalisation and increased legal intervention of measures for the expulsion of foreigners in the United States (Ngai, 2005; Kanstroom, 2007) and in Europe (Noiriel 1991; Fischer 2013). It allows us to connect the institutional, political and social issues relating to expulsion mechanisms and policies on foreigners in a country illegally, with their impact on the countries to which the expelled migrants are sent. In particular, it enables us to see how the reconfiguration of political space provoked by the European Union’s desire to set up a “global approach” to migration, influences the very nature of protests on the African continent, with the diffusion of certain slogans and the gathering of some of the expelled migrants’ associations in demonstrations along state borders which they contest. The forced reintegration of expellees into the society they left raises new questions relative not only to the
possible status of such migrants, their (re)registration as citizens, and the possibility and forms of protest, but also to the messages that they want to bring to public attention, relating principally to criticism of, or allegiance to, state policies.

The emergence and evolution of expelled migrants’ associations in Africa:

Giving “expelled migrants” a name: AME, a pioneering initiative

In October 1996, prompted by the feeling that if expulsion policies were to be criticised effectively and pressure was to be brought on governments, then expelled migrants needed to become visible in the public arena, Ousmane Diarra, a Malian shopkeeper expelled from Angola, founded the Malian Expelled Migrants Association (AME). Together with other compatriots, some who like him had been expelled from Angola, others expelled from Zambia, Tanzania and Europe, he regularly visited the Ministry for Malians Abroad, to be told that the fate of expelled migrants was not part of their responsibilities, and was referred to the High Council for Malians Abroad, a body representing the diaspora which in fact has very little power. After many informal meetings on the premises of the Delegation for Malians Abroad and vain appeals to the government, Ousmane Diarra and his supporters created an association whose name symbolised the reappropriation of the expelled migrants’ position by affirming their collective existence. Thus the name of the association, a reminder of their forgotten existence yet also a statement of it, moved expelled migrants from anonymity to a collective assertion of the experience of rejection, and was part of the action through which a long list of forgotten people forged for themselves a name which acknowledged the harm that had been done to them.
The reasons for this movement seem few, but in fact they were a step forward in relation to the shameful silence surrounding expulsion (Tounkara, 2013): making expelled migrants the object and the agents of protest in public life, promoting solidarity amongst migrants and welcoming those who had been expelled. Lacking their own space, the expelled migrants sought to find a space in which they could provide evidence for their rights and also, and perhaps above all, in concrete terms, provide a place, if only a temporary one, for those who returned destitute and without family or friends. Little by little AME gained credibility and forged a reputation for itself on the ground by putting in place reception measures, with those arriving at Bamako-Sénou airport being greeted by a member of the association and found lodging on the association’s premises (Dünnwald, 2010).

It also brought to the fore issues relating to the return of expelled migrants and their possible or impossible reintegration in their country of origin: their treatment and their welcome on arrival, the possibility of legal action to recover lost possessions or unpaid wages, for the right to go back or to return to their professional life, as well as the joint responsibility of governments in putting in place such measures. These legal, social and political issues opened up the unconsidered and what was often seen as politically indeterminate field of life after expulsion. Guided by the principle of self-help, AME aspired to give expelled migrants an organisation for collective representation and participation, which would enable them to make their voices heard in public life and influence the political choices made by the Malian and European authorities.

“The voice of the expelled migrant”
“The Voice of the expelled migrant” is a manifesto document of several pages, drawn up in 1997 shortly after the creation of AME. The conciseness and effectiveness of its title show the importance of the question of language and the various issues around speaking at events and the different language registers used in collective action. The desire to impose a name and an identity was in fact, from the 1990s onwards, an explicit motive behind various protests (Von Busekist, 2008). The subversive, anti-establishment, not to say revolutionary dimension of words spoken by individuals who are socially marginalised or whose existence is denied politically (De Certeau, 2008), is often considered a political act.

In “The Voice of the expelled migrant” we can find echoes of issues raised by the sans-papiers movement in France at the same period, relating to autonomous struggles and the importance of naming as a rallying factor (Diop, 1997; Cisse, 1999). In similar fashion, the emergence of expelled migrants onto the public stage is linked to a process of speaking out on expulsion and on its double status as an experience and a political issue. In this foundation document, the signatories stated the need for collective action in the face of the Malian government’s indifference to their fate, and the repeated refusal of their request for a meeting. Malians living abroad, they wrote, were nonetheless active contributors to the economy and the political life of the country. Instead of recognising this contribution, however, the Malian government was complicit with the practices imposed by other countries to the detriment of its own nationals: the expelled migrants therefore regretted having been kept at a distance from negotiations between the Malian and Angolan governments on the question of goods confiscated from Malians expelled from Angola, and furthermore accused the Malian government of facilitating the expulsion of Malians from France by making money out of the passes issued by its consulate, without which expulsions could not be carried out.
The originality of the central argument, which determined the nature of subsequent protests, was to make the expulsion of Malians an issue relating to colonial and postcolonial history (Mbembé, 2000). When France, which had held sway over the former French Sudan up until the proclamation of independence by the Malian Federation in 1960, closed legal access to migrant workers in the 1970s, this reopened the “wound” of colonial history. Memory and history form the background of the expelled migrant’s move to collective action. The violence which they suffered, being used then rejected by France, found its echo in the sacrifice of the tirailleurs (infantrymen recruited in the French colonial territories) in the service of the French army (Mann, 2003; Gary-Tounkara, 2013): “C’est cette France pour la 1ère et la 2ème fois, de 1914-1918, 1939-1945, qui est venue ramasser des millions d’Africains, des bras valides je veux dire, du bétail et produit alimentaires dont personne ne peut estimer, qui sont partis pour ne plus revenir”. [It was France who, for the 1st and 2nd time, in 1914-1918 and 1939-1945, gathered millions of Africans, able-bodied men, cattle and food products of unknown value, who left, never to return]. But the postcolonial government was also implicated: the inability of the Malian state to protect its nationals was presented as the major reason for the unilateral nature of expulsions, the flouting of rights and the confiscation of goods, without any compensation being demanded from the expelling nations.

“The Voice of the expelled migrant” was thus first and foremost an address to the state of Mali. The final appeal illustrates the desire of the expelled migrants to have a government capable of imposing real political force to prevent expulsions and to obtain the restitution of lost possessions: “L’Association Malienne des expulsés sollicite aujourd’hui la force vive et décisive malienne dans cette lutte afin que les biens confisqués en Angola, en France ou ailleurs soient immédiatement restitués sans conditions ; que les expulsions soient immédiatement arrêtées, que
les autorités diplomatiques maliennes en France soient remplacées, que les expulsés se retournent dans leurs pays hôtes, que des mesures sécurisantes soient prises pour protéger les personnes et leurs biens” [The Malian Expelled Migrants Association today calls for strong and decisive Malian action in this struggle, for goods confiscated in Angola, France or elsewhere to be immediately and unconditionally handed back; for expulsions to be stopped with immediate effect, for expelled migrants to return to their host nations, and for safety measures to be taken to protect individuals and their goods.]

**Expelled migrants, heralds of the parties and media of the Malian left**

The first notable action by AME, which rapidly earned it the reputation of an autonomous, anti-establishment force, was a march organised in 1997 to demand the freeing of 77 Malians who had been sent back from France on “Debré’s 38th charter flight” and imprisoned by the Malian authorities on their arrival in Bamako after the death of a French policeman during a riot inside the plane. AME roundly denounced the double punishment suffered by the migrants, considered as criminals and punished as such. The prisoners were freed two weeks later and AME, backed by a very politicised support committee, continued its intervention via communiqués and media interviews which condemned the conditions in which migrants were held and expelled in Europe and Africa, and tried to convert the social taboo of expulsion into a truly political issue, including the responsibility of the Malian government. AME benefitted from significant media coverage in opposition, left-wing and communist newspapers. Radio Kayira, created in 1992 by militants from the democratic movement to promote popular expression and the claims of associations defending the most vulnerable (peasants stripped of their land,
immigrants) and baptised “the radio of the voiceless”, gave a great deal of air-time to AME and publicised their protests: at the same time, the SADI party, lead by the deputy Oumar Mariko, who was also the owner of the radio station, made expelled migrants a feature of his political activity.

This radical, revolutionary party in the tradition of African socialism based on Marxist and collectivist theories (Ndiaye, 1980), made expelled migrants the figurehead of its denunciation of a neo-colonial, capitalist system organised by Europe with the complicity of African states. The “Declaration on the repression of African immigrants” published on 16th October 2005 following the death of migrants at the fence of the Spanish enclave of Ceuta and Melilla, pointed out Europe’s responsibility in the impoverishment of the African continent and in setting up a repressive policy on African immigrants: “Au lieu d’apporter des réponses politiques aux causes structurelles de la pauvreté et la misère qui gagnent le continent Africain, lesquelles sont les résultats des politiques d’ajustement structurel et du pillage néocolonial de ses ressources stratégiques par les sociétés multinationales, l’Europe continue de surélever les grillages de fer et déployer des fils de fer barbelés. Les immenses richesses stratégiques (comme l’or et le pétrole) sont pillées sans vergogne, tandis que les victimes de ce pillage, c’est à dire l’immense majorité des africains sont interdits de franchir l’espace Schengen.. Quel paradoxe!” [Instead of bringing a political response to the structural causes of the poverty and destitution spreading through the African continent, and which are the result of structural adjustment policies and the neo-colonial pillage of its strategic resources by multinational companies, Europe continues to build barbed-wire fences. Immense strategic wealth (such as gold and oil) is shamelessly plundered, while the victims of this, that is, the great majority of Africans, are forbidden to enter the Schengen Area... What a paradox!] The formulation of proposals for the
better protection of Malian nationals abroad was opposition at national level, but also an attempt
to erect barriers to the unilateral imposition of European migration policy on the return of
foreigners illegally within its borders. The party also took part in an international political
movement against the imposition of restrictive migration policies by the European Union, carried
forward by several Latin American countries.

The expelled migrants thus contributed to a renewal of the left-wing working class
struggle. AME was supported by Sanfin, the newspaper of the workers’ movement in Mali,
which regarded the struggles of the expelled migrants as an extension of the struggle of the
working class, a position which AME seized upon by gradually putting itself in the avant-garde
of contemporary social movements in Mali. Sanfin claimed an affiliation with the African
Independence Party, founded on 15th September 1957 in Thiès, Senegal, a pan-African, working
class, anti-colonialist, socialist party related to various national liberation movements across the
world. Through its chief editor, Mohamed Tabouré, who had stood by the expelled migrants
from their first meetings in 1996, the paper developed a radical critique of French and European
policies. The anti-imperialist credo of Sanfin stressed the effect of imperialist pressures and the
directives of a worldwide system on measures for the forced return of migrants. Leader writers
thus regularly attacked the question of development aid, trying to show its increasingly close link
to migration issues (Daum, 1997).

AME, however, kept away from any political label likely to diminish the originality of its
stand and the credibility of its actions. Although the SADI party was an essential support for
AME in parliament (in January 2010, the SADI-PARENA parliamentary group was the main
opposition alliance in the Malian national assembly and published a communiqué in which it
called on the government to act against the expulsion of Malian nationals abroad), AME retained
a defiant approach to all forms of institutional politics, which led it to keep its distance from parties, even when the most politicised members of its supporting collective wanted to use their close links with the association as an argument in their electoral campaign in 2010. This desire to seek representation for expelled migrants, which was at odds with traditional politics and which questioned the representative nature of the association itself (in reality, only a very small number of migrants were involved in collective action), raised the issue of the room for action and what forms of action the expelled migrants could use.

The complexity and heterogeneity of the movement carried forward by associations of expellees in Africa: Mali, Togo, Cameroon

If AME was a pioneer, it was also because it existed in a political context which allowed its emergence and the rapid spread of its slogans. The democratic liberalisation of the country in 1991 allowed those on the margins of society to take their place in public life (Daum, Le Guay, 2005). From the year 2000 onwards, other associations created by expellees appeared in different African countries. The disparity of their political contexts, however, demonstrates the difficulty that expelled migrants faced in creating a space they could call their own. Each association had to adapt to the political constraints which hindered or authorised its existence. In Togo, where in 2008 Togolese migrants expelled from Germany had founded the Togolese Expelled Migrants Association (Association Togolaise des Expulsés, ATE) (Basaran, Eberl, 2009) following the Mali model, demonstrations were limited by the sway which the regime held over public life, and the expellees, the majority of whom had fled Togo for political reasons, experienced hostility and distrust from the authorities on their return. The exile of a large number of political
opponents of the regime following the failure of the transition to democracy in the early 1990s had led the regime to suspect the diaspora of working abroad for its overthrow. On their return, the expelled migrants, immediately classed by the police at Lomé airport as enemies of the regime, were often imprisoned during the 1990s and into the early years of the 21st century, or had to negotiate their freedom through contacts or by resorting to bribery with significant sums of money. Their association, in a country in which all forms of opposition were silenced, was built up discretely and by a very cautious approach to the issues tackled in their public meetings.

Thus, rather than choosing direct confrontation with those in power as AME did, ATE moved on more unifying and consensual questions, such as legal forms of migration and the contribution made by the diaspora to the Togolese economy. It was similar to a number of associations that were beginning to form, such as Attac Togo or Visions Solidaires, which were trying to build bridges in Lomé between the authorities and the demands of civil society, and which in December 2010 organised the first Togolese social forum. If ATE and AME were inspired by the same aims – to bring expellees together, to improve the conditions on which they returned, to promote the emergence of an organisation and a way of telling their own stories – it also had to legitimise its contribution to public life without offending a wary dictatorship.

Because of politics and corruption, associations of expellees in Togo and Cameroon had long been waiting for official acknowledgement which would legalise their existence. Unlike Mali, these countries, which had almost always discretely recognised the sovereignty of other countries in relation to their migration policies, had never considered their migrants as an essential part of national construction: the issue of emigration simply had no place in public debate. ATE or the Cameroonian association Welcome Back Cameroon, founded in 2006, thus claim their links to AME’s pioneering initiative; Razak Aboubacar and Oscar Eyezo’o, the presidents of these
associations consider AME’s founder, Ousmane Diarra, as a titular figure in the organisation of expellees.

The overall picture of expelled migrants associations is, however, complicated. The gathering of expellees through associations can turn into cooperation with international agencies and an allegiance to state policies. In Cameroon, where the power of associations was growing and where in the early 2000s there were an increasing number of NGOs working on projects financed by Europe and the United Nations (notably on migration and citizenship), many associations dealing with migration were created, sometimes through necessity, often by opportunism. The contrasting picture provided by these associations in Cameroon led to a number of initiatives and campaigns which set the defenders of free circulation against those who were leading active, dissuasive campaigns against what OIM called “the dangers of illegal immigration”. These differences of position in the face of migration policy issues reveal tension and dissension even among associations of expellees, showing that the politicization of expellees gives rise to a variety of actions around expulsion, which cover the whole spectrum from alliance with, to opposition to, political authorities. Statements by expelled migrants’ associations could occasionally converge with European political interests. For instance, the Cameroonian Repatriated Migrants Association for the Struggle against Clandestine Migration (Association des Rapatriés et de lutte contre l’Emigration Clandestine du Cameroun, ARECC) created in 2005, chose a radical position, since these young expellees from the Spanish enclave of Ceuta and Melilla led media campaigns warning of the dangers of clandestine migration. On their own initiative and backed by the experiences they had been through, they mounted a photographic exhibition showing migration tragedies, which toured various large towns in Cameroon with the aim of encouraging young people to conform to migration laws. Robert Alain Lipothy, the
The president of ARECC, was also completely opposed to the idea that expelled migrants could become protesters; he passed harsh judgements on the protests against expulsion in Mali and in other African forums, which he considered pointless unrest. He had no illusions as to the influence of these demonstrations and considered that the authority of governments was undisputed. Their action was part of the dissuasive campaign by public authorities and the OIM which also took place in Mali, Senegal and other African countries, discouraging young people from leaving. Self-help by expelled migrants could thus be used by governments as part of their injunction to respect legal forms of migration.

**The collective organisation of expellees and the construction of a European policy on returning illegal migrants: mirrored policies: European policy as a catalyst of protest in the 2000s**

The creation of the Schengen area in 1985, which set up an infra-European free circulation area, and removed controls out to Europe’s external frontiers, had a major impact on the redrafting or adoption by the countries of the European community of policies aimed at regulating the issues of residence and the expulsion of foreigners. European states have very diverse histories in regard to immigration and the affirmation of national identity. The effects of the European project and of these individual national histories have contributed to the development of a return policy at European level which nonetheless leaves individual countries with a fair amount of room for manoeuvre. The agreements reached at European level thus produced a progressive redrafting of immigration policies at national level, while the basic principle of expelling foreigners became a community given (Carlier, 2007, 270-271). The years
from 1990 onwards therefore saw shared methods in relation to information about illegal immigrants and sending them back (Carlier, 2007, 259). In 1991 the member states of the Schengen Area signed an initial readmission agreement with Poland, which obliged it to authorise the readmission of any of its nationals subject to an expulsion decision. Other communal readmission agreements were to follow. The liberalisation of borders within Europe was accompanied by an increased preoccupation with the question of harmonising immigration and asylum policies. After 1994, several member countries, supported by the UNHCR, proposed the relocation of asylum claims, to countries that were the source of migration (Noll, 2003), and asked for a collective system for the rapid return of those asylum seekers whose status as refugees was not recognised and who needed no other form of international protection. This system would be based on readmission agreements negotiated collectively by the EU with the countries of origin (Rodier, Saint-Saens, 2007). Joint flights for expelling illegal immigrants were considered at European level at a meeting of Interior Ministers of the G5 in 2005, and were put in place in 2010 jointly by Great Britain and France for the expulsion of Afghans. These different elements came together in a formalised return policy with the adoption by the European Parliament of the “directive on common standards and procedures in Member States for returning illegally staying third-country nationals” in 2008. This seemed to mark a turning point in the development of a European migration policy, as it gave systematised and regulated scope for the return of illegal immigrants.

Up until 1995 the idea of drawing up bilateral agreements on the readmission of illegal migrants only existed in recommendations in European legislation. It constituted the negotiating base from which each member state would have to work with a third country. Against the background of this common framework set out by Europe, everything was still to be drawn up
and each country had wide room for manoeuvre in which to conclude partnerships with countries with which, for historic, economic and/or political reasons, it had a special relationship. Rather than agreements dealing exclusively with the readmission of migrants, which were politically risky (they could well be seen as a form of unilateral action), countries preferred mixed agreements in which readmission appeared as a simple “migration clause” in, for example, an economic partnership. What had been seen as a possibility, case by case, by the European Council became the norm in reality. A subsequent decision by the Schengen executive committee dated 15th December 1997, raised the issue of the methods by which individuals were to be identified within the framework of readmission agreements, and established a list of indicators and evidence that would prove the illegality and the identity of the migrant. These agreements were not only the subject of discrete negotiations, but were not always immediately identifiable. A number of countries signed such agreements, others regularly opposed any moves to facilitate the expulsion of their nationals, but in very few countries was this issue a matter for public debate led by the media.

The movement led by AME and FORAM [Forum for a different Mali] from 2008 until early 2009 against the signing of agreements by the Malian government was a first. In the call for mobilization against readmission agreements by the associations’ collective Overseas Migrants (MOM) on 4th June 2009, Mali is cited as an example of a successful joint movement by two countries against the signing of such agreements. This call stressed the need to dissociate public funds from the development of migration clauses which offended against the dignity of the individual. The campaign launched by AME and FORAM in 2008 was at first presented as a continuation of European protests against the extension of the powers of Frontex, the European agency for the surveillance of Europe’s external borders; the involvement of AME in an
international movement opposing expulsions increased its legitimacy and credibility locally. The originality of the campaign lay in the fact that the questions raised by the identification process underlying the expulsion of illegal immigrants in Europe brought new demands to the fore in relation to the country of origin.

A movement aimed at pushing the state to become fully involved in the protection of its nationals in relation to expulsion methods and in preventing them, was supported by AME and also by a part of the press and the Malian political class. At the head of this movement, AME developed a statement which went further than simply denouncing expulsion, and exposed more technical, and less well-known aspects of the practice of sending migrants back home. It warned against any suggestion that Malian police should accompany expelled migrants on their return journey, as was proposed in a pre-project, which would help to strengthen the feeling that the Malian state was complicit in the expulsion of its nationals. It also condemned the fact that increased expulsions in North Africa had transformed Mali into a country in which migrants of all nationalities ended up, and it labelled as “a human dumping ground” the ghettos of Tinzawaten, where undocumented migrants were left by Algerian police after being collectively deported from Tamanrasset, Algeria, after an exhausting 3 - 4 day journey in the desert and where they had settled self-organised shelters according to their different nationalities.

Demands concerning state policies were addressed both to the States which expelled migrants and to those which received them. Demonstrations and public statements took place in the margins of negotiations with the Malian authorities led by the French government envoy, Patrick Stéfanini. They involved a number of demands: freedom of movement, the sovereignty of the Malian state as an argument in favour of the non-subjugation of its policies to French migration policies, and the denunciation of the inhuman nature of expulsions. The movement
against readmission agreements gave substance to the claims of this association, by linking its statements on the disgraceful conditions of expulsion to a wholly political demand in relation to the Malian state. The stigmatization of European policy and the denunciation of the criminalization of migrants were accompanied by an injunction to the Malian state in terms of the protection and defence afforded to its nationals. Ousmane Diarra pleaded in favour of a review of the balance of power between countries in carrying out these measures, so that one country would not always have to submit to the policies of another, and said that he wanted to contribute to setting up a policy which would be designed from the migrants’ point of view. In October 2008 AME’s campaign widened and targeted the European directive on returning illegally staying third-country nationals and the treaty on immigration and asylum. By taking part in a counter summit on 17th and 18th October 2008 against the 2nd Euro-African summit on immigration (held in Paris on 20th and 21st October 2008), it restated its desire for the organisations defending migrant rights to take up the question of freedom of movement. AME then actively participated in marches organised by the Euro-African network on migration in Congo, Mali, Mauritania, Cameroon, Benin and Morocco. Other demonstrations on migration took place in Africa and Europe. The movement against the signing of readmission agreements took on such momentum that the President of Mali, Amadou Toumani Touré, announced in his New Year greetings to the country on 31st December 2008 that he would be holding a forum on emigration. Sympathising with the difficulties experienced by Malian immigrants and pointing the finger at the restrictive nature of migration policies, he called for a public meeting on these questions that would go beyond what he judged to be the sterility of moral indignation. The demonstrations by expelled migrants thus had the paradoxical effect of pushing the President to a
real politicization of the debate on expulsions, on which the government had always shown prudence, not to say a wait-and-see policy.

On Saturday, 10th January 2009, a meeting was held at the headquarters of AME. A statement was made reaffirming the view of civil society organisations that the government must not sign the agreements. Aminata Dramane Traoré defended the idea of a resistance specific to Mali. The final refusal of Malian government to sign these agreements was the main outcome of this protest (Soukouna, 2011), which revealed the communitisation of European expulsion policy, in so far as some of the demonstrations were based on the European policy agenda.

European policy and the politics of expelled migrants mirrored each other. The opposition to European policy represented by AME illustrates Jacques Rancière’s view that politics cannot be reduced to the institutions which organise the distribution of activities and roles in a society, but emerges from those very fractures and tensions between the practice of governments and what they produce in terms of the formation of collectives in the struggle (Rancière, 2007). These movements created a space of political confrontation and critique, which illustrated a struggle taking place not only at national level but also at a point of tension and relationship of force between states.

The figure of the expelled migrant was born out of a doubly impossible, doubly forbidden political affiliation. Undocumented immigrants are usually denied the political rights related to the nationality, and in this sense, the emergence of collective sans-papiers movements in France was seen as a crisis of citizenship and democracy (Balibar, 1998; Terray, 2008). For Etienne Balibar, they made it essential to consider the idea of a republican citizenship which would give immigrants access to certain aspects of citizenship, even without formal nationalisation.
The issue of the relationship of migrants to the state and to citizenship also arises from the point of view of their country of origin. In the 1980s, the progressive organization of the Malian diaspora via pressure from the state, which thus hoped to maintain links with, and control over, financial operations and the money contributed by migrants to their country of origin, went hand in hand with the emerging criticism of a double standard in the citizenship status given to migrants. Political criticism of differentiated citizenship, according to whether an individual was either an immigrant contributing to the general well-being of all, or an expelled migrant marginalized by public authorities, indirectly showed expulsion as an experience of material loss, moral harm and social delegitimization in a special report on migration published in the review Jamana in 1987: “This is so that humiliation should end, so that the migrant should not be considered a full citizen when he is earning and when all is going well, and then left on one side when he comes face to face with problems: illness, expulsion without compensation, etc.”

The issues around citizenship raised by both illegal migrants in Europe and those who are expelled from their country of origin make up the figure of the expelled migrant. It is by affirming this doubly impossible existence in politics that this figure finds political identity.

**The European “global approach”: Towards a depoliticization of expulsion?**

The European Union has been in favour of a global return policy, in which third-countries would agree to both migration control and expulsion. The unilateralism of expulsion policies would thus be overtaken by a return policy recognised and accepted by all the parties involved. Antje Ellermann has analysed the genesis of this “global approach” to return in relation to Germany (Ellermann, 2008). In 1994 the European Commission published a paper on asylum
and migration policies which promoted a global approach to migration control that would go beyond any internal national policy, with the aim of integrating security, trade and development elements. The idea of an approach to migration control favouring reciprocity shows clearly the way in which the European Union tried to overcome difficulties in the practice of expulsion by creating a political model combining politics and economics, thereby sheltering it from criticism of the unilateral and hegemonic nature of expulsion. At the European Council meeting in Seville in 2002, the European Union advocated a “global approach to migration” which aimed to create cooperation between the countries of origin, of transit and of residence of migrants in the implementation of European migration policy. The post-expulsion period was thus the object of increased political commitment by individual countries, international agencies and NGOs, anxious to legitimise forced return by paying greater attention to the difficulties it generated in the countries of origin. Migration policies which were developed and put into practice at different levels and which involved various agencies (governments, international agencies, NGOs, private organisations etc.), tried to reconcile expulsion practices with measures aimed at assisting returning migrants, following the classic procedure of adding a humanitarian touch to the repression which such policies represented (Agier, 2003)

The controversial establishment of the Centre for Migration, Information and Management (CIGEM) in Bamako in 2009, a pilot project by the European Union, was part of this process of legitimising return policy through increased partnerships with third-countries. Born out of cooperation between the Malian government and the European Commission responding to the migration phenomenon, CIGEM aimed to help Mali define its migration policy in response to the preoccupations of potential migrants, those returning and expatriate Malians. The first tenders invited by this institution in 2009 were to finance associations for welcoming
and assisting expelled migrants. While AME refused to respond, wanting to avoid reinforcing expulsion measures through the politically organised management of reception centres for expellees, other associations such as the Association for Central African Expellees in Mali (ARACEM), created in 2006 by Roméo N’Tamag and Patrice Boukar, two Cameroonian cousins who had been expelled from Algeria, the Association of Migrants returning to Kidal (AMRK), founded in 2008 by Modibo Diakité in Kidal to help expellees from Algeria, the Association for Return, Work and Dignity, which grew out of a regrouping by Aminata Dramane Traoré of expellees from Ceuta and Melilla in 2005, all set up reception centres for expelled migrants thanks to this finance. Even though ARACEM regularly took part in debates organised by AME, it focussed on the social insecurity experienced by expellees; from 2009 onwards it gradually put in place a humanitarian-style welcome system, offering lodging and medical care to expelled migrants from Algeria and Libya, in partnership with the NGOs Medico International and Médecins du Monde. ARTD, a partner of the OIM, also organised the reception of expellees in Bamako in 2011 and followed up on projects sponsored by the OIM for the long-term integration of expelled migrants in their country of origin.

The close relations between the expelled migrants’ associations created in Mali and northern NGOs, as well as with international agencies in charge of migration issues, transformed them somehow into administrators of social and medical help for expellees. The establishment of CIGEM as well as subsidies from the OIM and NGOs transformed self-help initiatives by expelled migrants and led to the emergence of a post-expulsion scene where European political interests met humanitarian-style management. CIGEM’s financing of expelled migrants’ associations in 2009 on the one hand, and the increased partnerships between these associations and European NGOs on the other (Médecins du Monde, Medico International, Cimade), was
both a vital resource for them, since they received no public funding, and a help in reorienting their activities towards strictly humanitarian post-expulsion work. This structural dependency meant that there was a hiatus between the emergence of expellees as a political entity and the formatting imposed by the humanitarian aspect – making these associations a hybrid product of self-help and western humanitarian concerns. In some ways, they were part of extended expulsion measures which they supplemented with their social or humanitarian contribution.

The awareness campaigns by the Ministry for Malians Abroad and African Integration and the OIM on the dangers of illegal immigration (Pécoud, 2012) can also be seen as part of this “European global approach”, since they were aimed at dissuading migrants from leaving. Although in Mali they were considered by most protest associations as simply an agent for the implementation of European migration policies, some of these associations did in fact testify to the dangers of the venture. Such opposing views on the part of these associations demonstrate the coexistence of AME’s demands on behalf of expellees with the participation of other associations in the prevention of unregulated migration led by the Malian government and European politicians. Similar tensions were at work in Cameroon when the Camaroonian Repatriated Migrants Association for the Struggle against Clandestine Migration (ARECC) chose to run media campaigns on the dangers of clandestine immigration.

While AME thus managed to raise a dissident voice which the Malian government could no longer ignore in its talks on migration policy – in 2008, the “Bamako Appeal” asked the Malian government to fight against expulsion – it was also increasingly asked to take part in consultations on establishing a national migration policy, which the Malian government was holding under combined pressure from the EU and agencies overseeing migration (IOM, CIGEM), with the aim of harmonising migration policies in Europe and Africa. Furthermore,
members of AME met several times with representatives from the European Parliament in 2010 and 2011, and in 2011 took part in a consultation meeting on a global approach to migration organised by the EU in Dakar. The commitment by the EU to questions raised by post-expulsion as well as its pro-active policy on the adoption of a legal migration framework by African countries, had an effect on the make-up of the associative picture which the expellees had initiated.

Opposition to expulsions in a new political arena:

Expellees caught between emancipation and exploitation

The public recognition of self-help movements is an ambiguous process. AME’s first meetings with the Minister for Malians Abroad and the French ambassador in Bamako in 2008 showed the symbolic weight of the pressure brought to bear by the association against the readmission agreements, but they were also indicative of the interest shown by the Malian and international political class in the “global approach” to migration policies promoted by the EU. The presence of CIGEM and the OIM in Bamako made the drawing up and adoption by the Malian parliament of a legislative framework on migration in 2011 inevitable, a process that was interrupted by the war which broke out in Mali in 2012. These bodies all consulted AME during the process. Seizing the opportunity of having its voice heard by the political authorities, the association was nevertheless wholly aware of the political exploitation in which they were involved. Those meetings with the French ambassador were certainly helpful in ensuring that submissions on family reunification for expelled individuals were examined; but the ambassador also tried to bring up again unsigned joint agreements on managing migration flows and used the
association’s network to inform migrants that they could now make appointments with the French consulate via the internet. At a hearing in November 2011 in the French Senate, at the invitation of the socialist senator Richard Yung, the association raised questions relating to the situation of the sans-papiers in France and expellees in Mali, but it also accepted expulsion as an inherent part of European policy from then on.

The paradoxes of AME’s political legitimisation can be seen in the difficulty it has in holding onto a purely oppositional position and not becoming an alibi for the construction of institutional policies. Consultations with different elements of civil society are a part of that search for consensus which is a crucial ingredient in the workings of European political institutions. All struggles founded on self-help organisations of marginalised people probably run the risk of exploitation and hybridisation. Combining the consultation process with maintaining a critical stand is a difficult balance when politics is itself operating at various levels. The different levels at which AME was involved were emblematic of the concerted action by governments, the EU, NGOs and international agencies in trying to set out the foundations of policies governing migration. AME was thus caught between its initial drive – to encourage representation for expelled migrants and to oppose the measures that oppressed them – and its progressive inclusion in the political consultation process. This double bind calls into question the possibility and significance of a policy for expellees, the room for action and also the risks of exploitation run by a protest movement which tries to establish the collective existence of people with no political status.

These different levels of involvement are, however, equally emblematic of the make-up of the protest arena and of a political critique which goes beyond state boundaries. Worldwide social forums, migration forums, social forums in Africa and Europe, workshops organised by
African networks, forums and summits organised by networks for the defence of migrants’ rights in Europe and across the world, all make up a transnational mobilization arena which seems to be the start of a movement running counter to the powers that are reconfiguring politics through attempts at a “global approach” to migration. Social forums and counter-summits are constitutive of what somehow looks like a "Global public space" characteristic of the 2000s, when some issues immediately took on global characteristics and followed a process of transnationalization of social movements (Baeza, Bonnefoy, Thiollet, 2005).

These forums in fact produce means of collective representation for migrants, as can be seen in the adoption in 2006 of the World Charter of Migrants (coordinated by Ousmane Diarra, president of AME), which was proclaimed again in Gorée, on the fringe of the World social forum in Dakar in 2011. The creation of the World Assembly of Migrants, of which AME is a founding member, in Bouznika in 2008, and of Justice without Borders for Migrants of which it is president, is also part of this effort to increase representation for migrants which extends beyond national limits and ensures a better defence of their rights. Establishing a dialogue on migration on an African and worldwide scale, in which civil society organisations are regularly consulted and encouraged to formulate recommendations, opens up yet more representative areas for AME and other migrants’ associations, while also involving them in a process with the final aim of strengthening the development and implementation of migration policies promoted by international authorities: by way of example, a workshop where associations pooled their ideas on intra-regional migration in West Africa in Bamako in 2010, or the high level talks on migration organised under the aegis of the United Nations in New York in 2013. AME’s history is caught in this tension between the desire for representation for those who until now have been deprived of a political existence, and its incorporation into a general process of legitimising the
coercion of migrants. Slipping from radical protest demanding a change in the political paradigm into a more or less forced allegiance to a policy on expellees put together by governments, international agencies on migration and NGOs, exposes expelled migrants’ associations to the reproach of being nothing more than an alibi for perpetuating expulsion.

The expulsion frontier is the mobilization frontier

The existence of joint protests between expelled migrants’ associations in Africa allows us, however, to overcome at times the disparities and difficulties of different national contexts. The link between some of these associations and the alter-globalization movement and their partnership with European anti-racist networks, as well as the networks that they have built across the African continent, explain the implementation of joint protests. Such occasions are rare, as associations develop first and foremost at a local and national level, and deal with urgent situations generated by problems particular to the expulsions experienced by their own country. Nonetheless, the organisation of social forums in Africa enables these associations to meet and to devise action in public life on issues related to borders, freedom of movement and expulsion. Such action operates at both national and transnational level and in so doing tries to push aside and subvert the barriers that migrants find along their routes. The caravan that left Cotonou for the World social forum in Dakar in February 2011, was conceived as a way of representing a border to be crossed and to be defied. The associations working together in this operation used each stage of their journey to denounce the corruption endemic in the practice of border guards and the rackets to which migrants are prey. This targeted action brought together issues of circulation and mobility with the multi-site, transverse character of migrant movements. Here,
ATE and AME met in communal action, leaving aside for a while their individual actions in their respective countries and the difficulties posed by their emergence as political entities.

These mobilizations challenge the concept of frontier by inventing new forms of demonstration that are mobile, multi-sited and that refer directly to the mobility and autonomy of migrants as they travel. In this regard, the use of the term 'caravan' to designate the grouping of migrants’ associations in bus convoys moving from city to city, publicly alerting authorities and people in all the places they go through to migrants' needs and rights, is highly symbolic. The Malian mobilizations and, more broadly, mobilizations on the African continent, are trying to put together the idea of a shared mobility. They are taking place in a space beyond the merely national scene and beyond the traditional divisions between countries. The notions of “bilateral struggles” or “the convergence of struggles” mentioned in exchanges and interactions between collectives of illegal migrants, networks in defence of the rights of immigrants in Europe and associations of expelled migrants in Africa, are all equally a part of this attempt to carry out joint actions across frontiers, as well as to find ways of coming together in Europe and on African soil. European migration policy is a catalyst for these new mobile, transnational scenes of protest. No doubt this phenomenon is not new, it has its roots in the 19th century workers’ movement and in the attempts at unity on an international scale. The fact that newspapers defending the interests of the working class in Mali played an active role in the campaign denouncing the bilateral agreements between France and Mali, suggests that the theme of migration is in the process of preparing the ground for, and giving a contemporary meaning to, the idea of a multi-sited struggle.

Conclusion
The creation of associations by expellees in Africa has brought about a shift from the invisibility and dismissal of expellees caused by the increasing importance of deportations from Europe since the 1990s, to their emergence and affirmation as public figures. The emblematic case of the movement carried out by AME in Mali illustrates the possibility, although a marginal one, for expellees to become political actors, influential in national political discussions. It shows a renewed form of belonging and participation for rejected citizens, both at a national and international level, but it also reveals all the critical issues that remain unaddressed by deportation policy and practice.

The process of collective subjectification at work in the movements initiated by the Malian Expelled Migrants Association and other such associations of expellees in Africa thus seems emblematic of the issues relating to European return policy, in terms of the reception, rights and citizenship of expelled foreigners. These movements are scattered and diverse across Africa. As we have tried to show, they give rise to protest but also create forms of allegiance and cooperation with state policies.

The politicization of expellees in Africa shows the extent to which the social, militant figure of the expelled migrant crystallises the issues at the heart of the internationalisation of control measures and governance in the field of migration. It is impossible to envisage the very remarkable responsibility exercised by expelled migrants other than within this multi-sited, fragmented dimension, actively involved in the expulsion process and the internationalisation of both the struggle against these practices and the measures which seem to give a humanitarian dimension to the repressive policing of the process.
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