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Unfulfilled expectations for making a better life:
Young Malian men coping with their adventures post deportation

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Abstract

This article gives insight to the unfulfilled expectations of young Malian men, who sought to make a better life through adventure on their way to Europe, but were forcefully returned home. By following their representations of life situations, their social and work environments, this text explores these realities as experienced in their daily lives and in actors' narrations. It further explores the trajectories of the young men in relation to work, mobility, and ideas of a better life, and analyzes to what extent their ideas and narrations contribute to the concepts of youth, migration, and work within the relevant literature. The key issue is that expectations for making a better life through migration remain unfulfilled as the actors – in most of the presented cases – never arrive to the originally desired places and cannot live out their aspirations. The following article shows how these young men cope with this situation and the subsequent consequences. For these men, the established idea of success through migration and thus also the hopes of contributing to family income does not become reality. On the contrary, these are thrown back into a potential "waithood" where they cannot gain the status and responsibilities of adulthood. The text highlights a case in the administrative circle Kita in the south of Mali, where emigration towards Europe has become increasingly aspired since the end of the 1990s. Data gathered in two villages show the spectrum of potential coping strategies for dealing with a forced return. I show that many aim to or talk about re-emigrating, but in the end stay, which may be a coping strategy itself. This finding is different from what post-deportation literature mentions as a common consequence of forced return re-emigration. While some may be held in a situation of "involuntary immobility", others positively cope with the presumed situation of failure and find ways to make a better life where they are.

Keyworks: Mali, young men, post-deportation, mobility, immobility, expectations, re-emigration, success

Résumé

Cet article donne un aperçu des attentes non satisfaites des jeunes hommes maliens en faisant une meilleure vie par l'aventure après avoir été renvoyés de force de leur chemin vers l'Europe. En suivant leurs représentations de situations de la vie et de leur environnement social et de travail, le texte n'explore d'abord ces réalités que dans la vie quotidienne des acteurs, ainsi que présenté dans leurs récits des acteurs. Il explore en outre les trajectoires des jeunes hommes en relation avec le travail, la mobilité, les idées d'une vie meilleure et, enfin, analyse dans quelle mesure les idées et les récits des anciens expulsés contribuent aux concepts de la jeunesse, les migrations, le travail dans la littérature pertinente. La question clé dans ma description est que les attentes une vie meilleure grâce à la migration restent non réalisées, comme les acteurs - dans la plupart des cas présentés – ne sont jamais arrivés à atteindre leurs aspirations de départ et ne peuvent pas vivre leurs imaginations de faire une vie meilleure. L'article montre comment ces jeunes font face à cette situation et quelles sont les conséquences. L'idée de succès à travers de la migration et celle consistant à la participation revenus de la famille ne se concrétisent pas. Au contraire, les interviewés sont rejetés dans un « waithood » potentiel, où ils ne peuvent pas obtenir le statut et les responsabilités de l'âge adulte. L'article met en évidence un cas, dans le cercle administratif de Kita, dans le sud du Mali, où l'aspiration à l'émigration vers l'Europe a commencé à augmenter vers la fin des années 90. Les données obtenues dans les deux villages présentés, montrent le spectre des stratégies d'adaptation possibles avec la situation de retour forcé. Autre que la littérature sur la post-expulsion qui mentionne la ré-émigration comme une conséquence commune de retour forcé, ici il est retenu que beaucoup des jeunes aiment et parlent de ré-émigration, mais ceci ne reste finalement qu'une stratégie d'adaptation. Si certains sont tenus de rester dans une situation « d'immobilité involontaire », d'autres font face positivement à la situation d'échec Supposée et de trouver des moyens de rendre une vie meilleure (où ils sont).

Mots clés: Mali, les jeunes hommes, après la déportation, la mobilité, l'immobilité, les attentes, ré-émigration, succès

1. Introduction

We sit in the shadow of a little shop that belongs to Sidi, our young host in this tiny Mandé village[1] in the south of Mali. The morning sun is already burning. It is a small group of young and some elder men – all formerly deported[2]. Sidi has spread the word that Birama[3] and I are here and would like to talk to some of the formerly deported. Since the previous day, those that felt addressed, or were simply curious, have come to see and discuss, although we had agreed to speak to individuals and visit their families. It is our first stay in the village, so we sit and talk with those appeared. This morning the group has decreased. Sidi has been to Libya twice. The first time he returned deliberately, in 2006, to show the money, he earned and get married. Two years later, he took to the road, again to Libya, with the plan to continue on to Europe. He wanted to go to Italy by boat, where a friend of his was staying. This time, however, he was deported, after being unexpectedly apprehended on an open street, "by those policemen", he says; he was caught in detention, and after six weeks without proper water, bread, or sleep, he was brought to the airport and flown back to Mali. There was a civil war in Libya[4] and he was not the only one returning. Several of the village youth, men between the ages of 17 and 39, were deported or repatriated via air or land way at this time and after. Still, each one suffers from his personal and above all financial loss, and each one has a story to tell. We have an interested, sincere, and engaged discussion that lasts several hours.

The narrations of hardship, disillusion, and of loss of their so-called adventures completely contradict what these young men had aimed for in wanting to take (financial) responsibility,

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[1] The names of the informants have been changed in order to preserve their anonymity. For the same purpose, the villages mentioned will not be named.

[2] The term deportation, here, refers to different forms of forced return, including push backs, refoulements as well as expulsions and repatriations. Instead of generalizing, I hereby want to emphasize the (probable) coercive and involuntary nature of the return without focusing on legal differentiations. This derives from my observation that legal definitions/terms are sometimes arbitrarily or dissimilar used by (Malian and other) authority representatives and above all by the returnees themselves.

[3] Birama Bagayogo is a young Malian anthropologist and consultant. We have been collaborating since May 2015. From October 2015 until March 2016, he accompanied my field work on numerous occasions as a linguistic and 'cultural' translator, and increasingly as an appreciated interlocutor, advisor, and friend.

[4] The Libyan uprising in 2011, different from the parallel uprisings in the region (e.g. in Egypt or Tunisia), also called the Arab Spring, was essentially a movement against the leader of the country Colonel Muammar Gaddafi that "rapidly spiraled into a protracted civil war, with the aftermath posing challenges quite different from those experienced in other countries, including a migration crisis" (cf. IOM 2012: 8).

explore the world and become men. The majority of them crossed the Sahara and tried to enter Europe, the assumed "El Dorado"[5], on a small vessel. After their forced return, the hopes of success connected to the adventure remain unfulfilled and the often perceived personal failure may lead to instances of (social) shame and thus endanger one's honor; a prerogative to avoid, and not only as a Malian man (Broqua/Doquet 2013). The stories of these deportees, often given retrospectively, give insights into conceptions of (im)mobility, work and youth that are discussed in this special issue. Due to restrictive migration policies and multifold borders, the journeys of the mostly young men are interrupted, stopped, redirected or reversed (Drotbohm/Hasselberg 2015). Deported, they are thrown back into a situation of "waithood". This is what De Boeck and Honwana (2005) called the extended phase between youth and adulthood that does not allow youngsters to follow the established ways to success as their preceding generations did. In light of a widespread lack of perspectives, emigration was the young men's way out of a potential waithood in order to gain the status and responsibility of social adulthood. Since the 1980s, structural adjustment measures have confined the economic, historically agricultural life (Lachenmann 1986), while globalization has deteriorated prospects but created a need for global connectedness among young adults (Geschiere/Nyamnjoh 2000). Besides waithood, I find the concept of "involuntary immobility" particularly useful here to explain realities of young aspiring migrants in West Africa and their inability to leave (Carling 2002; Jónsson 2008) or leave again. In the following discussion, I will examine the narrations of the deported youth to show how waithood and involuntary immobility, which are both intrinsically connected to the concepts of youth, work and mobility, are useful lenses for analyzing the social realities after forced return, as they can be particularly reinforced in situations where the aspired expectations of making a better life are suddenly not met.

The article follows the trajectories of young deportees in the Malian south. The data that I present here show a spectrum of potential strategies for coping with the situation of a forced return. First, I introduce my field work and important aspects of mobility, migration, and deportations in the Malian context. Second, I will outline the descriptions of the unwanted return in light of unmet expectations for adventure and the consequent social reactions. Third, I will highlight the disorientations and relativities of leaving and staying and show how persons talk about re-migrating, but actually re-emigrate substantially less, a finding, which contradicts

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[5] Spanish for "the golden one". For further empirical and critical discussion of the myth of "El Dorado" cf. for example Nyamnjoh (2010) regarding African migration from Senegal toward Europe.

parts of the literature on post deportation that mentions re-emigration as a common conse-quence of forced return (e.g. Schuster/Madji 2015, Dünnwald 2012). Fourth, I will show how others seem to stay by choice and create ways for proactively coping with the presumed fail-ure by positively focusing on the village and coming "back to the soil". The ways of handling the situation of not meeting expectations in light of a forcefully interrupted adventure are very heterogeneous.

2. Approaching situations of post deportation in the field

This article is based on extensive socio-anthropological and micro-sociological fieldwork of eight months in Mali (between 2014 and 2016)[6]. The fieldwork's aim was to find out about the life and self-representations of returnees post-deportation. Of particular interest for the second phase of field research was the social embedding of former deportees and the question of how and to what extend a deportation characterizes a person's life after return.

 While my first field trip took mainly place in the capital Bamako, specifically in the spaces of returnees, i.e. certain districts, working sites, or NGOs. In my second field trip I could explore the communities of origin, where deportees would (finally) return to, which more than expected turned out to be also their places of anew settlement. For the latter I was mostly assisted by Birama Bagayogo for linguistic as well as cultural interpretations. This certainly implied challenges as well as limitations in terms of understanding, power hierarchies or 'authenticity' that have been discussed in the literature[7].

At the same time, this research constellation seemed to imply certain benefits. Though one might assume people would have difficulties to speak about a traumatic or shameful past, we met a lot of openness. Birama reasoned that, as I came from outside, there was nothing to hide and no potential competition in the usually narrow social context. This explanation would feed into what has been discussed as a positive effect of being a researcher from outside the

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[6] I met former deportees, potential (re-)migrants, their families and their close acquaintances. I also interviewed governmental and other institutional representatives from NGOs and embassies.

[7] For a current summary cf. Dannecker/Englert (2014). Particularly the alienations that may occur through transla-tions have to be carefully taken into account.

specific field (Diawara 1985), but might also be connected to the observation that former deportees want to share their stories (Lecadet 2011).

The data selected and presented here derive from one small Malinké village very close to the capital of the district Kita, in the administrative region Kayes, as well as from the main village of a Malinké-Fulbe rural community, 40 km south of Kita city. This selection of field sites allowed me to focus on 'new' mobilities (Brujin 2007) and migration starting in the 1990s increasingly for Europe. Different from other areas in the region Kayes, particularly the Soninke ethnic, Kita has no history of "willing migrants" in France (cf. Manchuelle 1997). Here, (extended) seasonal migration mostly to the neighboring countries Ivory Coast and Senegal prevailed.

My access to the field was achieved through the networks of the Association Malienne d'Expulsés (AME), a well-established association of former deportees. The AME only recently set up a representation in Kita, which since the end of the 1990s had also been affected by a high number of deportations from Morocco, Mauritania and Spain, and particularly by repatriations during the Libyan crisis in 2011. The representative Modibo Keita introduced Birama and me to the village populations and accommodated us with a family of a former deportee. Regardless of the openness we met, we had to repeatedly clarify our positons and reason for being there, not only with the first contact but throughout the research, so as not to be confused with NGO workers, and to lower expectations.

3. On mobility, migration and deportations in Mali

Mali's historical and cultural mobility is regionally embedded in circular and manifold migratory forms (Hahn/Klute 2007). While in most Malian societies migration formerly meant pilgrimage into the wilderness, a "migration for prestige" during French colonization was followed by survival migrations after two major droughts (1973 and 1984), when people had to leave in order to earn their living abroad; first in the region, and later to Europe (Dougnon 2013). The migratory voyage is seen as highly important in popular culture and more than that conceptualized as a rite of passage (ibid: 39). The wilderness has now been replaced by big cities or far away countries. They challenge the traveler even by death, and thereby introduce him to adult life such as previously did initiation rites and secret initiation societies to discipline and

channel "the unruly energies of children so that after a symbolic death they are brought back to life as moral adults" (Jackson 2005: 61)[8] .

Today, it is not necessarily poverty that makes people leave. Rather it is the wish to go "on an adventure" (Bredeloup 2008), which is driven by lack of prospects and the search for a better life (Jónsson 2008). Many young boys in Mali grow up with the desire to leave in order to learn, study, and potentially support the family. Mobility is intrinsically connected to masculinity. The everyday cross-border trade and manifold transnational relations also facilitate movement. Yet, the structural adjustment measures and the effects of climate change added to economic reasons to leave. In the last two decades, however, mobilities have been increasingly excluded through the EU securitization and externalization of migratory control that has come to label persons suspect of irregular travel far beyond the European shores. The expectation of economic success through mobility and migration prevails (e.g. Hertrich/Lesclingand 2013), though adventures are much more in terms of realizing young people's dreams and social aspirations.

Mali has been affected by a high number of forced returns in the last decades. It is quite common, not only for those on the way to Europe, but also for migration on the African continent where securitization measures are on the rise. Shortly after its independence from France in 1964, the country faced for the first time (small-scale) deportations from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Following repeated economic crises, Congo-Brazzaville, Nigeria, Angola, Mozambique and Libya joined this practice (Gary-Tounkara 2015). Simultaneously deportations from the EU countries rose – in the mid-1980s from France and the end of the 1990s from Spain. Since 2000, fueled by the EU's externalization policies, Libya started to deport a great number of sub-Saharans. Ever since, the newly announced transit countries in the Maghreb, as well as Equatorial Guinea, and recently Gabon, have implemented

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[8] Dougnon (2012) points out that "two factors – revealed religions and labour migration – have consistently reduced the role of secret initiation societies in the training of children", however that "the lifecycle pattern which regulates children's training in labour still remains valid" as he shows by examining the profiles of children who migrate to urban centers (p. 144). Jackson (2005) describes how in the Sierra Leonean civil war it was violence initiating young men's lives froming part of the rebel group Revolutionary United Front (RUF): "For many of the kids who went to the bush and joined the RUF, this desire for initiatory rebirth as men of power (purified of the taint of childhood) may have been stronger than their commitment to the RUF cause." (p. 62). In Cameroon bush-falling is a metaphor for initiation in the wilderness, which is commonly used for going abroad against all obstacles and returning successfully (cf. Alpes 2011: 2).

mass deportation schemes[9] as instruments of border control that follow economic and xeno-phobic measures.

In 1996, facing these migratory constraints former deportees founded the AME to alert the national and international public. The engagement of deportees, migrants, and other civil rights organizations plays a central role in the public debate on migration in Mali, which in turn also influenced the formal political role. Today, there is a noticeable change in the government's discourse, and recent projects, toward the reintegration of former deportees[10]. This also seems to fit with the young deportees' narratives, as I will show shortly. It remains unclear to what extent the visibility of deportations has influenced the broader perceptions of migration and the established ways of making a better life. At the community level, young deported men still face ambivalence and hardship upon return while expectations remain high.

4. The unexpected and forceful return from an intriguing adventure

The concept of circular migration implies to leave and to return. Since pre-colonial times, the return from the pilgrimage to the wilderness was thought to be favorable and the returnee celebrated as a hero who had overcome the arduousness of the unknown (Dougnon 2013). In the small village close to Kita, Sidi has demonstrated his success at his first return when he came back mostly 'to show off'. Bredeloup (2008) describes with De Latour the migratory adventure as "encompassed" to be triumphal "in its design in the collective imagination" (p. 301). At the same time it allows for individual development, "to extinguish the debt of life" (ibid.) to parents; it supports projects of the close so that success could even bring more advantage and prestige. The deportee, in contrast, returns with empty hands, at the most with a plastic bag from the airport. Others are set out in the desert and, in case they not directly re-emigrate, muddle through with little work on the way to their home villages. Sidi even managed to save some money for the second, also successful return that he had earned with a

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[9] Migratory statistics estimate a 91.8% of Malians were deported between 2002 and 2012 within the African continent (Source: Délégation Générale des Maliens de l'Extérieur (DGME), December 2015), while thousands of migrants were simply left in the Malian desert or died before even reaching the Mediterranean Sea.

[10] This intention is included in the first National Policy on Migration (PNM) that aims at providing likewise opportunities for voluntary as well as involuntary returnees. In the aftermath of the EU-Africa Summit in Valetta and the funds of the EU Emergency Trust Fund, corresponding projects are recently being set up. See online: http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/node/104594.

friend in Tripoli. However, he was then caught, detained, and deported. He never heard about the money again. The supposed friend disappeared. Presumed networks of solidarity may radically convert in situations of extreme distress (Stock 2012).

Involuntary return to the village is a very sensitive issue. Social spaces are clearly defined and it is usually all too obvious who is a deportee. Boureima, from the main village of the rural community, explains, "Everybody knows that this is a deportation. If you make two years [abroad] and then you're deported, your objective to succeed is not achieved[11]." "Deportee, deportee", they may call you in the street, "and then they denunciate your mother".

It's not uncommon that a deportee stays inside the house of his extended family, not wanting talk to anybody: "I haven't left the house for one month", Boureima admits, now two years later. At 27 years old, he has already been deported twice from Equatorial Guinea, and once from Libya. He continues:

> "It was the friends in the village that helped me and said to go out again. It was them who unburdened me at every moment to forget these gruesome days. Bit by bit I re-gained confidence though I was having pains in both hands and it took almost a year until I was recovered."

According to central beliefs in Mandé society, individual felicity and affluence, social harmony and the respect of the others are only possible through compliance to socially prescribed roles (Brand 2001: 134). At first sight, these objectives have clearly failed in the situation of Boureima's 'unsuccessful' return. First, he reacts with internalizing his failure and pain, being ashamed to leave the house fearing the villagers' judgment. Still, in this case, it is the friends and villagers who support Boureima, provide relief in this delicate moment and thereby open up new ways to self-assurance and potential social harmony.

Schuster and Madji (2015) discuss deportees' social situations post return with the concept of stigma, which is produced in interaction with the socially close, "as a way of punishing those who have failed to repay the family's investments and as a way of holding on to the dream of a better life in a distant destination, a dream challenged by deportation" (2015: 648). In these young men's narrations, I hear that "returning with empty hands" is the major reason for suffering, which is expressed as an individual defeat. However, this is suffering which does not seem to be necessarily or only created by social surroundings. The reactions

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[11] Many of the quotations included are originally in Bambara and then translated to French in collaboration with my assistant Birama Bagayogo. For the purpose of this article, I've translated them to English.

of the families to the returned son differ. Boureima explains that the family was very grateful to have him back healthy and alive; even if the wish of making a better life through adventure still persists.

Adventurers' decisions to leave are mostly taken individually in the cases described here; the parents were only asked for consent and their benediction. There is not necessarily a large family debt, which could give reason to collective resentment after a failed return. Boureima financed his journey through farming and other work during travel. Sidi received help from his elder brother. These adventures are highly individualized (cf. also Dougnon 2012), not least as they relate to the collectively accepted conceptions of becoming independent and becoming a man. Consequently, the experiences and perceived failure may be individualized and internalized.

Suffering is omnipresent in the narrations. It's "always the same suffering", Mohamed, from Sidi's village who was deported from the Libyan border to Algeria in 2010 complains, referring to his adventure, the failure to succeed, and the suffering associated with being back where he feels he is facing the same hardships as before; not having achieved his objective and the social expectations of the family and village around. During my fieldwork, I often saw deportees sitting in front of me, holding their heads when talking about the hardships seen: this is an embodied expression of suffering and the unmet expectations of making a better life.

Gaibazzi (2010), who worked on young Soninke men's immobility in Gambia, explains with relation to Diawara (2003) that "references to 'suffering' are very common in everyday conversations" (p.109), particularly for illustrating agricultural work. Suffering thereby becomes a value in itself. Former deportees describe their experiences with the socially recognized codes of suffering. Deportation thus may become a form of everyday suffering, which can have an approving and also normalizing effect.

Still, the return to the village may not follow immediately. After being deported from Libya in 2011, Karim (45 years old), from the same main village as Boureima, went to his elder brother, a teacher in another province in the south:

> "In this moment, it was really hard for me. I was sad: I went to school, which didn't work, and then I left on adventure, which also did not work. These two failures have quite affected me. Since the adventure had not worked out, I did not know how to return to the village and explain this to my family. This was difficult. My father and mother were both old, whereas I returned from adventure with empty hands."

Equally Karim is ashamed about his repeated failures, which he takes very personally. He is unclear how to confront his aging parents, and feels the implicit pressure of having failed to

support. He finds relief through his brother who helps him recover. Once back in the village, it will be the father himself who asks the son to stay and support them.

In light of these observations, I would still like to argue that it is not only about failure and shame, though it is partially ascribed as such here. Particularly the concept of stigma in the sense of Schuster/Madji seems insufficient. Rather, social realities are more complex and ambivalent. Obviously, the young men suffer from the fact that their objectives and expectations are unfulfilled, but the social surrounding is not singularly stigmatizing until excluding the person from the village society. As Boureima describes, it can be the friends and brothers that help in overcoming the feeling of personal failure and shame. In Karim's case, it is his father who wants him to stay. Many of their friends in the village, their brothers and yet some of their friends' fathers were deported as well. In Sidi's village it is even more. They exchange their experiences. It thus becomes a collective, perhaps again normalizing form of balancing the pressure.

Notwithstanding Karim adds: "People were saying I was not man enough to stay abroad." He is directly confronted with the duties expected from him as an honorable man. The contribution to the family household is the central expectation for males' mobility as Hertrich and Lesclingand show from their work on adolescent migration in Mali (2013: 181). More generally, it has been said in the literature that boys are expected to emigrate in order to be viewed as a man, although they may not even know what this actually means (Dougnon 2012). The former journey into the wilderness represented "the first collective or individual experience of a man. […] Weeks of walking through the forests, savannah, and soils, reinforced his masculinity" (ibid: 154). Today it is the migratory adventure, not necessarily toward Europe, to gain economic, social and personal success, which is "reinterpreted, as a prestigious, 'initiatory', value-giving experience" (ibid: 164).

Prestige can equally result from going to Bamako or one of the increasing informal gold mining sites in the south or in neighboring countries. The narratives from there appear similar to those of the adventurers. Still, the adventure is the more desirable and in the long term, promising way. In this regard, immobility can be perceived as a threat to masculinity, as a liminal period in which young men wait to move out of their place in order to move up the socio-generational scale (cf. Gaibazzi 2010).

As e.g. Alpes (2011) concluded, death, hardship, and deportations do not frighten. They rather contribute to being an honorable man. The former or future adventurers, young and old, have very clear ideas about how to go abroad. Like experts, they explain their ideal journeys and migratory projects, and the dangers they may face: "If you go on adventure you have to

be aware that you can die or not. But you will anyways die." Risk is thus implied in the concept of adventure and consciously accepted (Dougnon 2013).

That being said, the relation to God or a broader spirituality is central in every aspect of life – not only in the adventure. Most of the young men are devout Muslims. One or more religious leaders are usually requested for advice before departure (also Nyamnjoh 2010) and after return. Karim described that he was very angry at his marabout after he had been unexpectedly deported: the marabout had predicted he would succeed. He had lost a small fortune for his advice. In contrast Mohamed calls upon God's will in order to explain the endured hardship and suffering:

> "If God decides to do something, nobody can counteract. When you are deported, you don't have the right to complain. You are obliged to stay at home and in the meantime search for something as activity."

In order to realize one's destiny the arduous and unexpected suffering experienced through deportation may be reinterpreted as sense making and the reference to God help to accept and cope with it.

Overall, one could observe a mixture of accepting one's fate, of young masculine attitudes of not backing down, and individually confronting the allure of adventure in close connection to the family. At first sight, the youngsters seem to be thrown into a situation of potential waithood and immobility. Their objective is not obtained. The forced return which is often accompanied by traumatic experiences on their journeys reinforces this situation. Still, the young men are experts in what they have been doing. Talking and exchanging stories about the adventure seems to become sublimation, a normalizing and coping strategy. Besides, the expectation of learning often seems to be met: "I feel different than the others since I have been on adventure," Boureima and others explain. His mother exemplifies how her son is grown up and taking responsibility now; this does not sound like a reference to an immobile waithood. Rather there seem to be multiple ways of how people keep up.

5. Re-Migrating or not – the question of (involuntarily) leaving or staying

For the often restless young men, the question of staying or leaving is quite central after deportation. Contrary to what has been said in parts of the literature (e.g. Schuster/Madji 2015, Dünnwald 2012), my research shows that instead of directly re-emigrating or staying in the capital, informants may talk about a potential re-emigration but in the end stay with their family in their village of origin, potentially after having experienced several failed attempts. Talk-

ing about a new adventure, like talking about the previous one, may become a coping strategy in itself. Yet the question of leaving or staying may reverse from one day to the next, as contexts and possibilities radically change even in everyday situations, e.g. through a parent's death.

Family economies have always played and continue to play an important role in Africa, particularly as a survival strategy in times of crisis. Even if decisions to migrate are often taken individually, they contribute to the generational and circular migration system which is so economically functional that deportations and migratory restrictions are not able to break it. Mohamed illustrates:

> "My elder brother left on an adventure in 2000, and was deported in 2001. He recommended me to stay as he would not want me to confront the same difficulties. I said I would leave because everybody's chances differ: It's possible that I would not see the difficulties as him. Later, I was also deported. I handed the same advice to my little brothers: They equally did not accept. The one that comes right after me is in a gold mining site. It's now two years that he is there in Senegal."

The experienced difficulties of the elder brothers do not prevent others from leaving. This meets established conceptions of sharing economic responsibilities and diversifying risks: "One of the brothers shall always be abroad", the mother of Karim asserts: "They cannot all be here; somebody needs to look for money abroad." Currently this is Karim's elder brother, in Bamako, and his own son whom he had recommended to stay. Today his son is in Spain and Karim is also a bit proud of him. In all these cases, the deportation is included in the process of circular migration – it becomes a sort of family re-emigration, though not necessarily to Europe. At the same time deportation is again somehow normalized.

For all that, deportees, their families and the broader surrounding little reflect on the fact that individuals' disturbances are caused through physical borders, as well as political and structural hurdles that hinder the adventurer's journey. Instead, there seem to be many ways to handle the presumed personal failure, whether it is talking about adventure, relating to God, or deeply internalizing. The deportees' narrations perfectly reflect how Streiff-Fénart and Poutignat describe the adventure as "a career, in which one enters with more or less trumps, that one accomplishes with more or less success and thus one finishes one day or the other, to leave in a more or less honorable way" (2006: 131). In Mali, there are numerous popular songs that depict the positive and negative sides of adventure. Following these relativities, failing, the related shame and feared lack of honor can be part of the same project in which the passage to Europe represents only one of many possible outcomes. They are part of suffering as a condition of life.

The ones I saw shortly after their deportation were indeed restless, anxious and in delusion, urgently searching for something in a rather desperate "stress, between hyper mobility and waiting" (Ibid.: 137). Madou (31 years old), from the main village as Boureima and Karim ret-rospectively proclaims his feelings after their ship had wrecked at the Atlantic Sea: "At this moment I had too much the journey in my head that means either I go on adventure or I die, because there is so much poverty in Mali", he recalls. Flown back to Bamako, he re-emigrated directly with some of his brother's money from the uncle's house, who was not in favor nor aware of his plan. But the nephew did not care. The individual and collective expec-tations had to be satisfied.

In light of the primary expectations related to the adventure projects, this stress appears to be a logical consequence. The hardships the young men experience can be enormous. They are back in the village where everything is the same as before, full of these memories and full of silent reproach. And yet the village is still different, because they have become differ-ent. Just giving into a new waithood or immobility may seem like giving up.

Others are not as convinced as Madou: in case he leaves again, Sidi prefers to take the air-plane, which seems hardly realistic. "If I do not find enough money, I may also go by land. But if I find the money, I will rather stay to build up something here", he continues. Such vague argumentation and incertitude is an obvious sign of disorientation, which has been described as rather characteristic for this generation in Mali and other African countries too, where young men are sitting, waiting and searching (e.g. Schulz 2010).

For the deportees in Kita the question of staying or leaving again is involuntary and difficult to strategically plan, since adventures are unexpectedly interrupted. A new departure may nev-er come. Life and family situations have to thus adapt to the unexpected. In the case of Ka-rim his involuntary immobility after deportation is result of the family's will:

> "If the father had not told me to stay, I would have returned on adventure. It's the money that allows solving things. My elder brother cannot take care of his family there and the expenses here. Therefore, I had to search for money so that I can take care of the family. That was my objective, but the father told me to stay. I did not have an-other choice."

Karim stays with his perceived defeat and accepts the established hierarchies as well as being in social harmony with the father. However, he has an inner conflict between the indi-vidual demand to support the family through leaving and the father's expectations to support them through staying. His mother had greater difficulties after the involuntary return of her son. It took some time until she could accept it. It is likely that people are conscious to "this new era of forced return and potential new types of immobility" as Drotbohm (2012) claims.

Still the youngsters want to go and have their own experience, as some of their elder brothers in the village openly complain. But they finally accept and support them while the parents also agree. The relation between talk and action is not always obvious here, but the adventure is obviously more a privilege of the youth.

In Sidi's village, there are many youngsters today that stay after their last involuntary return from Libya. Our host explained how this has led to numerous weddings. This was not the case before when everybody was on adventure. It can be the collectivity that approves the (collective) involuntary immobility. At the same time, marital responsibilities and household management are also important aspects in the discourse on masculinity, which give a fundamental value to men staying (cf. Gaibazzi 2010: 20). It is a collective form of coping here with the unexpected and the personally perceived defeat, which simultaneously helps young men to continue to live on and focus on their lives where they are.

6. 'Back to the soil' and reintegration?

Some may (finally) stay by choice. "We've all been deported," Madou asserts recalling his second deportation, and describes how his brother and he sat together and decided to stay because there was nothing better than the soil where they were born[12]. The two brothers do well. Madou gained a small fish culturing project through a family's friend with NGO contact. The youth in the village now talk about his project, and that they want the same. It has become a new source of envy, one not earned through migratory success.

During the village stays, Birama and I find ourselves frequently in situations where we discuss about small projects that allow the young men to invest, build up a small garden, or organize animal breeding. Our expertise is requested for consulting on alternative gains. This is most likely related to us being foreign researchers and comes despite of constant clarifications about our reason for being here. In the case of Madou, also the family convinced their son to stay as they need his responsibility and engagement where they are. Boureima, in the same village, was married shortly after his second deportation, as he reasons, "to give an additional reason to stay and an obligation to take care of". Three of Boureima's brothers

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[12] This relates to the idea that Gaibazzi brings up for the stayers in his Gambian Soninke village, "one should always keep one foot in 'poverty', and never forget 'where one comes from'" (ibid: 110), with the difference here that the early return and staying were not chosen as such.

have been abroad – in Guinee Equatorial and two at the European margins, in Mauritania and Algeria – for years without sending money and without returning home. Notwithstanding, Boureima asserts: "If I would have the money for the transport, I will still convince them. This is between parents and child; they will not refuse." The focus abroad persists in light of a potentially recognized immobility. There is still so much to learn and achieve and the family economy to survive.

The personal feeling of defeat may last despite staying by choice. "It's so long that I've not talked and thought about all this", Ibrahim, Sidi's father reflects when we speak to him one evening. Also he was in Libya, in 2001, and deported several years later; caught in the street like his son. "You cannot be satisfied when you return with empty hands", he recalls, and repeats what we've heard from the younger generation: "But it's God who decides, so you have nothing to complain." Ibrahim did not want his son to leave, particularly not crossing the ocean. He had almost died on the way when he tried. Sidi should have continued school. Now neither their adventures, nor Sidi's schooling worked out. Upon his return, Ibrahim re-started his agricultural activities, which he keeps doing until today. His age and distance to the deportation may help him to cope and digest the unmet expectations. He has been married twice in the meantime, had eight children, and is established in the village community. Still, he seems to have remorse in light of the failed adventure: "It helps that there is other deportees, but you cannot forget what you've lost." He wants his son to stay now – "I'm becoming old" – although he is aware of the small profit one gets. "A good education is crucial", he depicts, for succeeding a better life here or there. For Sidi this is late now, but maybe not for the ones to come.

Migratory attitudes and perceptions of the adventure may be in a process of change. Or better said, alternative concepts of learning and staying may coexist with the established adventurous ways (e.g. Daum 2014). Whether it is the restricted mobilities, a growing self-consciousness of where people come from, seniority or desperation, (young) men engage locally and thus may overcome the presumed defeat through deportation. 'Back to the soil' is what the first socialist president of Mali, Modibo Keita, preached in the 1960s.

At the same time Sidi and his friends express their criticism of how little they get from their agricultural work: "We need factories!" is one conclusion of our small group discussion. The Malian state is explicitly criticized: "There is no support, no possibilities here," they complain. Support and possibilities are rather linked to international experts and NGOs. Their discourse

about creating alternative income opportunities for the youth, and of valorizing agriculture has long been vivid. In the meantime, the prospect even entered the new Malian migratory policy, which is still not funded until this day[13]. However, the EU funds made lately available to fight irregular migration are also used for the reintegration of former deportees; as if leaving for a better life would be something unusual and disregarding that each departure already implies a return (cf. also Dougnon 2013). Besides, the AME has a new reintegration project. Interestingly, the young men's engagement toward staying and searching alternative opportunities, not only seems to reflect the current political discourse; some successful voluntary returnees or transnational family members in France or Spain have claimed a 'back to the soil' for the youth as well. At once, the families often naturally reintegrate the failed returned son despite of their disappointment. It is very questionable whether these prospects are equally attractive for the youngsters, also for those longing for a global connectedness, even in case they can be realized in the near future.

7. Conclusion: Outlooks toward post deportation, mobility and making a better life

This article has presented a spectrum of potential coping strategies of former deportees after their forced return to their villages in the Malian south. We followed parts of the trajectories of these (young) men in a region where international emigration toward Europe has a relatively short history when compared to the established relations and co-development activities of Malians in other parts of the Kayes region. It has become clear that the implicitness of mobility and the self-evident connection of success through mobility and thereby making a better life as a man are still fundamentally established in the youths' narrations. Here, Europe as a destination has produced the reality of forced returnees who confront the EU's expansive externalization of border controls, which increase parallel to new mobilities. Instead of reflecting on these structural aspects, I've shown how former deportees describe the glamor of the personal adventure and multiple sufferings involved in the memories of experienced hardships; the latter coming particularly because of facing one's expectations to succeed and self-perception as a man falling apart in a globally connected world that suddenly seems in-

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[13] The general lack of funds though is particularly striking since the 'crisis' in Mali. A regards migration policy this is lately changing in the context of the measures taken in light of the European refugee 'crisis'. Cf. FN 10.

accessible. Some may try to re-emigrate immediately, while others prepare to leave later or only talk about re-emigrating in order to at least discursively follow the predetermined ways to making a better life. The sublimation of adventure and talking about re-emigration become coping strategies themselves.

Although an unsuccessful returnee has difficulties in complying with the expected role as a man in Mandé society, social reactions and support presented here vary at the level of the family and in the broader village context and the expectations toward the forcefully returned are not unidirectional and necessarily excluding. A particular role play the deportees' friends as well as those that have been deported themselves, which may be the own father or a substantial percentage of the men nearby. This omnipresence of deportation in the everyday village life is recent and may contribute to changing perceptions of and ascriptions to (im)mobility. Not complying with the expected role as a man would thus not fully apply to the realities seen. As further described, the concept of a personal adventure involves more than economic success. The self-determination of leaving abroad and surviving hazardous situations – even if the final 'El Dorado' was not reached – seems to help the deportees in being accepted, grown up and becoming a man (though not in economic terms). Being back, young men try to create opportunities for staying, searching value in the soil where they are born and the sufferings of agriculture. Still it's possible that there is a (self-)comparison to those who 'have made it' and the aim of retaining one's honor remains central; while others have never left on adventure which can equally be of value for the family economy. Here, an important conclusion is certainly that deportations seem to become somehow normalized.

There is not one way of coping with the situation of seemingly being thrown back into waithood and involuntary immobility, which were the concepts introduced as relevant for analysis in the beginning. Rather, I presented a variety of strategies, how the young men keep up and engage and try to find ways out of being stuck in limbo, even if remaining physically immobile. The realities presented go beyond waithood, when returned youngsters are married once back and engage in the family economy. Also they cannot be called involuntarily immobile, when they prefer to stay where they come from, put aside structural obstacles such as border restrictions here. Both concepts have been a useful lens for explaining what I have observed in Mali. Young men's actions are naturally shaped by the context of societal norms and existing power relations, particularly in the rather hierarchical village sites as presented. At the same time, the young men do not seem to simply obey to those norms and expectations. The asserted disorientation, but restlessness, equally described for the Malian and other youth, are clear sign of commitment. Despite their potential hardships and silent reproach, they continue to employ themselves and search for new ways to make a better life

for them and their families, every day and everywhere they go – may it occasionally be through sitting, waiting and exchanging.

These findings notably contribute to the debate on post deportation as they highlight the relevance of the migratory context by illustrating a case that goes beyond descriptions of social exclusion or re-emigration as consequence of a forced return. Most of the young men presented here never hit the ground of their desired 'El Dorado' as many of them were deported from the externalized EU borders in North Africa or the open sea. In addition to the increasing presence of forced returnees in Malian villages, this may indeed lead to normalizations of deportation; further to individual and collective reconsiderations of expectations for adventure. Without approving the latter, such normalizations might eventually alleviate potential feelings of shame and endangered honor in case of the deported young men. These would be fruitful alleys to further explore. Certainly, the specific social realities of post deportation in the south of Mali deserve to be described in even more detail and depth.

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