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REFERENCE DOCUMENT
DDR/1

September 2011

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Interregional workshop on strengthening capacities to deal with international migration: “Examining development, institutional and policy aspects of migration between Africa, Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean”.

Geneva, 22-23 September 2011

**RECENT AFRICAN IMMIGRATION TO SOUTH AMERICA:
THE CASES OF ARGENTINA AND BRASIL IN THE REGIONAL CONTEXT**

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Brief presentation of the problem

During the last years, the presence of recently arrived Africans to Argentina became more noticeable, particularly in Buenos Aires City. Even though, compared to any other immigrant community it is a small population, these immigrants are marked by their race. The sudden emergence of this new immigrant group raised all sorts of speculations. ¿Who are they? ¿What are they doing in Argentina? ¿Why did they choose to come here? Local reactions to their presence varied, from more sympathetic and humanistic ones to less friendly and even racist. Yet there is no doubt that their presence has contributed to ‘visibilize’ Africa in Argentina in many respects, but particularly on two grounds, it has stimulated the debate on the African heritage and afro-descendants in Argentina, and on the human rights regard that is involved in international migration.

It should be emphasized that Argentina is not the only country of destination for African immigrants in South America, since there is also a sizable population in Brazil and other countries. Irrespectively of their particularities, in both cases these flows constitute a marginal expression of a dreadful situation: the reality of people escaping from violence, persecution and hunger with no places to go. Some of them, in face of a developed world that has increasingly closed their doors and rejected their presence; and neighbor countries that have become more hostile to regional immigrants, have decided for alternative countries of destination. Consequently, recent African immigration to Argentina and Brazil are both expressions of a broader geopolitical situation.

Despite having initiated this decade amid a crippling financial crisis, Argentina has seen a steady, if residual migratory inflow of both regular and irregular migrants from the African continent. They are mostly young and male, predominantly West Africans, a minority of whom are asylum-seekers, while others might fall under the category of *de facto* refugees. Most come from Senegal, but the list includes Nigerians, Ghanaian, Liberian, Guinean, Malian, Cameroonian, and a score of other nationals.

Existing studies (this one included) overwhelmingly mention Senegalese migrants —and, to a lesser extent, Nigerian— as the focus of attention. This is as perhaps virtue of their number. Yet, the common Argentinean might be constructing an ‘otherized’ subject no more than the scholar or the policy analyst. By default, this study, as the academic publications that preceded it, constructs the subject primarily as Senegalese, male, and young, possibly accepting discrepancies between the reality on the ground and the reality articulated on paper. In the absence of extensive footwork it is important, thus, to perhaps recognize the academic bias that pervades any such analysis.

In any case, this inflow that started in the late nineties, increased in the post-9/11 period, in which severe migratory policy shifts in consolidated destinations (EU, US) enhanced the risks and costs, and reduced the rewards of migrating there. Simultaneously, the externalization of migratory policies, particularly by the European Union, transferred migration pressure from the EU borders to a number of buffer nations in the immediate vicinity of the Union.

The neighbors quickly became frontier destinations, transit and transshipment centers where informal incorporation has been normalized. In some cases, the legal limbo and the impossibility of leaving created a permanent state of transience, resulting in actual settlement and liminality. The difficulties along the African/European border are now severely compounded by an unprecedented political upheaval, leading to a situation of further uncertainty insofar as migrants are concerned.

Although this crisis and the emergence of Argentina as a destination for African immigrants is not straightforward, it is relevant to question how EU immigration policies will emerge from the crisis, and how migrant networks might respond.

Argentina's relatively remote geographic position (far removed from Africa and from preferred destination countries) might insinuate it is an unlikely candidate to intervene in this process. Yet, a decade of sustained arrivals suggests otherwise. Motivational hypotheses put forward a variety of factors, possibly acting together to feed this flow: the growing impossibility to enter wealthier countries; Argentina's relatively open migratory policy; a normative that currently recognizes the right to migrate as a basic human right; the extension and porosity of both maritime and land borders; the lack of state capacity to monitor irregular migrants and visa overstayers; and relatively receptive and fairly affluent communities that provide safe haven for the informal commercial activity in which many migrants eventually end up working. Argentina, and in particular the city of Buenos Aires, has thus become a likely destination for a very visible minority, which is for the time being regarded with more curiosity than concern. While an extensive study on this community and its motivations is yet to be done, this document characterizes the different dimensions of the migratory corridor, evaluating its sustainability nexus and suggesting a direct geopolitical link with extemporaneous events and global migratory policy trends.

B. Objectives of the report

This report intends to systematize the available information to date from a variety of sources about African migrants in Argentina. Given the lack of substantive and sufficient studies on the theme, it does not presume to be an extensive survey-based work, rather resorting to a smaller sample and re-analyzing the conclusions reached in light of independent ethnographic field work, combined with previous studies, and measured against demographic, econometric and discursive data.

It is the intention of the authors to contribute to the academic furthering of a subject that is only now surging as pertinent, in academia, institutions, the media, and public opinion. It is also intended to that institutional debate, possibly leading to policy intervention —where necessary— might be forthcoming, particularly regarding the regularization of the migratory situation and the process of integration and participation in receiving countries.

The report rehearses social, economic, and geopolitical hypotheses that might justify the appearance of this new migration corridor, utilizing a phenomenological approach combined with extensive historic and demographic overviews. It also proposes an aggregation and systematized analysis of past studies, thus conflating ethnographic observation, demographic data, and geopolitical analysis of the Argentinean case study. Where relevant, the Brazilian case study shall be used as a term of comparison.

The different sections will shed light on —as far as it is known— who the migrants are; paint an up-to-date socio-demographic portrait; categorize Africans arriving in Argentina; consider how they may be impacting identity policies and, broadly speaking, migration policy making; establish ties between this particular migratory corridor and wider geopolitical concerns that condition it. The final two sections propose trends and policy recommendations for further analysis.

II. RECENT TRENDS IN AFRICAN EMIGRATION

A. Types of migrants, motivations for and methods of migration

Setting out to determine the socio-demographic outfit of Argentina's new African migration, a number of evident and fundamental questions require clarification. Where do these migrants come from? What type of migrants are they? Why do they leave Africa? Finally how do they pick, arrive in and enter Argentina?

A significant number of Senegalese have been identified among African-born migrants across Argentina, most particularly in Greater Buenos Aires, but also in some of the other major cities, namely the key harbor city of Rosario, Córdoba, La Plata and, seasonally, the province's beachfront towns. There are, however, migrants from many other Africa countries. Despite some coincidence, their regions of origin do not appear to directly correlate to areas that historically supplied slave labor to the Río de La Plata. The absence of such link immediately suggests the existence of a contemporary migratory corridor. The descriptor 'African', on the other hand, does not provide sufficient distinction to a community that is both *regionally* and *typologically* inchoate. Irrespective of the country of origin (see 2.3.), important distinctions are necessary vis-à-vis the motivations for migration, and the methods used to enter the country, or the region.

The principal point of entry categories appear to be economic migrants, asylum seekers, status refugees, and to a much lesser extent, transnationals/cosmopolitans.¹ A further distinction should be made between documented and undocumented migrants —also known as irregular, illegal, unauthorized, or clandestine. These terms are interchangeably used at policy level, and framed as categories requiring special management, notably through immigration control instruments. The category of irregular migrant, however, often encapsulates individuals arriving for different reasons. Thus, an irregular migrant may simultaneously be an asylum seeker, or a *de facto* refugee, and still be categorized as an economic migrant. This overlap demonstrates the complexity and informality prevalent in this migratory corridor, as in others, and makes evident that what is at stake is what has been loosely defined as 'mixed migratory flows'. It complicates access and, consequently, leads to attempts of bypassing overly bureaucratic immigration processes, which are often unequipped to interpret the full spectrum of migrant experiences and narratives. Thus, while irregular migrants constitute the 'norm,' by no means do they paint a complete picture.

UNHCR reflected this complexity by operationalizing the category of 'mixed' migrants, recognizing variable and often overlapping motives for migration.² Yet, this category appears to obfuscate concrete aspirations under a blanket statement with limited administrative gravitas, sheltering countries where the existing legal instruments fail to fully address the real needs of migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, although, theoretically, it offers enhanced instruments for migrant protection.

In fact, it is aspirations that better distinguish migrants leaving Africa, and why they choose Argentina, of all places (see chapter II, letter D). As many studies have shown, and continue to show, the motivations for migration are as diverse as the individuals who depart from or arrive in a specific

¹ A category which includes diplomats, investors, business leaders, researchers and other high income, high mobility African citizens entering Argentina on specialty visas.

² UNHCR, *Refugee Protection and Mixed Migration: A 10-Point Plan of Action*, Geneva: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2007.

country.³ Individual migratory projects may search a state offering political stability, economic and social opportunity (education, employment, healthcare, welfare), or a safe haven from gratuitous physical or psychological violence, including civil war and state warfare. Simply put: human security.

Migration and mobility are thus, perhaps better conceptualized adopting Amartya Sen's capabilities framework for human development. In Sen's view, migration tends to be reactive, identifying socio-economic gaps, and responding to them.⁴ In much of Africa, Structural Adjustment Programs, deficient agricultural reform, and in some cases the sudden implementation of a market economy have left many stranded in the fight for resources. In other cases, political instability and weak democratic institutions —when not open conflict— embolden citizen disenchantment,⁵ leading to what Clause Aké called 'democracy of the disenfranchised.'⁶ Better access to telecommunications and information sources, better means of travel, and increased contact with tourists may also be contributing to an understanding about income disparities, altering aspirations across the continent, as it has around the world. Migration could, thus, be understood as a personal development strategy, 'a reaction to *relative*, rather than *absolute* poverty'.⁷

Sen's statement points in the direction of what is a problematic concept: the image of the poor, destitute economic migrant looking for a better life for him/her and his/her family. Grappling with the financial capacity of migrants is stepping into a complex, and fairly uncharted territory. Many migrants depart from a position of 'relative' poverty, having access to just about enough funds to initiate a migratory journey, whether it is through a legitimate process or using smuggling networks. Others struggled to accumulate the necessary funds to initiate and maintain journeys that are becoming longer and more expensive.⁸ Access to funds, in fact, would seem to growingly be the one main obstacle to migration from much of Africa, as the cost of the migratory journey shoots up in tandem with heightened border security and stringent immigration procedures. International evidence denounces an internal class dynamic within diasporic Africa, clearly reinstating Van Hear's 'considerations of class into analyses of forced migration.'⁹ It is becoming almost impossible for the poorest of the poor to leave Africa. An obvious consequence is that Africa is slowly being bled of its most valuable and most entrepreneurial individuals, often leaving behind largely feminine —thus distorted and incomplete— communities.

³ See, for example, the two following projects at IMI (Oxford) and PRIO (Oslo): 'The Determinants of International Migration (DEMIG)', International Migration Institute, Oxford University (ongoing, 2010-2014), directed by Hein de Haas (<http://www.imi.ox.ac.uk/research-projects/demig/demig-the-determinants-of-international-migration>); or 'Security Threat: Migration-Based Threat', Peace Research Institute of Oslo, directed Jørgen Carling, <http://www.prio.no/Research-and-Publications/Project/?oid=64826>. See also J Carling, *Aspiration and Ability in International Migration: Cape Verdean Experiences of Mobility and Immobility*, Dissertations / Theses No. 5/2001, Oslo: Centre for Development and the Environment, University of Oslo.

⁴ A. Sen, *Development as Freedom*, New York: Anchor Books, 2000.

⁵ Rounds 1 through 5 of Afrobarometer's surveys on democracy in Africa reveal worryingly dismissive attitudes toward democratic processes across much of the continent. See: <http://www.afrobarometer.org>

⁶ C. Aké, 'The Democratization of Disempowerment in Africa', in *The Democratization of Disempowerment*, ed. J. Hippler, 70-89, London: Pluto Press, 1995.

⁷ H. de Haas, 'Migration and Development: A Theoretical Perspective', IMI Working Paper, Oxford: International Migration Institute, University of Oxford, 2008, p 40.

⁸ See for example: P.F. Marcelino and H. Farahi references, 'Transitional African Spaces in Comparative Analysis: Inclusion, Exclusion, and Informality in Morocco and Cape Verde', in *Third World Quarterly – Special Issue*, Oxford: Taylor & Francis, 2011 (forthcoming); H de Haas, 'The Myth of Invasion: The Inconvenient Realities of Migration From Africa to the European Union', *Third World Quarterly*, 29(7), 2008, pp 1305-1322; or PF Marcelino, *Toward a Shift in the Migration Paradigm: Inclusion, Exclusion, Immigration and Development in the Cape Verde Islands*, Saarbrücken, Germany: LAP – Lambert Academic Publishing, 2011 (forthcoming).

⁹ N. Van Hear, 'I went as far as my money would take me': conflict, forced migration and class', Policy Working Paper No. 6, Oxford: University of Oxford, 2004. See p 1.

Differences can also be detected among those that manage to leave. Longer transit periods in frontier places (vis-à-vis the European Union) such as Cyprus, Malta, the Canaries or Sicily, or in ‘buffer’ countries such as Turkey, Libya, Tunisia, Morocco or in the Cape Verde Islands are making the journey more expensive. Those with just about enough to get by are gradually forced to make lengthier stops, adding to the risk of an already risky endeavor. Most of these class dynamics of the migratory process were detected among Africans in Argentina, attesting to the heterogeneous nature of the phenomenon.

This heterogeneity reflects the complex and multi-dimensional dynamics between migration and development. The liberal vision would have it that development has a long-term effect in decreasing the motivations for migration, seen in this context as a personal/societal response to absolute destitution. This stance has been adopted with varying degrees of commitment by institutions such as the European Union. However, it is important to note that alternate views suggest that not only higher mobility leads to development, but also that development results in higher mobility. The UNDP, among other institutions, postulates flexible mobility—including circular migration—as a possible solution for development.¹⁰ On the ground, competing visions of migration-development nexuses become politicized by events. One such example is the North African crisis of 2010-2011, occurring just as this report is concluded, and in which a contrast between the UN’s position and that of the EU—Italy and France in particular—clashed.

Hein De Haas has conducted a review of a range of studies, regional and global in scope, establishing that ‘the process of social and economic development in its broadest sense tends to be associated with generally higher levels of mobility and *more* migration at least in the short to medium term’.¹¹ In the case of Africa, it is crucial to remember an ancient tradition of mobility where political and economic considerations became obfuscating factors in the macro-migratory nexus that fail to register as dissuading factors at the level of the individual migration project. Migration as self-development, thus, follows macro-economic orientations, but does not entirely rely on them as an aspirational factor. As posited by the capability approach to migration, it is part of a phenomenological nexus in which migration is not only a response to poverty, but also a quest for personal growth, success, and overall happiness, challenging the sedentary bias prevalent in much of the literature,¹² and certainly contrasting with the mobility of much of the continent.

Other motivations may be more abstract. In many of the source communities across the African continent mobility has attained the highest social status. Such is true particularly in parts of Islamic West Africa, where the migratory journey often takes on the role of a pilgrimage of sorts, a vaguely spiritual path, or even a rite of passage into manhood. In these regions shaped by profound ideologies of migration, the experience of being in transit, and the network of pan-African solidarities developed during the journey represents a web of complex and multi-layered realities not best described by the fixed institutional categories listed above. Instead, African migrant narratives cite families as a primary reason for migrating, highlighting it as a response to family and community aspirations, status acquisition, and the fulfillment of *social responsibilities*. The importance of conforming to social expectation affects the image of the journey portrayed to the home community, in which migrants often maintain a positive narrative, despite the hardship most face.¹³ The perceptions of the risk entailed in a migratory project of this type are rarely articulated, ultimately promoting the dissemination of a migration ideology back

¹⁰ *Human Development Report 2009: Overcoming Barriers: Human Mobility and Development*, New York: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2009.

¹¹ For a complete list of works studied, and conclusions reached, see: H. de Haas, ‘Turning the Tide? Why Development Will Not Stop Migration’, *Development and Change*, 38(5), 2007, p 18.

¹² O. Bakewell, ‘Keeping Them in Their Place: The Ambivalent Relationship Between Development and Migration in Africa’, *Third World Quarterly*, 29, 2008, pp 1341-1358.

¹³ See for example: P.F. Marcelino and H Farahi, ‘Transitional African Spaces’, op cit.

home, which, combined with migration pressure increases aspiration and (perceived) capability. But these narratives also perpetuate *hope*, a more intangible trait found on the discourse of many migrants in the streets of Buenos Aires —if often disguised by the *despair* tacitly displayed by many, or inferred by the researchers, a despair that they dare not transmit to those who expect them to excel.

Understanding the internal dynamics of migration processes may also refer to Appadurai and Nederveen Pieterse's concepts of modernity, multiculturalism and cultural globalization, implicitly influencing the motivations of potential migrants through the creation of personal ethnoscapings that mobilize individuals and social groups to dream beyond their traditional 'imagined worlds'.¹⁴ These new imagined communities, which overcome essentialist mores of old, imagined communities,¹⁵ also bypass political structures and insert an element of utopia into the rationality behind the migration project equation. Social, economic, and political aspirations are highly intangible elements of this migrant narrative, and best described by it. Migrants' ability to navigate through malleable structures, of being agents of change in their own lives, is a fundamental premise of the human development approach, which assumes personal aspirations as a strong enough motivation for migration. Migrants, however, do not exist in a political vacuum, and are subject to existing structures strongly influencing and constraining available means and modes of action.¹⁶ In many African nations, the structural limitations on agency are often so severely limiting, that migrants' option to depart may be a 'bare life' strategy. According to de Haas, 'the extents to which migrants are really capable of shaping their own lives (i.e. acting as free agents) is extremely contingent on the wider institutional and natural environment in which people live.'¹⁷

A final note on the methods of arrival is necessary (more on 2.4.). Although solid public data is largely absent, the Argentinean immigration authorities have implied that irregular African migrants may be entering the country as *polizones* (stowaways, or clandestine passengers in cargo ships), and perhaps subjected to people trafficking networks (*redes de trata de personas*).¹⁸ This requires two fundamental remarks. Firstly, considering the significant amount of Africans *presumed* to be either regularly or irregularly residing in Argentina, and the fact that this particular migration corridor did not open until after 9/11, it appears very unlikely that more than a few dozens might have actually entered in this manner. The contrary would be to assume that hundreds of migrants would have entered Argentina as stowaways in large cargo ships calling at the ports of Rosario and Ensenada, in less than a decade. Alternatively, they would have hypothetically arrived by boat to any given location along the extensive Argentinean coast. Both hypotheses seem highly doubtful. Secondly, it is important to carefully distinguish trafficking networks from smuggling networks. While it is possible that some trafficking networks might be exploiting African migrants (a thesis that requires factual verification), it is more likely that migrants might be resorting to smuggling networks (*redes de tráfico*). This could be the case for those who do indeed enter as stowaways, but also for those who enter through other means. Either way, this version attributes a degree of agency to migrants themselves, versus the victimhood narrative implied by the assumption of trafficking as a major path into Argentina.

¹⁴ A. Appadurai, 'Modernity at Large', op cit; and JN Pietersee, *Ethnicities and Global Multiculture: Pants for an Octopus*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2007.

¹⁵ B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London: Verso, 1983.

¹⁶ P.F. Marcelino and H Farahi, 'Transitional African Spaces', op cit.

¹⁷ M. Collyer and H de Haas, *Developing Dynamic Categorizations of Transit Migration*, Oxford: Centre on Migration, Policy and Society, University of Oxford, 2009, p 23.

¹⁸ Interview to Federico Augusti, Dirección Nacional de Migraciones, in 'African Immigrants Turn to Argentina for Opportunity', posted by The VJ Movement in YouTube, accessed 13 March 2011 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xPh_iASSw30>.

A rather more logical explanation —based on whatever scarce information there is, and on interviews to both migrants and academic/institutional specialists on Argentinean migration/refugee issues— is that migrants have for the last decade taken advantage of fairly sophisticated diasporic networks, using the loopholes in Argentinean border control and immigration law. Despite the difficulty in ascertaining the veracity of the data, preliminary information points toward a large inflow of migrants using two different methods: by cargo ship (either as stowaways, or with the crews' knowledge and complicity) to the port of Santos, Brazil, the largest and busiest in Latin America, and a major port of call to many of Africa's convenience flags; and, until recently, by airplane from Dakar to a number of major Brazilian airports, taking advantage of a special protocol between Brazil and Senegal.

According to the current migrant narrative, from Brazil, and for reasons that are yet to be fully determined, many migrants typically continued by land toward Argentina, crossing the country by bus or train and arriving at one of the many remote border outposts between Brazil and Argentina, Brazil and Bolivia, or Brazil and Paraguay.¹⁹ The extension and porosity of these borders make the crossing a fairly simple endeavor. It might be done by car, at regular border outposts where control is known to be scarcer or avoidable, in some days or times; it might also very likely be done in unmarked locations (e.g., anywhere in the Paraná/Misiones jungle). Both alternatives possibly require access and payment to local smuggling networks. One of the most common narratives, however, describes how entrance is done through the Triple Border (*Triple Frontera*), a location in which the cliffs along the Iguazú River are the only obstacle between Paraguay, Brazil, and Argentina. Crossing attempts appear to be done by boat, possibly fast Zodiac units, very likely during the night, when border patrols are best avoided. There appears to have been, however, reinforcements on border patrolling in this area, from all sides.²⁰ In Argentina, random equipment advancements and random road check-points in the vicinity of the Uruguayana (Brazil), and La Quiaca (Bolivia) attempt to reduce the permeability of the region.²¹ Some migrants have claimed to have been controlled much further south in National Road 9 (Ruta 9), in the provinces of Jujuy and Salta. Yet, it is unmistakable that the sheer extension and remoteness of these land borders makes it nearly impossible for authorities to fully patrol. Inherently, resources are being allocated in a reactive manner, leaving it to migrants to simply adapt and find new pathways to complete one more stage in their migratory project.

What this reality reveals is Argentina's (and Brazil's) integration in a broader migratory nexus stretching all the way from across the Atlantic, but in which both countries are possibly only secondary/ultra-peripheral nodes, at least for the time being. Although this might be slowly changing, migrants seemed to consider either country as a pit stop in a project that envisaged the United States or Canada as final destinations. This forcibly assigned role of transit or transshipment country is, in and of

¹⁹ In numerous interviews conducted in Buenos Aires with scholars and professionals working with migrants (UNHCR Southern Cone, FCCAM, CAREF, among other institutions) there was solid agreement that this was the major point of entry in Argentina. From the interviews conducted personally by the authors with migrants, one admitted this route in vague terms, while others avoided responding. Informal statements by some migrants seem to confirm this understanding. See, for example: 'Migration: From Africa to South America', posted by France24 on YouTube, accessed 13 March 2011 <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vy68khUIpfw&feature=related>>. Only a large-scale enquiry to migrants themselves, based on researcher-subject trust can confirm or deny what appears to be the going narrative.

²⁰ Widely reported in the Brazilian media, see for example: 'Ministro anuncia reforço em fronteira com o Paraguai para aumentar combate ao tráfico de armas', Zero Hora, 15 April 2011; 'Governo amplia reforço policial na fronteira', ParanáOnline, 29 April 2011; 'Fronteira terá policiamento reforçado', Diário dos Campos, 29 April 2011. The border reinforcements appear to respond to a mixed basket of threats including people smuggling and trafficking, traffic of weapons, and traffic of counterfeit goods.

²¹ Enhanced border controls in Argentina appear to be motivated primarily by illegal merchandise smuggling, but there is a strong coincidence between border crossings where this is a normal occurrence, and those reported to have been used by African migrants to cross from Esther Bolivia or Brazil. See for example: 'Preocupa la debilidad de los controles en La Quiaca', ElTribuno.com.ar, 21 January 2011.

itself, as problematic as talking about ‘transit migrants.’ A variety of nations have been bundled up and qualified as ‘transit countries’ in an inchoate class of countries branded as ‘transit states’, a label that encompasses nations with extreme differences. This terminology, which largely took hold in post 9/11 migratory nexus, reflects the consequences of European and U.S. borders’ securitization process. It has induced a funneling up of migration flows, and the accumulation of migrants in countries qualified, according to their role in the migration process, as ‘transshipment centers,’ in other words migrant warehouses where the opportunity to migrate is awaited. While transit is admittedly—and growingly—a fixture of the migration process, the use of this term lacks in accuracy when describing the diversity, textures, and interconnectedness of today’s migratory experience. African migrants have become a common view in many of Argentina’s major urban areas and, if other ‘transit’ countries are any example, they won’t be going anywhere anytime soon. They are part of a new and fluid ethnoscape facilitated by a changing geopolitical paradigm that encompasses Europe, North America, the Mediterranean basin, the Maghreb and West Africa, and in which Argentina plays second fiddle.

Migrants and asylum seekers should not be rendered as ‘victims’ by default. At one stage or another most require the services of smugglers for logistically challenging sections of their journeys, but ‘the vast majority migrate on their own initiative,’²² and are far from being ‘scruffy, dirty victims,’ rather being active agents in the attempted change of their own socio-economic condition, even if those are limitations to their free agency.²³ Most importantly, migrants are often (and increasingly) put in ‘transit’ countries, a permanence that is perhaps one of the notable realities bypassed by the term ‘transit.’ It is important, thus, to rescue back the migrants’ own experiences from the flat narratives conflating them, essentializing them, and depriving them of agency and free-will (of which the debate between victimhood in trafficking vs. agency in smuggling is a testament). As pointed out throughout this report, however, agency does not detract from a number of limitations to their choices and actions, as it does not from the overarching vulnerability that characterizes many migrant experiences, but in particular that of Africans.

B. Preferred destinations: Africa, Europe, and beyond

According to the UNDP’s *Human Development Report 2009*, and following its conservative figures, the largest portion of the world’s migrants is internal (within the same state). That would account for roughly 740 million people, or four times more than those who move outside of their countries. Out of those who moved internationally, only 70 million did so between a developing state and a developed state, whereas 200 million international migrants thickened the lines of south-south migrations.²⁴ Africans are no exception. Although most African migrants in 2000 went to Europe, the second largest chunk traveled within the continent. Those who left to North America, Asia and the Middle East each represent less than a sixth of the intra-African flow. South America did not even register. And then there was 9/11.

For Africans, the traditional destination is Europe, and has always been Europe. It was thus during the slaving era, it remained thus prior to and during the waves of independences, and it continues to be thus today. It is the closest continent, with a few bottlenecks—Gibraltar, Lampedusa, Malta—technically keeping the two just a few kilometers apart. It is, for that reason, the cheapest to access, and was until recently perhaps the easiest way out of Africa. Additionally, strong historical, political, and geographical ties (as well as some legal exceptions) bind specific European countries to African nations: England to Egypt, Somalia, Madagascar, South Africa and the Commonwealth member states; France to

²² H. de Haas, ‘Trans-Saharan Migration’, op cit.

²³ N. Rothschild, ‘Not All Immigrants Are Scruffy, Dirty Victims’, Open the Borders Campaign, London: Spiked, 1 October 2009, <http://www.spiked-online.com/index.php/site/article/7475/>. Note: Victims of trafficking, clearly, should be understood in a completely different context.

²⁴ UNDP, ‘Human Development Report 2009’, op cit.

much of the Maghreb, the Sudan, and the Sahel; Portugal to five Portuguese-speaking states, including Angola and Mozambique; Spain the Equatorial Guinea; Italy to Libya, Ethiopia and Eritrea; Belgium to the DRC, Rwanda and Burundi; Germany to Tanzania and Namibia; and the Netherlands to South Africa.

This cultural, political, historical, and linguistic familiarity justifies Africans' migratory preferences, and explains the existence of important communities of each of these nationalities in the respective former colonial power. Such close relationships have led to the maintenance and encouragement of close diaspora-homeland ties, often practiced as high intensity transnationalism.²⁵ In some cases, the history of migration to the *metropolis* is so entangled that it is difficult to distinguish where Africa halts and Europe starts, or vice versa. A few countries —particularly Sweden, Norway, Denmark, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands— also appear to have received cosmopolitan migrants and political refugees from around the African continent, creating yet another layer of inter-continental connectedness. Finally, with the advent of the European Union, the economic attraction of the single market and, subsequently, the Schengen Agreement, Africa-Europe migration gained a whole new dimension. And then there was 9/11. And yet again, there was a paradigm-shifting crisis that spread across the Maghreb, with results that are as unpredictable as they are volatile.

As in Europe, North America's history of migration dates back to the slaving era, with interesting episodes of return migrations (freed American slaves settled in Freetown, or Nova Scotia's former slaves settled in the same region). US immigration and racial laws prevented any significant migrant inflows from Africa for much of its history, with notable exceptions such as the Cape Verdean diaspora settled all over New England, constituting the earliest significant non-European migrant group in the US. Only much later did others arrive: South Africans, Nigerians, Senegalese, Ghanaian, and gradually a kaleidoscope of African identities, lost in the diversity of America, and diluted among a large Afro-American population. In Canada, humanist traditions meant that the first substantial contacts with blackness was through freed American slaves arriving through the Underground Railroad. Until recently, the country was receiving large numbers of migrants and asylum seekers from the continent, concentrating in Greater Toronto and in other large cities.²⁶ However, asylum claims in Canada now tacitly require the applicant to seek to apply *prior to* arriving in Canada, a policy change that fails to recognize the increasingly blurry line between economic migrants and *de facto* refugees, while also not recognizing agency to individual applicants.²⁷ Since the inception of the official policy of multiculturalism in the 1970s, Québec also received significant numbers of Francophone Africans, who can 'integrate' locally. And then there was 9/11.

C. The 'Fear of the boat': geopolitical puzzles and recent changes in destination

Signed in Luxembourg in 1985, and mainstreamed into the *acquis communautaire* —the main corpus of European law— by the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1997, the Schengen Agreement (now Schengen Acquis) and the ancillary Schengen Information System (SIS) were cornerstones of the European project. On a technical level, its ratification, while enforcing stricter rules along the external borders of the EU, namely by creating a mandate for joint patrols on vulnerable external borders, also obliged member states to

²⁵ P. Góis. 'Low Intensity Transnationalism: The Cape Verdean Case', in *Viena Journal of African Studies*, 5(8), pp 255-276, Vienna: Stichproben. 2005.

²⁶ According to UNHCR's fact sheet on Canada, currently a total of 230,604 refugees and asylum seekers reside in Canada. See UNHCR's 2011 fact sheet on Canada (accessed 13 May 2011): <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/page?page=49e491336>.

²⁷ While the overall numbers in the past five years present a modest increase, overall numbers since 1995 have decreased. The quota for asylum seekers applying for immigration settlement after their arrival to Canada decreased under the current government to 9,000 to 12,000, down from 22,500 to 28,800 under the previous Liberal government. According to Immigration Canada (<http://www.cic.gc.ca>), the overall annual quota for migrants currently sits at 240,000 to 265,000.

restrict and control the entrance of non-EU nationals, and to consult with fellow members in cases that raised doubt. The strengthening of external borders strongly impacted Europe's expansive and permeable hotspots in the Mediterranean coast and the vast territorial waters surrounding Spanish and Portuguese Atlantic possessions off the African coast. Under the banner of enhanced cooperation, the instruments later proposed and ratified by some of the EU members under Schengen II (2001) and III (2005) predicted the 'continued harmonization on issues such as the management of visa policy [and] immigration policy (on both legal and irregular immigration)',²⁸ clearly defining a path to eventually be followed across the EU, particularly in the area of migration. These, however, would already be coated by a game-changing event: the September 11th bombings in New York.

The security measures following the terrorist attacks impacted travel and migration around the globe in an unprecedented fashion. Within hours, North American borders were all closed. The following months and years would bring a crescendo of border and immigration control mechanisms implemented both in the US and in Canada. Across the Atlantic, 9/11 accelerated the implementation of already restrictive laws on immigration, inversely proportional to the deregulation of internal European borders. Never as then was the idea of 'Fortress Europe' so clear. A complex legislative web took over European immigration policy, slowly 'pushing back the link of the chain'—that is, gradually but effectively externalizing European immigration policies, attempting to solve migratory pressures in the source countries, both by discouraging and curtailing emigration, and by promoting local development. The assumption was that less poverty in Africa would inevitably result in less pressure along the European borders. Yet, this strategy was to be combined with stringent land, sea, and air controls in the borderlands of the EU, in Portugal, Spain, Italy, Malta, Greece, and Cyprus; and with bold EU proxy measures in 'buffer' or 'transit' countries in the immediate vicinity of the EU, such as Turkey, Libya, Tunisia, Morocco, the Cape Verde Islands and other countries in West Africa. By and large, the virtual map of Europe appeared to soar, and the *de facto* Mediterranean border appeared to stretch all the way down to Dakar, where European navies nowadays patrol foreign territorial waters.²⁹

The creation of Frontex, the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union, was followed by the joint operations HERA 2008 (to tackle illegal migration flows from West Africa to the Canaries) and NAUTILUS 2008 (border control reinforcements in the Central Mediterranean, to curtail undocumented migration to Italy and Malta); operation Hermes 2010 (an initiative to acquire a clear image of illegal migration and organized human trafficking in the EU); and Rabbit 2010 (emergency control of Greece's external borders with Turkey, the FYROM and Albania, by then the most vulnerable in the EU). On occasion, NATO was also partly co-opted into this new geopolitical outfit.

Closer military and immigration cooperation following special agreements between several European countries and neighboring states intended to neutralize the growing human disaster of precarious boats taking off the African continent's northern and western shores to attempt what were becoming suicidal crossings. When the boats did arrive, dozens, sometimes hundreds of undocumented migrants swarmed the shores of Lampedusa, Malta, Sicily, the Canaries and, more recently, the Cape Verde islands, an outpost for Europe's externalization strategies.

²⁸ J. Gelatt, Julia, 'Schengen and the Free Movement of People Across Europe', Washington, DC: Migration Information Source, 2005, <http://www.migrationinformation.org/Feature/display.cfm?ID=338>.

²⁹ P.F. Marcelino and H Farahi, 'Transitional African Spaces', op cit; similar claims on the 'bufferization' of frontier states such as Argentina, Mexico, or Morocco, have recently been presented in Buenos Aires by Dr. Mbuyi Kabunda, on the public presentation of his Ph.D dissertation 'La nueva emigración de africanos: desafíos para la integración', at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Buenos Aires, 1 April 2011.

Libya's cooperation in particular, following its bilateral agreement with Italy, seemed to have resulted 'in a partial westward shift of Trans-Saharan migration routes' towards the Maghreb, particularly to Morocco,³⁰ and in an eastward shift toward the Greek border, and toward Cyprus.³¹ This was, however, done at the expense of migrants' rights, some of which found themselves trapped in Libya and used by al-Qaddafi as geopolitical leverage. In any case, the arrival of more migrants to the western coasts of Africa demonstrated that migrant networks across the continent were reasonably aware of, up-to-date on, and reactive toward fast-changing immigration policies.

The Northern African case is all the more relevant when considered as a conceptual conduit to what is going on elsewhere around the world, particularly in Latin America. Recent studies compare Morocco with an unlikely country, Mexico, by virtue of newly imposed statuses as buffer countries, but admitting also that both share migrant narratives revealing heavy-handed authorities and the absence of legal codes or practices.³² Other studies have established that constructing cushions around key borders in the North (EU, US) is part of a wider nexus in which migration became a political instrument, and weaker states accept dubious intermediary roles.³³

Undeniably, the key patterns of African migration were affected by radical immigration policy changes imposed from remote decision centers in Europe and North America, particularly since 9/11. In Europe, this required active and passive collaboration of states in pivotal geographical locations to control some of the most sensitive border crossings in the continent. This new doctrine gradually resulted in the dislocation of migration pressure back to North Africa and other peripheral regions, with the tacit consent of local authorities. But all across the continent, the crackdown on irregular migration was accompanied by aggressive measures challenged by many human right advocates: the tentative practice of forced returns (which Italy is now threatening to fully implement, in the aftermath of the Libyan crisis), following a variety of models (not all of which successful);³⁴ the increasing habit of turning back vessels in territorial waters, practiced by Italian border patrols in the Central Mediterranean; the return of circular migration agreements; and the increasingly common occurrence of detention centers delocalized to peripheral regions of the EU, and to buffer zones in its vicinity, where migrants were forced to live in transit limbos and legal voids, undocumented and unacknowledged, for years at length.³⁵ This latter strategy, however, eventually backfired, in light of the severe North African crisis of early 2011.

The political crisis in across the Maghreb and parts of the Middle East poses unheard challenges to regional stability, at a moment when Europe faces a variety of other challenged, both financial and political. It cannot be said, however, that this crisis was a surprise. Not only were there plentiful indicators showing that social tensions were simmering in many of the region's countries, but also the

³⁰ H. de Haas, 'Trans-Saharan Migration', op cit.

³¹ Up-to-date information on HERMES extension is regularly posted on Frontex's homepage <http://www.frontex.europa.eu/hermes_2011_extended/background_information>. See also Migration News Sheet: 'Worsening Security in Libya, Tunisia forces Malta to renew FRONTEX participation in the Med' (http://www.migrationnewssheet.eu/?page_id=2431).

³² See for example the comparison of two of the main buffers to Europe and the US; H de Haas and S Vezzoli, 'Time to Temper the Faith: Comparing the Migration and Development Experiences of Mexico and Morocco', in Migration Information Source, Washington, D.C.: Migration Policy Institute, 2010 (<http://www.migrationinformation.org/Feature/display.cfm?ID=791>).

³³ P.F. Marcelino and H. Farahi, 'Transitional African Spaces', op cit; and M. Kabunda, 'La nueva emigración de africanos', op cit on note 29.

³⁴ As implied by P.F. Marcelino and H. Farahi, op cit; M. Kabunda, op cit; H. de Haas, 'Time to Temper the Faith', op cit.

³⁵ A. Morice and C. Rodier, 'Europa Encierra a Sus Vecinos', *Le Monde Diplomatique/El Dipló*, (Paris/Buenos Aires), July 2010, pp 14-16.

migrant situation had reached untenable levels. Too little, too late. The cacophony of voices in EU foreign policy sadly slowed down action, partially causing the unspeakable migrant crisis currently underway.³⁶

In late September 2005, Europe woke up to unsettling nocturnal images of its furthest frontier, with ‘black people hanging from barbed wire, laying down with broken arms and legs, bleeding and desperately asking for help,’³⁷ following a hopeless run for the militarized border of Melilla, a strategic Spanish enclave in northern Morocco. Over several weeks, thousands of distressed Sub-Saharan and North African migrants ran for the 3-6 m high fence in successive waves. On several occasions, Spanish authorities are rumored to have opened fire. Witness reports and documental evidence speak at least of mass police brutality. The days that followed, when Spain demanded that Morocco accepted the migrants back, as per a 1992 bilateral agreement, shocked the world: Morocco was found to have abandoned dozens of undocumented migrants to their luck in the confines of the Sahara, close to the Algerian border, without food or water, until denounced by international advocacy groups. Political opportunism quickly grabbed the headlines, utilizing the rhetoric of ‘invasion’ to describe this humanitarian disaster.

A couple of other minor episodes should have ringed alarm bells in the Frontex Situation Room in Warsaw, and across the European capitals. The temporary arrest of Muammar al-Qaddafi’s son by Swiss authorities (2008) and the referendum eventually resulting on the ban of minarets in the country (2009) conducted Switzerland to a serious —if anecdotal— falling out with Libya, with al-Qaddafi going as far as pledging an anti-Swiss *jihad*, and threatening to sever ties with all Schengen Space member states. Italy’s Premier Silvio Berlusconi, concerned with maintaining close ties, sizeable investments, and invaluable immigration cooperation agreements that had managed to reduce the bleeding of African migrants from the Libyan coasts to Italy, further added to the baroque set of circumstances by publicly chastising Switzerland, getting involved in a three-way war of words.³⁸ Although mostly inconsequential, the episodes denounced the degree of European vulnerability and nervousness regarding its neighbors, as was made widely apparent at the beginning of the 2011 crisis. At this juncture, once again Silvio Berlusconi repeatedly intervened, first confessing he was unable to actively join his European partners in the bombing of al-Qaddafi’s positions in Libya,³⁹ then demanding that the EU (in particular France) accepted part of the burden caused by African refugees escaping the conflict,⁴⁰ and finally by symbolically ‘liberating’ the island of Lampedusa, where the migrant crisis reached its highest point.⁴¹

³⁶ Since the inception of the war in Libya, too many tragic incidents occurred. However, the authors close this report a mere two days after an overcrowded ship with African migrants (and *de facto* refugees) desperate to leave Libya sunk off shore, with an estimated 600 victims. Following on the tragic incident, UNHCR ramped up fundraising to supply rescue equipment to the coastal regions between Libya/Tunisia and Italy/Malta. See for example: Associated Press, ‘Witnesses: Ship with 600 migrants sinks off Libya’, 9 May 2011 <<http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5iHiFZ-kQ3VEffvCuPB7EIk0bnoOw?docId=d73f403483a6434d8cde95640b8916b4>>.

³⁷ Staff writer, ‘Ceuta and Melilla: Europe’s Wall of Shame’, Red Pepper, <http://www.redpepper.org.uk/Ceuta-and-Melilla-Europe-s-wall-of/> (accessed 21 March 2011); T Drago, ‘From the Berlin Wall to Ceuta and Melilla’, IPS – The Store Underneath, <http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=30546> (accessed 21 March 2011).

³⁸ See for example: H. Bachmann, ‘Libya Flips Over Swiss Detention’, Time, (New York), 24 July 2008, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1826237,00.html>; or S Kettmann, ‘Switzerland Goes Rogue’, Foreign Policy, (Washington, DC), 19 March 2010, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/03/19/switzerland_goes_rogue?page=0,0.

³⁹ Although he has since changed Italy’s stance, Berlusconi’s government resisted as long as possible to an intervention in Libya, a country with which Italy spent years strengthening a relationship. See for example C Abadi, ‘A Regime We Can Trust: How did the West get Qaddafi so wrong?’, Foreign Policy, 22 February, 2011 <http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/02/22/a_regime_we_can_trust?page=0,0>.

⁴⁰ See, for example: The Economist, ‘Take my migrantes, please: An influx of North Africans causes a headache for the government’, 14 April 2011 (http://www.economist.com/node/18561247?story_id=18561247&fsrc=rss); R Maroni, ‘France blocks train from Italy in dispute over North African migrants’, The Economic Times, 18 April 2011 (http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2011-04-18/news/29443719_1_joint-sea-and-air-patrols-north-african-migrants-tunisian-immigrants); or ‘France temporarily shuts its border to prevent the entry of Tunisian immigrants, fleeing from uprisings in North Africa’, The Australian, 18 April 2011 (<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/world/france-temporarily-shut-its->

Commonly, the view towards migration has been one of ambivalence in the context of the interventionist development approaches commonly applied across the African continent,⁴² and as a ‘problem’ needing to be ‘managed’ by policymakers.⁴³ According to many European leaders and media reports, the ways to stop the influx of ‘unwanted’ migrant populations reported to be increasingly gathering at the shores of North African ‘transit’ countries waiting for an opportunity to enter Europe, is to tackle the ‘root causes’ of migration, while also increasing border controls.⁴⁴ With Tunisia and Libya’s cooperation, Italy had introduced aggressive interception-at-sea tactics, systematically turning away precarious boats with dozens —asylum seekers and economic migrants alike— aboard, in direct contravention of asylum processing guidelines and laws of the sea. The Spanish-Moroccan repatriation agreement, as it was implemented, also appeared to be in contravention of asylum guidelines, by doing collectively what should be done on a case by case basis, that is, enforcing group expulsions which deny asylum claimants rights to have their claims independently evaluated through due process.⁴⁵

European policy is achieving a degree of control of its external borders, but not without consequence: in blindly applying aggressive methodologies, Europe has been feeding a time bomb in its own doorstep, as overwhelmed Malta and Italy presently attest. In fact, in the height of the crisis, the UN appealed to EU leaders to open its arms to asylum seekers first and process them later, in precisely the same day Italy’s Foreign Minister Franco Frattini alerted Europeans of the looming invasion of a quarter of a million Africans stranded across the Mediterranean, while a few days later the country’s Interior Minister, Roberto Maroni, wondered “if it makes sense to stay in the European Union [if the EU does not collectively react against the perceived threat to Italy].”⁴⁶ It is perhaps because of these extreme events and extreme positions that the terms ‘asylum seeker’ and ‘refugee’ are losing currency in Europe. Requests to stop repatriation processes are being overruled, and *de facto* refugees are being sent back to ‘safe’ places like Iraq, even as EU delegations wear bullet proof vests and surround themselves with armed convoys in their visits to the country.⁴⁷

The difficulties of crossing African/European borders, now compounded by the political and military crisis, resulted in new, semi-permanent livelihood strategies of elongated liminality among migrant populations in these geographic transit nodes —somewhat like the strategies of ‘invisibility’ found in Argentina. The situation in North Africa, of course, is of a different degree of severity and it remains to be seen where it will lead. What will happen to EU immigration policy in the aftermath of this crisis? And how will migrant networks respond? What consequences, if any, will be felt across the Atlantic in Argentina and Brazil? These questions will remain unanswered for some time.

border-to-prevent-the-entry-of-tunisian-immigrants-fleeing-from-uprisings-in-north-africa/story-e6frg6so-1226040870002?from=public_rss).

⁴¹ See for example: E. Jozef, ‘Berlusconi veut “libérer” Lampedusa de ses réfugiés’, *Libération*, 31 March 2011 (<http://www.liberation.fr/monde/01012328954-berlusconi-veut-liberer-lampedusa-de-ses-refugies>).

⁴² O. Bakewell, *op cit*.

⁴³ H. de Haas, ‘The Myth of Invasion’, *op cit*.

⁴⁴ The North African crisis in 2011 suggests it might be too late for this.

⁴⁵ ‘Acuerdo de 13 de Febrero de 1992 entre el Reino de España y el Reino de Marruecos relativo a la circulación de personas, el tránsito y la readmisión de extranjeros entrados ilegalmente, firmado en Madrid. Aplicación provisional’ (*BOE núm. 100*, 25 April 1992, and *BOE Núm. 130*, 30 May 1992 (also available online: <http://www.mir.es/SGCAVT/derecho/ac/ac13021992.html>)). The agreement refers to ‘foreigners’ without determination of their status. During the crisis, thus, many of the foreigners who were *de facto* refugees appear to have been regarded as irregular migrants.

⁴⁶ See for example: R Donadio, ‘Fears about immigrants deepen divisions in Europe’, *The New York Times*, 12 April 2011 (http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/13/world/europe/13europe.html?_r=1&ref=global-home).

⁴⁷ See Migration News Sheet: ‘ECHR: “Alarming rise” in number of requests to suspend deportation’ <http://www.migrationnewssheet.eu/?page_id=2435>.

D. The emergence of Argentina and Brazil as potential destinations

The geopolitical causal shifts described above demonstrate not only the versatility but also the interconnectedness and reactive immediacy of migratory dynamics in the region. Although a complete change in patterns and routes of migration possibly takes years to accomplish, the effects of policy shifts may indeed start to trickle down fairly soon after implementation. There is, thus, a quasi-permanent disconnection between policy-making and the reactions among migrant networks, which adapt as quickly as possible but may require time and repeated experience to ascertain the extent to which the changes affect them.⁴⁸

It should be unsurprising, then, that African migrants started to appear in considerable numbers at the Argentinean coasts (as in other receptive countries) right after 9/11, and particularly after 2006. At that moment, a combination of a lenient immigration law in Argentina, and a stringent regime in the EU compounded push and pull factors into a window of opportunity that thousands of migrants knew to take advantage of. In spite of the difficulty in getting to and making a living in Argentina, migrants appear convinced that the immigration legislation and a more accepting public opinion still makes it worthwhile.

But how do Argentina and Brazil fit in the global migratory flows of Africans, and how are the two countries co-opting—or distorting—a migratory corridor so far away? Ostensibly, as ultra-peripheral geographical nodes with diffuse/frontier interest to at least some migrants, offering up an alternative to saturated and more challenging, if preferable, destinations. The attractiveness of Argentina is inversely proportional to the heightened security measures in the European continent.

African citizens have entered the country using different strategies and constitute presently a diverse and complex legal situation. Some of the processes identified are indicative of strategies encapsulated in a nexus of migration by stages. In that context, the Triple Border with Paraguay and Brazil would be one of the earliest phases of the migratory journey, possibly using irregular access methods. The present study has allowed the preliminary conclusions that the selection of Argentina as a destination in African migratory projects is part of a wider Atlantic geopolitical context in which Argentina is likely currently an outpost. Although further in-depth studies of the motivations for migration at the source are necessary,⁴⁹ it is suggested here that the strengthening, tightening up and closure of borders in the EU and in the United States, as well as the systematic persecution of African migrants within their borders (racial profiling; enhanced land controls, such as those currently practiced by France along its border with Italy) might be pushing migrants to furthest, but as of yet supposedly ‘amicable’ countries such as Argentina.

In this wider geographical nexus, Brazil and Argentina, despite the distance, can be configured as major transit options and, perhaps final destinations, due to their symbolic capital, their socio-economic stability, the perception of economic opportunity, and the perception of a migratory normative that is less aggressive (and less active) than in other countries. In reality, the dire situations faced daily by migrants in Argentina do not necessarily confirm these findings. In many cases, migrants from outside South

⁴⁸ P.F. Marcelino, ‘The African ‘Other’ in the Cape Verde Islands: Interaction, Integration and the Forging of an Immigration Policy’, Upper Guinea Conference in Transnational Perspective, Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle (Saale), Germany, 9-11 December 2010, conference proceedings forthcoming.

⁴⁹ Studies such as those directed by Carling or De Haas, as listed in reference (iii).

America end up in a legal vacuum, forced to accept a *de facto* status of ‘permanently temporary.’ It is, nonetheless, possible to preview the signs of a growing transnational activity amidst the immigrated African community, pointing toward a consolidation process of this specific migratory corridor. Perhaps this is an indication that —barring stringent measures in the national immigration normative— Africans are staying, as they did in other transit nodes.

There are hard reasons and soft reasons for the choice of either country. Firstly, both are traditionally receptive to immigration, from the legislative and the societal point of view. The immigration normative also allows migrants some room to seek temporary or permanent settlement (see 4.1.). The principle of non-refoulement is followed in both countries, and Argentina in particular does not practice repatriations (even when they are sometimes ordered). Secondly, there are strong symbolic elements that may be easy to dismiss but could be attractive for migrants (at least in their own narratives): both Argentina and Brazil have a long history of humanism, independence, and defiance. Both countries have famous football teams, a fact that should not be underestimated in a football-obsessed continent, particularly when most of the migrants correspond to the football-crazy demographic group. Finally, Argentina has a reputation of being a rather cultured, ‘European-style’ country. For migrants locked out of Europe, it might prove to be one of those tiny coins that tip the scale. As to Brazil, with 65-million afro-descendants, it is, after Nigeria, the largest African nation. Surely, this can constitute an incentive. Interestingly, the labor market does not appear to bear particular influence in the choice of destination, in stark contrast with comparable contexts. Instead, informality seems to dominate this particular migratory flow, itself creating the trope with which African migrants came to be associated in Buenos Aires: that of trinket sellers (*vendedor de baratillas*).⁵⁰

But are Argentina and Brazil nothing but transit nodes, in a route that migrants expect will take them north to the United States? The answer is, “maybe”. Yet, past evidence demonstrates that the migratory project often changes after departure. Despite the difficulties found in Argentina and Brazil, there is some likelihood that the respective governments will eventually fill in the gaps and address the needs of African migrants —at least those already there— in a way that European and North American governments could not or would not do.

The slow development in Argentina of a legal corpus addressing the novel realities of migration suggests a hesitation to tackle the current challenges head on. In other transit countries, typically African frontier nations, which were themselves until recently net senders of migrants, legislation approval has been haphazard, ad hoc and mostly reactive. Legislative voids have often been tacitly co-opted by European policies that respond to the EU’s own interests. As a historically significant net receiver of migrants, however, Argentina is in a completely different situation, being well equipped with legal instruments, doctrine and plentiful precedents. And yet, the process of legislative updating is surprisingly slow, as is the creation of regulations to supplement and monitor existing laws. Although this is clearly rooted in the state’s limited capacity, it can also partially be explained by a deficit in national identity tropes.

⁵⁰ Differently from many other cases, the labor market appears to be in focus for its irrelevance in this case. Interviews with MyRAR representatives, for instance, reveal that only a minimal number of African migrants achieve a job placement through the institution every year, despite its best efforts. On several instances, Argentinean informants noted that support to migrants was always carefully monitored and balanced against the realities of the country’s own vulnerable populations. Brazilian researcher Andrea Pacheco Pacifico posited the same for Brazil (see: A Pacheco Pacifico and PF Marcelino ‘The Quest for Refugee Integration in Multicultural Brazil’, paper presented at the XXIX Congress of the Latin American Studies Association, Toronto, October 6-9, 2010). Informality and invisibility are strong markers of this type of vulnerable migration. In this particular corridor, invisibility appears to be part of a strategy of survival. The downside, of course, goes beyond issues of race: selling trinkets in the street launches the migrants into a vicious cycle from which they can hardly find an autonomous exit.

While Argentina has a consolidated identity, it does not fully recognize and embrace the different ethnic elements that compose it (see section 3.). Thus, the arrival of a small group of ‘exotic’ migrants assumes a disproportionate weight in the imaginary of a ‘white nation’, a national identity that is ‘is always in the state of becoming,’ in the words of Cecil Foster. He further suggests that “[e]ach time an immigrant arrives [...] [s]he seeks to re-open and even restructure the compact that is the existing social order,’ so that ‘[c]onsensus, no matter how long it had taken to achieve, is threatened.’⁵¹

E. Transit, invisibility and liminality

In Argentina, the above process could be a scary prospect. In colloquial conversations African migrants are often conflated with other *black* residents —Afro-Argentinean, Uruguayan, Brazilian, Colombian, Peruvian, Ecuadorian, Haitian, and Dominican. The confusion leads to the idea that there are many ‘Africans’ out there. In reality they are mostly ‘hyphenated Afros.’ For African migrants, this is a possible way out, as they operate in specific activities in the informal sector, making them slightly too visible, and perhaps leading to the sensation that there are many. Strangely, despite Brazil’s recent economic and political approximation to Africa, and despite it being easier to ‘disappear’ there, many migrants surprisingly still opt for Argentina. This appears to be the case, notably, of Senegalese —the largest African group in the country— ignoring a bilateral agreement between Senegal and Brazil that gave them access to the latter.⁵²

It is necessary to illuminate aspects of ‘invisibility’⁵³ and “liminality” in migrant life. This approach zooms in on the everyday experience of the subject, as opposed to the prevalent discourse in most inherently policy-oriented studies. The study of the experiential and relational ‘process’ of migrant ‘illegality’, incorporating broader ‘processes of social transformation’, allows for the elaboration of life-worlds, intimate understandings, and gets closer to the heart of what anthropologist Clifford Geertz referred to as ‘thick-description’.⁵⁴ Phenomenological studies of migrant illegality must necessarily include the recognition of the effects of juridical status —as a socio-political condition of being ‘illegal’— where the lack of a legal status evidently results in social exclusion, ostracizing, *invisibility*, and suffering. Invisibility may, however, extend beyond being merely a relational concept, to be utilized by migrants as an adaptive strategy.

To be or not to be recognized, categorized, identified and/or accounted for, through formal means, institutions, or institutional actors, becomes a rational choice informed by something akin to Scott’s ‘weapons of the weak.’⁵⁵ In this case, referring to ways in which vulnerable individuals attempt to stay invisible to the ‘powers that be’ by hiding and obscuring identities and activities that the state or

⁵¹ C. Foster, ‘Racial Democracy and Official Multiculturalism: Ontologies of Blackness in Brazil, the United States and Canada’, unpublished paper presented at ‘Rethinking Multiculturalism: Brazil, Canada and the United States, CERLAC/York University, Toronto, 29-30 January 2010.

⁵² Evidence of this is limited to multiple statements made during the authors’ interviews with professionals working with African migrants and refugees in Buenos Aires, who claim to have had hints from migrants in this respect. This particular case was also specifically articulated by the leader of a migrant advocacy group with significant reach. Direct migrant narratives are absent in our sample.

⁵³ T. Polzer and L. Hammond, ‘Editorial Introduction’, *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 21(4), ‘Special Issue: Invisible Displacements’, 2008, pp 417 – 554.

⁵⁴ C. Geertz, ‘Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture’. In *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, New York, Basic Books, 1973, pp 3-30.

⁵⁵ J. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1985.

other powerful institutions prohibit.⁵⁶ Invisibility is therefore a survival resource, and refers to the utilization of informal sectors for sustenance. The informal incorporation in society becomes a survivalist strategy of interaction with local populations as well as authorities, taking place in a social context largely autonomous of laws and policies of the state, although agents of the state may be involved in the process (see 5.2.). So, while Africans are highly visible in a largely white Argentinean society, they can also rely on the existence of other ‘Afro’ elements to be utilized as identity vehicles. This liminality results in a variety of ‘in-between’ and ‘in-between’ states, where the notion of ‘embodied liminality’ as a phenomenological lived–experience of the everyday life is coupled with the in-betweenness of being in transit, that is, neither here nor there, neither home nor a guest.

The term ‘transit’ migration, finally, does not fully recognize the dynamic nature of the migration experience, nor the change and adaptation processes that permeate it. While recognizing liminality as part of the process, it also attempts to understand migration as fixed aspirations, choices, and decisions, ignoring the fact that some migrants change their goal of further migration.

There is today a continuum of mobility whereby not every migrant is —either voluntarily or involuntarily— just passing by; many are indeed staying ‘in transit’ for increasing periods of time, laying bare the multiple realities of sending countries, ‘transit’ countries, and destination countries, as well as the ‘imagined worlds’⁵⁷ of migrants themselves —their borderless lives in an increasingly bordered world— that characterize contemporary migration flows in Africa. How this is affecting conceptions about migration and processes of integration and exclusion is as yet undefined. Geopolitical changes have altered the focus of migration pressures, by limiting the prospective migrant’s access to traditional, geographically closer, and easier destination countries as a consequence of stricter immigration policies. African migrants are crossing permeable borders, one by one, testing different frontiers, and ostensibly attempting to reach farther. The conflict between their aspirations and the political and economic realities of a fenced up world creates a social vacuum and a geopolitical challenge of unprecedented might, and with unforeseen consequences.

III. AFRICANS IN ARGENTINA

The recent arrival of Africans in Argentina takes place in a particular context: that of a society that has historically denied the significant presence of Africans and Afro-descendants in its territory, and consequently their cultural influence. Mirroring the exiguous role given to the African population in Argentina, foreign relations with African nations have traditionally been marginal. In contrast to the policies followed by neighboring Brazil, Argentina’s bilateral relations with Africa —particularly Sub-Saharan countries— have been erratic and unpredictable (as will be demonstrated in section 3.4).

However, the recent arrival of black immigrants from that continent coincides with a renewed interest in Africa from several groups fighting to promote its visibility and heritage not only in academic terms but also from a socio-political point of view. In this context, the purpose of this section is twofold: on the one hand, to briefly depict the study of Africans and Afro-descendants in Argentina, both from a historical point of view and based on the current situation; and, on the other hand, a political perspective depicting relations between Argentina and African countries.

⁵⁶ G. Kibreab, ‘Revisiting the Debate on People, Place, Identity and Displacement’, *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 12(4), 1999, pp 384-410.

⁵⁷ A. Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996.

A. Africans in Argentina in colonial times and beyond

The presence of black Africans in Argentina has been historically neglected by an unfortunate numeric argument, its low incidence in Argentina's population. The fact that the number of slaves in Argentina was much smaller than in other Latin American regions (such as Brazil, Peru, or the Caribbean), on the one hand, and that the population was severely downsized as a result of both wars and epidemics, as well as miscegenation (*mestizaje*), were often provided as arguments for the little relevance given by the Argentinean official discourse in the past. However, as many authors point out, despite the fact that these are real causes, they are not adequate reasons to explain the seeming disappearance of Africans from the territory. These reasons should be found in the influence of "civilizing" models of thought that have purposefully denied their presence.⁵⁸

The arrival of Africans started just a few years after the second foundation of Buenos Aires and extended first to the most developed and commercially relevant region of Tucumán. Florencia Guzman points that the relationships with Africa were not direct and that very little is known about the places of origin of the slaves brought over to Argentina. The period of most intense slave trade was *circa* 1792, continuing on till the abolition of traffic in 1813.⁵⁹

Gladys Perri clearly states that several myths crosscut Argentinean historiography, and have unfortunately been extended to education. 'The idea that in Buenos Aires there were no black people — and much less slaves— has endured in national history'.⁶⁰

Marta Goldberg, in 1976,⁶¹ and years later Reid Andrews, in 1989,⁶² put in evidence and quantified the presence of black Africans in Argentinean territory. In Buenos Aires in 1810, black and mulatto population constituted 29.5 per cent of the population and in 1838 23.7 per cent. Perri, using findings from José Luis Moreno and Carlo Mayo, shows that the presence of blacks in the countryside was also significant.⁶³ In 1744 they were about 15.4 per cent of the population and in 1815 about 7.8 per cent (although in absolute numbers the registered slave population increased from 303 (in 1744) to 3346 (in 1815).

Florencia Guzman also shows that the presence of black population was even more intense in the northeast region: the 1778 General Census indicated that the number of black, mulattos, brown, and *zambos* represented 44.5 per cent of the total population, while the indigenous people were 35.5% and whites 19%.⁶⁴

However, in later counts, the percentages significantly decreased, stimulating controversies regarding the actual evolution of the population and the way it was portrayed. Alejandro Frigerio considers that the dominant narrative emphasizing the whiteness of the Nation has conditioned the way

⁵⁸ D. Piccotti (ed.), *El negro en Argentina: Presencia y negación*, Buenos Aires: Editores de América Latina, 2001.

⁵⁹ F. Guzmán 'Africanos en la Argentina: una reflexión desprevenida', in *Revista Andes*, online edition, no. 17, 2006.

⁶⁰ G. Perri, 'De mitos y historias nacionales: La presencia/negación de negros y morenos en Buenos Aires', in *Historia Unisinos*, 10 (3), pp 321-332.

⁶¹ M. Goldberg 'La población negra y mulata de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires', 1810-1849, *Desarrollo Económico*, 61(16) pp 75-99.

⁶² G. Reid Andrews, *Los afroargentinos en Buenos Aires*, Buenos Aires: Ed. De la Flor.

⁶³ G. Perri, *op cit*.

⁶⁴ F. Guzmán, *op. cit*.

we have explained the evolution and the role of Afroamericans.⁶⁵ In contrast to many other Latin American countries, Argentina does not glorify its ‘*mestizaje*’, but it does its ‘whiteness’. An ideal image of how Argentina is and how it should have been works as a structure that strongly conditions the way studies have been carried out. This dominant narrative characterizes Argentina’s society as white, European, modern, rational and Catholic. This narrative oversees processes of racial and ethnic mixture and cultural hybridization and emphasizes on the early disappearance and the irrelevance of Afro-Argentines to the local culture. He also considers that there is another contextual factor that has contributed to the disappearance of black population in Argentinean society: the system of racial classification. Using one of Reid Andrews’s findings, Frigerio illustrates how a change from a three category to a two category (white and black) system of racial classification had a significant effect on the percentage of black population in Buenos Aires: whereas that percentage was 23.7 per cent in 1838, it decreased to 1.8 per cent in 1887.

Since the mid-1980s, studies of Africa, Africans and Afro-Argentines, particularly regarding Africans in the XIX and XX centuries, have gained significant impulse.

B. African immigrants and Afro-descendants at the turn of the 20th century

The recent arrival of Africans to Argentina has been studied mainly by anthropologists. According to Frigerio the intense social and cultural militancy carried out by immigrants and increasingly numerous local followers drew the attention of anthropologists. “The new black presence in the city stimulated the production of papers for congresses and masters thesis not only on every modality (of *African participation*) but also on their interactions, synergies and conflicts among them”.⁶⁶ This impulse was mounted on a growing interest in the historical, anthropological and cultural studies on Afro-Argentines that resulted from both changes in theoretical point of view (the emergence of a multicultural narrative) and the upsurge of a new social movement (Afro-Argentine militant groups, cultural activism, participation in transnational black movements).⁶⁷

The academic production on these immigrations from Africa points out that one of the main limitations is the lack of representative information. As it will be further argued, data on African population from the 2001 census is outdated and the only additional quantitative, but incomplete, sources of data come from the immigrants requests for any type of residency (including refugee) status. Due to this important limitation, most of the research has to rely on data of this kind, completed by ethnographic information collected from interviews with migrants themselves, and/or public officials and NGOs’ staff.

Argentina received an inflow of Sub-Saharan Africans, particularly from Cape Verde and South Africa, at the end of the 19th Century and the beginning of the 20th Century. Marta Maffia consistently studied the Cape Verdean immigration which first was linked to the whale hunting industry in the southern seas, and later gained relevance, particularly from the 1920s onwards, when one of the worst famines devastated that country. A third flow entered Argentina in 1946, when two other famines hit the

⁶⁵ A. Frigerio, ‘De la “desaparición” de los negros a la “reaparición” de los Afrodescendientes: comprendiendo la política de las identidades negras, las clasificaciones raciales y de su estudio en la Argentina’, in Gladys Lecchini (ed.), *Los estudios Afroamericanos y Africanos en América latina: herencia, presencia y visiones del otro*, Buenos Aires: CLACSO, 2008.

⁶⁶ A. Frigerio, *op cit*, p 134.

⁶⁷ G. Lechini, ‘Los estudios sobre Africa y Afroamérica en América Latina. El Estado del Arte’ in G.

Lecchini (ed.) *Los estudios afroamericanos y africanos en América Latina. Herencia, presencia y visiones del otro*, Buenos Aires: CLACSO, 2008.

islands, but around the 1960s this flow decreased, coinciding with the beginning of Cape Verdean migration to Europe.⁶⁸

Research carried out by Maffia showed that Cape Verdeans in Argentina, unlike their counterparts in the United States and in Portugal, did not form closed groups, and refused to maintain traditional practices. She found that this was partly due to the fact that many have traumatic memories of their places of origin and did not want to remember; others denied their African, black, Cape Verdean origin (calling themselves Portuguese); and a third group who experienced upward social mobility and did not want to have contact with those from lower statuses. The *Argentinization* of Cape Verdeans is interpreted as part of the imperative of the Argentinean state to *nationalize* and *civilize* immigrants and their children. “At this point, we can conceptualize invisibility as a strategy born partly from the historical process in Cape Verde, linked to African and black denial.”⁶⁹

According to Frigerio, the high invisibility of Afro-Argentines during the 20th Century started to crack at the turn of this new millennium, with the constitution of some black Afro-descendant militant groups.⁷⁰ He states, for example, that two black activists arrived in 1996, both international consultants for the Inter American Development Bank, both women —one a slave descendant and the other a first generation Argentine-Cape Verdean— and founded Africa Vive. This NGO had the purpose to put an end to the invisibility of the black population in Argentina, helping to promote their congeners and, generally speaking, reclaiming the role of black people in history and in Argentina’s society.

Regarding the context in which Sub-Saharan immigration to Argentina occurs, Marta Maffia points out that this late arrival of black African immigrants originates in a historical and political milieu significantly different from those of previous migrations.⁷¹

She points out that recent Sub-Saharan immigration is heterogeneous in many regards, such as countries of origin, religion, migratory status, educational profiles, social networks, access to information, or access to communication and transportation. Even though violence and political unrest in their countries of origin may have triggered migration, the main migratory reason for immigrants from Senegal, Cameroon, Nigeria, Mali, Ghana, and Ivory Coast to come to Argentina is economic, particularly the lack of labor opportunities at home. Most migrants can be found in densely populated areas where informal labor opportunities abound: primarily Buenos Aires, but increasingly also La Plata, Morón, Avellaneda, or Villa Gesell.

1. The Senegalese population: ‘Little Dakkar’ in Buenos Aires

The single most studied group of recently arrived Africans in Argentina is the Senegalese community. These immigrants have lower levels of education compared to other groups, but also present various particularities. Traoré, in his ethnographic study identifies two ethnic groups residing in Argentina: Wolof and Diola, one from the North of Senegal, principally from Diourbel, and the other from the province of Ziguinchor.⁷² They came from rural areas, have low levels of education, and live in different

⁶⁸ M. Maffia, ‘Migration and identity of Cape Verdeans and their descendants in Argentina’, in *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal*, 3(2) pp 169-180, 2010.

⁶⁹ M. Maffia, op cit, p.172-173.

⁷⁰ A. Frigerio, op cit.

⁷¹ M. Maffia, ‘Una contribución al estudio de la nueva inmigración africana subsahariana en la Argentina’, in *Cuadernos de Antropología Social*, No. 31, pp 7-32, 2010.

⁷² B. Traore, ‘Los inmigrantes senegaleses en Argentina: ¿Integración, Supervivencia o Participación?’, ‘Primeras Jornadas Afroargentinas Hoy: invisibilización, identidad y movilización social’, La Plata, 5-6 October 2006.

neighborhoods in Buenos Aires. Members of one group work mainly in street vending, whereas members of the other group work as wage workers in small scale enterprises.

According to Zubrzycki and Angelli nowadays they are mainly coming from the regions of Thies, Diourbel, and Dakar, and are all Muslims.⁷³ These authors conducted a series of interviews and found that they arrived over the last two years, traveling alone and entering Argentina through Brazil. The most common trip detected has been Dakar-Fortaleza (Brazil), or alternatively Dakar-Cape Verde-Fortaleza, by air, then on to Sao Paulo by bus, continuing to Argentina crossing the Uruguayan border. Most of them have friends or relatives in Argentina and make use of migratory networks both to leave their country of origin and to get established once they are in Argentina. According to their interviewees, there is an organized network in Senegal facilitating migrants' access to visas to enter Brazil, and providing contacts at arrival, and at the border crossing. Once they arrive, kin lend them merchandize to sell and provide company during their first street experiences.

Cicogna explains the political and economic reasons that triggered immigration from Senegal and the recent increase in the number of asylum seekers.⁷⁴ She points out that since the attenuation of the conflict in Casamance, in 2006, there seems to have been a shift in the motivations of asylum seekers. Afterwards, only isolated cases should be coming as asylum seekers from that region, but on the contrary, the number of petitions grew significantly. The fact that many of these petitioners were using exactly the same argument in their applications called the attention of the National Migration Office. Nowadays, it is presumed that most recent applicants are part of a movement of human smuggling.

Many others arrived in a less organized, more chaotic way, fleeing from violence or war, some of them even without knowing their destination. Blanco, in his article 'Contingency, catastrophe and subjectivity in the African stowaways arriving to Argentina,' points out that many people from Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea, among other countries, who had to flee from their countries did not know very much about the conflicts, and never intervened in direct combat but needed to escape at any cost, sometimes even taking boats with unknown destinations.⁷⁵

C. Africans in numbers: what statistics say on African immigration to Argentina

Currently, the number of African born people in Argentina is unknown. There are several data sources that partially account for this population: census data; migration related registries; data on refugees and asylum seekers; and data from African consulates or Embassies. Even though the vast majority of immigrants from Africa need to get a visa in order to enter Argentina⁷⁶ this type of data is not a good indicator of the presence of a particular immigrant group in a receiving country. In this section we compile all the available data in order to describe their countries of origin, their socio-demographic profiles and their geographical distribution. Despite the fact that these sources present some limitations (particularly regarding coverage or because data has been collected several years ago) they are the only ones that allow an empirical depiction of this migrant group.

1. African population in Argentina by the 2001 National Population Census

⁷³ B. Zubrzycki and S. Afgnelli, 'Allà en Africa, en cada barrio por lo menos hay un senegalés que sale de viaje': La migración senegalesa en Buenos Aires', in Cuadernos de Antropología Social, Vol. 29, pp 135-152, 2009.

⁷⁴ M.P. Cicogna, 'Breve historia de los refugiados en Argentina durante el siglo XX', HAOL, Vol. 18 (Winter, 2009), pp 51-63.

⁷⁵ P. Blanco, 'Contingency, catastrophe and subjectivity in the African stowaways arriving in Argentina', in Revista Escuela de Historia, 1(6), pp 181-193.

⁷⁶ The only countries that are exempted from this requirement are Morocco, South Africa, Tunisia, Egypt and Algeria.

According to the 2001 census data, the African born population in Argentina was small, about 1883 people. Even though they came from a variety of countries, four origins concentrate almost sixty percent of the African population in Argentina: Egypt, Morocco, South Africa, and Algeria (Table 1).

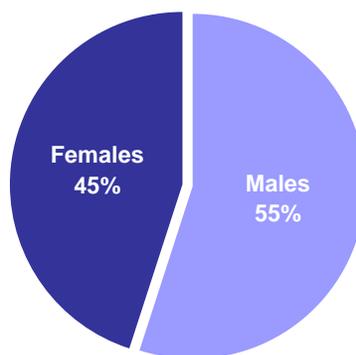
Immigrants from Africa are predominately male (Figure 1), although the percentage of women varies significantly by country of origin, ranging from 22 per cent in the case of the Senegalese population to 52 per cent in the case of Moroccan and Angolan populations.

Table 1
**ARGENTINA 2001: AFRICAN FOREIGN BORN POPULATION CLASSIFIED BY
 COUNTRY OF BIRTH**

Country of birth	Population	% Distribution by country	Cumulative % distribution	% Female
Egypt	328	17.4	17.4	52.1
Morocco	287	15.2	32.7	47.7
South Africa	213	11.3	44.0	49.3
Argelia	160	8.5	52.5	40.0
Tunisia	77	4.1	56.6	48.1
Lybia	71	3.8	60.3	42.3
Cape Verde	71	3.8	64.1	50.7
Senegal	63	3.3	67.4	22.2
Nigeria	49	2.6	70.0	38.8
Ethiopia	46	2.4	72.5	41.3
Congo	37	2.0	74.5	51.4
Angola	36	1.9	76.4	52.8
Ghana	31	1.6	78.0	19.4
Sierra Leone	27	1.4	79.4	3.7
Other countries	208	11.0	90.5	44.2
Country not specified	179	9.5	100.0	48.0
<i>Total</i>	<i>1883</i>	<i>100.0</i>		

Source: INDEC, REDATAM, 2001 National Population Census.

Figure 1
ARGENTINA 2001: FOREIGN BORN AFRICAN POPULATION BY SEX

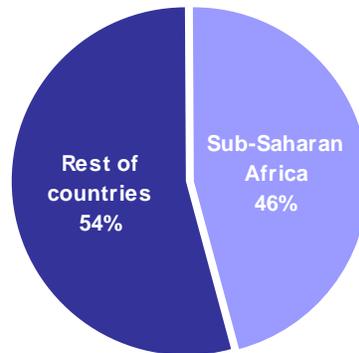


Source: INDEC, REDATAM, 2001 National Population Census.

At the beginning of the millennium, immigrants from Northern Africa were more numerous than those coming from Sub-Saharan countries (Figure 2). It should be emphasized that among Sub-Saharan Africans, the proportion of women is significantly smaller (42 % vs. 48 %).

Age profiles of this population, particularly the incidence of an older population, can be a proxy of time of arrival. There are five groups with a significant proportion of people who are 65 and older, indicating that they are old migrations: Cape Verde (59%), Tunisia (38%), Egypt (36%), Morocco (32%), and Algeria (31%). In contrast, groups with a large proportion of young population are those from Senegal, Nigeria, Congo, Angola, Ghana, and Sierra Leone.

Figure 2
**ARGENTINA 2001: FOREIGN BORN AFRICAN POPULATION BY
 REGION OF ORIGIN**



Source: INDEC, REDATAM, 2001 National Population Census.

Largely coinciding with this portrait, the presence of a high proportion of young immigrants is indicative of their recent arrival. The percentage of recent migrants—that is, those who lived in a different country five years prior the Census—is significantly high among those from Nigeria (100%), Sierra Leone (93%), Congo (59%), and Senegal (56%). Despite the fact that immigrants from Ghana and Angola are young, the percentage of those who arrived recently is much lower. In the case of Angolans, that might be explained by a parallel corridor from Angola to Brazil, already in the 1990s, in the height of the civil war. It is possible that part of that migrant flow might have spilled over to Argentina.⁷⁷

Regarding their current place of residence, most of the immigrants from Africa (three out of four) live either in Buenos Aires City or in the province of Buenos Aires (Figure 3). The vast majority of those who live elsewhere reside in other large urban areas such as Córdoba, Mendoza, or Santa Fé.

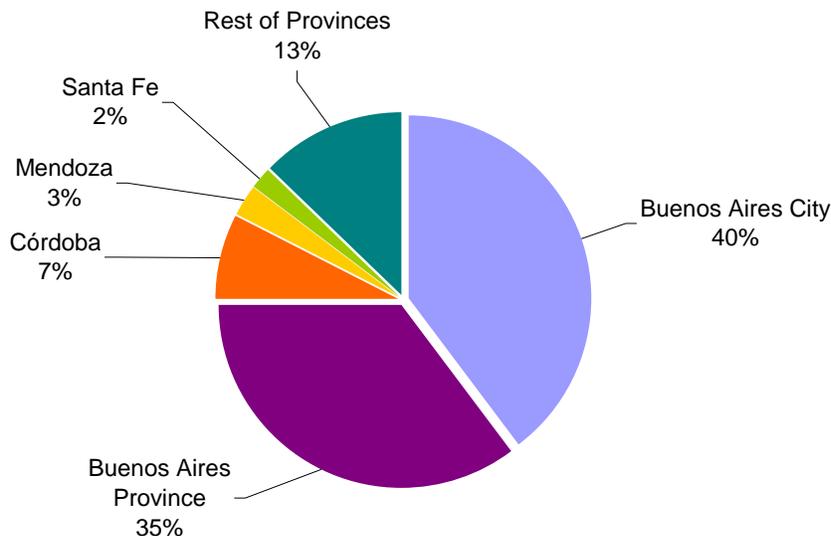
Another trait of the African immigrant population in Argentina is their high educational attainment, significantly higher than Argentina's population (and clearly higher than any African country). About four out of ten African immigrants aged 18 and older have attained some tertiary or university education.⁷⁸ There are no significant differences between immigrants from Sub-Saharan countries and those from other countries in Africa (mainly from North Africa).

Still, some specific groups, particularly those that have arrived more recently have significantly lower educational attainment. That is the case of the Senegalese population: only 35 per cent have a high school or higher education diploma, compared to 69 per cent of Sub-Saharan as a whole. Others immigrant groups with low levels of education are those from Guinea-Conakry, Sierra Leone, and Tunisia. Cape Verdeans share the same profile, but mainly because it is an old population that arrived in Argentina many decades ago.

⁷⁷ A. Pacheco Pacifico, *O Capital Social dos Refugiados: Bagagem Cultural e Políticas Públicas*, Maceió, Brazil: CESMAC and Universidade Federal de Alagoas, 2010; see also: A Pacheco Pacífico and PFMarcelino 'The Quest for Refugee Integration in Multicultural Brazil', paper presented at the XXIX Congress of the Latin American Studies Association, Toronto, October 6-9, 2010.

⁷⁸ In 2001, and also according to census data, only 9.5 per cent of Argentina's population aged 18 and older have a tertiary or university degree

Figure 3
ARGENTINA 2001: FOREIGN-BORN AFRICAN POPULATION BY PROVINCE OF RESIDENCE



Source: INDEC, REDATAM, 2001 National Population Census.

Table 2
ARGENTINA 2001: AFRICAN FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION AGED 18 AND OLDER, CLASSIFIED BY REGION OF ORIGIN AND LEVEL OF EDUCATION

Level of Education	Sub- Saharan countries	Rest of Africa
Less than complete Primary Education	9.0	6.5
Complete Primary or Incomplete High School	24.7	24.2
High School Degree	23.8	27.5
Tertiary or University Incomplete	15.4	11.2
Tertiary or University Degree	27.1	30.6
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Source: INDEC, REDATAM, 2001 National Population Census.

A note on African foreign born population in Brazil by the 2000 Census

Even though Brazil was in the past an immigration country, nowadays the proportion of foreign born population is relatively small, reaching close to 700,000 in 2005,⁷⁹ that is about 0.4% of the country's total population. Among the foreign born population, more than half of them arrived several decades ago from countries such as Portugal, Japan, Italy, and Spain. At the turn of the millennium, immigrants from Africa were a minority, although in absolute numbers they represent a significantly larger population than in Argentina (15.679).

⁷⁹ R. Milessi, 'Migrações Internacionais no Brasil. Realidade e Desafios contemporâneos', Instituto Migrações e Direitos Humanos, IMDH, 2010, data taken from PNAD, <http://www.migrante.org.br/migracoes_internacionais_no_brasil_rm_wca_07jun10.doc>.

Roughly 40 per cent of African immigrants in Brazil are nationals from Angola; 22 per cent from Egypt and 9 per cent from Mozambique. Most Egyptians arrived during the first half of the XX century and one out of two immigrants from Angola arrived between 1960 and 1979 (one third arrived since 1990). The arrival of Angolans to Brazil since the 1960's coincides with independence wars. Throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s guerrilla groups actively engaged against the colonial power, although different factions were also fighting among each other. Anti-colonial war was, thus, accompanied by a civil war. Throughout those years, and even after Angola's independence in 1975, the climate of war and violence fueled out-migration, and many people fled to Brazil, where their adaptation was not overly difficult given the cultural and linguistic commonalities.

Regarding other traits of the African immigrants in Brazil as portrayed by the 2000 census, they are predominately men, with the only exception of Egyptians. Similarly to what has been showed for Argentina, only 43 per cent of African immigrants in Brazil are women.

2. Applications for permanent and temporary residency in Argentina

Another source of data on African immigrant population in Argentina comes from the National Office of Migration, Ministry of Internal Affairs (Dirección Nacional de Migraciones, Ministerio del Interior). A report published by this office presents the number of requests for permanent and temporary residency by country of origin. This data shows that even though the number of African applications is relatively small (in comparison to other origins, particularly from South America), it is large on account of the size of the African population counted by the 2001 Census.

Table 3 shows that between 2004 and 2009, 356 applications for temporary residency and 296 for permanent residency were filled by Africans. Since it is not known how many people have applied for both during this period, it would be wrong to add up both numbers. However, the lowest estimate of the number of Africans who have applied is 353 (about 20 per cent of the African population in 2001) and the largest is 652 (about 35 per cent).

These applicants come from 35 countries, but a handful concentrate almost 80 per cent of all applications for permanent residency (Senegal, Nigeria, South Africa, Morocco, Algeria, Cameroon, Egypt, and Sierra Leone). On the other hand, the same proportion of temporary applications was filled by people from Senegal, Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa, Cameroon, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Ivory Coast.

3. Asylum seekers and refugees

According to data from UNHCR, by July 2010, there were in Argentina 3,233 refugees, whereas the number of asylum seekers was 329. The acceptance rate by December 2009 (*tasa de reconocimiento*) was 14 per cent. Data provided by Fundación Comisión Católica Argentina de Migraciones —the agency acting on behalf of UNHCR with the mission of assisting and providing support services for refugees and asylum seekers— shows that the number of refugees reached a peak in 2008, decreasing sharply in 2009. The countries of origin of petitioners were mainly Senegal (28%) and Colombia (22%), followed, among others, by Peru (9%), Cuba (5%), Haiti (5%), the Dominican Republic (4%), and Nigeria (3%).

The presence of Africans was much more considerable among those petitioners younger than 21 years old. Petitions made by children and very young people account for less than 10 per cent of the total number of petitions. However, almost half of these were by youngsters from Senegal (16%), Nigeria (10%), Ivory Coast (10%), Guinea-Conakry (6%), and Ghana (6%).

The number of petitioners from Senegal and Sierra Leone has increased overtime. The 2004 and 2005 UNHCR Statistical Yearbooks show that petitions from Senegalese increased from zero in 1996 to nine in 1997, to twenty in 2001, and to 59 in 2005. In the case of people from Sierra Leone, it started with one in 1998 and reached 71 in 2004.

According to Zubrzycki and Angelli⁸⁰, using official data from CEPARE, between 2000 and 2006, 501 petitions for refugee status by Sub-Saharan Africans were filled: 18 from Guinea, 23 from Ghana, 23 from Cameroon, 26 from Liberia, 29 from the Democratic Republic of Congo, 58 de Nigeria, 87 de Sierra Leone and 182 from Senegal. This number increased significantly in the following years; between 2006 and mid 2008 petitions increased to 594 (438 from Senegalese).

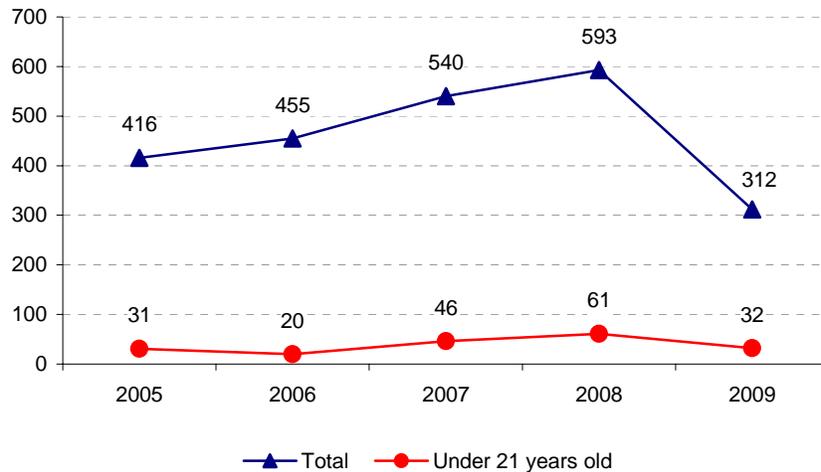
Table 3
**ARGENTINA 2004-2009: NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS FOR PERMANENT AND/OR
TEMPORARY RESIDENCY BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**

Country of Origin	Permanent	Temporary
Senegal	83	81
Nigeria	27	46
South-Africa	26	25
Morocco	25	6
Algeria	19	
Cameroon	19	25
Egypt	19	15
Sierra Leone	15	25
Burkina	9	
Angola	6	
Kenia	6	
Ghana	5	36
Tunisia	5	4
Guinea	4	17
Ivory Coast	4	21
Mozambique	4	2
Ruanda	3	
Tanzania	3	
Cabo Verde	2	1
Congo	2	6
Nigerina	2	2
Uganda	2	1
Zimbawe	2	
Guineana Bissau	1	1
Lesotho	1	
Libia	1	1
Togo	1	2
Liberia		22
Kenia		6
Burundi		3
Ethiopy		3
Central Africa		2
Botswana		1
Guinea Ec.		1
Zambia		1
<i>Number of requested residence permits 2004-2009:</i>	<i>296</i>	<i>356</i>

Source: Dirección Nacional de Migraciones
<http://www.migraciones.gov.ar/accesible/?estadisticas> (April 2011)

⁸⁰ B. Zubrzycki and S. Angelli, op cit.

Figure 4
ARGENTINA 2005-2009: TRENDS IN THE NUMBER OF REFUGEE STATUS PETITIONERS, TOTAL NUMBER AND BY PEOPLE UNDER 21 YEARS OLD



Source: Dirección Nacional de Migraciones.
<http://www.migraciones.gov.ar/accesible/?estadisticas> (April 2011)

Several informants interviewed for this report, as well as Cicogna (op cit), have stated that the significant increase in refuge petitions by Senegalese coincides with the adoption of a strategy to obtain a regular residency in Argentina.

To our knowledge, there are no empirical studies that have analyzed the reasons given in the petitions. It has been suggested, however, that conflicts in West Africa —particularly the Casamance conflict, involving Senegal, The Gambia, and at times Guinea-Bissau— were a common reason given in many asylum requests, with stories often coinciding word by word.⁸¹

A note on African refugees in Brazil

As will be further described in Section 4, Brazilian legislation broadens the 1951 Geneva Convention and the 1967 Protocol definition of 'refugee' to the individuals whose human rights have been seriously violated forcing him/her to leave his/her country of citizenship to look for refuge in another country. According to Milessi⁸² Brazil is known as having one the largest approval rates of refuge petitions. In her report, she shows that according to CONARE, the total number of refugees in Brazil by December 2009 was 4,261. For the vast majority —that is nine out of ten— Brazil is the first country of asylum. About 65 per cent of refugees in Brazil (that is 2,760 individuals) are from Africa.

Regarding the country of origin of these refugees, the vast majority of them (39.6%, that is 1688 refugees) are Angolan, followed by Colombian (14.2%), and Liberian (9.4%), Iraqi (4.6%), from Sierra Leone (3.2%) and Cuban (3.0%). Pacheco Pacífico and Marcelino point out that in 1992, in the height of

⁸¹ The peak of asylum claimants was registered in 2006, as the conflict in Casamance wind down and then exploded again in several minor army clashes. The Argentinean government appears to have reacted with growing skepticism to these claims. Unfortunately it is difficult to pinpoint which, if any, are justified.

⁸² Milessi, op cit. 2010.

the Angolan civil war, about 1200 refugees arrived in Brazil and claimed refuge. “This is the moment when Brazil widens the net and extends the definition of refugee to meet guidelines set forth by the declaration of Cartagena of 1984. As of then, also those escaping credible widespread violations of human rights are eligible to seek refuge in Brazil.”⁸³

4. Africans portrayal by the media

A few years ago, the most important newspapers in Argentina started publishing articles on Africans in Buenos Aires. If this population was already noticeable on the streets, they became more visible with the attention paid by the media. Investigative reports described why they were coming, their modes of entry, their demographics, countries of origin, and legal statuses. They showed concern with their situation from a humanitarian point of view, particularly for those petitioning for refugee status.

A few headlines illustrate how they portray the new immigrants:

- A new immigration: one African and one Asian arrive in Argentina every day. (Clarín, 1 November, 2006).
- The number of children who arrive to the country petitioning for asylum and refuge grows. They are already 13 and 900 more applicants are expected. Many are Africans. They run away from miseries. They travel by themselves, are younger than 19, and seek to adapt rapidly (Clarín, 26 November, 2008).
- Africa in Buenos Aires. Every year hundreds of young men from the black continent arrive in Argentina escaping from wars and misery: Where do they come from? What are their dreams? What do the bijou street vendors that took over downtown think about Argentina? (La Nación, 25 April, 2009).
- Buenos Aires: A destiny for Africans. In the last two years the number of asylum petitioners grew 142%; most of them come from Senegal (La Nación, 7 September, 2009).
- Once [a Buenos Aires neighborhood]: The Little Dakar of new African immigrants. In the neighborhood there is a numerous Senegalese community. They come to escape from poverty in their country (La Nación, 21 October, 2009).

African immigrants were depicted by the media as mostly refugees or asylum seekers that are running away from conflicts over land, religion or racial/ethnic persecution. According to their data (quoted from UNHCR sources) in 2008 a high record of asylum petitions (859) were filled, 38 per cent of them by people from Senegal. They also pointed out that a smaller group of immigrants were coming just searching to improve their standard of living, entering illegally through the Argentina-Brazil border.

NGOs officials describe the ordeal of African asylum seekers in Argentina until some of them are able to obtain the status of refugee. Both refugees and those who have filled the petitions receive six months of food and housing support, as well as medical and psychological assistance if needed, and they could also take Spanish lessons. Those who obtain the refugee status are able to get their ID and therefore get a formal job. Meanwhile if their application is rejected they will stop receiving help.

In terms of their demographics, these African immigrants are described as mainly young men (younger than 40 years old) who have arrived in Argentina with no family. They are mainly street vendors, and reside and work in only a few neighborhoods. In the holidays they travel to seasonal cities in order to sell their wares.

⁸³ A Pacheco Pacífico and PF Marcelino, op cit.

An official from UNHCR in Argentina explains this trend: “[as] a consequence of the toughening of migration policies in European countries, Argentina turned into one of the favorite destinations for people escaping ethnic conflict, or simply hunger.” Since not everybody who gets here has been persecuted, only about 25 per cent of those are recognized as refugees. A public official from the Migration Office in Argentina points out that those who have been rejected as refugees either start an appeal at the judicial system (which can last for several years) or ask to be recognized as residents.

In 2008, 62 minors entered Argentina seeking refugee status, and 130 were already living with that status. They came mainly from Senegal, Ivory Coast, and Guinea-Conakry. A significant number arrived as stowaways in ships. A public official from the Ombudsman National Office said that the situation has surpassed their capacity to bring proper assistance.

It is worth noting that one of the longest and more elaborated articles started with this enlightened and meaningful sentence:

It will be a mistake to say that, almost as if it were a 21st Century discovery, suddenly Buenos Aires became filled with black immigrants, when two hundred years ago, at that historical 1810, 33% of Argentina’s population had black blood. (La Nación, April 25, 2009)

Thus, some writers were making use of the arrival of Africans to communicate to a broader audience a significant part of Argentina’s history that has been systematically hidden and denied. In other words, the arrival of Africans in the 21st Century is not only meaningful in itself, but also because it served to reconsider and value the historical presence of the black African population in the country.

D. Argentina’s foreign policy towards Africa

Africa has never been a priority for Argentina’s foreign policy. Gladys Lecchini, an acknowledged authority on this matter, has stated that “[a] revision of the evolution of Argentine-African relationships throughout the last four decades, since the independence of the African States, shows that Sub-Saharan Africa has a low profile in the external priorities of Argentina, with a low density relationship, lack of continuity among different Argentinean governments both in the design of strategies and in the actions towards the region”.⁸⁴ For Argentina, the place Africa has occupied can be appreciated in the context of its participation in the *Non-Aligned Movement*.

One crucial aspect to understand the policies towards Africa since 1960 onwards has been Argentina’s own political and institutional instability. The series of democratic and military governments resulted in fluctuations in its foreign policy that varied according to periods, governments and international integration projects⁸⁵. In clear contrast with the Brazilian policy towards Africa, Argentina’s policies were driven by ideological, political or commercial impulses depending on the necessities of specific governments, and the relevance given to South-South relationships.

This inconsistency was clearly reflected in the states chosen by Argentina to orientate its actions, sometimes Ethiopia -where the headquarters of the Organization of African Unity was located- and most of the times, South-Africa. In any case, policy impulses have much to do with the establishment of embassies, diplomatic and commercial missions, conventions and sudden variations in trade balances.

⁸⁴ G Lecchini, *Argentina y Africa en el espejo de Brasil ¿Política por impulsos o construcción de una política exterior?*, Buenos Aires: CLACSO, Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales, 2006 (own translation).

⁸⁵ G Lecchini, *op cit*.

During the last military dictatorship Argentina's foreign policy was oriented to defend territorial matters and West values adopting a National Security Doctrine (*Doctrina de la Seguridad Nacional*). In economic terms, the country was looking to find new markets for its exports. Yet, a few years later, all through the Malvinas War,⁸⁶ Argentina tried to get African votes in the United Nations.

With the advent of democracy Argentina started a phase of bilateral and multilateral contacts with African countries. They tried to consolidate South-South alliances, by cooperation and commercial relations. According to Buffa,⁸⁷ the political will to incorporate Sub-Saharan Africa in Argentina's foreign policy agenda was evidenced by the creation in 1987 of the Sub-Saharan Direction in the Office of Foreign Affairs. Together with Argentina's breakdown of foreign relations with racist South-Africa and the establishment of a Peace Zone and the Cooperation of South Atlantic the level of dialogue with Africa improved substantially.

However, the situation changed in the early nineties, when a neoliberal government ruled the country,⁸⁸ and defined different priorities in foreign policy. Its main traits were a strong and aligned relationship with the United States and the substantiation of the MERCOSUR. Argentina's membership in the non-aligned movements was considered irrelevant and relationships with African countries were neglected. Argentina's embassies in Tanzania, Ivory Coast, Ethiopia, Zaire (currently Democratic Republic of Congo) and Gabon were closed arguing budget restrictions.

More recently, since 2003, commercial relations with Africa intensified. According to Escudero,⁸⁹ in 2006 the largest commercial surplus came from Africa, particularly with countries such as South Africa, Algeria, Egypt, Morocco and Angola. These types of relations were promoted from the Foreign Affairs Ministry with significant success. In fact, it is believed that trade with African countries is currently growing. Commercial trade is mainly of agricultural products. Yet, Argentina is paying more attention to North African than Sub-Saharan Africa and keeps giving priority to commercial relations than to cooperation policies.⁹⁰

Currently commercial and economic relations are prioritized. Last year, Argentina's Chancellor, Héctor Timmerman, met with his peers from Angola, Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, South Africa, and Tunisia, declaring that Argentina's government is aspiring to deepen its cooperation with African countries in many areas, and for that reason "look[s] to expand and to widen the bases of an economic and commercial relationship."⁹¹

More recently, public officials from the agriculture sectors from fourteen Sub-Saharan African countries gathered in Argentina with the Minister of Agriculture in order to strengthen bilateral initiatives to increase food staples production⁹². The Minister stated: "Africa is the region in where much remains to

⁸⁶ Falklands War.

⁸⁷ D Buffa, 'Pasado y presente en los estudios e investigaciones sobre África en Argentina' en Gladys Lecchini (ed.) *Los estudios afroamericanos y africanos en América Latina : herencia, presencia y visiones del otro*, Buenos Aires: Centro de Estudios Avanzados, Programa de Estudios Africanos, Córdoba; CLACSO, Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales

⁸⁸ Carlos S. Menem (1989-1999).

⁸⁹ E Escudero, 'Cristina Fernández de Kirchner por Africa: Oportunidades en el marco de la coyuntura internacional', Working Paper No. 21. Buenos Aires: Centro Argentino de Estudios Internacionales.

⁹⁰ G Lecchini, in B. Bologna (dir.): *La política exterior del gobierno de Kirchner*, tomo IV, vol. 1, Rosario: CERIR-UNR.

⁹¹ Sala de prensa. Secretaría de Medios de Comunicación, Presidencia de la Nación. <<http://www.prensa.argentina.ar/2010/10/25/13249-el-gobierno-busca-profundizar-sus-relaciones-con-frica-del-norte.php>>.

⁹² Ministers from Ghana, Nigeria, Angola, Congo, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Kenya and Uganda participated at the meeting.

be growing; FAO foresees that our regions (Africa and Latin America) will be the ones in providing a growing demand for food staples.”⁹³

IV. LEGAL CONUNDRUMS: THE REGULATION OF MIGRATION AND THE SITUATION OF MIGRANTS

A. The legal framework in Argentina

As it has been said, the migratory status of Africans residing in Argentina varies from those who have already obtained some kind of legal residency (either temporary or permanent) and those who are staying under different non-regular conditions. In order to evaluate their current situation it is important to provide a brief description of the legal migratory framework in Argentina, allowing immigrants to obtain a legal residence, particularly in reference to asylum seekers or refugees.

The Argentinean Migration Policy is defined by the Law 25871 and 16/2010. The law establishes several admission criteria for three broad statuses: permanent residency, temporary residency, or transitional residency. In accordance to the provisions of current legislation, the ways and requirements to obtain a residence is different according to whether the applicant is a native citizen of any MERCOSUR member country or associated states, or citizens of non-MERCOSUR countries.

Africans, as non-MERCOSUR citizens, can apply for **permanent residency** if: he/she is a relative (child, spouse, or parent) of an Argentine citizen; is a foreign-born child of an Argentinean parent; serves as diplomatic or consular staff at international organizations; or has refugee status. They could also apply for a **temporary residency** under any of these categories: as a labor migrant (with a contract); a person of independent means (*rentista*); a retiree with a considerable pension; an investor; scientific or specialized personnel with a labor contract; athletes and artists who have a contract in their area; clergy of cults or religions that are officially accepted in the country; patients under medical treatment; minors with special needs that will be cared for in specialized medical centers; regular students; asylum seekers or refugees that have been granted that status; humanitarian reasons; special reasons (not contemplated in the above categories). Finally, transitory residents can be admitted as: tourists; passengers in transit; international crew members; seasonal workers; academic personnel; for medical treatment; and special reasons.

Argentina has recently undergone a massive regularization program. This program was created by Decree No. 836/04 with the purpose of improving “the insertion and integration” of irregular foreign born people in the country by regularizing them. In accordance with the Residency Agreement signed by MERCOSUR countries in 2002, in 2005 Argentina’s National Direction of Migration was instructed by Decree Num. 578/05 to implement a specific program aimed at nationals from MERCOSUR and associate countries: Argentina’s National Program of Migratory Regularization.⁹⁴ In contrast to previous regularization efforts, this initiative was not conceived as an amnesty. The program was considered a success; the total number of immigrants who initiated the process reached 423,697. Among them, almost one hundred thousand got their permanent residency and 126,385 a temporary residency; the rest were people who started the process but did not present the required information. The immigrant groups that got the most benefits were Paraguayans, followed by Bolivians and Peruvians.

⁹³ <http://www.pais24.com/index.php?go=n&id=116379> .

⁹⁴ Dirección Nacional de Migraciones, Programa Nacional de Normalización Documentaria Migratoria.

B. Argentina's legal provision on asylum seekers and refugees

Argentina is party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol. In 1984, it also signed the Declaration of Cartagena, and in December of 2006, Argentina's Congress passed the General Law of Refugee Recognition and Protection incorporating international instruments to its national corpus of law. The 1951 Refugee Convention defines a refugee:

As a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951 and owing to well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.⁹⁵

The Convention is both a status and rights-based instrument and is underpinned by a number of fundamental principles, most notably non-discrimination, non-penalization and non-refoulement.

The 1967 Protocol expands the field of application of the 1951 Refugee Convention, eliminating both the time frame established by the Convention and the geographical limitation in the definition of a refugee. The 1984 Declaration of Cartagena, a nonbinding international instrument, also extended the field of application including as refugee

people who have fled their country because their life, security or freedom have been threatened by generalized violence, foreign aggression, internal conflicts, massive violation of human rights or any other circumstances that have seriously disturbed public order.

Argentina's Law 26.165, passed in 2006, incorporates previous instruments to national law, establishing that their provisions should be interpreted and applied in accordance with the principles and norms of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the American Convention of Human Rights, The Geneva Convention of 1951 and the New York Protocol of 1967, and all other provisions or conventions applicable to the Human Rights and Refugees ratified by the Argentine Republic and or contained in the article 77, subsection 22 of the National Constitution. It defines the concept of refugee and its extension to family members, respects for the principle of *non-refoulement*, determines the juridical condition of the refugee and the body that is in charge of processing and conferring the refugee status.

In Argentina the office in charge of determining if an applicant will be granted the refugee status is the National Commission for Refugees (Comisión Nacional de Refugiados, CONARE). It depends on the Ministry of Internal Affairs (Ministerio del Interior) and is composed by members of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as the ministries of International Commerce and Cult, Justice, Security and Human Rights, Social Development, the National Institute Against Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism (INADI), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), by a well reputed and long standing NGO assisting and defending the rights of refugees.

The purposes of CONARE are: (i) to protect the rights of refugees and asylum seekers under the jurisdiction of the Argentine Republic; (ii) to solve at first instance both the recognition and the curtailment of the refugee status; (iii) to solve the authorization of applications related to family reunification and resettlement; (iv) to approve plans for voluntary repatriation, and resettlement of refugees to a third country; (v) to assemble national, provincial and municipal authorities in order to

⁹⁵ UNHCR, Convention and Protocol relating to the Status of Refugee, 2011 (<http://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10.html>).

propose common actions to ensure the protection of refugee rights, to assist refugees and their relatives, and to promote their social and economic insertion.

To apply for refugee status a person has to present at the office of the competent authority (at any branch of the National Migration Office or any other national, provincial or municipal authority) a letter clearly detailing the reasons for the request, an ID (or a letter explaining why the person does not have an ID), two passport photographs and basic contact information. The process is free of charge.

Within twenty days, the authorities have to grant the applicant a provisional certificate of residence (known as *precária*), to be extended for as long of a period as it takes for the case to be decided. With that certificate in hand the applicant can seek lodge, work and travel legally within the national territory. With this provisional certificate it is possible to obtain a labor ID code and to work regularly, protected under Argentina's labor regulations. The applicant must renew this certificate as long as he or she is under evaluation.

The applicant will be informed of CONARE's decision by mail. If the response is positive, a refugee certificate will be granted in order to obtain a temporary residency (initially for two years, but renewable). Having the temporary residency he or she can obtain a National Identification Number (*Documento Nacional de Identificación*, or DNI) for foreigners. If the response is negative and the application has been refused, the candidate can appeal the decision to the Ministry of Internal Affairs. If the appeal is denied, and once all administrative instances are exhausted, the candidate may resort to a judicial instance.

C. Similarities and differences with the Brazilian migratory framework in Brazil

Law 6815, passed in 1980, defines the juridical situation of all foreign-born residents of Brazil. The provisions of the Foreigner Status (*Estatuto do Estrangeiro*) address all immigration and extradition procedures, as well as asylum and naturalization. The Brazilian regulatory framework recognizes full immigrant rights only for permanent residents, whereas rights for temporary residents are restricted.

In September of 2009 Brazilian government passed two important decrees. Decrees 6964/2009 and 6975/2009, which enacted a Residency Agreement for Nationals of MERCOSUR (Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and Paraguay), Bolivia and Chile. Similarly to what Argentina accomplished a few years before, these decrees made possible for nationals of these countries to work and reside in Brazil by presenting a few documents (passport, birth certificate, and no-criminal background certificates in both the country of origin and in Brazil). According to these decrees, the immigrants and their families have the same civil rights as Brazilians, and equal treatment before the law. Family reunification is also promoted and there is a commitment with social security rights acquired in another country, the right to transfer resources, and the right to the nationalization of immigrant children.

In the same year Brazil adopted a system of regularization of migrants. Since the *Estatuto do Estrangeiro* passed in 1980, three regularization programs were carried out in Brazil, in 1981, 1988, and 1998. Irregular migrants were allowed to petition for a provisional residency. According to Millesi, the number of petitions was estimated at about 43,000 to 45,000. Immigrants from Bolivia constituted the largest group (5,492) followed by Peruvians (4,642).

A note on the legal framework regarding refugees

Despite the fact that the Brazilian refugee law was passed in 1997, the country had already ratified the 1951 Geneva Convention and its 1967 Protocol in 1989. The 1997 Federal Law (9474/97) created the National Committee for Refugees (CONARE). According to the representative of UNCHR in Brazil, this country has a significant experience with refugees, an advanced legislation, several 'good practices' and is one of the most important countries in the Southern Cone regarding solidary re-settlement.⁹⁶

Some of the most significant traits of the procedures to claim refugee status are: (i) the claimant has to be in the national territory and has to express the wish to be recognized as a refugee, irrelevant of the point or mode of entry; (ii) the process is free of charge; (iii) the refugee claimant cannot be deported; (iv) the claimant has to fill in a declaration in his/her mother tongue, stating motives, personal information, and information on dependants.⁹⁷

Until recently, the Brazilian Refugee regime stood out compared to all other countries in the region, since it adopted specific legislation for refugees, respected the principle of *non-refoulement*, did not establish a deadline for formalizing the request once in Brazil, had a straightforward and transparent process, and had in CONARE a hybrid composition.

Nowadays, Argentina has improved its standards, as shown in the previous section, by also passing a specific Law on Refugee Recognition and Protection, and establishing a specific office coincidentally also called CONARE. However, it would appear that Brazil has larger experience and greater commitment regarding resettlement practices. In 2004, it joined a resettlement program for Latin American refugees, which "enabled any Latin American country, when adequate, to associate itself to the program and receive refugees from other Latin American countries, helping to reduce the impact of the humanitarian situation faced in the region, and sharing the burden of those countries with more recognized refugees—such as Costa Rica and Ecuador."⁹⁸ Argentina implemented the program in 2005.

V. FUTURE PROSPECTS FOR IMMIGRATION IN ARGENTINA

A. Expected trends in African immigration

From a demographic angle, the maintenance, erosion, or reinforcement of an active migratory corridor between Africa (especially West Africa) and Argentina/Brazil is currently determined by a complex combination of both endogenous and exogenous variables. Perhaps it is worth noting, first and foremost, that migration in and from Africa is far from being a new phenomenon. Instead, extensive anthropologic evidence suggests African out-migration is as old as humanity itself, making this an inherently exogenous continent. Nonetheless, in consonance with international migratory data, migration from Africa is mostly migration *within* Africa itself. The most significant corridors in the continent occur between neighboring states. This makes apparent one of the strongest paradoxes in migration generally, but most particularly—and tragically—in the African continent: while mobility keeps increasing, so do barriers to mobility.

⁹⁶ <http://www.oreporter.com/detalhes.php?id=32192>, 11 November 2010.

⁹⁷ A Pacheco Pacífico and PF Marcelino, op cit.

⁹⁸ A Pacheco Pacífico and PF Marcelino, op cit, p. 10.

When only the last six post-independence decades are considered,⁹⁹ the obvious conclusion is that barriers to mobility among ancestral ethnic groups located across multiple national boundaries have increased. Simultaneously however, there have been added pressures for migration, including droughts and famines, civil wars, and multi-state wars. The current crisis in North Africa neatly illustrates multiple dimensions of this conundrum. As a tragic example, in Libya tens of thousands of Sub-Saharan *de facto* refugees and economic migrants were forced to flee the country as they could, heading for the borders of Tunisia and Egypt, two nations from which other refugees and migrants had just fled weeks earlier... to Libya. These massive flows of people have occurred time and time again, with every new conflict in the continent. Only a small percentage, as dramatically evidenced during the Rwandese ethnic conflict of the 1990s, ever managed to leave Africa. Most mobile Africans, thus, move inside the continent, as they have done ancestrally.¹⁰⁰

Africa's population is the fastest growing in the world,¹⁰¹ but resources continue to be among the most unevenly distributed. The expectation, thus, is that out-migration will continue to be a reality in decades to come, even as some bright spots of development surface across the continent. For these reasons, migration pressure—the differential between people's wishes to leave and their capability to do so—appears to be increasing in the continent. Out-migration should, thus, continue to be a reality. With EU barriers consistently and increasingly shut (see 5.3.), minor flows to alternative destinations are expected to consolidate. From this perspective only, some continuity in the flows to Brazil/Argentina is expected.

B. Inclusion, exclusion, and Informal incorporation

Processes of inclusion and exclusion are subject to a variety of factors at any given time, including the sociological character of the host society, the size and origin of the migrant community, and others, such as ethnicity and perceived occupation and economic contribution of the newcomers. This report does not aim to clarify all the simultaneous and complex processes at play but rather underlines that this complexity has only begun to be studied in Argentina. While a study of African integration in Argentina would warrant a wholly different approach, necessarily dwelling into Argentina's unresolved Afro history, currently existing studies of ethnographic nature (focused overwhelmingly on Senegalese migrants) suggest that what is occurring in most cases is a process of increasing liminality, rather than inclusion or integration. Some important factors for this are briefly outlined in this section and in section 6. However, it is at the confluence of them all that the integrative process focuses.

Currently, informal incorporation in Argentinean society appears to have become a survivalist strategy of interaction with a local population who is curious but at times cautious or suspicious about the newcomers, but also with the authorities and agents of the state, most notably the police, who deal with day-to-day societal control. Invisibility, in this manner, becomes a tool of a deformed integration: the migrant is *here*, but is not *really here*. This in-betweenness is becoming normalized in liminal micro-societies incorporated in larger communities dealing with complex change. It is suggested that this is the case in Argentina, now faced with a side of itself it had long forgotten. Times are different, nonetheless, and in consonance not only with other traditionally multicultural destinations of migrants across the Americas, but also with Argentina's own history of incorporation, it is suggested that also in Argentina this new community will eventually become one more component of the urban ethnoscape. This transition

⁹⁹ With the notable exception of Ethiopia, which was never colonized (but for a brief period of Italian occupation), and Liberia (1847), all other African states conquered their independence after 1951.

¹⁰⁰ UNDP, 'Human Development Report 2009', op cit.

¹⁰¹ ESA, 'The World at Six Billion', New York: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2011.

comes with time, contact, and knowledge. Integration of Africans in Brazil does not appear to present particular challenges, but is subject to the same racial undertones already present in Brazilian society, and to the same resistance observed in any countries dominated by middle classes. However, in a context of a fast-growing Brazilian economy and a government with a strong social pennant, concerns are limited.

C. Geopolitical and ideological mores

Another paradox affecting the African continent is the contrast between the liberal concept of development requiring and begetting greater mobility (as widely recommended by international organizations such as the United Nations Development Program, or the International Organization for Migration, among others) set against the current migratory policies of the preferred destination outside Africa: Europe. The EU precepts of migration are changing on a daily basis, and three key moments could perhaps be identified in the context of migration to Argentina: (a) the signature, implementation, and total enforcement of the Schengen Agreement; (b) the creation of FRONTEX, and its increasing influence in migration issues across Europe and in the borderlands; and (c) the doctrines rising out of the North African crisis of 2010-2011. The latter is still occurring as this report is finalized, for which reason the authors deem it necessary to be cautious. The trend appears to be, nonetheless, that enhanced barriers to mobility will be enforced proportionally to the political instability in the Southern Mediterranean.

Current trends appear to suggest a more heavy-handed use of migration prevention tools (legal barriers, enhanced coastal controls, walls in land borders, etc.), taking precedence, or at least equaling European development strategies and practices in Africa. In other words, the current crisis might be resulting in the most important backlash in public opinion in Europe, and therefore influencing the authority's response. 'Fortress Europe', who for long favored development *in* Africa as a way to curb out-migration, is now overwhelmingly enhancing and enforcing effective barriers to mobility, including the suspension of the Schengen agreement (as posited by President Sarkozy) in cases of extreme need for specific national controls over the borders.

These changes in Europe do not go unnoticed to networks of African migrants. Invariably, as is always the case, migrants will find another way in, or another place to go. But they will go. It is in this context that Argentina appears to tangentially gain importance in African migration circuits. On the one hand, migrants' networks, increasingly informed of the hardships tied to the European route will gradually consider alternative destinations as viable, interesting options. On the other hand, Argentina's own migrant-friendly ideology, and its path toward qualifying the right to mobility as a basic human right suggests that, while a tangible institutional response should be forthcoming, an outright ban on African migration is not to be expected. The corridor should, thus, remain modestly active.

D. Media coverage and public opinion

The overwhelming fact about media coverage of new African migration to Argentina is the absence of frequent references to it. In the past, national and local newspapers have referred to it on occasion, mostly in the form of background 'human interest' stories. Considering more recent media coverage, however, it becomes apparent that, at some point, there was a transition to an angle of mild concern, as evidenced by recent reports in Buenos Aires newspapers. More than trying to understand who these migrants are, and why and how they appear in Argentina, newer pieces question the state's response to their entry, their legal status, and their liminal positions as members of the informal sector (*vendedores de baratillas*). In a few cases, reactions to more critical articles were met with reader's backlash. Likewise, online comment boards on Argentinean newspapers are abreast with extreme comments for and against Africa migration.

On TV, on the rare occasion this debate has been showcased, it has focused on two major aspects: refugees, and *polizones* (stowaways). Only a couple of years ago, televised statements by high government immigration officials revealed a discourse of concern with the rights and possible exploitation of African migrants, particularly minors. There was an implication of the government's concern with their welfare.¹⁰² Admittedly, the government continued to support refugees, but was unwilling to condone irregular entries. Soon after the steep increase in requests for asylum from African nationals, however, the nuances of this discourse were slightly altered to more frequent and more frontal caution about African migration, based on the assumed involvement of human trafficking networks that had to be rooted out, and an alleged massive wave of stowaways.

As of yet, there appears to be little impact of any of the above on public opinion. Africans are conceptually aggregated to other black members of the Argentinean ethnoscape, which contributes to their invisibility. By contrast, the most evident signs of Africans in Buenos Aires —those that everyone sees— are the street sellers in the inner city and in out-of-town beach resorts. Public opinion, at the moment, appears to be puzzled by the African presence, referring to them as 'exotic' elements of society that are seen, but not really interacted with. Assuming that the trend for African migration is to maintain the corridor modestly active, the authors see no evident rationale for negative public reactions, other than the occasional incident. This does not, however, illibate the authorities of alleged institutional racism, nor does it illibate Argentinean society of the underlying racism that has existed since its inception. The growing influence and visibility of Afro societies in Argentina may, in the long run, mitigate this.

E. Multicultural nodes in the urban space: 'Little Dakar' in Buenos Aires

In most cities, urban voids —central spaces that remain empty and unused— tend to be assimilated by groups on the margins of society, with results effectively depending on a diversity of factors. Increasingly, however, urban planners, architects, and cultural programmers have considered this to be a source of cultural and artistic wealth and diversity. While unattended urban voids quickly become eyesores and a negative focus of public health and security issues, urban voids adopted by migrant communities have been shown to become thriving new centralities for an alternative side of the city.¹⁰³ As urban life becomes more diverse, these new inner city centralities become multicultural nodes, catering to different nationalities and ethnicities in the city, and becoming important points of contact.

It is in urban voids turned into thriving centers for newcomer communities that cultural integration becomes possible by making contact available, and serving as a multicultural idea and business incubators. There is no doubt, in the opinion of the authors, that co-opting into the active urban fabric that is already the transitioning Buenos Aires district of Once/Plaza Misére, anecdotally known as Pequeña Dakar (Little Dakar), will bring benefits to multicultural understanding and to the diversity of the city.

¹⁰² Federico Augusti in video interview, op cit.

¹⁰³ Urban voids were one of the main focuses of the 1st Lisbon Architecture Triennale in 2007, with dozens of internationally reknown architects and scholars presenting different solutions for these spaces, notably those undergoing cultural change. The blog archives are still available here: <http://trienal.blogs.sapo.pt/>. Similar ideas on gentrification and urban renewal have been recently explored in major conferences in London, England, and Philadelphia, as well as in a variety of smaller interventions

VI. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

While this report makes no claim to have identified every single aspect of African migration in Argentina, and much less so its Brazilian offshoot, it presumes to have made apparent some of its most striking characteristics and paradoxes. In fact, there is admittedly a lack of warranted knowledge about a community that is as misunderstood as it is fascinating. In light of the reality on the ground, and the expected trends presented in the previous section, the following policy recommendations briefly sum up the paths suggested by the authors primarily to institutional actors.

A. Broadening Argentina's immigration policy

Considering North American, Australian and European immigration legislation, both Argentina and Brazil's current laws compare favorably, being less restrictive in a number of aspects. They consistently practice non-refoulement of asylum seekers. Brazil's law and common practice are, nonetheless, more restrictive than Argentina's and both on access and penalties (Brazil, as many other countries, routinely practices expulsions of irregular migrants, for example).

Foreigners in Argentina, on the other hand, are afforded most social rights regardless of their legal status. The main issue of concern, in the particular case of African migrants, is the process of settlement as permanent or even temporary residents (*radicación*). As non-MERCOSUR citizens, this process becomes a sequence of paper work loops difficult to surmount for migrants that, all too often, entered the country irregularly, and may not be able to show proof of entry.¹⁰⁴ The question is, thus, how to facilitate the regularization of such migrants. An answer to this question would link back to asylum policies. It is the opinion of the authors that the absence of a settlement process designed to address the needs of this specific group has resulted in deceptive uses of asylum mechanisms (see 6.6.). Thus, what should be a fluid settlement process for those who are entitled to it, has instead all too often been replaced with a sequence of asylum claims evaluation, negative rulings and appeals. A final refusal leaves a significant group of migrants in a legal limbo, overstaying their welcome but staying nonetheless. This could be avoided by creating feasible access to proper settlement by African citizens, who are at the moment *de facto*, if not *de jure*, locked out of the system.

Once migration pressure in Africa is set to increase, and that the migratory realities in both Europe and in the United States will continue to push migrants to find alternative destinations such as Argentina and Brazil, it is suggested that, rather than creating an access labyrinth, Argentinean authorities may wish to consider paths for integration and formal incorporation that include settlement as a viable alternative for qualifying candidates.

B. Technical instruments for regional and African immigration

In an increasingly integrated region, it makes political sense to seek common ground in immigration and refuge policies. Thus, Argentina might benefit from seeking to align its own precepts to those of fellow MERCOSUR member states, in particular Brazil, given its role in this specific migratory corridor from Africa. Sharing resources in this manner might result in budget savings as well as enhanced controls. It is further suggested that, in the long run, Argentina and its regionally integrated partners might consider immigration agreements with its African counterparts, most notably with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), from which most African migrant currently come. Given the limited

¹⁰⁴ France24 (video), 'Migration: From Africa to South America', op cit.

nature of Argentina-Africa ties, it is likely that this path could be initiated by way of bilateral or multilateral commercial integration agreements. This, in the opinion of the authors, should keep in mind the human aspects, considering migrants an asset, and thus aiming to incorporate them productively, in line with Argentina's migration history.

C. Enacting effective border controls

As pointed out in 2.1., there is little doubt that border controls are an important piece of the puzzle. Eliminating irregular entries in the country requires, on the one hand, the creation of and access to a feasible regular avenue; and on the other hand, an efficient and effective border control. Although air borders appear to be adequately controlled, the entrance of *polizones* suggests insufficient cargo control in some maritime borders. In the case of Argentina and Brazil, however, the major challenge is the vastness and remoteness of the land borders between the two countries, and with third countries such as Bolivia or Paraguay. Admittedly, the resources that would have to be allocated for an integral control are unfeasible. Nonetheless, an important reinforcement of air and river patrols, as well as human resources and technology in some of the key points of entry might be a necessary investment. Once again, state integration in matters of immigration would prove beneficial, and could potentially curb other irregular corridors, as well as illegal merchandise traffic.

D. Rooting out smuggling and trafficking networks

The authors of this report suggest there appears to be, as yet, little evidence of *large scale* trafficking of African migrants, although the resource to established local smuggling networks, for instance in the Triple Border region, indeed appears to be a commonplace. Moreover, the number of Africans presumed to be in Argentina could not have entered the country solely as stowaways. This discourse, thus, echoes others around the globe, whereby the 'fear of the boat' becomes a trope representing an entire group, when in reality the group is using different methods. While in Brazil ships might be a convenient method of arrival, it is suggested that, in Argentina, land borders are probably the main points of entry. As recommended on 6.1., creating an avenue for regular migration might curb the need to resort to smuggling networks. By the same token, it is suggested that comprehensive investigation of currently existing smuggling networks might be necessary. Based on field interviews with migrants, and with professionals interacting with migrants daily, it is the opinion of the authors that most arrive in Argentina using smuggling networks, but not trafficking networks. Nonetheless, it is admitted that trafficking might be in existence, particularly in the case of minors. Dismantling such networks should be a priority, but requires extensive collaboration with African authorities, tackling the issue on the side of demand.

E. Migration as a human right: the Argentinean path

Given Argentina's history, the process of arriving at a common charter of human rights has been remarkable and trendsetting by international standards. A long process of advocacy and consultation with numerous civil society institutions such as the Argentinean Commission for Refugees (CAREF) and the Center for Legal and Social Studies (CELS), both in Buenos Aires, has mainstreamed the debate on migration and mobility as a basic human right. Using a legal path to achieve this result has largely contributed to root out discriminatory practices and slowly build a path to full acceptance and implementation of this right. Even when, as these organizations admit, institutional bias, as well as legal and civil challenges may subsist, there is no doubt Argentina is in the right path. In Brazil, the process has taken a different path, based on rooting out discrimination, very particularly racial discrimination. This might have trickle-down effects on the immigration policy. Both countries appear to be on the right track.

F. Refuge and asylum in the context of South American humanism

It is of vital moral importance to resume a normal process of evaluation of asylum claims, as per Argentina's international commitments. As in Europe, the fast increase in the number of claims may have resulted in an institutional knee-jerk reaction, making the words 'asylum' and 'refuge' almost indissociable from economic migration. Opening up a formal path for regular migration might defuse the instrumentalization of asylum as a step in the migratory process, a fact that is admitted by multiple agencies acting on behalf of the Argentinean state. It should also reinstate asylum as a fundamental mechanism aimed at supporting those who are truly vulnerable and in need of assistance.

G. Capacity building of the immigration and police authorities

It has been repeatedly noted in interviews with migrants, migrant collectives, and officials in state-sanctioned agencies and organizations dealing with migrants, that one of the biggest challenges to refugees is the fact that police authorities, and civil society at large, often do not recognize the official refugee or asylum claimant documents. It is important, therefore, to act on two fronts: firstly, train immigration and police authorities to recognize such documents, and accordingly honor their value, recognizing also that their holders are often individuals in need of special social or linguistic support, requiring tactful approaches. This can only be achieved by mainstreaming training on the subject as part of other training activities; secondly, consider replacing the said documents with cards similar to national identity cards (DNI), which might more easily be recognized as official documents. The back of such document could also consider a brief list of rights entailed by it, such as the right to work in Argentina.

H. Measuring and enhancing integration policies

On a wider societal level, national campaigns for integration are necessary, educating citizens about the rights of migrants and refugees, and about the fact that the temporary residence document (*precaria*) in fact has legal tender, granting the holder the right to access the job market or to rent a house. Although this does not solve issues of racial discrimination that have been identified, it would be a step in the right direction. Sustained campaigns of this kind have shown positive results in other countries.¹⁰⁵

As widely noted throughout this report, it is of fundamental importance to promote, at the earliest possible moment, a widespread, anonymous, and state-backed quantitative and qualitative study that traces all information about migrants, identifying needs, and promoting integration policies to match them. Most importantly, it is necessary to identify those problematic issues in Argentinean society that might also need to be tackled. It is suggested that a broad study on migrant integration in Argentina might be an invaluable tool to assess and measure the real situation on the ground. This might be based on the European Migrant Integration Index (MIPEX), which has provided EU member states not only with useful statistical tools, but also with a vital barometer of the real effects of policy-making.

¹⁰⁵ The MIPEX (Migrant Integration Index) results in 2011 show that, despite continued problems, countries in which pro-integration policies and campaigns were underway registered higher scores (interactive charts available here: <http://www.mipex.eu/>). An example of these campaigns is that currently underway in Portugal, under the auspices of the Ministry of Interior and ACIDI (High Commissioner for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue), available here: <http://imigrante.mai.gov.info/>. Immigrant rights have recently been approved in parliament, and upgraded from regulations to law.