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Potential of Migration – The African Example

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Abstract

The paper is based on results out of a project on “Potential of Migration from Africa to Europe” carried out at the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF). The project aims at obtaining well-grounded assumptions on the intensity of future migration pressure from Africa onto Europe.

The study defines “potential of migration” as a qualitative concept and analyses the motive for migration on grounds of demographic, political, socio-economic and ecological discrepancies between sending and receiving countries as well as based on supporting migrant networks.

The study advances in three steps:

- (1) In the first stance, demographic, political, socio-economic and ecological push- and pull-factors between Africa and Europe are studied.
- (2) Secondly, data on migrant stocks and flows from Africa to the prominent European destination countries are presented for revealing the relevant migration networks. Further, current migration routes are described.
- (3) Thirdly, the potential of migration from Africa to Europe is built up by the strength of identified push-pull-factors and the existing migrant networks.

The paper will show how a concomitance of high levels of population growth and ongoing socio-economic and political crises in Africa might increase the migration potential which may, to some greater extent, flow in inner African migration. Intercontinental Migration, particularly from Africa to member states of the EU, goes additionally along the established migrant networks. It can be assumed, that France, Spain and Italy might remain the preferred destination countries of African migrants.

The qualitative migration potential analysis seems to be a promising path for getting a wider view on migratory movements in a world of unequal chances and a narrowing spatial distance between them.

1. Theoretical Considerations

The author defines migration potential as a qualitative concept and analyses the motive for migrating from the Africa to Europe on grounds of comparisons of lifestyles between these two regions. The sum of propensities, intentions and motivations in a society or social groups for leaving one's region should be called "potential of migration".

In general, the migration potential arises from regional discrepancies, differences in lifestyle, and from an obvious prosperity gap. Lifestyle is operationalized by demographic, economic, political and ecological factors. To what extent the migration potential will actually be realised and triggers off real migratory movements, depends on the migrants' opportunities, their means for transfer and the existence of helping networks (Fig. 1).

Figure 1: Migration potential from regional discrepancies in development

Push-factors Countries of origin	Migrants	Pull-factors Countries of destination
↓	Structure of difference in development	
Population growth, young age structure Lack of educational institutions, medicare and social security	1. Demographic factors and social infrastructure	Stable population, population decline, demographic ageing Welfare state benefits, educational institutions, medicare and social security
Unemployment, low wages Poverty, low consumption and living standard	2. Economic factors	Labour demand, high wages Welfare, high consumption and living standard
Dictatorships, shadow democracy, bad governance War, genocide, surveillance society, torture, persecution, expropriation, terrorism, oppression of minorities	3. Political factors	Democracy, rule of law, pluralism, political stability Peace, security, protection of human and civil rights, protection of minorities
Ecologic disaster, desertification, lack of natural resources, water shortage, soil erosion, lack of environmental policy	4. Ecological factors	Better environment, environmental policy, protection of natural resources and environmental protection
↓	Migrant networks	
Decisions of the family or the clan Information flows, media, transferred picture of country of origin Possibilities of (ir)regular immigration, routes of trafficking	5. Migrant flows and stocks	Diaspora, ethnische community, historical colonial relationships Information flows, media, transferred picture of destination country Possibilities of (ir)regular immigration (right of residence)

Source: Schmid 2010.

2. Demographic, political, socio-economic and ecological Push-factors from Africa to Europe

Demographic Push-factors

The African potential of migration might increase for demographic reasons, because in international comparison Africa still shows a significant population growth (Tab. 1). Until 2050, the African population will more than double and will count two billion inhabitants. For this increase, the still very high TFR is responsible, which lies in Africa, on the average, at 4.6 children per woman, in Middle Africa even at 5.7 children per woman. Furthermore, Africa has a very young age structure: one in five Africans is between 15 and 24 years old, 41.2% of the population is under 15.

A comparison of the African regions shows that only Northern and Southern Africa have lower fertility levels, but even there, with a TFR of 2.9 and 2.6 (2005-2010), they still lay above replacement level of 2.1 and much more above the European fertility level of 1.5 children per women (Tab. 2).

The most problematic living conditions concentrate in Western, Eastern and Middle Africa. In these regions the TFR lies between 5.3 and 5.7 (2005-2010) children per women. This means a triplication of the parent's generation in the next one (Tab. 1). The rate of natural population increase lies between 2.6% and 2.5% (2005-2010). Their population will more than double until 2050.

Table 1: Demographic indicators for the regions of the world, 2009 and 2050

Region	Pop. 2009* in Mio.	Rate of nat. increase 2005-2010* in %	TFR 2005-2010*	Pop. 0-14 2005 in %	Life expectancy at birth 2005-2010*	GNI PPP per Capita 2008 (US-\$)	Pop. 2050* in Mio.
World	6,829	1.18	2.56	28.4	67.6	10,090	9,150
More developed regions	1,233	0.34	1.64	17.0	77.1	32,320	1,275
Europe	732	0.09	1.50	15.9	75.1	25,550	691
Northern America	348	0.96	2.04	20.5	79.3	45,890	448
Less developed regions	5,596	1.37	2.73	31.0	65.6	5,170	7,875
Africa	1,010	2.29	4.61	41.2	54.1	2,660	1,998
Asia	4,121	1.14	2.35	28.2	68.9	6,020	5,231

* Medium Variant.

Source: UN 2009, 2009a; World Bank 2009, 2009a; PRB 2010.

Table 2: Demographic indicators of African and European regions and countries, 2005 and 2050

Regions/Countries	Pop. 2005 in Mio.	Rate of nat. increase 2005-2010* in %	TFR 2005-2010*	Pop. 0-14 2005 in %	Life expectancy at birth 2005-2010*	GNI PPP per Capita, 2008 (US-\$)	Urban Pop. 2005 in %	Pop. 2050* in Mio.
Africa	921	2.29	4.61	41.2	54.1	2,660	38	1,998
Sub-Saharan Africa	764	2.44	5.08	43.2	51.5	1,950	35	1,753
Western Africa	270	2.51	5.27	43.2	51.0	1,600	42	626
Ghana	22	2.09	4.31	39.6	56.5	1,430	48	45
Nigeria	141	2.33	5.32	43.1	47.8	1,940	47	289
Togo	6	2.47	4.30	41.2	62.4	820	40	13
Eastern Africa	287	2.59	5.30	44.5	53.2	1,030	22	711
Ethiopia	75	2.59	5.38	44.9	55.0	870	16	174
Kenya	36	2.64	4.96	42.8	54.2	1,580	19	85
Middle Africa	113	2.60	5.67	45.8	48.2	1,650	41	273
DR Congo	59	2.76	6.07	47.6	47.5	290	33	148
Cameroon	18	2.26	4.67	41.7	51.0	2,180	57	37
Southern Africa	55	1.04	2.64	32.6	51.6	9,380	56	67
South Africa	48	0.98	2.55	31.7	51.6	9,780	59	57
Northern Africa	195	1.71	2.91	33.2	68.0	5,370	50	321
Egypt	77	1.81	2.89	33.3	70.0	5,460	43	130
Algeria	33	1.51	2.38	29.6	72.3	7,940	63	50
Morocco	30	1.20	2.38	30.3	71.2	4,330	56	43
Tunisia	10	0.98	1.86	25.7	73.9	7,070	66	13
Europe	732	0.09	1.50	15.9	75.1	25,550	71	691
Germany	82	-0,09	1,32	14,3	79,9	35,940	73	71

* Medium Variant.

Source: UN 2009a; World Bank 2009, 2009a; PRB 2010.

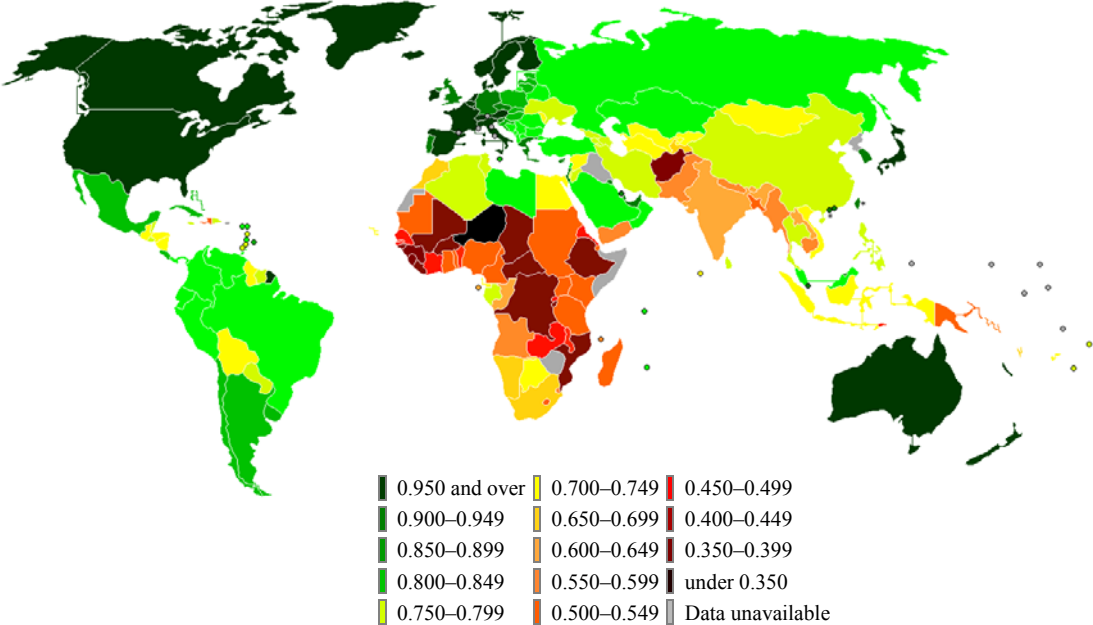
But the demographic development, as such, is not the only reason for growing shortcomings in living conditions and, therefore, a rise of migration potential. It is more the problematic interplay of demographic development with other deficient economic and ecological factors, which worsen the situation by restricting the level of subsistence for a growing population.

Socio-economic Push-factors

The African potential of migration might grow for economic reasons by virtue of the lack of educational and occupational opportunities for big juvenile cohorts entering the economically active population. In spite of the economic growth of the last years, the (youth-)unemployment rate remained high: 65% of the African and 74% of the Sub-Saharan African population does not reach the 2 US-\$-poverty line per day. The comparison of the GNI (PPP) for Africa shows an income per Capita of 2,660 US-\$, whereas the European one is nearly 25,600US-\$. So Africa is an example for a disadvantageous combination of weak economy and a substantial population growth (Tab. 1 and 2).

According to the Human development Index (HDI)¹ 2009, EU member states are ranked along their human development (HDI ≥ 0.9) as the highest. Most African states show a relatively low human development (HDI < 0.5). In the lowest group are 22 African countries (Fig. 2). Niger reached in 2009 the lowest rank (182). Ranks 176 to 180 hold the DR Congo (176), Burkina Faso, Mali, Central African Republic and Sierra Leone (180) (UNDP 2009).

Figure 2: Human Development Index 2009



Source: UNDP 2009.

¹ The HDI combines three dimensions: (1) Life expectancy at birth, as an index of population health and longevity; (2) Knowledge and education, as measured by the adult literacy rate (with two-thirds weighting) and the combined primary, secondary, and tertiary gross enrollment ratio (with one-third weighting); (3) Standard of living, as indicated by the natural logarithm of gross domestic product per capita at purchasing power parity.

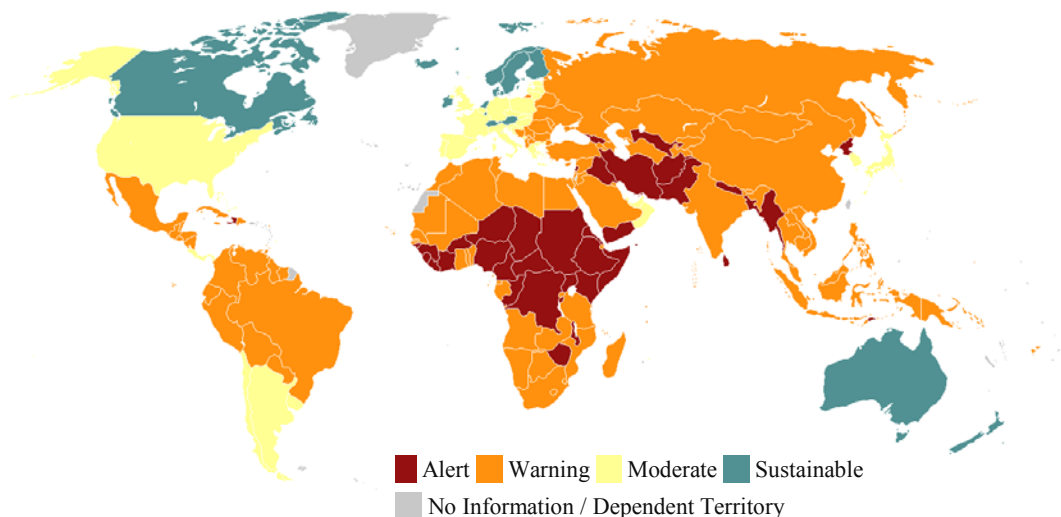
Political Push-factors

The African potential of migration might increase for political reasons. On the African continent accumulate deficient governance, political instability and an unsatisfactory situation of human rights. African regimes are mostly dictatorships and shadow democracies. In the foreseeable future, a decrease of the inner African conflict potential and of flows of refugees arising from it cannot be seen.

A fast proceeding democratisation of the mostly authoritarian African regimes and the fast political stabilisation of failing and failed states is, in near future, not conceivable. Furthermore, the political instability hinders in most of the African regions urgently needed international investments.

On the most recent Failed States Index 2010, there were 37 states classified as “alert”, 92 as “warning”, 35 as “moderate”, 13 as “sustainable”. Among the worst 10 states there are 7 African countries, namely Somalia, Chad, Sudan, Zimbabwe, DR Congo, Central African Republic and Guinea (Fig. 3).

Figure 3: Failed States Index 2010



Source: Fund for Peace 2010.

Ecological Push-Factors

The African potential of migration might increase for ecological reasons, because ongoing climate change, increased population pressure on natural resources (water, soil) and lack of ecological sustainability and environmental policy will intensify extreme weather phenomena, water shortage and soil degradation. The dwindling of the carrying capacity for viable livelihood will force the persons concerned to leave their region.

3. The regions of destination of potential migrants

The analyses showed how a concomitance of high levels of population growth and ongoing socio-economic and political crises in Africa might increase the migration potential in the long run. But we have not stated yet what direction the migration might go. In the last stance, the growing potential of

migration might lead to (1) inner African migration (e.g. exodus to other regions) or to (2) intercontinental migration including migration to Europe.

African inner migration

The analyses showed that the African potential of migration might, to a greater part, go to inner African regions, maybe into cities. But the extent of African inner migration depends on the absorptive capacity of urban regions of destination, their labour markets, and their opportunity structure for new coming people.

It can be assumed that the trend of African inner migration and particularly, the migration into cities will continue or even grow.

Much pressure on inner migration between African countries comes from temporary asylum migration. Neighbouring countries are favoured destinations, because after the stabilisation of the situation at home a fast return is possible. Migrants out of environmental decay prefer to migrate to ecological more intact neighbouring regions or move for taking up work in close urban areas.

It can be assumed that this trend of migration within the African continent will continue or even increase.

Intercontinental migration to Europe

Migration to Europe usually goes along the established migrant networks between Africa and Europe, whose scope can be deduced from the registered migrant stocks and flows.

On grounds of the preceding migratory movements of Africans to Europe can be assumed that France, Spain and Italy will remain the preferred destination countries (Tab. 3). In these three countries the total African migrant stock and inflow is on a high level. Particularly Spain and Italy register the fastest growing stock of African population in Europe (Tab. 4 and 5).

Africans will continue to migrate to Europe mostly for the purpose of family reunion and education (studies). The labour migration of (highly) qualified to Europe might increase. Escalating wars, conflicts, humanitarian crises and environmental catastrophes concurrent with decreasing inner absorption capacity would raise the refugee and asylum potential from Africa to Europe.

Table 3: Migration flows of African nationals in selected EU-Member States, 2005-2007

Country	Inflows 2005	Inflows 2006	Inflows 2007	Difference Inflows 2005-2007	Outflows 2007	Migration balance 2007
Spain	121,118	116,733	130,795	+ 9,677	49,933	+ 80,862
France	-	105,164	-	-	-	-
Italy	48,048	-	-	-	1,839 (2005)	+ 46,209 (2005)
UK	53,831	42,944	40,235	- 13,596	13,656	+ 26,579
Germany	25,229	23,504	22,401	- 2,828	17,099	+ 5,302
Belgium	10,100	-	14,933	+ 4,800	1,175	+13,758
Netherlands	6,041	5,398	4,835	- 1,206	1,732	+ 3,103
Portugal	-	4,119	-	-	-	-

Source: Eurostat.

Table 4: Stocks of African nationals in selected EU-Member States, 2004-2008

Country	Stocks 2004	Stocks 2005	Stocks 2006	Naturalisations 2007	Stocks 2007	Stocks 2008
France	-	1,510,460	-	82,411	-	-
Spain	525,429	644,722	762,273	10,316	819,638	905,639
Italy	608,494*	641,755	694,988	2,564 (2003)	749,897	797,997
UK	488,877	-	-	51,255	-	-
Germany**	265,001	274,929	272,376	10,328	269,937	268,116
Portugal	138,707*	143,283*	147,502*	3,234 (2006)	154,900	150,980
Netherlands	122,108	119,908	114,876	8,979	108,801	102,606
Belgium	105,112*	104,944*	-	15,632	-	142,655

Source: Eurostat; * OECD, **German Federal Statistical Office.

Table 5: Stocks of persons born in Africa (country of birth) in selected EU-Member States, 2005-2008

Country	Stocks 2005	Stocks 2006	Stocks 2007	Stocks 2008
France	3,360,930	-	-	-
Spain	751,117	868,742	840,583	928,671
Netherlands		301,564	297,763	296,918
Belgium	304,855	-	-	343,207
Germany*	310,000	317,000	342,000	340,000

Source: Eurostat, * German Federal Statistical Office (Microcensus: persons with migratory background and own migration experience)

4. Conclusions

Between Africa and Europe (especially the EU) exists a prosperity gap. This gap is made apparent by the difference of demographic, economic and ecological indicators reflecting the life chances in each of both regions. To what extent migration potential will lead to actual migratory movements depends on the migrant's individual decision, his or her opportunities and means for transfer and the existence of helping networks on both sides, in the meantime.

The high levels of population growth, unemployment, socio-economic and demographic pressures in Africa and the ongoing human crises in Sub-Saharan Africa might further increase the migration potential in the long run. The Maghreb as region of immigration and transit will gain importance.

Migration potential does not refer to an exact number of persons but to a presumed collectivity of political importance for population and development policy. It comes to the fore not by vague migration prospects or in net migration projections but by a comparison of lifestyles between sending and receiving regions and the search for a prosperity or welfare gap between them. This gap, made obvious by rumour, mass media or information exchange will generate emigration propensities and therefore a migration potential, which is an entity with fuzzy borders but of clear political relevance. Migration potential is a highly resilient entity responding to inner and outer changes of living conditions in a particular area.

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