"IF WE COULD TRAVEL EVERYWHERE WITH A PASSPORT, IT WOULD BE BORING"

A case study of how encounters with local NGO workers in Ghana reveal the ambivalences of Europe's ideology of migration management

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Cover image: Wall painting in Accra: “Re-imagining the future of mobility”, Source: IOM Ghana, 2022

Abstract

Through deterrence measures, Europe attempts to control people on the move to European destination countries outside its territorial borders. In addition to 'hard' interventions in countries of origin or transit, 'soft' interventions aim to shape the 'subjectivities' of potential migrants as a 'preventive' measure. This is best illustrated by awareness-raising activities implemented in African countries by International Organisations in collaboration with local civil society organizations. Through a study of my encounters with local NGO workers in Ghana involved in migration-discouraging projects, this research explores how their experiences and perceptions lay bare the ambivalences of the EU's externalized migration management. Data for this fieldwork is collected in 2022 during three months of fieldwork, using qualitative research methods and semi-structured interviews.

I argue that the ambivalences are functional in practice and that migration management does ideological work by rationalizing inequalities and exclusion. Migration management keeps its appeal because it promises a world where everybody could benefit from regulated mobility by portraying the world of unregulated mobility as dangerous, chaotic, and deadly. Theoretically, the conclusions of this research add to research on the spectacularization of the (humanitarian) border away from the geography of border enforcement while also highlighting the agency of local NGO workers in translating global migration discourses into project realities and the local dynamics surrounding the externalization of border control.

Keywords: migration management, information campaigns, externalization, border spectacle, ideology, Ghana.

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1. Introduction

A little bungalow with a big TV and a European flag

A relatively new and small bungalow with a large empty parking lot stands at a deserted junction in Sunyani, a medium-sized city in western Ghana and the capital of the Brong-Ahafo region. Next to the door are two signs, once white and blue but now covered in dust. One shows the logo of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the other the logo of the European Union. The IOM designated this region a "migration high-risk area" because most irregular migrants from Ghana to Europe originate here.

In the bungalow, several officers from the Ghana Immigration Service (GIS) sit watching TV, day in and day out. They rarely receive visitors since the outbreak of Covid-19. Still, they are certainly prepared for the arrival of any "potential migrant" who might come to inquire about possibilities for "regular" migration in this so-called Migration Information Centre. Yellowed flyers, with texts like "#Noplacelikehome," lie ready to be handed out to "empower potential migrants to make informed migratory decisions."[1] On the wall next to the flatscreen TV dusty picture frames are hanging, with group photos of GIS officers proudly holding a certificate. In some of the pictures, flags of foreign countries are prominently displayed. IOM Ghana facilitated a study visit in 2016 of GIS officials to Tunisia and Italy, which allowed the participants "to observe first-hand the reality of the migrant crisis in the Mediterranean".[2] According to IOM Ghana, the trip made a strong impression on the officers and provided new ideas for developing innovative, safe migration campaigns.

When "potential migrants" show up at the bungalow, the message is clear: say no to irregular migration, find opportunities at home! To me, a visitor from Europe, the tone was a lot lighter during the small tour of this Migration Information Centre: "One day I will go back to Italy and build a comfortable life," joked the chief officer when he pointed at one of the group pictures taken abroad.

This Migration Information Centre is an example of Europe's externalized migration regime which largely comprises of the following:

- The intervention takes place in a country of origin.
- The intervention aims to exert control over the migratory decisions of people before they reach the territorial borders of Europe.
- Local actors run the project under the supervision and funding of an international organization.
- The information relies on the framing of migration as either regular or irregular, promoting the regular way and discouraging the irregular way.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, European states have increasingly externalized migration policies outside Europe's territorial borders to gain control over mobility. The European Union (EU) has implemented many programs and policy frameworks to tighten the external European border controls and 'cooperate' with African states to reduce migration to Europe. While the EU has become a space for freedom of movement across the national

[1] https://www.iom.int/news/migration-information-centre-opens-ghanas-brong-ahafo-region
[2] https://www.iom.int/news/ghanaian-immigration-officers-undertake-study-tour-tunisia-and-italy

borders of its member states, admission from outside is highly restricted, particularly for inhabitants of countries on the African continent (Gaibazzi et al., 2016). Europe's so-called migration crisis in 2015 created an unprecedented moment of the control and confinement of people on the move, culminating in the 2015 EU–Africa Valletta Summit on Migration. In the wake of this summit, Europe has paid increasing attention to "transit" and "origin" states in North- and West Africa.

One of the goals of Europe's governmentality of mobility has been to regulate people's movements in these "transit" and "origin" countries through different types of 'soft' and 'hard' deterrence measures. "Soft tools" of migration management include information campaigns. The "harder tools" include building walls and incarcerating undocumented migrants in closed centers. A newer objective of these "soft tools" has been to constrain local governments in a "preventative" manner and shape the subjectivities of potential migrants so that they "govern themselves" to suit European immigration requirements (Pécoud, 2013). Control over mobility is not only about stopping or coercing people but also about steering them. Scholars have long favored the "law and order" perspective in research on migration control. However, the place of control in migration management cannot be solely captured by focusing on such top-down control mechanisms used by actors in the security field. To date, "soft" measures of border externalization have received less scholarly attention than the "hard" measures (Musaro, 2019; Watkins, 2017).
European border externalization measures have distressing effects on the lives of people on the move. New obstacles on the trails to and at the territorial borders of Europe restrict cross-border movements in those regions and force migrants to take even more dangerous routes. These dangerous routes expose Migrants to death in the desert or at sea, arrests, and serious abuses, particularly in "transit" places like Libya (Andersson, 2014). The core of Europe's migration discourse is the manufactured dichotomy between 'regular' and 'irregular' movements, the former being classified as desirable and the latter as undesirable. This manufactured dichotomy does not accurately reflect people's movements and produces a blurred distinction between voluntary and forced migration.

Several migration scholars draw on Foucault's notion of governmentality to comprehend how control penetrates different spheres of social life and how normative standards subtly influence people's thoughts and behaviors (i.a., Kalm, 2008; Zaiotti, 2016). Feldman (2011) positions the relationship between the mobility of people, their subjectivity, and Europe's governmentality of migration in his work by making a Foucauldian analysis of how migration governance by the EU as an 'apparatus' of decentralized elements, or an 'anonymous constellation of control (Feldman, 2011, p. 44) to describe the power of the sovereign state on the lives of migrants. Contrarily, more recent studies focus on the precedence of human mobility over the governmental technologies of control, highlighting the agency of migrants concerning Europe's attempts to govern them (Squire, 2011). Some scholars argue to analyze mobility as an expression of freedom of movement and a political struggle and as a force of migrants' subjectivity (Tairozzi, 2015; De Genova, 2017).

The phrase "international migration management" has gained popularity for various externalization measures that try to renew the laws governing cross-border human movement (Geiger & Pécoud, 2013). The IOM, whose motto is "managing migration for the benefit of all," employs the phrase extensively globally. According to Geiger & Pécoud (2013), migration management as a policy and knowledge paradigm refers to a notion that is mobilized by actors to conceptualize and justify their increasing interventions in the migration field and refers to a range of practices that are now part of migration policies performed by the institutions that promote the notion.
Pécoud (2013) argues that information campaigns are the most concrete examples of what "migration management" entails. They are run under the supervision of an international organization and rely on interstate cooperation as they are funded by destination countries while being implemented in "sending" and "transit" countries. They assert to go beyond simple movement control by steering potential migrants in behaving appropriately, that is, in a way that respects the laws and policies of "destination countries." They also incorporate humanitarian concerns within the development- and human rights-centered activities; finally, they are set up in partnership with local civil society organizations. Migration management activities' multi-level and multi-actor nature is essential to its practices. This results in complex interactions between local actors and institutions with international presences and global influence and complicated interactions between their strategies and interests (Geiger & Pécoud, 2010).

These information campaigns are based on the idea that potential migrants lack information: ‘The assumption is that irregular migrants are unaware of the rules governing the entry of non-nationals in destination states and that, if properly informed, they would renounce unlawful migration projects’ (Pécoud, 2010, p. 186). Additionally, migrants must be aware of the risks and hazards associated with irregular migration to combat the migrant smuggling sector. If potential migrants had better access to information, they would rethink irregular travel and have less faith in migration facilitators. However, emphasizing the necessity to save migrant lives by warning them about the risks is a humanitarian policy goal and a rhetorical device to support stepping up control and securitization measures (Hernández-Carretero & Carling, 2012). Raising awareness of the dangers and risks associated with migration is unlikely to stop people from doing so (Oeppen, 2016). Because information campaigns frequently draw on false assumptions, academics have questioned their effectiveness (Schans & Optekamp, 2016).

The IOM has coordinated "information" efforts over the past decade, funded by the EU and its member states. IOM has created a niche in the 'migration industry' (Gammeltoft-Hansen & Sorensen, 2013) by making migration and development its motto. The assumption is that regulated migration can improve the economic performance of both migrant-sending and migrant-receiving countries (De Haas, 2010, 2012). Relatively little is known of the local experiences of recent migration information activities in regions of departure. The involvement of civil society organizations in this migration information sector in West Africa's migration projects needs to be studied more (Bisong, 2021). Also, the involvement of CSOs raises questions about how these actors are positioned and included in international

migration management efforts (Marino et al., 2022). More academic attention has recently been paid to the interactions surrounding EU policies when they are put into practice in African contexts, where local strategies and performances mutually reshape Eurocentric ideologies, policies, and registers of "crisis" (Stock et al., 2019).
On the one hand, in the context of the development world, the Western states are described as 'hegemonic' and 'controlling' of local development actors (Escobar, 1997; Ferguson, 1990). Conversely, the agency of local development actors and their ability to re-interpret, translate, or re-appropriate development projects is highlighted (Mosse, 2005). To focus on the agency of local actors, local development workers are seen as "brokers" between their international partners and the communities they represent. Local development brokers have their views, lifeworlds, and ways to succeed in life, affecting their position towards the projects they implement. The chief officer in the Ghanaian MIC, who jokes about his dreams to travel to Europe while also working on a project to control mobility to Europe, is an example of how personal desires possibly affect his position. He stands, as it were, between two worlds of experience, of the IOM's counterparts on the one hand and the population in Sunyani on the other.

Through qualitative research methods and semi-structured interviews, this research focuses on the personal stories of local development workers in migration projects who function as 'development brokers' between international organizations and the local 'target' communities (Lewis & Mosse, 2006). To discuss the involvement of local actors in migration management projects, I take the case of Ghana. Ghana has a long history of development cooperation with Europe. While the Ghanaian government's interests lie primarily in diaspora, labor migration, and regional free movement, since 2016, in cooperation with Ghana, the European focus has been primarily on irregular migration and return policies (DGAP, 2021). Since the increase of migrants to Europe in 2015, both the launch of the EU's Partnership Framework and the new European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa in 2016[3] have become essential instruments for funding and development assistance. In Ghana, this has resulted in a mushrooming of projects for migration prevention. The IOM Ghana, active in the country since 1987, has launched many additional projects around awareness raising and prevention since 2016. The implementation has involved many local organizations, part of them previously inactive in the field of migration. This context provides an opportunity to explore how local actors perceive migration governance, how they experience the implementation of the projects, and to what extent the narrative of Europe's migration management affects their subjectivities. This case led to the following main question:

How do the perceptions and experiences of local NGO workers in Ghana, involved in the implementation of migration discouraging projects, lay bare the ambivalences of EU's externalized migration management?

[3] https://trust-fund-for-africa.europa.eu

In order to answer this question, the following sub-questions were developed:

1. How do information campaigns in Ghana perform in practice, and how do they act as deterrence?
2. What motivations and interests inform the involvement of local NGO workers in migration-discouraging projects?
3. How do local NGO workers perceive and experience the implementation of migration-discouraging projects?

The first sub-question provides insight into the practical side of the information campaigns in Ghana, on the one hand, by zooming in on the staging and narratives of the campaigns and the methods used. On the other hand, this question provides insight into how the campaigns contribute to deterring potential migrants. From the perspective of different (local) actors involved in the implementation, it analyzes the function of the campaigns to (self)govern potential migrants through their content and execution.
The second sub-question examines the motivations of local NGO staff to understand why and how they became involved in migration projects. This presents an opportunity also further to investigate the relationship between the IOM and local organizations. Zooming in on the personal stories of local NGO workers reveals the social realities that illustrate their position and ambition as "brokers" concerning migration projects (Mosse & Lewis, 2006). By taking their involvement under the loop, the desires and beliefs of local NGO staff emerge, revealing how the rationalization of the migration management functions based on the Žižekian notion of ideology (Kapoor, 2013)
The third research question further identifies these non-rational elements by first looking at how local NGO workers view "good" and "bad" migration and how they see their role concerning the dichotomy of care and control. In addition, the campaign experiences of local NGO workers are analyzed to understand how local NGO workers act in contradictory fields and what space they have to navigate these differences (Mosse & Lewis, 2006). To what extent does the "translation" of the imposed migration discourse to local realities expose manifestations of counter-conduct (Odysseos et al., 2016)?
Before turning to the empirical findings of these three sub-questions, I will first provide this research of a theoretical framework in chapter 2 to outline the relationships between borders, actors, and representations. In addition, this framework will elaborate on ideology critique and the role of psychoanalysis in discovering the contradictory nature of migration management. In Chapter 3, I will outline the research methodology and reflect on my role and position as a researcher and the possible impact of my position on my research. Chapter 4 will discuss the most relevant context of migration in Ghanaian society, focusing on the NGO sector and migration governance.

2. Borders, Actors, Representations, and Ideologies

International migration management is a complex and multifaceted field requiring a robust theoretical framework for analysis. Based on Geiger & Pécoud (2010), the phrase 'migration management' refers to at least three different trends in contemporary migration governance:

1. Actors in this field mobilize the notion of migration management to conceptualize and justify increasing interventions in this field. This trend highlights the role played by agencies such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the importance of their functioning and strategies.
2. The notion refers to a range of practices, such as counter-trafficking or capacity-building efforts, that are now part of migration governance policies and are executed by the institutions that promote the notion of migration management.
3. The notion of migration management relies on discourses and new narratives about what migration is and how it should best be addressed.

The essential argument of Geiger & Pécoud (2010) is that the actors, practices, and discourses of international migration management are connected, but only partially and in complex manners. Examining the complex relationship between practices, border representations, and actors provides a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of international migration management by uncovering the power relations, social contexts, and policy implications of regulating and governing migration. The first part of the theoretical framework seeks to explore and examine the intricate dynamics of migration management, focusing on key concepts such as Externalization, Development Brokerage, and The Border Spectacle. Moreover, by adding a psychoanalytical perspective, the second part of this theoretical framework explores the underlying discursive constructions and ideological dimensions that shape how migration is discussed and perceived by local actors involved in migration management practices. This perspective allows us to understand, in particular, why the discourses and narratives of migration management endure.

2.1 The Externalization of EU's Migration Policy

The term "externalization" is used to describe the extension of border management and migration controls from so-called 'receiving states' in the Global North into neighboring countries or 'sending states' in the Global South (Frelick et al., 2016; Kipp & Koch, 2018; Lavenex, 2016; Menjivar, 2014). The term was introduced in the context of more public attention to the way in which border and migration policies impact peoples' lives (Stock et al., 2019). Over the past decades, research has shown a growing tendency in certain countries and immigration regions to transfer and diversify migration management and border control mechanisms to more 'distant' African countries (Stock et al., 2019). In public and policy debates, the concept of 'border externalization' is approached from an economic logic, and externalization measures are justified from the perspective of 'cost-efficiency.' In this way, migration can be seen as a burden for receiving countries rather than part of a positive social change in both sending and receiving countries (Castles, 2010). As a result, the social, economic, and political costs of 'unwanted' migrants are being outsourced to third parties. However, this "externalization talk" is also used to politically justify the transfer of moral

responsibility for the well-being of migrants to origin states and transit spaces (Stock et al., 2019). The concept of externalization characterizes expanding the 'external dimension' of EU immigration and asylum policies since the 2000s (Boswell, 2003; Lavanex & Ucarer, 2004). Within the academic debate about international migration, externalization practices, and policies are contextualized as a reaction to a more general shift in contemporary international politics through which certain types of mobility are perceived as a threat to security and stability, while other types of mobility are not (Stock et al., 2019).

Beyond using this term in the context of a policy tool, externalization can be used as a 'heuristic device' to research and examine the processes and effects of increasingly globalized migration policies (Stock et al., 2019, p. 2). Externalization practices and policies can be conceptualized as social mechanisms responsible for the reproduction and the continuous shaping of political, economic, and social border-making processes in transnational spaces (Faist, 2009). *Externalization processes* can be defined as "composed of a set of specific actors, regulations, practices, and discourses involved in migration management, which in conjunction produce similar effects on mobility and settlement dynamics in different contexts" (Stock et al., 2019, p. 3). In this research, externalization refers to these heterogeneous processes deployed in Ghana as a migration 'sending state' to keep unwanted migrants at a distance from destination states in the Global North (Van Dessel, 2021).

There are different challenges in researching and studying externalization because of the many different practices, discourses, and policy measures that are identified as being a crucial part of it. There is a need to research how externalization takes place and which actors' responsibilities in managing migration and controlling borders are being transferred (Stock et al., 2019, p. 2). The research of these actors does include not only relations between states and people on the move, but also the increasing involvement of civil society organizations and private companies (Gammeltoft-Hansen, 2011). Besides that, development programs of the European Union aimed at economic development also set out to tackle the 'root causes of migration,' which are implemented by local NGOs and linked to migration control. Furthermore, it is challenging to locate where the effects of externalization measures are being felt and how the exact social-economic and political realities are being shaped in those places. This relates to the difficulties in theorizing where borders start or end. Scholars invoke different terms to capture this complexity, such as 'border zones' (Gaibazzi et al., 2017) or 'borderlands' (see, for example, Brambilla, 2010; Brunet-Jailly, 2011; Van Wolputte, 2013).

The externalization of border controls is part of a general trend that has made borders ubiquitous because of the extension of the reach of control both spatially and institutionally, within states and beyond (Faist, 2009). The 'spatial imaginary of borders' (Cobarrubias, 2020) no longer appears strictly to the territorial margins of the state. The nature and scope of the spatial displacement of state borders is still a topic of academic debate. Some believe that externalization strategies have resulted in the 'stretching' of EU borders beyond the sovereign territory of member states, as seen by the shift of migratory control on the African continent (Casas et al., 2011). However, on a larger scale, this process of 'extra-territorialization' has

also been followed by the 'hyper-territorialization' of borders (FitzGerald, 2019). Due to their dynamic spatiality, contemporary borders are increasingly seen as an "itinerant" apparatus deployed along ever-changing migration pathways, which calls into question the relationship between state sovereignty and territory (Casas-Cortes et al., 2015, 2016; Cobarrubias, 2020).

According to Faist (2009), it is evident that externalization policies create power asymmetries in global and regional political orders. Moreover, as part of a more extensive social, cultural, and economic boundary-making process in transnational spaces (Faist, 2009), these policies contribute to the (re)production of inequalities between states, institutions, and people. Therefore, externalization policies can also be conceptualized as social relations in which "opportunity stockpiling and social closure is sought at least by one party in the relationship to accumulate power over the other" (Faist, 2009, p. 16). The unequal power relations, reflected by externalization measures, result in most cases in the dodging of basic norms and rights, go against principles of good governance, create patterns of immobility, and contribute to the crisis of the global refugee regime, failing to protect refugees and (would be) migrants (Betts Collier, 2017).

Contested Externalization

The relations of inequality embedded in the externalization of migration control produce spaces of control and resistance (Stock et al., 2019). The various reactions to externalization policies go far beyond the field of migration management. These are often overlooked in the academic debate about this topic since migration policy and practice are most often analyzed from the perspective of the state and the view of governance and institutions (Casas-Cortes et al., 2015; Lavenex, 2016). Institutions in 'receiving' states are not passive recipients of externalization measures (e.g., Üstübici et al., 2020; Laube, 2019; Tyszler, 2019). Instead, states engage in migration and border policy with the EU (Ustübici, 2019). Based on Faist's (2019) analysis of contested externalization, "the dynamics of externalization are driven by a web of power relations between the various political actors involved, encompassing above all governments, courts, and CSOs" (Faist, 2019, p. 2).

An essential response to practices of externalization comes from (would-be) migrants. They have their way of adapting to (im)mobility strategies by taking control of alternative regulatory frameworks to foster mobility options (Alpes, 2017). On a different level, CSOs and migration networks are constructing (rescue) industries within the migration industry (Gammeltoft-Hansen & Nyberg Sørensen, 2017) based on the restrictions on the mobility of African populations (Andersson, 2014). Furthermore, host states' institutions are appropriating migration management discourses for their benefit (Stock et al., 2019). The externalization of migration management can be seen as a battlefield. Within this battlefield, different actors position themselves to gain access and control over mobility, resources, and governance (Stock et al., 2019). These actors are renegotiating the social, institutional, and legal boundaries of (im)mobility and citizenship in different ways. However, it is not always the "traditional" destination country that successfully gains power over (im)mobility. Local actors subtly resist the rationalities of border externalization.

Cold-Ravnkilde (2021) describes how forms of everyday resistance in the context of border externalization do not necessarily have revolutionary or emancipatory potential. The subtle forms of 'everyday resistance' are more about maintaining the status quo, balancing between the dependency on the EU and the desire of the population to be mobile (Cold-Ravnkilde, 2021). 'Everyday resistance' is a term introduced by James Scott (1985) to describe a type of resistance that is less dramatic and obvious than rebellions, riots, demonstrations, revolutions, civil wars, and other such organized, collective, or confrontational forms of opposition (Scott, 1985, 1989, 1990). According to Scott (1985), everyday resistance is quiet, dispersed, disguised, or otherwise seemingly invisible.

This type of behavior represents "counter-conduct" in the Foucaldian sense of the term. It focuses on attempts to inventively modify, resist, or escape how we are governed (Odysseos et al., 2016). Therefore, it is valuable to examine those inventive attempts to resist or escape how we are governed within or outside expressly political dissenting practice aimed at the state and the market (Foucault, 1982). In the introduction of the special issue on interrogating "counter-conduct" (Odysseos et al., 2016), Foucault's observation on the rise of the question of government is explained. How to be governed is accompanied by the question of how not to be governed. This question can be found in the "preoccupation about the way to govern and the search for the ways to govern, which asked, how not to be governed like that, by that, in the name of those principles, with such an objective in mind and by means of such procedures, not like that, not for that, not by them" (Lotringer & Hochroth, 2007, p.44). "Counter-conductive struggles do not explicitly look for the chief enemy but for the immediate enemy, not always the state as governor par excellence, but governors in the plural, resulting in attempts to resist, escape and "involute" rationalities and techniques of conduct, or the art of not being governed quite so much" (Lotringer & Hochroth, 2007, p. 45).

Here, I call attention to how social and political realities on the ground possibly challenge and reshape the externalization discourse and how European efforts to gain control over mobility are both supported and resisted by local actors (Vammen et al., 2022). Within the responses to externalization policies, I focus on the less visible practices of resistance or those not manifested in overtly political registers. By zooming in on the responses of local actors in Ghana, this research further explores subtle resistance in the context of the externally driven migration policy designed to immobilize Ghanaians.

2.2 Local Development Brokers

The concept of 'development brokers' is useful for understanding the local implementation dynamics of development interventions. The concept provides insights into the roles, strategies, and aspirations of local development actors who operate between global counterparts and local communities. Lewis (2007) conceptualizes development brokers as intermediaries who operate between different actors, translating and mediating between them to facilitate development processes. Lewis defines development brokers as individuals or organizations that occupy positions in the development arena that allow them to connect different organizations and levels of government, translating languages and cultures across organizational boundaries (Lewis, 2007). According to Lewis, development brokers often

have unique skills, knowledge, networks, and resources to bridge gaps, negotiate relationships, and navigate complex socio-political contexts. They facilitate interactions and collaborations among diverse stakeholders, including aid agencies, NGOs, governments, and local communities, aiming to promote development outcomes. Lewis emphasizes that development brokers are not neutral actors but are influenced by their own interests, values, and positionalities. Their activities can shape the dynamics of power, influence resource allocations, and impact development outcomes. As such, understanding the roles and motivations of development brokers becomes crucial for analyzing and evaluating the implementation of development practices. Lewis' work highlights the importance of studying development brokers in the ethnographic context, where their day-to-day practices, relationships, and negotiations can be examined in detail. This approach provides insights into the complexities of development processes and the agency of local actors in shaping development interventions and outcomes.

According to Bierschenk and others (2000), it is necessary to pay attention to the roles of "brokers," who assume a rising level of importance and seize a considerable amount of resources in the mediated cultures of development. An actor-oriented strategy aims to establish an anthropological understanding of development projects' "social life" and the social actor's reactions and experiences, variously situated and affected (Long, 2002). This method emphasizes how development meanings are created and negotiated in the real world and how distinct actors have different meanings attached to specific development interactions (Long & Long, 1992; Arce & Long 2000). Instead of seeing the interaction between policy and practice as an instrumental or planned transformation of ideas into reality, it sees it as a messy free-for-all where processes are frequently unpredictable and outcomes ambiguous (Mosse, 2002). Analyzing intermediary players or brokers who operate at the "interfaces" of multiple worldviews and knowledge systems is another benefit of an actor-oriented approach. This kind of research highlights the importance of these players in negotiating representations and roles (Mosse & Lewis, 2006)

Local development brokers in African countries are expected to speak for the local people and convey their "needs" to the organizations in charge of providing aid or designing interventions. Development brokers are the leading players in the quest for projects carried out in and around African villages, far from being passive operators (Bierschenk, 2002). Strong actors (international organizations) offer narratives for which other people can be temporarily recruited while all actors produce their interpretations. According to their statement, their interpretations "prove themselves by modifying reality by their perspective on the world" (Bierschenk et al., 1996: p. 194–195). In this sense, actor interpretations are performative. The question then becomes how development projects—always unpredictable—become real through translating interests, creating context by tying in supporters, and sustaining interpretations (Latour, 1996; Mosse, 2005). This contrasts how actors operate and strategize within preexisting development arrangements. The different people and institutions they bring together, who give them weight and a sense of consensus, must be translated into the various logics of their goals, objectives, and ambitions (Mosse, 2005). Local Development brokers could be viewed as translators between several registers

(Mosse & Lewis, 2006, pp. 13–17). In this context, "translation" refers to cooperative engagement and blending interests that produce project realities.
When studying the involvement of local actors in the implementation of migration projects, focus on the lifeworld of local NGO workers brings out the performative aspect of migration management action and knowledge and highlights the work by local NGO workers to keep "official" linguistic representations in place, while maintaining a degree of ambiguity and room for maneuvering (Bierschenk et al. 2002: p. 11). This concept will help zoom in on local NGO workers' manifestations of "counter-conduct" by analyzing how local NGO workers maneuver between EU-imposed migration discourse and their desires, realities, worldviews, and experiences.

2.3 The Border Spectacle

"Border Spectacle" refers to the performative and evident aspects of border control and management that capture public attention and shape public perceptions of migration issues (De Genova, 2013, 2015). It encompasses the dramatic and often sensationalized portrayal of borders through media coverage, political rhetoric, symbolic displays of security measures, and public discourse surrounding migration. In contemporary migration issues, the Border Spectacle plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion and policy debates and framing migration as a political issue (Van Reekum, 2016; Van Dessel, 2021). The concept of 'Border Spectacle,' developed by De Genova (2002), highlighted how the US-Mexico border was a good theater for staging and rendering visible the spectacle of the "illegal alien" produced by "the Law" (De Genova, 2002: p. 426). Through this spectacle at the border, "the Law" is utterly naturalized and vanishes from view.
Consequently, this Law produces the illegality of the migrants in question (De Genova, 2012). To explain border enforcement as a set of material practices at physical borders erected between states, De Genova draws on a theory developed by the Marxist philosopher Guy Debord (1967). Debord defines a *spectacle* as the hegemonic assemblage of discourses and images that mediate social relations and have been turned into an objective force in modern society (De Genova, 2012, p. 493). De Genova contends that the spectacle of border enforcement "fetishizes" immigration status as a fact of nature because of how the society of spectacle can make a limited number of images into the "epitome of truth" (Andersson, 2014, p. 153).

Following its original definition, the Border Spectacle functions using two lenses. Migrants' "illegality" is, on the one hand, reified through the visual and discursive frameworks that set the ground for their exclusion; on the other hand, this spectacle covers its obscene side: the widespread hiring and exploitation of "illegalized" migrant labor on a global scale (De Genova, 2012). This nasty side shows that the externalized borders of the EU reinforced exclusion and created a differentiated system of access to supply the needs of the European labor market, which restricts specific movements while easing others (Kojadziv & Karakayli, 2010). This way, borders can select between desired and undesired movements (Mezzadra & Neilson, 2013). The different acts of border crossing also address different audiences. Andersson (2014) shows how the spectacle of rescue operations at sea is addressed to a domestic and international audience, while the spectacle of migrants' exclusion at the

enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla is addressed to "European paymasters" (Andersson, 2014, p. 140). Cuttitta (2014) described how the security and humanitarian aspects of the 'border enforcement' on Lampedusa rely on a two-sided narrative of the border as both human and tough (Van Dessel, 2021). This performance has multiple spectators, from governments of countries of origin to potential migrants (Cuttitta, 2014, p. 206).

As argued by De Genova, the Border Spectacle is best illustrated at the territorial borders, where border patrols and policing are most visible. However, he invited further research to identify alternative spectacles of migrant illegality: "nothing about the Border Spectacle requires its choreography of images to be so literally affiliated to the geography of border enforcement" (De Genova, 2013, p. 1183)." As illustrated by Van Dessel (2021) and Carlotti (2021), moving beyond the stagings of the Border Spectacle in the border zone, this theoretical concept can be mobilized to show how migrant illegality is rendered visible. "Behind the curtain" of the Border Spectacle (Carlotti, 2021) suggests a hidden or obscured reality beyond the public Spectacle unfolding at the border. It points to the need to look beyond superficial representations and examine border control policies' underlying dynamics and implications. It encourages critical analysis of the ideologies, power relations, and human experiences often obscured or marginalized within the Spectacle. By going "behind the curtain," one can reveal the systemic inequalities and the unequal power relations that are often overshadowed by the visual Spectacle of border enforcement.

The Humanitarian Border

A particular representation of the Border Spectacle is the humanitarian border. The concept of humanitarian borders is a clear interpretive lens for studying EU borders (see: Cuttitta, 2020; Isleyen, 2018; Pallister-Wilkins, 2015). The concept was developed by Walters (2011) and is constituted by the uneasy alliance between a politics of alienation and a politics of care (Novak, 2022). This alliance focuses on governing border crossings as a matter of life and death and transforms border zones into zones of humanitarian governance.

This concept allows us to conceive the externalization of migration control as a process of spatial differentiation (Rajamar, 2003) that reacts to different kinds of migrant subjectivities and that produces different forms of access and rights (Caes-Cortes et al., 2015). In addition, the concept of a humanitarian border allows the externalization of migration control not so much as a tool of exclusion and violence (Novak, 2022). However, externalization can be understood as creeping inland and across multiple domains (Frowd, 2021). In this way, it produces site-specific experiences and can be better characterized as the localized activation of border controls away from border lines (Novak, 2022).

The concept of the Humanitarian Border refers to the intersection between migration management and humanitarian discourses and practices. It recognizes how humanitarian principles and language are invoked in the context of border control, asylum procedures, and refugee protection. The Humanitarian Border represents a complex and often contested space where migration policies and practices are framed and legitimized in humanitarian terms. At its core, the Humanitarian Border suggests that migration management is not solely driven by security concerns or immigration control. It is also influenced by the perceived need to

address human suffering and protect vulnerable individuals. The concept acknowledges the tension between restrictive immigration policies and the principles of humanitarianism, exposing the contradictions and challenges inherent in migration governance. Understanding the Humanitarian Border requires critically examining the narratives, discourses, and practices that shape migration management. It involves questioning how humanitarian ideals are invoked and operationalized within border control practices and policies.

I will focus in particular on one element of the analysis of Walters (2011) that is essential for the argument of this research. Following Novak (2022), the first element underscores the humanitarian border's productive nature. Humanitarianism governs precarious lives, which emerges in the faultline between the Global North and Global South (Novak, 2022). Although this government strategy's outcomes are not substantially different from a regime of militarisation, the governmental logic that produces the humanitarian border is distinct, as humanitarianism operates alongside, and not outside, the violence of borders (Dadusc, 2019). The violent forms of deterrence are combined with forms of care and enable to dye militarisation with a humanitarian layer because of its seemingly benevolent but selective border practices (Stierl, 2018). This care and control dialectic also creates a humanitarian border concerning biopolitics (Walters, 2011, p. 142). In this government strategy, the mobilized knowledge acts as a disciplinary mode of power that governs by fostering life (Dadusc, 2019). They are constitutive of new spaces of care and control that dislocate and decentralize border enforcement to the Mediterranean, to transit and origin countries (Cuttitta, 2018). These new geographical areas (Işleyen, 2018) result in areas of circulation that enclose, direct, slow down, and reroute migrants' movement (Garelli & Tazzioli, 2018), new legal statuses, differential channels of protection, deportation, and illegalization (Tazzioli, 2018). The productive nature of the humanitarian border stems precisely from its capacity to enact differentiated categories of life (Pallister-Wilkins, 2017), which are essentially hierarchical (Perkowski, 2016).

2.4 Doing Ideology Critique

The Slovenian rockstar philosopher Slavoj Žižek renewed current interest in Ideology, arguing that social reality is ideological. Žižek's engagement with the philosophy of Jacques Lacan is central to his philosophical framework. Jacques Lacan was a French psychoanalyst and philosopher who significantly influenced the field of psychoanalysis in the 20th century. Drawing on the ideas of Sigmund Freud, Lacan developed a unique and complex approach to understanding the human psyche. He emphasized the role of language and symbolism in shaping subjectivity and explored concepts such as the Unconscious, the Symbolic Order, and the Real. Lacan's notion of the subject, which emphasizes human identity's fragmented and divided nature, informs Žižek's understanding of subjectivity. Žižek often examines how ideology and social structures shape subjectivity and influence our desires and beliefs. Based on the Lacanian position - the reality is permanently ruptured by gaps and contradictions (the Real) - Žižek states that Ideology tries to cover up these contradictions to obscure the Real (Žižek, 1989, p. 45). In this sense, Ideology serves as a way for the social to escape its traumatic core, and ideology critique tries to focus its attention back on this trauma.

Ilan Kapoor's approach to psychoanalysis provides a valuable framework for ideology critique within the field of international development. Kapoor argues that thinking and practice in the development field are psychoanalytically structured since it is replete with unconscious social passions (Kapoor, 2014). Kapoor builds his argument on Lacan's approach of how desire reveals itself in a linguistic site: holes, gaps, and measures come to the front in miscommunications, blind spots, mistakes, and confusion. In these cases, the unconscious desires reveal themselves. Although they are evident from the start, they can only be discovered retroactively. Kapoor draws on psychoanalytic concepts to understand the unconscious dimensions of development processes and discourses. He explores how unconscious desires, fears, anxieties, and fantasies shape development agendas, policies, and practices. Psychoanalysis helps uncover hidden motivations and ideologies that may remain unnoticed, shedding light on power dynamics and social inequalities.

Kapoor's work is grounded in a commitment to ideology critique, which he defines as "a systematic analysis of the assumptions, values, and beliefs that underlie any social phenomenon" (Kapoor, 2014: p. 4). He argues that Ideology is not simply a matter of false consciousness or deception, but rather is deeply embedded in social structures, practices, and discourses. His approach to ideology critique emphasizes the importance of understanding how power shapes dominant ideologies and how counter-hegemonic ideas and practices can challenge and transform these ideologies. Kapoor has written extensively on the role of development discourse in shaping development policy and practice. He argues that development discourse is not neutral but shaped by dominant ideological frameworks prioritizing economic growth, technological progress, and individualism. He suggests that development discourse functions to legitimate and reproduce global power relations, perpetuating a system of global inequality and marginalization.

Drawing on Žižek's work, Kapoor argues that Ideology depends on two essential "non-rational" components: belief and enjoyment (*jouissance*). According to Žižek's theory, belief is nonsensical since it disallows deliberation or rational argument. Ideology hinges on this non-rational core, this incomprehensible submission, that we hold without question or justification (Pound, 2008: p. 53). Despite objections or resistance, we follow the Law or the logic of the market because we have already intuitively accepted them; thinking or rationalization comes afterward. Furthermore, beliefs do not only exist in the domain of ideas, separate from reality; on the contrary, they are constantly externalized, making the material reality evidence of their existence. "Belief is always materialized in our effective social activity," writes Žižek (1989: p. 36), "because belief supports the fantasy that regulates social reality." Due to this and the fact that it represents our irrational views, ideological "truth" is always "out there," in plain view.

Ideology also depends on enjoyment, the second non-rational component. According to Žižek, one of the issues with Foucauldian discourse analysis is that it does not effectively address the subject's inner life, failing to address the psyche's propensities for supporting Ideology (Žižek, 1999, p. 66). Žižek strongly emphasizes the economy of human enjoyment, which is today recognized as one of his significant contributions to contemporary political

philosophy. By drawing directly from Lacan, he defines enjoyment as the libidinal excess created when we enter the social/symbolic order—a surplus that continuously motivates but also perplexes human endeavors. In this view, enjoyment refers to extreme or transgressive pleasure or pain that motivates us to take actions that might otherwise appear unreasonable, counterproductive, or even wrong (Dean, 2006: 4). Žižek is referring to the profound delight and comfort we receive from administrative procedures, religious rites, or social conventions.

The essential point is that contrary to what we frequently believe, Ideology acts more at the unconscious level than at the level of reason and knowledge. This is why Žižek changes the focus from what people know to what they do: Ideology exists not on the side of knowledge but in the 'reality of the doing itself' (Ziziek, 1989, p. 33), and it succeeds because people continue to 'do' despite knowing better. One can know but still not reject or abstain if belief and enjoyment are present in their behaviors. Furthermore, one can be aware (or know better) while adhering to an idea. Žižek focuses on the postmodern inclination to believe that ironic detachment enables us to transcend Ideology and bring in a "post-ideological age" in this argument. He argues that Ideology can be influential without brainwashing us. Instead, it feeds on giving us a space where we may 'dis-identify' with the ruling regime and maintain some distance from it. However, transgression, cynicism, or ironic detachment leave 'untouched the fundamental level of ideological fantasy' (Žižek, 1989, p. 30).

Like international development, international migration management is a discursive and linguistic practice that structures the relationship between the West (destination countries) and the Global South (countries of origin and transit). To study the role of the unconscious in migration management, attachments, and disavowed passions can be identified. Using psychoanalysis to uncover the social passions of migration management will expose the 'gaps' of migration management. However, more than exposing the contradictions of international migration management is needed, this research also tries to investigate why this notion of migration management keeps such a sustained appeal, despite its 'gaps'. What unconscious commands and passions can be exposed that bind us to the Ideology of migration management, despite the critical distance to this paradigm?

3. An Account of Fieldwork: Methodological Choices and Reflection

The countless social interactions during my fieldwork in Ghana were a source of intriguing, entertaining and sometimes shocking stories, but also a confrontation with who I am, how I appear to others, and what implicit assumptions I have. My fieldwork was not only an encounter with my research subjects but undoubtedly an encounter with different parts of myself. In this chapter, I will discuss the methodological choices of this research, and I will elaborate on my personal experiences. In addition, I will reflect on my position as a researcher and address how my research subjects related to me and, subsequently, what my presence in the field evoked among them. I will zoom into the most relevant dimensions of my position and examine these dimensions' outward impact on my research design and findings.

Furthermore, this reflection on my position and choices also gives some initial insights into particular desires for mobility among Ghanaians. My encounters in the field illustrate how perceptions of travel and life "abroad" are socially embedded in Ghanaian society. Finally, I also address the ethical considerations and limitations of my research.

I conducted the fieldwork for this research in February, March and April 2022. The study focuses on Ghana, particularly Accra, Kumasi and the urban area of Sunyani. In Accra, most of the head offices of international and national NGOs are located, including the office of IOM Ghana. The majority of local actors active in migration management are located in Kumasi and Sunyani, as most projects are implemented in these regions. I conducted 22 semi-structured interviews, complemented by informal conversations and observations from a returned migrant training and a migration information center. I attended two conferences on migration-related issues and a panel discussion about migration at the Goethe Institute. I derived the semi-structured interviews from eight locally owned NGOs. Three were locally owned migration NGOs, and five were 'regular' locally owned NGOs. I also interviewed staff from IOM Ghana, GIZ, Ghana Immigration Service, Migration Study Centre and the EU delegation to Ghana. Locally owned migration NGOs mainly implement migration-related projects and are explicitly founded around migration issues. In Ghana, there are three of them, all consisting of 1-5 staff members. The 'regular' local NGOs also implement other projects (for example, around youth employment), and they started their involvement in migration issues after 2015. Five of the organizations I interviewed twice. Overall, the positions and roles of respondents ranged from director to project manager and from communication officer to campaign volunteer to get a broad picture of implementation dynamics and to collect different perspectives.

Access

I have used several ways to access my research subjects. First, I tried to reach organizations via email. This approach had varying degrees of success. Most international organizations were slow to respond, it was more challenging to schedule a concrete appointment, and I often needed a response through the general email addresses. I also had to deal with the bureaucracy of the larger international organizations. Sometimes endless email exchanges followed without concrete results.

In contrast to the international organizations, most local organizations responded quickly, and almost all suggested contacting me by phone to discuss further details. Often a phone call was also a way to build trust. From the moment phone contact had been made, followed by WhatsApp contact, I could count on an interview. What was much more challenging, however, was to find the local organizations' offices. This stands in contrast to IOs, whose offices and corresponding billboards or wall paintings with logos are easy to find in the neighborhoods of Accra, but contact and access were more complex.
My first interview with one of the largest local NGOs implementing projects for the IOM, which I contacted through Facebook, was an opening to gain access to other organizations. This way, some informants acted as gatekeepers (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2010, p. 49). At the end of the interview, I asked if the respondent knew any other active local NGOs around migration issues. In addition, I asked for the contact information of other colleagues. This often resulted in a spontaneous taxi ride to an office or acquaintance around the corner, with whom I could ask ad hoc questions. The shared moment of trust between me and the potential new research subject was an advantage and often functioned as an opening of the conversation. An essential part of this was the use of telephone contact over email. Although the various local organizations did have visibility on the internet or through a social media account, there was a degree of invisibility of local NGOs. This contrasts with international organizations, which have high visibility on the internet and often offer multiple contact options on these websites but are much less accessible. During the fieldwork, I primarily used "snowball sampling." This "is a non-probability sampling strategy used to locate subjects with certain attributes or characteristics necessary in a study of a particular population" (Clark, 2006, p. 419).

Sampling

I used purposeful sampling to locate other research subjects to complement snowball sampling. In Accra, I looked for events in various ways that were tangential to my research. The Goethe Institute, linked to the German Embassy, was particularly active in this area. Among other things, I attended a photo exhibition opening on migration and a panel discussion. This was a way to meet many employees of, e.g., GIZ or embassies and speakers who worked, for example, for a local organization. Once I realized that employees came here more often, I also started working here regularly on weekend evenings in the adjacent cafes. This was an excellent way to access the NGO community. I also attended conferences in Accra, such as regulating domestic workers and recruitment. Although the topic differed from my research topic, relevant NGOs in the field of migration were invited here, as well as essential actors such as the Migration Study Centre. So over time, I chose places deliberately, intending to meet a specific group of people (Palinkas et al., 2015).

Research methods

In-depth interviews provide a "rich bank of descriptive and anecdotal data, which indicates patterns, factors, and ideas for further study" (Jacobsen & Landau, 2003, p. 109), which are exploratory dialogues between the subject and the researcher. For the in-depth interviews, I used a topic list that guided the interviews. I kept adjusting this topic list during the fieldwork based on the data obtained. I used this method, especially at the beginning, and also more

frequently with IOs and embassies. The interviews with these actors often took place in a more formal setting, often in conference rooms in their well-secured offices.

In addition to the semi-structured interviews, I collected data through informal conversations and small talk with locals, academic observers, government officials, development workers, returned migrants, 'potential migrants', and volunteers. These conversations have been a crucial contribution to data gathering in this research. Those informal talks needed to reveal underlying discourses, beliefs, and narratives about migration (governance) in Ghana and the position of the EU vis-a-vis Ghanaians. Those informal talks were not recorded, I did not use a topic list, and I could only sometimes make notes. Afterward, I wrote down the critical anecdotes and interpretations. An essential condition for informal conversations is the trust between the researcher and the subject, and the informal nature of the interviews contributed to that. This method provided extensive amounts of descriptive data, contributing to the understanding of the experiences and perceptions of local actors. My conversations were very individual, issue-specific accounts and cannot be generalized to such an extent. The conversations created a greater ease of communication and, in this research, produced more 'naturalistic' data (Swain & King, 2022).

These informal conversations also occasionally occurred online via WhatsApp messages and Facetime calls. The personal connection between the researcher and the subject was crucial for this method. Small talk and casual talks are also essential investigation methods for the researcher to establish rapport with the research population (DeWalt, 2017). In order to establish a relationship of trust where the informant is eager to provide information regarding the study issue, rapport is required (DeWalt, 2017, p. 48). While doing online interviews, Weller (2017) found out that: "physical separation can facilitate a greater (emotional) connection through participants' increased sense of ease with the setting and mode" (Weller, 2017, p. 585). Online interviews are experienced as less intimidating because research participants feel safer and non-intrusive because they could be in a safe environment (Dodds & Hess, 2020, p. 208). I conducted short online interviews in preparation for the offline interviews. I also often had short online video conversations to get to know each other better or discuss how to get to a location—this involved small talk. The online connection with my research subjects was a crucial way to build rapport with my research subjects so that I could later plan interviews or meetings. Through these online encounters, I could also have follow-up conversations online to add an extra layer to my gathered data. For example, some respondents sent me additional information, campaign pictures, or voice messages with things they wanted to add afterward.
Furthermore, some hours of observations of returned migrant training and conferences on migration issues have also provided valuable data. The review of reports and policy documents, especially of IOM Ghana, have complemented the other methods. IOM Ghana's online channels, both the website and social media, were crucial in analyzing the campaign materials, especially the tone, and approach. The same goes for the websites and social media of local organizations.

I kept a journal describing my experiences, observations, and thoughts during my fieldwork. This was a way to give space to my observations during an interview as well as during a visit. In addition, this gave me a handhold during all my small talk. I also often wrote down my thoughts or observations after a spontaneous meeting. For example, here I also wrote how I introduced myself, what jokes had stuck with me, and described non-verbal communication. This proved especially valuable during my data analysis and helped interpret my role in this research. It also allowed me to check afterward how certain things manifested in language use, jokes, mistakes, and spontaneous encounters.

This interrelation of various methods and the cross-checking of interpretations and inferences align with "method triangulation" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2010, p. 184). As a result, I got a full picture of the actors, practices, and discourses of migration governance in Ghana. This triangulation of methods allowed me to interact with the research participants in different ways and experience them in different settings. Moreover, in those different settings, they also related to me differently. This provided valuable data that gave me more insight into who they are, how they think about the subject, how they relate to me, and their dreams and aspirations.

Ethics

A set of ethical principles guides my research design and practice. The principles I tried to maintain included “do no harm” by protecting all research participants' autonomy, well-being, safety and dignity. I informed the participants of the interviews beforehand about who I am, to what university I belong and what the purpose of my research was. I asked permission to record the interview and promised confidentiality and anonymity if wished. I was also clear about my role as a master's student and the scope of my research to prevent participants from having expectations about the possible benefits of their participation in my study. However, it wasn't easy to fully manage their expectations, and often there were implicit expectations associated with their participation in my study. For example, some people expected that I would connect them directly to financial donors, or that I could promote their organization among other NGOs. I ensured anonymity by limiting their identity in my research to their role (for example director or campaign volunteer), and classifying their organization as local NGO, local migration NGO, IO, etc. In this way, participants are not personally identifiable. By anonymizing personally identifiable data, I have ensured that it cannot be linked to other data by anyone else. However, in the case of informal conversations, I did not always seek consent beforehand. Obtaining informed consent before, during or after informal conversations in everyday, natural settings can be obtrusive and impractical (Akesson et al., 2018; Swain & Spire, 2020). However, I also did not actively withhold details, and as my relationship with my participants developed, I became more open and expansive about my research aims. According to Swain & King (2022), the critical dynamic is trust. It is true to mention that often participants never fully understood the purpose or motivation of the research. It is also correct to say that not all participants want to know. In my fieldwork, I also experienced that many just wanted to be heard, talk about their work and lives and get to know me. Most importantly, I preserved the participants' confidentiality and anonymity.

During my fieldwork, I was also aware of the certain power dynamics between me as a researcher and the participants. One of the risks of this power imbalance is that as a researcher, I simply go to 'mine' data and exploit knowledge (Marchais et al., 2020). I tried to avoid this by 'giving something back.' I shared the most important conclusions of my research with the participants and the broader migration sector in Ghana. I tried to also 'do-some-good' by using my research in The Netherlands to raise awareness of Europe's border violence and to advocate for the freedom of movement.
Lastly, an essential part of ethical research is reflecting and critically examining my position, which I will do in the next section. Sultana (2007) states that it is "crucial to pay attention to positionality, reflexivity and the production of knowledge in order to do ethical research" (p.380). The clear implication is that, with reflexivity on the researcher's part, their research may be conducted ethically. This also has to do with communicating my results. This must be done in a reliable, credible and ethical manner. By being transparent about how I arrived at my results, I have tried to achieve that.

Positionality

The term positionality describes both an individual's worldview and the position they adopt about a research task and its social and political context (Foote & Bartell, 2011; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013; Rowe, 2014). Positionality influences how to conduct research, its outcomes, and results (Rowe, 2014). I have identified my positionality by locating myself in relation to three areas: the subject under investigation, the research participants, and the research context and process (Chiseri-Strater, 1996). I could identify, construct, critique, and articulate my positionality through a reflexive approach. Then, I attempted to self-assess how my views and position might or have, directly or indirectly, influenced the design, execution, and interpretation of my findings (Greenbank, 2003; May & Perry, 2017). Such a reflection process is complex and time-consuming, much more extensive than presented in this chapter. I have chosen to highlight mainly the prominent aspects of my positionality that had the most influence on the interpersonal interactions, the research design and the analysis of my data. Starting with how my topic choice came about and, thus, the approach to this research.

I came to the topic of the EU's management of irregular migration out of anger and fascination with the subject. Anger at the tragic consequences of the migration regime for the many "travelers" who, in their life-changing journeys, encounter violence from border controls and make deadly desert and sea crossings. Strict European border policy, an easy topic for right-wing politicians in Europe to win votes, leaves little attention to the stories of untold deaths and misery in border areas due to this repression. This research aims to zoom in on the local dynamics surrounding the externalized migration regime to partially expose how the policy contributes to structural violence and only leads to even more danger and repression on the routes into Europe. This research objective is intertwined with a fascination with the "appeal" of Europe from the perspective of young Ghanaians and the motivations of many of them to "go on an adventure," to see more of the world, to step outside their village or country.

Together, these sentiments of astonishment and indignation shaped my research, and, according to Fassin (2017), “they are what motivate critical inquiry” (p. 26). One form of critique is critical theory directed at ideology. Critical theory makes it possible to distinguish between what is true and what is untrue: “ideology being precisely what deceives human beings by blurring this separation and thus allowing the reproduction of domination” (Fassin, 2017). This is reflected in this research as I approach my inquiry as an examination of the “ideology” of migration management - by which I mean the (discursive) practices that structure the relationships between the destination and sending countries, between the “West” and the “Global South”. This research is inspired by Ilan Kapoor’s ideology critique in the context of international development, based on the Žižekian notion of ideology (Kapoor, 2012). Ilan Kapoor’s use of psychoanalysis as a tool for ideology critique helped me to uncover the unconscious of migration management. I tried to represent its absence and expose the socioeconomic contradictions and antagonisms that migration management discourse disavows (Kapoor, 2014). The contribution of psychoanalysis to migration is fascinating, in line with Kapoor’s examination of the contributions of psychoanalysis to international development, since international migration management as a paradigm is also full of unconscious social passions, and precisely because they remain unacknowledged, can result in irrational behavior (among local development workers, policy makers, experts) (Kapoor, 2014). I used qualitative mixed methods for this critical inquiry because they allowed ongoing reflection and method adaptation to have an open, flexible and exploratory approach.

Although I went into my research with clear concepts and theories guiding me, I tried not to be overly guided by them to avoid tunnel vision. In the end, my fieldwork in implementation was also primarily intuitive. Initially, I did not include "migration aspirations" in my research. I explicitly did not want to research why people leave but rather to pay attention to those who implement the policy that aims to stop people from leaving. However, the more hours I spent chit-chatting during my time in Ghana in fully loaded mini buses, and the more often I sat on plastic chairs along the road drinking a beer with local NGO workers and their family members, the more I realized that my interactions with the people I encountered, both within local NGOs, and on the street, actually exposed a lot about the way Ghanaians think and talk about migration.
Because of the way I look, I was referred to in Ghana as "Oburoni": those who come from over the horizon. My appearance represented certain things to the people I encountered in the field: as Oburoni, many perceive I come from an "advanced and rich" country. This perception coincides with many in Ghana's image of life beyond the horizon. In the many small talks I had with my bolt-drivers, highly educated young men, it often came up: "I want to go to your country; everything is better, you do not have potholes, and I can earn to feed my whole family". I realized that I should not let my "obsessive" policy lens direct my research. As I reorganized my field notes, I started exploring how my respondents think and talk about migration and traveling abroad and what kind of "desires" this language brings to the forefront. This was evident in the way they approached, treated and perceived me. I switched from straightforward interviews to more small talk and informal conversations with local NGO workers to explore this. After reflecting on the interactions and my position in the

field, I also realized that researching what local actors represented to me cannot be separated from what I represented in the eyes of my research subjects. My presence in the field provoked reactions, comments and jokes that revealed interesting perceptions and points of view. I could identify a feature of my research topic that resulted from my presence, which would have been challenging to notice had I not been in the field. My position towards my respondents exposed much about the (implicit) assumptions and perceptions about migration for Ghanaians.

In addition, many respondents had assumptions about the opportunities I could offer them. They assumed I could connect them to financial donors or other European or international organizations. My imagined position was often linked to the possibilities of obtaining funding, expanding their network or even possibility of traveling to Europe. Respondents implicitly mentioned this in their jokes but also explicitly when they asked me to make their organization known in the Netherlands, to give their business card to an IOM staff member, or they asked if I would like to become an international board member and host them in my home country. During training for returned migrants, a local NGO worker told me that my presence at the training meant there was money for the beneficiaries. This was also one of the reasons I was often photographed, uninvited, in the offices of local organizations. To engage in expectation management, throughout my research, I introduced myself as "just a master's student" only to make my research seem less significant. However, the high expectations of what I could do for my respondents also provoked statements that provided insight into my research topic. Those were moments where understanding myself as a researcher informed my reflective attitude and impacted my understanding of my research context.
My position towards respondents was also confrontational. In order to build rapport with respondents, I often engaged in conversations about my impressions and experiences of Ghana, the food, and the Ghanaian Afrobeats. This small talk was a way to connect with the people I met. In those conversations, I often discussed the various places I had visited in Ghana and my impressions of the country. Several times respondents pointed out my position - a student traveling to Ghana for "just a master" research - to address the unfair distribution of mobility.
On the one hand, the shared desire for adventure and mobility between (young) Ghanaians and me emerged. On the other hand, they pointed out my privileged position and used me as an example to demonstrate that. Throughout my fieldwork, I became more aware of how I presented myself in the eyes of my research subjects. "Just a student" who visited many more places in Ghana for her research than the average Ghanaian ever does. Paradoxically, my travel experiences in Ghana brought me closer to my research subjects and thus increasingly were part of my repertoire, but also exposed inequality and difference, making me aware of my own position and exposing desires and aspirations for mobility among Ghanaians.

To conclude, reflexivity has been an interactive process that eventually surfaced more clearly the ideas about my research's purpose, goals and function. I dealt with the impact of my positionality on my research by contextualizing my data, which means that I also included perceptions of what I observed in the field. My research experiences generally support the statement that "success in the field is formed as much by confusion and accident as by design

and planning" (Hays-Mitchell, 2001, p. 314). Finally, after numerous conversations and interactions with Ghanaians about migration and the dark side of the journey, I concur with what Andersson (2014) states; "Clandestine migration, I sensed, was not all gloom: it was also a journey of self-realization that revealed the resilience, restlessness, and striving of a very contemporary human condition." (p. 22).

Limitations

One of the first limitations of this research was time. It took quite a lot of time to find and reach local organizations. It was hard to find them online, and geographically, local field offices were far from Accra or Kumasi, and it sometimes took me days to get there. In addition, meeting with participants for a second time proved very valuable because, in later conversations, I could collect other types of data. However, it took time to build rapport and plan my meetings with them. By the end of my 2.5 months of fieldwork, I had eventually established a rapport with participants.

Another limitation was that there were fewer campaign activities during my fieldwork timeframe, so I had fewer opportunities to observe the actual project implementation.

In addition, most actors I spoke to were materially invested in the topic and depended on funding (and thus the existence of their NGO) from international organizations and the EU. This dependency made me fear that they would not look at the implementation of the project in a "critical" way or were unwilling to be vocal about it. This was often the case during the first meeting, but in later encounters, some local NGO workers were also honest about their disappointments and difficulties. Against this limitation, the material investment of the participants also turned out to say a lot about the extent to which they were exposed to the "ideology" of migration management, which was a valuable addition to my analysis.

Finally, I mention the subjectivity of my data production. My research was very informative, and a big part of the conversations was not recorded. Even though I used my journal to make notes about the conversations, this was only possible to a limited extent. I jotted down jokes, statements, and dialogues, but not word for word. I wrote them down after interpreting or reproducing them in my head. My journal primarily reflected dialogue with myself, and some of the verbal accounts of research participants might not have been written down accurately. However, as I had (online) follow-up conversations or other encounters with a part of them, I was able to check or correct some of my interpretations. Another research approach would have made the data collection much more complicated and prevented me from investigating informally, which was crucial for the data of this research.

4. Setting the Scene

This chapter emphasizes what matters from the contextualization of migration trends, the NGO landscape that local organizations are part of, and the developments and actors in Ghanaian migration governance. I present three main arguments by zooming into the role of migration in Ghanaian society and highlighting the critical elements of the NGO landscape and migration governance in Ghana. First, the international migration discourse in Ghanaian society is characterized by the 'idealized' image of life abroad, present in different socio-economic segments. The diaspora's social status in Ghana embodies this discourse and affects attitudes towards international migration. Additionally, the focus on contemporary migration trends shows how the framing of these trends is strongly affected by the binary distinction between regular and irregular migration. Secondly, Ghana has a diversified and extensive network of NGOs, strongly reliant on international donors. In this respect, donor dependency's effects on local NGOs' autonomy are interesting concerning the power relation between them. Thirdly, Migration governance in Ghana is discussed in connection to the role and nature of IOM Ghana, explaining the growing presence of international actors in implementing migration policies.

4.1 Migration in Ghanaian Society

"If you have not traveled, you can forget it; you have no chance of marrying a woman anyway," a youth employment NGO employee in Kumasi joked. With this joke, he summarized well the versatile position of the topic of migration in Ghanaian society. For young Ghanaians, traveling abroad is an essential step toward adulthood. Once back in Ghana, travel experiences are a way to climb the social ladder. "Every young person sees migration as an ultimate goal. It is deeply ingrained in their minds," explains a researcher at the Migration Study Centre in Accra. The manner of travel is much less decisive in this perception of Ghanaians. Perceptions tend to revolve around the outcome of travel or migration and the social status associated with it. The terms "migrant" or "traveler" have a positive connotation in Ghanaian society and cover different forms of mobility, either by land, by plane, with or without legal papers. The journey is about an adventurous quest, and its outcome proves that someone has managed to build a life abroad.

Consequently, many Ghanaians' connotation of migration is positive, exciting, and adventurous. This contrasts with the Eurocentric connotations of the words "traveler" and "migrant," where the first evokes a positive association and the second a negative one. The traveler, tourist, or expat is celebrated for their capacity to bridge distances and connect regions; others are worried for the same reasons. They are typically, and oddly, given the designation of "migrants" (Andersson, 2014).

Human mobility is a crucial feature of Ghana's past and present and is socially embedded in society (Ungruhe, 2010). Historically, migration from Ghana to destinations outside West Africa started after independence when many professionals moved to the UK. Ghana changed more towards an emigration country in the 1980s because the military dictatorship and economic recovery policies increased the migration of professionals and unskilled youth to destinations outside West Africa (Azikiwe, 2015). In recent decades, migration patterns have

expanded geographically, with more migration from Ghana to Europe and North America. Within these international destinations, African migration flows have diversified (Grillo & Mazzucato, 2008). Both regional and international migration flows have changed and taken place simultaneously. Migration plays a significant role in Ghanaian society, impacting various social, economic, and cultural aspects. The following contextualization of migration in Ghana zooms in on contemporary trends, focusing on international migration to Europe.

Contemporary migration trends

Modern migration trends are described, measured, and defined by International organizations and research institutions based on the binary distinction between "regular" and "irregular" migration. The European Union defines *irregular migration* as the "Movement of persons to a new place of residence or transit that takes place outside the regulatory norms of the sending, transit and receiving countries." From the standpoint of the countries of destination, it is the act of entering, remaining in, or working in a country without having the proper authorization or documentation required by immigration laws. When a person crosses an international border without a passport or other legal travel document or fails to meet the administrative procedures for leaving the country, these situations are irregular from the viewpoint of the sending country. However, there is a tendency to limit the term's application to instances of human trafficking and migrant smuggling. The definition of irregular migration has generated much discussion. In national policy discussions, terms like "illegal," "undocumented," "non-documented," and "unauthorized migration" can have a variety of meanings. The European Union traditionally used the phrase "illegal immigration," but more lately uses the term "irregular migration," while the UN uses the terms "irregular" or "undocumented" migration. Regular migration refers to migration that occurs within the legal framework and adheres to the laws and regulations of the destination country. It typically involves individuals or families with the necessary visas, permits, or other legal documents to migrate and reside in the destination country.

The use of these terms to describe international migration from Africa to Europe has increased in recent decades, especially as migration from Africa to Europe has increased significantly from the perspective of destination countries. The distinction between regular and irregular migration is used by policymakers, academics, and humanitarian organizations to describe migration's dynamics, causes, and consequences and to develop and legitimize appropriate responses and policies. Associated with this distinction are discourses on migration that do not necessarily "reflect" the real world but "represent" the imaginary relationship of different types of mobility. According to the Zizekian notion of Ideology, this binary language helps shape how migration is viewed and talked about in the first place. Contemporary migration trends are analyzed, described, and approached from this artificial dichotomy. However, the distinction between regular and irregular simplifies the complexity of migration and fails to capture the diverse experiences and circumstances of migrants (Deridder et al., 2020; Tazzioli & Garelli, 2018; Tazzioli & Walters, 2019). Although the following contextualization also shows trends in this binary manner, this research will further analyze how this artificial distinction is integral to European migration management.

Contemporary migration trends from Ghana to Europe involve a mix of regular and irregular migration flows. While it is important to note that migration patterns can vary over time and are influenced by numerous factors, including changes in immigration policies and economic conditions, there are some key trends. In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the number of Ghanaian youth irregularly migrating to Europe and the Middle East and a significant incidence of child trafficking. Ghanaians living outside the country increased by 26.2 percent, from 716,044 in 2010 to 970,625 in 2019 (UN DESA, 2019). Male emigrants outnumbered female emigrants by 8% in 2010 and 6% in 2019 (IOM, 2019). Between 2009 and 2012, the number of Ghanaian refugees abroad almost doubled. In the same period, the number of Ghanaian asylum seekers grew, of which 41 percent arrived in Italy. The Brong-Ahafo region had the most migrants in 2017. Brong-Ahafo also accounted for 1,562 of the 4,092 Ghanaian returns from Libya.

However, the levels of irregular migration from Ghana to the EU are still minor compared to irregular migration from other countries on the African continent to Europe. As visible in Figure 1, there was an estimated peak in 2015 and 2016. After that, levels of irregular border crossings leveled out. Also, the total number of people from Ghana who live illegally in the EU has been stable since 2010. Most of them are staying in Germany, the UK, and Greece. There has been a high increase since 2012 in the deportation of Ghanaians from different destination countries, especially those coming from Libya (GIS, 2014). The latest figures for assisted returns, organized by the IOM, show that more than 60000 Ghanaians are currently in Libya (IOM, 2017). Many Ghanaians have returned to Ghana in recent years, either by their own means or through IOM-coordinated return/reintegration programs. However, accurate, trustworthy, and timely migration data is scarce in Ghana and worldwide. This scarcity makes it difficult to understand how many Ghanaians leave for Europe irregularly or stay there illegally. Accurate estimates of total Ghanaian migrants worldwide do not exist today due to the lack of regular data collection, and some migrants have an unauthorized status abroad.

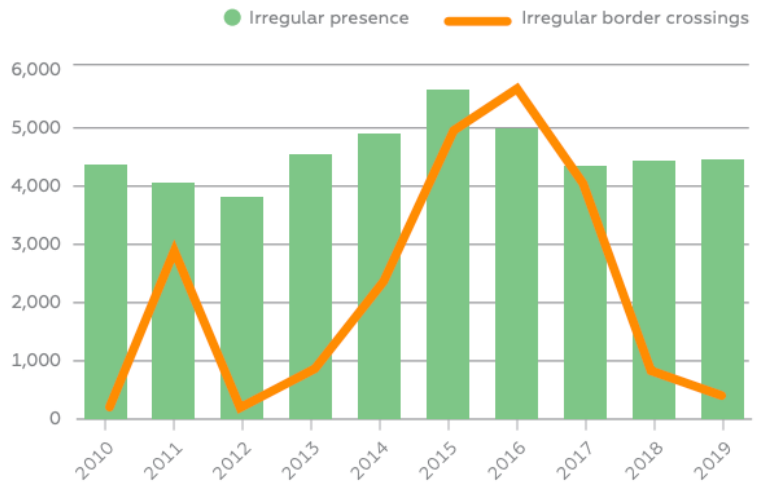

Figure 1: Irregular migration from Ghana to the EU (Eurostat, 2020)

These statistics show that, despite the peak in 2015, there is a relatively small number of "irregular" border crossings from Ghana. As a starting point for his inquiry, Andersson (2014) highlights the mismatch between the minor statistical significance of this phenomenon and the vast industry around irregular entry by land and sea. It has long been evident to migration scholars that such movements into Europe are small compared to other forms of undocumented entry and residence despite the wildly optimistic government estimates and the need for firm data. Contrary to the media coverage, the most recent immigrant census in Spain reveals that less than 1% of people who have entered the nation since 1990 have done so illegally by boat. Instead, Frontex has acknowledged that the majority of illegal immigrants in Europe are those who have overstayed their visas. In other words, the political impact of the "boat people" arriving at the southern European borders far outweighs their actual numbers (Andersson, 2014). Additionally, movement within West Africa has long outpaced migration from other continents. However, North Africa's so-called transit states are becoming increasingly popular travel destinations in their own right. Figure 2 shows the most common migration routes and the options for people traveling from Accra toward Northern African countries.

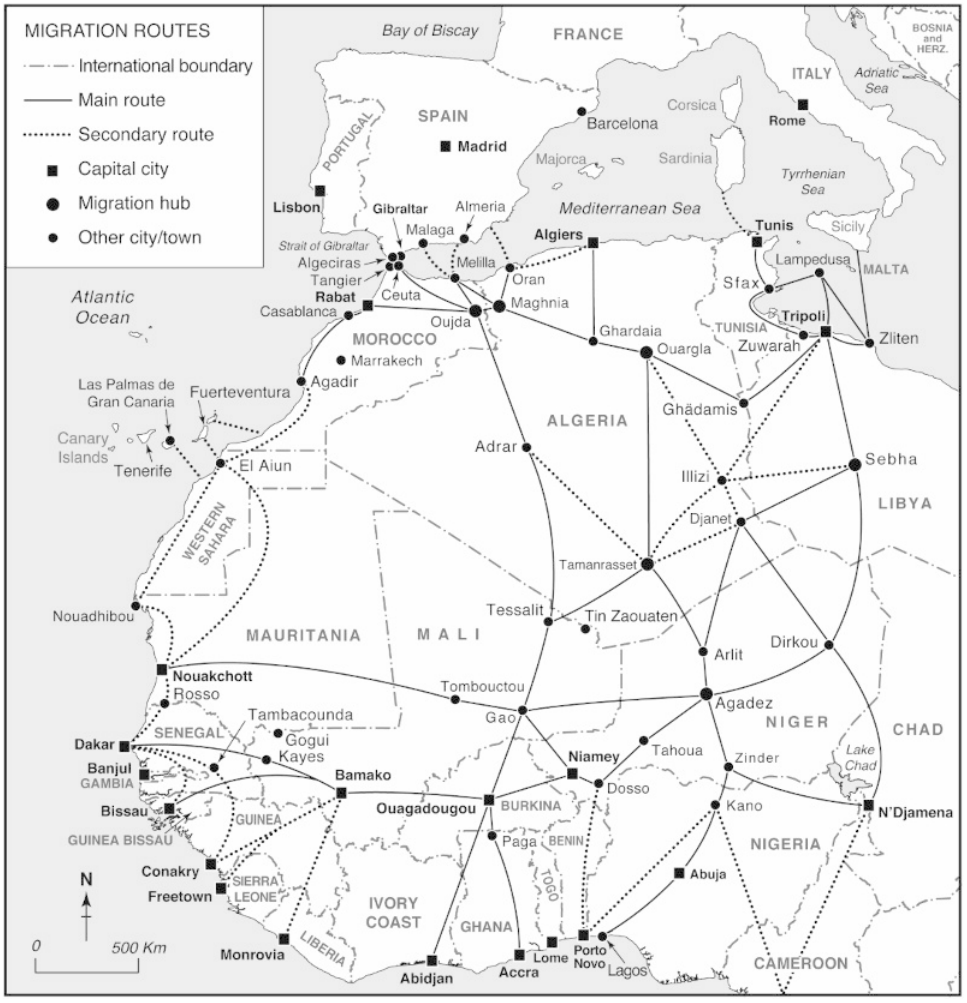

Figure 2: Irregular migratory routes between Africa and southern Europe (Andersson, 2014)
Note: The routes displayed on this map could have changed after it was made, the map is indicative.

Remittances and diaspora

Over the past decades, the importance and influence of the Ghanaian diaspora increased. In the 1990s, Ghanaians became one of the main groups of 'new African diasporas' (Koser, 2003). In that period, the primary destination countries were the UK, US, Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands. Although Ghanaians mostly moved to major cities in these countries, they also live in many more countries worldwide (Anarfi & Kwankye, 2003). Ghana is one of Sub-Saharan Africa's top remittance recipients, with most remittances going to food, health, and education (IOM, 2019). The remittances of the Ghanaian diaspora abroad constitute a critical aspect of improving socio-economic conditions for the receivers back home in Ghana. The diaspora sends most remittances through informal channels, such as friends, relatives, and transport drivers. Up to one-fourth of remittances are said to be spent on investment purposes. Over the past few decades, there has been an increase in awareness of the diasporas' active involvement in development-related issues like poverty reduction, economic growth, trade, and post-crisis recovery (IOM, 2013). Over the last decade, growing economic prosperity and political stability have attracted many Ghanaians in the diaspora, including second and third-generation migrants, to return to live and work in Ghana. People come back for their retirement, to work for big companies, to set up charities, and increasingly, to start social enterprises (Darko, 2015).

The diaspora has also acquired a special social status in the country and they play a significant role in maintaining and creating an image of what life is like abroad. Although not all diaspora members are 'successful' in (re)building their lives abroad, it is not common for the diaspora to talk about the challenges or disappointments of life abroad. Therefore, ideas and perceptions of life abroad are generally idealized. Although migration trends fluctuate, the positive discourse surrounding international migration has always been strongly present in Ghanaian society. On crowded junctions or at public squares, many advertisements are on display about getting a work permit, obtaining a visa, scholarships, language certificates, or other legal documents in order to be able to migrate to countries like the UK and the US (see picture below). The public visibility of international migration and the status of the diaspora contribute to the positive attitudes towards international migration in Ghana.

Figure 3: Advertisement on display in Accra "Learn. Earn. Migrate." Source: Author, Accra, April 2022

Culture of mobility

The culture of mobility plays a role in shaping migration patterns, including migration to Europe. The culture of mobility among young Ghanaians refers to a societal mindset or set of values that prioritize and encourage movement, both within Ghana and internationally. It is influenced by various factors such as economic aspirations, social networks, access to information, and perceptions of opportunities abroad (Hallberg Adu, 2019). Young Ghanaians often aspire for better economic prospects and improved standards of living. They may perceive Europe as offering more significant employment opportunities, higher wages, and access to social welfare benefits. Education is highly valued in Ghanaian society, and young Ghanaians may view studying abroad as a way to gain international exposure, acquire valuable qualifications, and enhance their employability. Higher education in Europe can provide access to quality education and exposure to new ideas, technologies, and networks, making it an attractive option for those seeking personal and professional development (Yeboah, 2021).

Ghanaians often have extensive social networks that span across borders. Family members, friends, or acquaintances who have successfully migrated to Europe may act as role models or provide support, information, and assistance to those considering migration. These transnational networks can play a significant role in shaping migration decisions and facilitating the migration process (Mayer et al., 2015). Social media and the internet have increased access to information about life in Europe. Young Ghanaians are exposed to images, stories, and narratives highlighting the benefits and opportunities available in European countries. Such exposure can shape their aspirations and fuel their desire to migrate. It is important to note that the culture of mobility does not imply that all young Ghanaians aspire to migrate or that migration is the only form of mobility they pursue. Many young Ghanaians engage in internal migration within Ghana, moving to urban areas in search of education, employment, or better living conditions. Migration to Europe is just one pathway among various mobility options, and a range of personal, social, and economic factors influences individual decisions.

4.2 Ghana's NGO Landscape

For a long time, Ghana was considered a 'donor darling' country for bilateral and multilateral aid donors (Hughes, 2005; Opoku, 2010). A vibrant space for NGOs could arise due to the massive support from public aid agencies over the past decades and Ghana's relatively strong governance institutions and accountability systems in peaceful elections (Arhin et al., 2018). NGOs were seen as the 'magic bullet' to fill the gap of failed top-down development coupled with limited government capacity (Hearn, 2007). These developments laid a strong base for the emergence of many local NGOs around issues ranging from women's empowerment to migration. Accompanying this trend was a growing demand from international NGOs for local partners and a response to the growth of local needs as public expenditure declined across the African continent (Townsend et al., 2004). In addition to filling this gap, the Government of Ghana and international development partners were keen to promote national ownership within the development agenda of Ghana (Brown, 2017) and therefore relied on 'local/national' development experts and workers (Kumi & Kamruzzaman, 2021). The

contemporary NGO sector includes indigenous grassroots organizations, government-sponsored community development, religious organizations, local craft unions, women's organizations, international development organizations, business associations, women's associations, migration groups, and faith-based organizations (Krawcyzk, 2013). These different types of organizations also reflect the broad type of organizations currently active in implementing migration projects.

Traditionally, the funding and donations for NGOs in Ghana came from development partners, private trusts, foundations, governments, the UN, individual donors, religious institutions, and other grant-making NGOs (Edwards, 2009; Arhin et al., 2015). The Ghanaian NGO sector is currently characterized by external financial dependence and external orientation, with NGOs relying on foreign aid for more than 90 percent of their funding (Hearn, 2007). In the last decade, the development landscape has been changing gradually. Ghana was reclassified as a Middle-Income country in 2010, which resulted in the 'forced' re-strategizing of donors. Also, the country branded itself as "Beyond Aid" – a vision announced by Ghana's President Nana Akufo-Addo in 2017 to pursue a foreign aid-free country. Donor financing has been critical in strengthening civil society and is declining significantly. Some donors are re-prioritizing, retracting, and even cutting funding significantly. Within this changing development landscape and the drop of traditional sources, different scholars raise questions about the future role and the sustainability of civil society organizations in Ghana (e.g., Arhin et al., 2015; Bandyopadhyay, 2013; Goswami & Tandon, 2013).

Donor dependency

With such a diversified and extensive network of local NGOs, the battle for donor financing is fierce nowadays (Khieng & Dahles, 2015). The levels of competition among local NGOs, also related to migration projects, are incredibly high. According to an officer from GIZ, they get hundreds of responses to migration projects from all kinds of NGOs, often not even primarily related to the project's content. It is a strategy of various NGOs to spread the chances and submit multiple project proposals to different international donors (Arhin et al., 2015), which must be very detailed. The fierce competition is a source of frustration for donors receiving bad proposals and NGOs applying. It often happens that NGOs do not hear anything back at all from their submitted proposal, as this local NGO worker explains:

> "I have been working for days to finish everything in detail, and then you never hear anything back (...) you know that they choose the local organizations they already know. But the next time, you still do it all over again, because once they choose you, they will not let you go; you are in" [4]

This quote also shows that most international donors in Ghana tend to contract or partner with local NGOs who are already known to them. Various studies have pointed out that over-reliance on foreign donors has significant risks and consequences for local NGOs

[4] Staff member, local NGO. Personal interview (04.03.2022)

(AbouAssi, 2013; Banks et al., 2015). Changing donor patterns for development harms organizations' sustainability and ability to function effectively and deliver on their vision and missions (Mawdsley, 2012; Hayman, 2016; Arhin, 2016). These consequences have called into doubt their long-term sustainability, representativeness, operational efficiency, policy power, and accountability to beneficiaries, from whom they derive their most important source of legitimacy and the ability to facilitate transformational outcomes (Kilby, 2006). Different authors have documented the heavy reliance of local NGOs on foreign funders (Mitchell, 2014; Kumi, 2017). As a result of these levels of competition, there is widespread skepticism of local ideas, as most NGOs follow donor preferences and models without question (Porter, 2003). The following quote from a local NGO staff member illustrates this last point:

> "The closer I stay to the language of the donor, the bigger the chances to get the funding. (...) Like using their words to tell our own story about the project, sometimes feeling uncomfortable, (..) but when we use certain words or sentences, like 'curbing irregular migration,' they better recognize our ideas and might pick us" [5]

Following the language and preferences of the donor is linked to the imbalance in donor-local NGO collaborations, which lean toward the donor. Foreign funders have a de facto veto over the local counterpart and control most of the money. Due to the firm reliance local NGOs have on funding, the relationship between donors and local NGOs is mostly supply-led, indicating a type of engagement in which funders determine the goals of programs (AbouAssi, 2013). This connection shows that regional NGOs care more about their donors than the target population (Banks et al., 2015). Donors' interests frequently take precedence, and local NGOs' autonomy is losing strength.

4.3 Migration Governance in Ghana

In Ghana, as in most other countries, migration is governed by national, regional, and international frameworks. The central pillar of migration governance in Ghana is the National Migration Policy (NMP). This policy document addresses all migration areas, ranging from irregular migration to diaspora engagement and human trafficking. Also, cross-cutting issues, such as gender, education, and health, are addressed (Ministry of Interior, 2016). Different factors led to the development of this policy framework. First, migration has been perceived more positively since the end of the 1990s, significantly contributing to economic development and poverty reduction (Kleist, 2011). The importance of using the benefits of migration took on a new dimension in the 2000s when Ghana gained middle-income status.[6]

The formulation of the NMP is pursued by different stakeholders to 'manage' migration well and minimize the challenges. A second factor that led to the development was the need to address various migration streams affecting Ghana, such as internal migration, emigration, brain drain, and irregular migration (Segadlo, 2019). Thirdly, international migration was

[5] Staff member, local NGO. Personal interview (04.03.2022)
[6] Junior researcher, Centre for Migration Studies. Personal interview (14.03.2022)

high on the agenda of international development partners, especially after the increase of Ghanaians migrating to Spain and Italy in the 2000s and, later on, the increase of migrants using the Mediterranean route.[7] Mainly IOM Ghana played a significant role in influencing the Government of Ghana to develop a national policy to manage migration with a particular focus on irregular border crossings.[8] Fourthly, there was no coordinated approach to migration, and an encompassing document was missing. Even though the Government of Ghana launched the NMP almost six years ago, the NMP has yet to be fully implemented. There is a delay in the implementation due to the entanglement with party politics and the lack of ownership (Arhin-Sam et al., 2021). The last point is relevant because external actors, such as IOM Ghana, have played an outsize role in drafting this policy document, as well as in aspects of the implementation. According to critics, the NMP was essentially co-drafted by foreign and European actors present in Ghana.[9] The Ministry of Interior contracted experts from the University of Ghana's Centre for Migration Studies to create the document, while IOM provided direction and technical oversight.

Establishing the NMP makes it seem as if there is a close partnership between Europe and Ghana on migration, but in practice, the interests of the two countries appear to diverge. Ghana is more interested in diaspora, labor migration, and regional free movement. This contrasts with Europe's focus on irregular migration and return and re-entry policies (Arhin-Sam et al., 2021). Ghanaian policymakers indicate that the EU's focus is disproportionately on countering irregular migration, while this is a relatively salient policy issue for the Ghanaian government. Therefore, migration that plays a role in the country's economic development, such as the participation of the sizable diaspora, is high on the Ghanaian government's priority list. It prioritizes creating safe and legal routes for Ghanaians to work abroad. Ghana strongly emphasizes regional migration, as it primarily attracts migrants and contributes to migration within ECOWAS.
The EU's migration policy's external component has placed irregular migration at the forefront of its interactions with third-party partners. Political ties to financial incentives prove this, particularly in the Western African region. Ghana has adopted portions of the EU agenda on irregular migration in response to financial incentives and has been effectively beneficial regarding issues like border management and institutional capacity building (Arhin-Sam et al., 2021). However, most initiatives with EU funding to operationalize the NMP specifically focus on migration restriction. These include the Strengthening Border and Migration Management in Ghana (SMMIG) project, launched in 2018, the Ghana Integrated Migration Management Approach (GIMMA) project, which IOM launched in 2014, and the ongoing awareness-raising campaigns on irregular migration that IOM and the Ghanaian government continue to run with funding from the EU. However, Ghana's irregular migration to the EU is insignificant compared to irregular immigration from other countries. This phenomenon's narrow reach also helps to explain Ghana's lack of interest in working with other countries on forced returns. Due to the irregular migration's relatively limited scale, Ghanaian politicians do not view it as a major problem for the nation.

[7] Ibid.
[8] Director, local migration NGO. Personal interview (18.04.2022)
[9] Director, local migration NGO. Personal interview (18.04.2022)

Different international organizations play a considerable role in the implementation of migration policies. The most prominent actor is IOM Ghana, which implements and sub-contracts most migration projects. Besides, donor governments and their development organizations are important implementing organizations. Especially Germany's development agency (GIZ) and the Ghanaian-German Centre for Jobs, Migration, and Reintegration (GGC), implement most return and reintegration projects. For the implementation, those organizations rely on sub-contracting and partnering with local NGOs on a community-level basis. The figure below shows the relations between different actors:

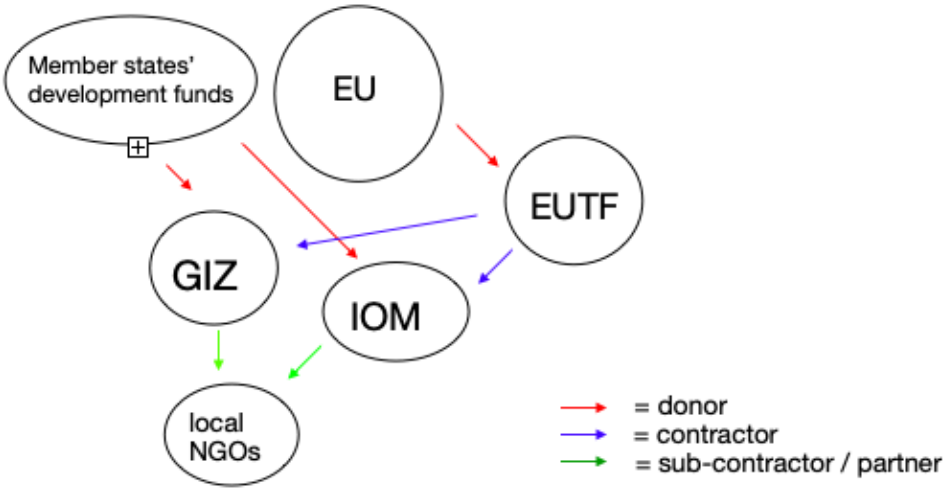

Figure 4: Implementing organizations and funding streams.

IOM Ghana

IOM has been active in Ghana since 1987, working on various migration-related issues such as assisted voluntary return and reintegration support, border management, counter-trafficking, and strengthening government capacity (IOM Ghana, 2019). Since Ghana is geographically located further away from a migratory route to Europe and Ghana's intention to be politically and financially independent of international donors, the engagement on migration topics prior to 2014 has been on a project-to-project basis.[10] These projects were short-term and mostly linked to individual aspects of migration, such as diaspora engagement (Trauner et al., 2019). The nature of the activities of IOM Ghana contrasts with the closer and more intensified collaboration between IOM and other West-African states, such as Senegal (ibid). However, IOM Ghana implements almost all of Europe's projects related to migration in Ghana. Therefore, IOM Ghana became an influential actor in this field. IOM Ghana launched the first significant initiative in 2014 in partnership with the Ghana Immigration Service (GIS). The initiative aimed to improve border management capacities by restructuring migration information services and information campaigns. From 2015 onwards, the different activities and projects of IOM Ghana changed, as will be outlined in the next section.

[10] Policy officer, IOM Ghana. Personal interview (12.03.22)

In particular, a key difference is the framing of migration, which has been much more categorized as regular/irregular migration since 2014. This dichotomy intertwines with IOM Ghana's new identity and approach. IOM Ghana's tone since 2014 has focused more on promoting regular, safe, and legal migration and discouraging irregular migration. This dichotomy has become integral to all of IOM Ghana's activities, evident in how diverse projects all have "stop irregular migration" goals. This contrasts with IOM Ghana's goals in the earlier period, which mainly focused on the "well-being of migrants." In the 2000s, for example, IOM Ghana was still providing "cultural awareness training" for Ghanaian migrant workers who were going to work in Canada.

The change in IOM's approach in Ghana reflects Pécoud's (2018) analysis of the nature of the IOM globally. Most scholars observe the neoliberal nature of IOM as the organization prides itself on cost-efficiency and the capacity to provide competitive services to states. The changing role of IOM in West Africa after 2015 reflects the opportunistic and 'entrepreneurial' spirit of IOM (Bradley, 2017), following Europe's growing attention on West Africa (Traumer et al., 2019) and following Europe's approach to regulating African mobility. The actions of IOM have generally become more interconnected with the EU's agenda. This interconnectedness is most visible in the dynamics of the implementation of the EU Trust Fund for Africa. As part of this new regional fund, IOM Ghana and the EU introduced the EU-IOM Joint Initiative in Ghana in 2017. Its objectives include enhancing protection, facilitating voluntary return, offering returning migrants sustainable reintegration, and strengthening migration governance. This joint initiative meant a new funding tool for IOM Ghana. These funding streams allowed IOM to bolster its presence in Ghana and to launch more migration-related projects. Also, this new initiative included many Ghanaian NGOs in its projects; however, the EUTF and other EU funding streams also led to increased competition among international organizations and domestic and international actors (Traumer et al., 2019).

Information campaigns and awareness-raising

IOM Ghana first implemented 'safe migration campaigns' in 2016 as part of the technical cooperation with the GoG to build 'migration management' capacity and to promote 'safe migration options' (IOM, 2016). The campaigns lean heavily on the dichotomy of regular and irregular migration. Ghana was one of the target countries of the first extensive 'Aware Migrants' campaign, initiated by the Italian government in 2016 and implemented by the IOM in several other African countries. Most of the other AR initiatives of IOM Ghana prior to 2016 targeted the capacity building of GIS staff working at border posts. 'Information training' was mainly mentioned concerning 'pre-departure cultural orientation' to empower refugees by enhancing their abilities to better integrate into their new countries.

Although the objectives and wide range of activities of IOM Ghana remained the same after 2016, the approach of IOM Ghana towards awareness-raising and information campaigns changed in several ways. Next to the EUTF as a new funding tool, other European member states contributed to the campaigns. In particular, the contribution of Germany made it possible to launch the second phase of the 'Aware Migrants' campaign, which the IOM

implemented in Senegal, Niger, and Ghana. The second phase also reinforces other AR activities and emphasizes the voice of the returned migrants. From 2017 onwards, IOM Ghana devoted its reports to awareness-raising, as "*awareness-raising activities are an opportunity to educate the public on various migration issues affecting Ghana*" (IOM, 2017). IOM Ghana presented these campaigns in the following years as of critical and manifold importance, reflecting the global IOM way of naming and describing the use of information within migration management (Pécoud, 2020). IOM Ghana sees a vital role for local partners in presenting and implementing some of these activities:

> "An important part of the way we try to reach people is through the communities themselves. Because we only have an office in Accra, it is challenging to reach the high potential regions specifically. Therefore, local partners are a way for us still to reach these groups" [11]

As the above quote clearly shows, acknowledging the importance of local partnerships is also increasingly a central theme within IOM's vision of migration management (Pécoud, 2010). The primary purpose of involving local partners is to make the intervention more sustainable (ibid). This growing desire of IOM to use awareness-raising and information campaigns to influence migration patterns of the local population is exhibited clearly by the emerging role of local actors in 'migration management.'

To conclude, this chapter has provided insight into the context of migration and migration policy in Ghana. One clear conclusion is that Europe's approach to migration in Ghana is very different from the approach to migration in Ghana itself. Migration has a strong positive connotation in Ghanaian culture and a broad interpretation. The diaspora plays a vital role in maintaining the (idealized) image regarding migration and life abroad. In addition, a strong mobility culture makes traveling or migrating abroad popular among young Ghanaians. Ghana's interests concerning migratory governance are, therefore, much more focused on regional free movement and increased opportunities for legal migration; the Government of Ghana does not see irregular migration as a policy issue negatively affecting the country, unlike Europe. The dichotomy between regular and irregular migration determines Europe's interest and perspective in regulating migration. Irregular migration is statistically only a relatively small proportion of Ghanaians going abroad and does not accurately reflect the realities of different types of mobility. Regular migration is still the most common form for Ghanaians going abroad. There is a disproportionate focus on irregular migration in EU migration governance in Ghana, and the dichotomy between desired and undesired types of movement has been the common thread running through IOM Ghana's activities since 2015. Especially concerning migration governance, international organizations are influential because of their role as financial donors in a context of declining development funding for local NGOs. Although IOM Ghana crucially identifies local NGOs to reach out to local communities, the context of the NGO sector shows that local organizations must primarily conform to the wishes, interests, and language of international organizations.

[11] Policy Officer, IOM Ghana. Personal interview (12.03.2022)

5. Information Campaigns in Practice: From Billboards to Celebrities

A Ghanaian man stands next to his taxi, and as he begins to clean it, the camera zooms in on two young guys who casually approach him. This video clip of Ghanaian rapper Kofi Kinaata [12]- goodwill ambassador for safe migration- starts with a conversation: "I am so happy today," says one of the boys, "this money is going to take care of all the travel expenses." Later on, as the boys walk on cheerfully, they point at a taxi driver: "Look at the man. He is suffering here in Ghana." The boys start a conversation about their planned trip to Europe, in which one convinces the other that they do not need a visa at all; he has money and connections to go to Libya. The taxi driver, the moral voice in this story, intervenes: "Libya is dangerous, bro, do not go!". However, he does not convince them to stay, so the boys leave. While Kofi Kinaata sings with lyrics like "*The connection man will collect his money, he will make many promises, you will get there, and things will be different - so think about it*," the video jumps in time. Some years later, one of the boys returns home, traumatized, and the other boy has drowned at sea. The clip ends with a zoomed-in headline: no way home from the world's deadliest sea.

Kofi Kinaata's song and music video are one of IOM Ghana's most well-known statements within their No Place Like Home campaign. This song is a so-called migra-corridos (migrant ballad), and it aims to shift the perspectives of potential migrants by targeting their emotions and linking the idea of border crossing to desperation and death (Williams, 2020; Kosnick, 2014). The narratives of the lyrics and the way the song spreads nationally through social media and local radio stations characterize how information campaigns are implemented in Ghana, which will be further explored in this chapter. How do these campaigns try to govern people in Ghana? The following analysis does not aim to examine how the target audience takes up the campaigns. Instead, this research analyzes how the campaigns function as a deterrent measure through their content and execution. The first part of this chapter looks at how local actors are involved, how the campaigns operate, and how the campaigns attempt to reach different audiences. The second part analyzes the two complementary narratives conveyed by these campaigns, a narrative around the risks of irregular migration and the opportunities to become successful in Ghana. The manufactured binary between regular and irregular migration underlies both narratives. These narratives expose Europe's fantasy of governing African mobility and bordering bodies (Vammen et al., 2022). In addition, this chapter highlights the interaction between IOM Ghana as coordinator and local actors as implementing partners. This interaction already provides some insight into the power dynamics of this particular global-local partnership, which will be discussed further in the following chapters.

5.1 Staging and Execution of Campaigns

> If you drive north from downtown Accra, and certainly from my temporary neighborhood Kokomlemle, and especially around rush hour, there is enough time to observe the surroundings of the Kanda Highway from behind the dusty window of my taxi. The baby on the billboard of the infant cereals' advertisement - "a delicious way

[12] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oFukHyBS1YU

> to grow" - smiles at me when I am stuck in traffic for the umpteenth time right in front of the Ghana National Mosque. At that dusty, chaotic junction, the latest mural by the Ghana Graffiti collective has been on display since January 5, 2020 - a day designated as International Migrants Day. I see 'reimagining the future of mobility' written in big white letters on the blue-painted wall. I wonder what that may actually mean, especially for the street vendors who spend their days selling sachets of water at the traffic light, dreaming of something better for their kids. A map of the world can be seen on the graffiti, with paper boats sailing between Africa and Europe and a painted group of happy people walking, as it were, across the globe. The IOM and EU logos are not to be missed.
>
> (Edited fieldnotes, February 2022)

The first impressions from this wall painting hint at some of the particularities of the staging of information campaigns in Ghana. At first sight, the painting seems to be strategically placed at a central position in Accra, functioning as a strong marketing tool to spread the message to everyone passing by. However, the wall painting also raises questions about the meaning of the message and the precise target audience: whose mobility has to be re-imagined? The way information campaigns function as acts of deterrence differs based on the targeted audience and staging (Van Dessel, 2021). Before zooming into these two factors, the general execution of campaigns will be described.

The information campaigns implemented in Ghana during 2016-2022 were coordinated, funded and developed by IOM Ghana. The titles and equally the slogans of the campaigns are: Aware Migrants (2016), Let's Talk Migration (2017-2018), No Place Like Home (2019-2021, during the pandemic combined with covid-19 awareness raising) and Waka Well Fa Kwan Pa So (2021-ongoing). These national campaigns are often linked locally to other migration and development projects (related to "fighting root causes"), where also other international NGOs are involved in the coordination or funding. A substantial part of the national campaigns are implemented and disseminated by IOM Ghana. Local NGOs are mainly active in the regions outside Accra, particularly in the urban areas of Sunyani and Takoradi, the regions from which most 'irregular migrants' originate (IOM Ghana, 2021). IOM Ghana opened 'Migration Information Centers' (MICs) in Sunyani and Takoradi in 2016, with the following goal: "The MIC aims to facilitate and empower migrants to travel in a legal, voluntary and safe way. The new building will offer a neutral venue for potential and actual migrants to obtain accurate and reliable information on legal migration procedures and required documentation as well as the risks of irregular migration." (IOM, 2019)

The MICs exemplify IOM's approach in Ghana and function as a 'flagship initiative'. The underlying assumption is that people with migration aspirations go to these centers, receive 'reliable' information about migration, and make their choices on the basis of this information. IOM Ghana trains the staff, and the locations are said to be easily accessible. Campaigns in the communities around these MICs aim to refer people to these premises. The establishment of these MICs to complement the campaigns shows that, as of 2016, the issue of "irregular"

migration has gained a more prominent place in the public space in Ghana, which it did not have before then.

Local implementation partners receive campaign materials and training from IOM Ghana. This training, targeted at senior NGO staff, mainly focuses on transferring knowledge and information about migration and is less focused on project implementation. The idea is that the local staff primarily serve as a link between the population and IOM and can disseminate this knowledge and information in their communities. The IOM provides campaign materials, such as flyers, posters, billboards and t-shirts with accompanying texts and images. In developing these materials, especially for creative expressions, IOM Ghana works with local artists or performers, such as Kofi Kinaata for the clip or the Accra Graffiti Association. IOM is increasingly using vehicles of popular culture to spread their messages to potential migrants (Kosnick, 2014).

The local organizations are responsible in their communities for the practical implementation, and to make campaigns more concrete on the ground. However, IOM gives clear guidance. For example, there is a list of suggestions for activities and locations. The condensed version of this guidance is the "campaign toolkit,"[13] which summarizes the story surrounding the campaign clearly and conveniently. Most campaigns last several weeks intensively, during which it is also essential that local organizations collect much visual material of the actual implementation. Local organizations often involve community volunteers in the campaigns or collaborate with other communal nonprofit organizations. This way, a wide range of local CSOs are involved in migration management, that were previously not active in this field (Carling & Hernández-Carretero, 2011). Since the campaigns are ultimately serving as "migration control" measures, the traditional ‘law and order’ actors involved in control measures, such as the border police, are complemented by these new types of actors (ibid).

The campaigns implemented in Ghana use various communication tools through mainstream and digital media. Even though the precise target audience is frequently not adequately defined, the campaign's communication tool(s) are often expressly defined in information campaigns (Bryant & Joudo, 2017). The offline campaigns use more "traditional" means of communication, such as billboards, murals and flyers. The local NGOs complement communication channels with so-called 'community outreach events’. This broad category includes public debates, community gatherings, sports events, radio talks and broadcasts, dance and music performances, film screenings, video clips, and art shows. A local NGO worker explains how they organize a campaign gathering:

> “We mostly do this next to the big junction, lots of traffic is there. We gather with a group, all with t-shirts. And then, make sure that everyone who is involved gets a briefing on what the story is, how bad irregular migration is. (..) Some of them know the village better, and they can invite someone who has migrated, or returned, or

[13] IOM Ghana, Migration Toolkit, 2018

> whose son is in Europe. (..) We have music, of course, we are Ghanaians! We never do anything serious without music. (..) We play the song [of Kofi Kinaata], and then, everyone is at least interested in what we are doing, and will come and see what's up"[14]

As this quote shows, the location of these types of events are primarily public spaces, like main squares, markets, or venues commonly used for other communal events (see figure 2). Implementing organizations bring flyers, boards, film screeners, and posters to these places. Besides, most volunteers are wearing t-shirts with information slogans as well. This operationalisation of the campaigns brings a high level of public visibility to the topic of migration, penetrating into the daily lives of citizens (Van Dessel, 2021). Another common part of the campaigns is the involvement of returned migrants, both in online and offline campaigns especially when they come from 'target' communities. They are telling their own story about their migration experiences, and in this way, they become 'safe migration advocates.' Many local partners stress that the involvement of returned migrants is necessary to build community trust. Most of the time, the returned migrants are invited to a small 'stage' or are part of a panel discussion, and the campaign volunteers or mediators ask them specific questions about their experiences. The involvement of returned migrants also happens on radio broadcasts, where the campaigners interview returned migrants. The various NGOs indicate that generally, these activities generate much interest, but, according to a campaign volunteer: "it is mostly us giving the information, and the community receiving. Let's talk migration, is often, more like, let's present migration".[15]

Figure 4 (left): Radio campaign about irregular migration; Figure 5 (right): Music performance in Sunyani. Source: Facebook page BOK Africa Concern (10-05-2022)

This resonates with the main pitfall of this type of public awareness raising in developing countries, namely the lack of interaction between the (international) sending and (local) receiving actors (James et al., 2007). Visits to schools and churches are also part of the campaign, and many local staff argue that this setting does allow them to start a

[14] Staff member, local NGO. Interview (22.03.22)
[15] Campaign volunteer, local migration NGO. Informal conversation (05.03.22)

"conversation" about migration, in addition to ‘just’ conveying the information. However, the reach of these specific activities is much smaller than the community events. The informative nature characterizes most awareness-raising events. For example, a campaign volunteer of a local NGO tells about how the football competition, organized by IOM Ghana, was a combination of fun and information. Besides all the games, the participants could also listen to two returnees and ask them about migration. This combination of sharing information during a communal event is in line with IOM Ghana's idea behind the activities at schools and playgrounds, as explained by an assistant from IOM Ghana:

> "It is very necessary to combine the message with something fun. Especially young people in Ghana, they love to do sports together, or hang out. If we just organize a meeting, they will probably not show up. (..) By combining the awareness with something that sounds attractive to them, there is a higher chance of reaching more youth. (...) The activity itself is also a way to increase social cohesion, and start a dialogue about the topic within the community" [16]

These kinds of outreach events, targeting young people, exemplify the rationale behind the campaigns to act before the migration pattern of Ghanaians eventually led them to Europe (Van Dessel, 2021). As a local NGO worker declared:

> "The earlier we start, the better. The ideas about moving abroad, traveling, and life in Europe, are already starting to formulate in their minds. (...) In primary schools, you can actually have more impact by already tackling these perceptions about life being better abroad" [17]

This "preventive logic," implemented through the campaigns/activities, seeks to act before a desire to migrate is even formulated in the minds of individuals (Van Dessel, 2021). Despite the underlying idea of 'the younger the better', the wide range of activities and locations that are part of the campaigns also shows that there is often no specific target group. Many of the activities are aimed at the "local population" as a whole, with no further specifics for this target group. This poorly defined target group is problematic for the evaluation of the impact of these kinds of interventions, since it makes it difficult to find out on whom the campaign actually has an effect. This is exemplified by how this NGO worker reflects on the campaign:

> “It was a very successful activity, I can tell you, and I will also show you the pictures we made (..). We counted them [participants], 30 women, 19 men, and a lot of small kids, you know, all ages also, so everyone from the community, that makes us feel like it was a success, they all listened to what we had to tell” [18]

This quote illustrates how the success of campaigns is viewed: a successful campaign is one that manages to reach many people. In working with local organizations, the IOM places a

[16] Outreach assistant, IOM Ghana. Informal conversation (22.03.2022)
[17] Staff member, local NGO. Interview (29.03.22)
[18] Director, local migration NGO. Interview (15.03.2022)

strong emphasis on counting attendees so that the IOM can meet donors' own M&E standards. This value-for-money approach to impact measurement also shows that in these so-called "high-risk" areas, everyone is labeled as "would be migrant" (Nijkamp & Poot, 2012). According to a senior worker from a local migration NGO in Sunyani, there is much confusion among local NGOs about migration decision-making.[19] As a result, most conversations with local NGOs showed that specific characteristics and understanding of the target group remain vague, such as their level of education or socio-economic status. According to Aguillon (2018), the broad and vague target group of the campaigns is problematic because it reduces the departures of all migrants to single causes, even though triggers are multiple (ibid). The lack of adequate knowledge and definition of the precise target audience affects the impact of the campaign, even though the communication tools and activities can be used successfully (Bryant & Joudo, 2021). This also comes up in a conversation with the enthusiastic staff member who talks earlier about his activities in schools:

> “Before the start, we asked everyone about if they wanted to travel, then we asked again, after all the information. They all say, that they changed their mind, or they will re-consider it” [20]

The campaign activity was successful in educating about migration, as this staff member explains. The kids can now tell him why they shouldn’t travel through irregular means and list the dangers. However, whether the campaigns are successful in actually stopping migration from Ghana to Europe is an entirely different measurement, one that is problematic and especially contested. The supposed causality between migrants' risk awareness and decision-making process is called into question (Richardson, 2010; Rodriquez, 2019; Schans and Optekamp, 2016). Examining the causality involves an examination of how information is accessed, processed, and evaluated, and how expectations are generated (Pagogna & Sakdapolrak, 2021).

A minor part of the campaigns and activities coordinated by IOM Ghana are targeting specific ‘gatekeepers’ or ‘middle-men’, such as journalists, youth group leaders, and community leaders. According to an IOM project manager, these groups are important because they function as 'ambassadors' to spread the campaign message. In his words: "By also involving the more natural leaders of the community, such as the chiefs, elders, and members of the church, who already have more influence on the community, we can enhance the credibility, and we can increase the impact of the message."[21] This approach, characterized as "peer-to-peer" (Van Dessel, 2021), is valued by the local actors and is a way to elevate the impact of the campaign message. Another way to reach specific target groups is by involving peers as ambassadors in schools and churches. For example, so-called "mercy migration clubs" raise awareness of the dangers of irregular migration. An outreach assistant of IOM Ghana explains that it became clear to them that not many of the youth had full

[19] Policy Officer, local NGO. Interview (07.04.2022)
[20] Staff member, local NGO. Interview (07.03.2022)
[21] Policy Officer, IOM Ghana. Interview (12.03.2022)

knowledge of the dangers of traveling irregularly in the desert, and therefore they opted for peer-to-peer messaging to target high school students specifically. Like in several other West African countries, journalists are being trained to better provide "information" about irregular migration. The active involvement of civil society actors in disseminating the migration narrative, and the involvement of a wide range of local organizations, indicates that the targets of the migration narrative are not only would-be migrants, but also those who influence how migration is being written, spoken and thought about in Ghana.

IOM teaches journalists what words and phrases to describe certain phenomena. In this way, Europe directly influences the image and vocabulary surrounding migration and manages to convey Europe's vision of mobility. IOM also organizes the annual "West and Central Africa Migration Journalism Awards." An IOM project manager spoke about the importance of supporting journalists who bring stories about migration to media attention: "Media coverage can contribute immensely to awareness-raising activities that inform returning migrants, communities of origin, and the public about the dangers and alternatives to irregular migration. Nevertheless, most media networks and journalists pay little attention to migration issues compared to other segments".[22] As this quote shows, a Eurocentric approach to migration is dominant.

In addition to offline campaigns, online campaigns have become an increasingly important tool for destination countries to influence migration decisions in recent years (Williams, 2020). Online campaigns have been spread mainly through social media, using (high quality) photos, videos and texts. IOM Ghana itself is the most active on this, and a lot of information is shared about "legal pathways" and other ways to travel abroad. The website WAKAWELL is designed to provide step-by-step information about the visa requirements of different destination countries, as visible in the two figures below.

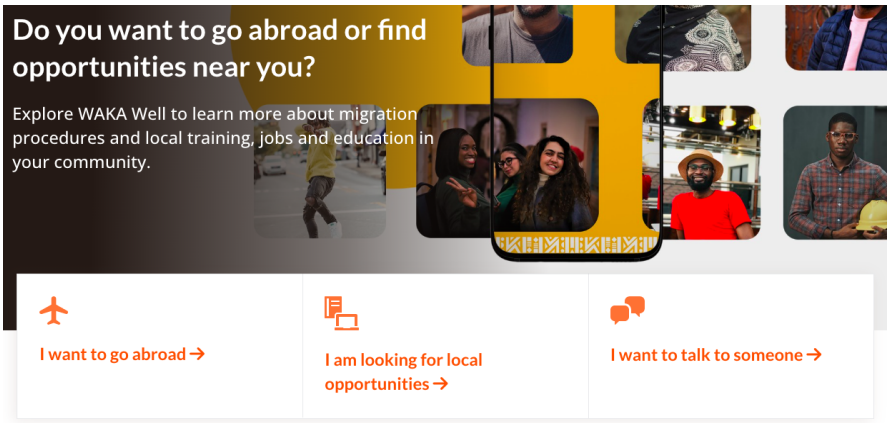

Figure 6: Information website about legal migration possibilities and local opportunities, such as scholarships. Source: https://www.wakawell.info/en

[22] https://environmentalmigration.iom.int/events/west-and-central-africa-migration-journalism-awards

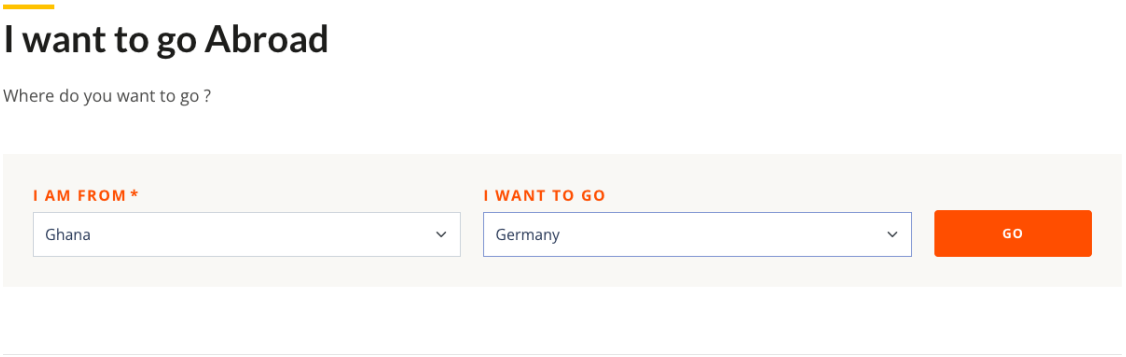

Figure 7: Search engine to find information about how to go from Ghana to Germany in a legal way. Source: https://www.wakawell.info/en

IOM Ghana also extensively shares photos and witness statements of returned migrants. In 2018, a 'virtual exhibition' on the website of the EU-IOM joint initiative was launched, showing photos and in-depth stories of returned migrants. [23] The IOM views social media from the capacity to enable otherwise ordinary people to increase their communication resources, and thus their information position regarding migration (Williams, 2014). An important assumption for the "success of an information campaign is that the potential migrant trusts the 'messenger,' and the source of the information. Kosnick (2014) argues that, in the case of the potential migrant audience, knowledge and stories are transmitted by people connected to each other by prior relationships of trust, such as friends/relatives/neighbors or colleagues. It is highly unlikely that official social media campaigns, coming from a relatively unknown international organization, will have the impact on potential migrant audiences as desired by IOM Ghana.

Although there is an increased use of social media among the target population over the past few years, migration scholars question the role of social media in discouraging migration (e.g. see Williams 2020). On the one hand, it is indeed a source for information about migration, but on the other hand, it also constitutes a resource for migration. Social media can help migrants create networks that offer discrete, unofficial information and insider knowledge about migration, such as details on the labor market, legal framework, or other relevant practical concerns relating to migration to or life in the destination context. Social media has thus been regarded as a "backstage" source of knowledge that increases people's resources and mobility, serving as a kind of resistance to Western countries' increasingly severe immigration policies (Dekker & Engbersen, 2014). Most of IOM Ghana's social media is full of photos about IOM Ghana's own projects, meetings, activities and results. Several local NGO staff suggest that this Facebook page is mainly a "showpiece' for the IOM itself, to show donors, embassies and other IOs what the money's all spent on. Several local NGOs also describe that IOM often stops by to record how they work on the ground as a campaign team. This is often the footage they use online and in their evaluation reports. When these practices are compared to how IOM reports on its activities worldwide, critics argue that it is

[23] https://www.virtualexhibition.reportingmigration.org

primarily a way of demonstrating how IOM and donor states meet their humanitarian responsibilities (Oeppen, 2016; Kosnick, 2014). Especially considering that campaign evaluations are questionable, this raises questions about why this type of migration management continues to attract significant funding worldwide (Schans & Optekamp, 2016).

5.2 Two-fold Narrative

In the analysis of the content of the information campaigns, two complementary narratives emerge, a narrative around the risks of irregular migration and a narrative around the opportunities to become successful in Ghana and thus remain in the home country. In both narratives, migration is not necessarily discouraged; indeed, on paper, the IOM strongly supports it. However, it must be done in a regular manner. This manufactured ideological binary between regular and irregular migration underlies both narratives, and the blurred distinction between voluntary and forced migration is the basis of this policymaking (Masurò, 2019).

No food, no water in the hot desert

The set-up of the videos of the 'Aware Migrant' campaign, the first campaign implemented in Ghana in 2016, is always the same: you would see a close-up image of the testimony with the name and age of the storyteller, slowly telling about the horrible things that happened to them in Agadez (Niger) or Libya. After the personal story, a black screen would appear to share data about victims of trafficking and the number of people dying in the Mediterranean Sea. The sections included articles with more extensive information about the risks of the journey and warning would-be migrants about the criminal behavior of the smugglers (Musarò, 2019). This campaign was supported by a website which provided extra information under the sections 'news' and 'media.' This first campaign exposes the "danger" narrative that runs like a thread through all (subsequent) information campaigns, and is the most prevalent in migration information campaigns worldwide.

From the lyrics and clip of the song by the famous Kofi Kinaata, this is strongly present in both images and text. In the campaigns, and similarly in Kinaata's video, the journey is divided into different parts of the route from Ghana to Europe, focused on specific dangers: the road from Ghana to Libya, through the desert, to then focus on the dangers surrounding the stay in Agadez and Libya itself, and finally the crossing to Europe. In his lyrics, Kofi Kinaata speaks of the 'unapproved routes' that could potentially cost migrants their life. Kofi Kinaata raps that the danger of this route lies in the harsh conditions in the deserts, 'no water and food,' and the chance of violent robberies. This is illustrated by the part where he mentiones the situation in Agadez, 'where rape and exploitation are especially dangerous'. The song ends with the last part of the journey of migrants; the crossing from Libya to the EU. The video emphasizes this message mainly by repeatedly zooming in on news headlines with this information: "5000 people died at sea."

These different 'dangers' of irregular migration are central to the campaigns. The goal of the campaigns is that potential migrants should be able to identify typical exploitative or abusive

patterns before they get trapped in them. An essential part of the campaigns is to raise awareness of these different patterns, as described in detail in the toolkit for local partners: [24]

- kidnapping, held for ransom,
- debt bondage,
- withholding of passport or other documents,
- forced labor, sometimes without pay,
- violence, exploitation, abuse,
- human trafficking,
- lack of legal and medical support,
- detention, deportation, death.

A local NGO worker explains that to make people aware of these patterns, they need to explain to the audience what will happen from the very moment they leave:

> "First we explain to the listeners or the audience that the journey starts here in Ghana, and we always mention the place here in the area. (...) So from Nkoraza, also from places like Teciman, they cross into Burkina Faso or sometimes they choose the route east, and then Togo is the first country. (...) We teach them about all the steps, so that they can recognise it. (...) We always explain that no matter where it starts, you know the map, they always all end in Agadez. IOM calls these transit places. And from there, the route continues to Libya"[25]

This quote shows in how much detail local actors describe the route, which is strongly emphasized by the IOM. Campaigns must describe, as stated in the toolkit, how hot the desert is, where "evaporation is greater than precipitation," and migrants are always "at the mercy of the sun: some die of hunger, and others are killed by bandits."[26] Through these narratives, the Sahara and the Mediterranean are portrayed as "no-go" areas (Brachet, 2018), which inevitably bring trauma to migrants. This "dangers en route" narrative thus turns the "raw physicality" (Doty, 2011, p. 607) of the desert and the sea into a deterrent factor and helps to "naturalize" (Kosnick, 2014) the conditions in which they experience trauma along the way. Linking the circumstances of the journey to the danger, in campaigns, is done by providing the audience with as many detailed descriptions of the journey as possible. And thus, as it were, reducing the vague and abstract idea of "trip to Europe," to concrete, dangerous situations, just like the manner of transportation through the desert, as in the words of a campaign volunteer:

> "You know that the migrants, they are packed in buckets or Toyotas, with 32 to 48 people. (...) And if you are unlucky, you have to sit on the edge, and you have to hold a stick so not to fall off the car. This will take you 2-4 weeks, and that's only the

[24] see Appendix 1
[25] Staff member, local NGO. Interview (18.02.2022)
[26] see Appendix 1

> minimum. (..) Because like I told you, there are bandits and robbers. And also, the car can break down" [27]

The final step in the campaign story is the actual crossing to Europe. Here it is all about emphasizing the trip in a "rubber dinghy" on the "high sea", and the campaign volunteer continues:

> "Because the boat is made of rubber, when it gets in contact with the salty water, it will deflate and the boat will drown. You will die there. (...) Or if you are lucky enough to survive, they put you in jail. (..) And detention in Liya means abuse."[28]

The two quotes above make it very clear that the use of these "fear-appeal messages" to deter potential migrants (Schans & Optekamp, 2016) have a prominent role in campaign materials. Many local NGO workers know how to talk about the boats, focus their storytelling on the security situation in Libya, especially in response to the CNN video of Sub-Saharan migrants being sold in a "slave market". The emotional and more engaging way of reporting the information, contrasts with the IOM goal of providing "neutral" and "factual" information (Kosnick, 2014). The risk narrative is primarily based on the "images of violence and death" (Van Dessel, 2021) that take place on the route to the EU's actual border. The campaigns outline a rather "dark depiction" of migration, and the choice to migrate illegally seems, due to this prevailing narrative, to end mostly in failure, exploitation and unhappiness (Pécoud, 2020). This tone is reinforced by the inclusion of "returned" migrants in the campaigns, who share their story or testimony with the community, as explained as follows:

> "We are always looking for them [returned migrants] to include them in the campaign. (..) you see in their eyes, on their face, and I know because I speak to them also before, that they suffered. They have trauma, some are missing a leg or have been raped (...), it is better to let them share, and people believe it better. How can I tell you about it, I have not been through the desert, (...) I do not know what it is like for women" [29]

While Bishop (2020) argues that the deterrence campaigns produced by international actors portray migrants as anonymous masses, with no backstory or voice, the above quote shows that there is a trend to personalize migration stories in order to create an emotional connection and identification in the audience. By using the real-life testimonies in the activities and giving the individual stories a stage, the details of the suffering of the returned migrant and their families, try to touch the audience more than if they were anonymous stories. The personal story aims to evoke feelings of panic, sadness, hopelessness, and tragedy among potential irregular migrants (Musarò, 2019). NGOs also train returned migrants to act as ‘change agents’ in conjunction with their reintegration program or "entrepreneurial skills training," as I witnessed:

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[27] Volunteer, local migration NGO. Informal conversation (05.03.2022)
[28] Volunteer, local migration NGO. Informal conversation (05.03.2022)
[29] Staff member, local NGO. Interview (25.02.2022)

> Plastic chairs had been placed in a circle for the occasion. The room was large and noisy and belonged to the catholic church of Don Bosco. Upon entering, I immediately noticed that the 'workshop' looked professional, with banners from GIZ and IOM, and of course, staff from the local NGO wearing t-shirts with the slogan “# let'stalkmigration”. I could guess even before I was told who the 'return migrants' were. A group of women was sitting in the corner of the room with closed postures. A few of them were charging their phones. When I asked one of the staff members how exactly they knew if these women had been to Libya, he told me that it is something you can see right away in their eyes. Later, once the workshops had begun, a young woman told her story, shuddering, of how she once went to Libya and returned to Ghana. One NGO staff acts as a trained moderator, asking her the questions she has answered before. "In Libya, life is not easy at all, I am grateful to be back and get support for my business," she tells, and the NGO staff member nods affirmatively while his colleague takes lots of pictures. While I didn't want to question the woman's experiences, the authenticity of her story was far from it. It clearly felt scripted. And that woman didn't really come across as a "reintegration success."
>
> (Edited Fieldnotes, March 2022)

These impressions from a 'returned migrants' training show the new trend implemented in West African countries, to use the stories of returned migrants and their reintegration in campaigns and activities. As Aguillon (2018) outlines, from 2015 onwards, returns are increasingly presented as 'deterrents' to prevent departures. The idea behind this is that the increasing rate of returns, especially from Libya, has a dissuasive effect on irregular migration. The effect of return and reintegration is seen as a "strongly deterrent" by IOM Ghana as well, and IOM Ghana advocates the causal linkage in their "reintegration programs," in which 'migrants who have come back raise the awareness of potential community-members for departure' and would therefore prevent emigration (IOM Ghana, 2017). The failure to reach Europe, followed by a return and successful reintegration, is in some way a new success story and a way to set an example (Aguillon, 2018). Stories of 'successful' reintegration and return are extensively presented on IOM's websites and social media. Several authors criticize this binary justification of the presumed causal connection between returns and departures in nuanced ways, demonstrating that returns may not always have the anticipated dissuasive effect (Carrera et al., 2016). The field notes also reveal my doubts about the role of returned migrants in the campaigns, and in particular about the authenticity of the 'success' stories. This is later confirmed by several local actors' criticism of how the IOM comes to collect these stories. The IOM visits during local campaigns to collect footage, especially the stories around return, but, local staff argue, they offer little actual support to returning migrants. Local actors especially see the lack of help for returnees, and the difficulties they face once back in their communities: such as stigmatization and family exclusion. For the IOM, the returning migrant serves mainly as a "campaign story".

Figure 8: IOM poster with the statement of a returned migrant, distributed by local NGOs, Source: author, April 2022

On the one hand, according to most staff members, involving returned migrants is actually a way to combat stigma. By sharing the migrants' story with a community, there is a greater understanding of what the returned migrant has endured, and in this way the conversation about migration is initiated. Because it is not an aid agency staff member advising against traveling to Europe, but someone who has endured it, the assumption is that the message is more trusted. On the other hand, in the broader narrative of the campaign, of which this returned migrant is a part, migration is presented as inevitable victimization (Kosnick, 2014; Van Dessel 2021). Certainly, female migrants are presented in the campaigns as passive victims, unable to make active/informed choices. Thereby, women's victim status is linked to the trafficking networks (Kosnick, 2014).

The idea that the return-narrative is both a deterrent and an empowerment, due to the success of finding opportunities at home, is the other narrative prominent in the campaigns. However, by placing a heavy emphasis on the risks, a shifting of responsibility or blame for the risks taken during the journey occurs, onto the migrants themselves rather than the absence of safe and legal alternatives (Oeppen, 2016). This corresponds to the image of "the irregular migrant" in this type of campaign, namely, "the choice of the ignorant, the stupid, the lazy, or the old-fashioned (Nieuwenhuys & Pecoud, 2007). Through the spread of this narrative, a social stigmatization of irregular migration takes place, which de-legitimises all non-regular modes of migration outside of state frameworks (Van Dessel, 2021).

The future is bright, we shall build, we shall travel safe

"Why don't you invest your money here, bro?" asks the taxi driver, who serves as "the laggard" in Kofi Kinaata's clip. While the young, reckless boys put their lives on the line in an attempt to reach Europe, he works hard to build his future in the homeland. His hard work is paying off: at the end of the video, he drives, proudly with his wife and child, in a luxury

car through Accra. This story of the successful taxi driver in Ghana illustrates the second 'opportunities at home' narrative that has emerged in the campaigns. The narrative stressed that there are also many opportunities 'to make it' in Ghana. These opportunities include the 'legal pathways' available for the 'potential migrants' to travel safely and regularly. In practice, this discourse operates by demystifying the dangerous journey to Europe and replacing it with a celebration of the lifestyle 'at home', characterized by an entrepreneurial spirit. This "opportunities at home" narrative has become more dominant over the "risks" narrative, especially in recent years in the “No Place Like Home” and “Waka Well” campaign.

The tone and atmosphere of the short videos and footage, used on IOM Ghana’s website and social media, has changed from the first phase of the "aware migrants" campaigns in 2015. The setting of more recent videos and photos is different; the 'returned migrants' are sometimes in an IOM center, in their community at home or somewhere else in their home country, for example on a lively market. While traumatic experiences, pain and false expectations certainly play a role, there is also room for hope and laughter in the video. Often when the returned migrant talks about missing his or her family, the homeland and when he or she talks about the possibilities that exist in the homeland. A common theme in this new phase are stories of anger toward the traffickers, gratitude to God for helping them survive, and a quiet sense of redemption expressed in the desire to return to their family in their home country (Masuro, 2019). This change is also reflected on IOM Ghana's website and social media channels. Information is now available on 'alternatives to migration' and 'opportunities in Africa'. This shows the discursive shift towards discrediting potential migrants through stories of despair, hope and dreams. Most of the stories in the campaign are presented by returned migrants, "who can become an agent themselves, and the experiences also combat the threat of disbelief. Which is common among potential migrants" (IOM Ghana, 2020).

This narrative is characterized by a "positive approach" to migration. IOM Ghana communicates closely with local implementers and puts this prominently forward in its narrative that the efforts to raise awareness are not intended to stop young Ghanaians from migration (IOM, 2019). The toolkit clearly emphasizes the benefits of migration:

> “Now zoom in by telling your listeners’/audiences the importance/benefits of migration: financial remittances, social remittances (skills transfer), economic opportunities, economic growth, demographic stabilization (aging population), innovation, cultural diversity (...). Then ask the question: How do you accrue all these benefits? By using safe means to migrate” [30]

The narrative about both the possibilities of building a livelihood in Ghana and the possibilities of eventually migrating through a regular route is mainly based on the idea that if you work hard, acquire your skills, and get a degree, you will get there. This way, an interpretation is given to what 'safe migration' means by educating yourself, arranging a valid

[30] IOM Ghana, Migration Toolkit, 2018

visa, and regularly leaving for a foreign country. The interpretation of the "safe" migration story points to the distinction between 'good/desirable' and 'bad/undesirable' migration from a European perspective (Faist, 2009).

The image of 'the migrant' that is sketched in the 'opportunities' narrative is also different from the 'danger' narrative. The migrant is portrayed much stronger and has an entrepreneurial spirit. The returned migrants are also important actors in this narrative because their return and reintegration, the so-called new "success story," is strongly related to the story that there are enough opportunities in the home country that only some do not see. In this way, a picture is painted of the returned migrant, often with the help of the IOM, grateful for the return and opportunities:

> "They [the returned migrants] get some funding, but also training, to open a small shop or to start with catering. (..) A lady in the village, she came back from Libya. Her family is happy that she returned, and also she showed the possibilities. There are a lot of possibilities and support from IOM and GIZ (..) Now she started to make soap in the factory that we built with IOM support. (...) She is taking care of her niece, and now she says she doesn't want to leave again, because she helps the community as well" [31]

The adaptability of returned migrants is at the core of IOM's normative approach to migration. The underlying assumption is that 'people must adapt', and that adapting means above all, not leaving but looking for opportunities to stay (Pécoud 2020). The underlying assumption is that staying in the home country is an option and that alternatives at home are available to leaving (Schans & Optekamp, 2016). However, this narrative of "opportunities at home' overlooks the risks involved in staying. When local livelihood opportunities are scarce, possibilities for social mobility are limited and migration may be considered the only way to survive (ibid). While information campaigns emphasize the need to migrate legally, they do little to actually enable people to do so for the simple reason that very few legal migration channels are available – especially for low-skilled workers from sub-saharan Africa (Pécoud, 2010).

To conclude, the analysis of information campaigns in Ghana exposes how the staging and narratives of the campaigns attempt to discourage and deter migration to Europe. The campaigns have high visibility in public spaces, attempting to reach a broad audience. The message penetrates different social domains, such as schools and churches, showing that this policy has a preventive logic. In implementing the campaigns, local NGOs are, to some extent, free to come up with concrete activities, but the normative interpretation of "migration management" is imposed by the IOM. The narrative disseminated by these campaigns is twofold. On the one hand, the campaigns attempt deterrence and discouragement of migration by confronting potential migrants and their families with the dangers of migration through emotionally suggestive information. This deterrence focuses primarily on the "spectacular"

[31] Staff member, local migration NGO. Personal interview (18.02.2022)

aspects of the border (De Genova, 2013). On the other hand, staying is encouraged by pointing to the opportunities at home and promoting regular travel. In both narratives, "returned migrants" play a role: on the one hand, they can share their traumatic experiences, thus deterring migration for others; on the other hand, they are used as examples of "successful reintegration" to show that Ghana offers opportunities. Embedded in these practices is the binary distinction between regular and irregular migration, which is not an accurate description of social reality, but an ideological distinction. This two-sided narrative produces a narrative around "migrant victimhood", which stigmatizes irregular migration. The ultimate goal of these campaigns is to create an 'inner self-regulating border' (Vammen, 2021), with the assumption that the border is installed in the migrant him- or herself. The message that migration to Europe is deadly and dangerous works preemptively alongside border control. Building on Foucault (1980), information campaigns are part of a broader migration control ‘apparatus’ or ‘dispositif’, designed to bolster practices of governmentality. However, there is no mention in the campaigns of the "hard" components of the migration control strategy, which is an integral part of the EU's border externalization, in the campaigns that have caused Sub-Saharan migrants to take ever-greater risks when traveling to Europe.

6. The Involvement of Local NGO Workers: Passion, Status & Knowledge

When I met Abdullah, whose nickname is "Pope", I was immediately overwhelmed by his enthusiasm and speed of speech. I sat at a small table in a local NGOs warm, dusty office next to a Catholic boy's home. Pope, and his colleague, talked enthusiastically about their involvement in migration-discouraging programs. Various leaflets were shown to me, ranging from studies into the motives of migrants to the plans for a photo exhibition on irregular migration. Pope explained that all boys have an image of life abroad, even at a very young age. "They think Europe is paradise", he repeatedly stated. Unfortunately, the screaming of a group of young boys, who caught a glimpse of an Oburoni sitting in the small office in the gated courtyard, drowned our conversation, after which Pope interrupted his story and closed the door. "You need to hear everything about the dangerous journey", he emphasized. After an hour, the interview was over, and while I stopped my recording, Pope invited me to have a beer before he drove me back to my hotel, which he insisted on doing because I was "the special guest from Europe!". When we sat at the bar, the real stories came out. Pope, who once, years ago, also attempted to leave for Europe but was stranded in Libya, proudly told me about his recent visits to Italy and Poland. He got invitations for meetings with other catholic NGOs, attending training or workshops. Long stories of how impressed he was by the two countries followed, "everything is better there, even the rain", and he stressed that he was grateful for all his new international friends. However, above all, he was most thankful that he finally got to experience life abroad: "I did not make it to Europe in the first place, but my failed trip to Libya helped me to get there anyways." He laughed and added, after taking a sip of his beer: "Next time, Amsterdam!"

This joke exposes Pope's deep-seated desires to experience life abroad, which, in addition to his humanitarian motivations, are intertwined with his involvement in implementing migration projects as an NGO worker. This chapter zooms in on the involvement of local NGO workers in the migration sector by analyzing how they present their motivations and passions for doing their work. These motivations are linked to the opportunities offered by NGO work, showing how the work also yields other (social) gains. This analysis provides insight into how the ideological dichotomy between regular and irregular migrants affects the perceptions and positions of local NGO workers and also exposes the difference in status between the desired and undesired versions of mobility. Above all, based on these personal stories, this chapter provides insight into local NGO workers' mobility desires and the reasoning and rationalizations for discouraging others from being mobile. In addition, it exposes the role and authority of IOM Ghana.

6.1 Branding the Passion

The various local NGO workers welcomed me with particular pride. Sometimes in a neat office with air conditioning - especially in the case of the more prominent NGOs - other times in a small room with plastic chairs and posters on the wall, an office that often also served as a living space for one of them. Most local NGO workers are between 25 and 40 years old and have often obtained degrees in one of the country's well-known universities. They began volunteering during their college days or participated in charity work through the church. In

Ghanaian society, having a network is especially important to get a paid job in the nonprofit sector. Although only some people were open about it immediately, the director or founder of the NGO they work for is often a family member or acquaintance. The pride in their work stems from a "passion" for the development of Ghana. Most local NGO workers define themselves as "development workers" or even "change agents" committed to doing something positive for their community and country. For many NGO workers, migration projects are part of their broader development work, and their motivation to work for an NGO stems primarily from a need to make an impact, as described by a local NGO worker as follows:

> "For me it is all about working for the future of Ghana. (..) I see many young people suffering from all the insecurities and hardships here, and I see it as my duty to help them become who they want to be.(...)I think development work is all about seeing that opportunity and devoting your life to the potential growth of a new generation. Personally, I work in development, and all the other topics are related to that. (..) Whether it be migration or sustainability, it is all about empowering the next generation to fulfill their dreams in Ghana" [32]

This quote shows that the local NGO worker is not explicitly committed to one 'development' topic. Spreading out the themes to focus on also concerns scarce funding opportunities for local organizations. Due to competition among local civil society organizations, they only sometimes have much say in the projects they get funded; donor requirements are decisive. The general sentiment among them is to contribute to the country's future, especially to work for the opportunities of young Ghanaians. Altruism and patriotism are vital determinants for many local development workers in Ghana to engage in development work. An evident pride for Ghana came forward in all the interviews. For example, the local NGO workers often referred to Ghana's independence as the first African country and to the developments the country has already undergone in recent decades. In addition, there is also a sentiment among local NGO workers that they mainly want to be in charge of developments in their country, and their tone often expresses a dismissive attitude towards too much interference from international organizations.

Most local NGO workers emphasized that they are mainly concerned with improving the socioeconomic conditions of young people and providing help and support to marginalized groups in particular. The same goes for Pope. He is incredibly passionate when he talks about the boys' school he runs with his colleagues. The boys can receive an education through donations from a European church foundation. In addition, the local NGO allows them to develop skills, with Pope pointing out several photos of former students who now have their own mango farm, clothing shop, or small taxi company. Because his NGO is active in one of the so-called "high-risk" areas for migration, IOM invited them to join a training about migration in 2016. After the training, Pope started to focus on migration projects and combined different types of local development projects with the implementation of migration

[32] Staff member, local NGO. Informal conversation (05.03.2022)

campaigns. Pope's local organization started focusing on migration in the years that followed when there was a demand from international organizations for NGOs in this region.

There is a strong sense of youth empowerment among local NGO workers. In addition, there is a solid commitment to developing Ghana's civil society, in which many also emphasize that the state is failing in its provision of services and basic needs. A senior project officer of a local NGO explained: "Working in development is like trying to fix the toilet when the state is only giving toilet paper." According to Knodel (2021), local NGO brokers in Ghana identify themselves as vital members of civil society. They see it as their duty to discover societal gaps the state cannot recognize, let alone address. In addition to this role, local NGO workers also see an essential role for local NGOs to complement the many international organizations operating in Ghana. They emphasized their ability to make international development projects more responsive to the realities on the ground, as explained by a project officer of one of Ghana's most prominent local NGOs:

> "Without me, they [international aid workers] have no point of entrance, they don't know whom to talk to. Also, I give them input about the things that are needed. (...) One day, they proposed to start a project for the youth, with giving them lessons about personal hygiene, and then, I told them: also build a toilet. So I knew what they needed, and told GIZ about it. Without me, they never bridge the distance from Accra to here [small village], and never know the true needs." [33]

The above quote shows that local workers occupy an "intermediate position" between the local population and international donors. The directors or founders of Ghana's three local migration NGOs strongly represent the intermediate position between the local population and the international organizations. In addition to contributing to Ghana's development, those migration NGO workers are intrinsically motivated to work on migration issues. They have many years of experience in migrant work and are all impressive personalities. I immediately noticed that the three directors spoke English eloquently, with a solid British accent. They have been to the EU or US several times and have an extensive NGO network within Ghana and abroad. Compared to Pope, who primarily works in the boy's home on the outskirts of Sunyani, the three directors have a much more cosmopolitan appearance, almost looking like businesspeople.

Fred, a charming and well-dressed mid-age man, picked me up with his brand new 4WD at the University of Ghana campus. While driving to the office of his NGO RECFAM - Research & Counseling Foundation for African Migrants (see box 1) -he told me the 'origin story' of his NGO, mixed with his personal life story. Fred explained that in the late 1990s, the church played a role in encouraging migration to Europe, not naming the dangers and even extolling life and the route to Europe. As a young academic, he visited Europe for conferences and noticed the challenges and realities migrants face in Europe. Then he saw it as his duty to save people in Ghana from the fables of the church:

[33] Staff member, local NGO. Interview (18.02.2022)

> "When I arrived [in Germany], I was very shocked about what I saw. There was nothing true about everything they [the church] told us about life in Europe. They made it sound like paradise, but reality was more like hell. And then I realized, not even everyone is making it. (...) Back home, I need to tell the truth, about living a life abroad, but also about the journey. (..) I was kicked out of church, and it even led to my divorce, but at least I stayed true to what I think was the right thing to do for all those young delusional boys." [34]

His intrinsic motivation came mainly from the need to combat fake or false expectations about migration, something he could do in addition to his work as an academic. He focused on information surrounding the struggles of living in Europe and started distributing flyers in churches and schools. Because he had been to Europe several times and traveled extensively, he assumed that people in Ghana trusted his story better. In the first years of his NGO, around the mid-2000-nds, he reached out to all kinds of donors to attract funding and to gain attention to the issue. Initially, some donors were interested in contributing, but this was often only for a temporary project. However, later on, around 2015, he started to work together with the IOM, and in this way, he became involved in the larger migration projects in Ghana. He proudly talks about all the projects RECFAM has now done together with the IOM and that he was able to add valuable "local expertise."

Research and Counselling Foundation for African Migrants (RECFAM) is a NonGovernmental Organization (charity) established in Ghana in 2004, with a mission to conduct research, promote safe, fair and dignified migration, combat irregular migration, human trafficking/smuggling, protect vulnerable children, offer humanitarian support, address environmental issues, empower women/socially marginalized groups, offer innovative entrepreneurship development/skills training programs, counselling/psychosocial services; provide education, sustainable return and reintegration of voluntary returnees'/abused victims/refugees, promote health and knowledge transfers, create/develop community development initiatives, carry out public advocacy and building generation of community change-makers towards sustainable development.

Box 1 - RECFAM [35]

Kofi, the founder of Migrant Watch (see box 2), similarly started his NGO and is especially profoundly committed to stopping the exploitation of Ghanaian women abroad. He is Fred's good friend and also runs a clothing brand in Ghana with some retailers in Germany. That was evident from his fashionable appearance. He started his NGO work in the early 2000s after noticing how many women fell victim to smuggling and trafficking and ended up in prostitution, which also happened to his sister. His motivation stems from his commitment to protecting vulnerable Ghanaian women and supporting them in finding legal ways to work

[34] Director, local migration NGO. Interview (04.03.2022)
[35] https://recfam.org/

abroad. With the support of a church association, he was able to start several projects to combat this. He, too, appears to be well-integrated into the NGO scene, just like Fred. During our conversation, he details all his contacts at various international organizations. He strongly emphasizes that, as a Ghanaian-owned NGO, he knows what is happening among the population, and therefore, IOM needs organizations like Migrant Watch to gain trust.

> *Migrant Watch and Skilled Revolution Front has been birthed as a result of the adverse impact of illegal migration on the citizenry and the country as a whole. MWSRF seeks to be an organization empowered with the ability to fight against poverty, injustice and illegal migration. We are committed to working in coalition and partnership with other Migration organizations in all levels from the local through to the global level.*

Box 2: Migrant Watch [36]

Robert, one of the founders of The Sahara Hustlers Association (see Box 3), Ghana's third prominent migration NGO, started his NGO after returning from Libya in 2010. He explained that because of his experience, he could empathize with the emotions of both the migrants returning and their families desperately waiting for news. He started with small-scale support to migrants returning to Ghana and later became involved in IOM's programs. He strongly emphasized his concern for returning migrants who had become "refugees in their own country" even before "Europe began to care about them." From his experience, he claimed to know much more about the real challenges of returning migrants than the major international NGOs. Like the other two local migration NGOs, his NGO has an extensive website and Facebook page, replete with logos of international partners and footage of drowning boats and IOM slogans (see figures 8 & 9 below).

> *Sahara Hustlers Association, SHA is a Non-Governmental organization which was founded by returned irregular migrants, now settled in Africa who had traveled irregularly through the Sahara Desert and had attempted to travel to mainland Europe through the Mediterranean. SHA also comprises those who had once been irregular migrants in Libya and some parts of Europe. SHA is armed with a core mission – to help combat irregular migration and human trafficking and create awareness on the dangers of irregular migration. It has always been part of our mission to publicly recommend the resettlement and reintegration of irregular migrants who have been repatriated back to Africa. Face the challenges of life with knowledge and advice from experts…We are the Sahara Hustlers Association and we're here as your extended family to guide and support you in making the right choices towards a successful future. The Sahara Hustlers Association is campaigning against illegal migration and human trafficking, educating the less informed and misinformed Africans.*

Box 3 - Sahara Hustlers Association [37]

[36] https://migrant-watchsrf.org/
[37] https://saharahustlers.com/

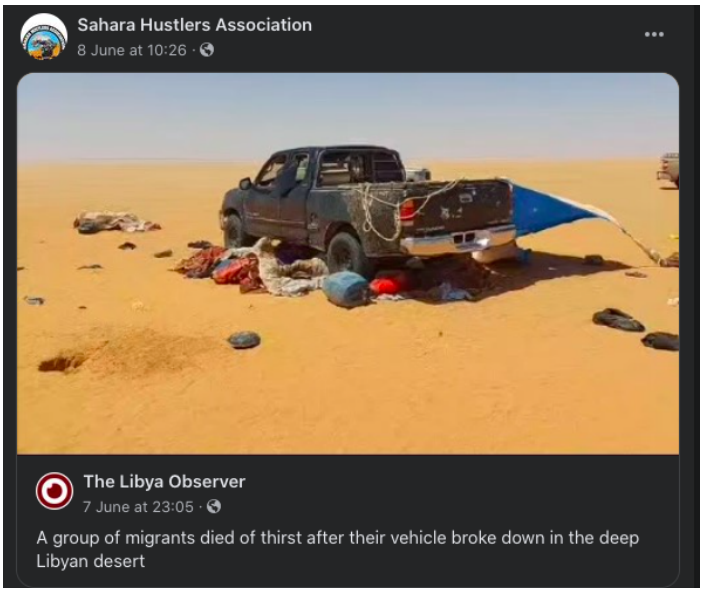

Figure 9: Message of a group of migrants who died after their vehicle broke down in the deep Libyan desert, shared by Sahara Hustlers Association on their social media (source: Facebook, 08/06/2023).

Figure 10: Social media account of Sahara Hustlers Association (source: Facebook, 08/06/2023)

These "founding" stories show how the directors, as brokers, recognized local needs and translated them into development projects to make them suitable for international donors. As they claim, these directors did so even before migration became a more 'hot topic' for international donors. Knodel (2021) states that successful development brokers have a solid sense of their NGO's starting point. The founding myth of their connection is a personal experience with the neediness of a particular peer group, which becomes a compelling story over time. Local NGO workers also often "create" these needs and formulate them by available funding (Mosse, 2005; Mosse & Lewis, 2006; Bierschenk et al., 2000). While the three directors certainly have a straightforward story of how they once started their NGO, they also come across as men who know the needs of international NGOs well. From the texts on their websites and social media (boxes 1, 2, and 4, images#), it is also noticeable that they have a mission that aligns with the policy goals of many international migration projects, and their missions have been tightened in recent years, according to the needs of international donors. They are well informed about IOM Ghana's projects and plans, in addition to being

based in Accra, close to the head offices of different IOs. With all three, I walked out after the interview with flyers, business cards, and even a signed copy of Fred's book "Black Angels in The White Man's Country."

The way the directors talk and write about migration and mobility echoes the ideological charge behind Europe's classification of desirable and undesirable forms of mobility. All three use the terms "regular" and "irregular," referring to the idea that "irregular" migration should be "combated. Related to this is that these three directors assume that there is an 'adverse impact' of 'irregular migration' not only on individuals but 'on the citizenry and the country as a whole' (see box 2). All three have 'branded' their founding stories and motivations in line with Europe's dominant migration discourse, framing 'illegal' or 'irregular' migration as a problem for Ghana. This "ideological branding" contrasts with the stories of most other local NGO staff involved in mainstream development NGOs. When Pope talks about his involvement in migration projects, he emphasizes his commitment to supporting "his boys." His regular development project is what matters most. In detail, he talks about how tough life is in Ghana, how hard it is to make ends meet, and how few opportunities there are to find work. Other local NGO workers share stories like this, highlighting the resilience and self-reliance of young and vulnerable people in Ghana. For them, the migration projects are an extension of their work, but they mainly focus on supporting marginalized people in their community, and in their motivations, narratives of suffering from the Ghanaian perspective predominate:

> "You wake up, work all day, not knowing what to eat, it is a very hard life. They see it [migration] as an opportunity to escape. And my project will help them with some skills, but still, life is hard and I want to support them, that motivates me most. IOM campaigns that sometimes glorify the opportunities (..) Honestly, there are none." [38]

By this, the NGO worker recalls how scarce the opportunities in Ghana are for young people. He is also aware of where the need and desire to travel comes from and recognizes daily life's struggles and hardships in specific regions or neighborhoods in Ghana. The story they have to put forth in the campaigns - that you can become successful in Ghana - contrasts starkly with reality. A reality that many local NGO workers know very well from their work. The following quote, from an NGO worker who works as a social worker in a youth center, also shows his views on the narrative of "opportunities at home":

> "Even for me, after I graduated, it was a challenge. In Ghana, we do not have enough jobs for the youth. And if we tell them to get a certificate, to work hard, have diplomas and everything, then we still cannot give them jobs. My friends are all struggling, they have to become a bolt driver, with their diploma's. (..) So it is not so easy to say that there are opportunities here, but I still want to help people with developing themselves with my projects, that's my motivation" [39]

[38] Staff member, local NGO. Interview (18.02.2022)
[39] Staff member, local migration NGO. Interview (14.03.2022)

This quote shows that the local NGO worker is very aware of how difficult life can be in Ghana and has a cynical tone toward the EU's discourse on local development as an alternative to migration. Nevertheless, he is motivated and passionate about his work. The European narrative of addressing "root causes" through mainstream development projects, such as through the youth center where the employee works, resonates with many local NGO workers' personal development motivations and passions. However, they are also very aware of the hardships of daily life. Their understanding of the hopelessness of some Ghanaians, and the lack of opportunities for growth and work, also shows an understanding of why Ghanaians choose migration. Europe's migration discourse around "root causes" and "promoting opportunities at home" are consistent with local development objectives and might be implemented more efficiently in cooperation with existing organizations. However, by combining this with the migration discoursing campaign objectives, the goal is primarily to control African bodies and territory.

6.2 The Opportunities: Status & Knowledge

While all local NGO workers emphasized the passion and altruism behind their involvement in development and migration projects, they all indicated that other issues complement their involvement in this "migration" sector. The opportunities offered by work in the NGO sector, in terms of personal development and other (financial) benefits, capture some of their personal desires and the status of international organizations in Ghana. Development brokerage often refers to certain benefits such as having access to political or financial resources (Olivier de Sardan 2005, p. 173-174). Previous studies on the involvement of civil society actors (such as a women's collective and groups of returning migrants) in raising awareness about migration in Senegal highlight the role these resources play in brokerage (Bouilly, 2010; Pian, 2010; Andersson, 2014, p. 33-65). This migration sector in Ghana consists not only of projects themselves, but is in part "knowledge exchange" and so-called "capacity building," involving all stakeholders from local NGOs to embassies and IOs, as was the case during my visit:

> On one of my last days in Accra, just before I flew home, I got a call from Fred. He invited me to attend a conference. Moments later, he sent an invitation on Whatsapp: NATIONAL LAUNCH OF MIGRANT RECRUITMENT ADVISOR (MRA) AND STAKEHOLDERS CAPACITY BUILDING/TRAINING. I could not find out precisely what the conference was about but decided to go since the invitation displayed the logos of GIZ, ILO, and IOM. As the room flowed in, I saw many familiar faces, the directors of Migrant Watch and Sahara Hustlers and a researcher of the Ghana Migration Study Centre. This surprises me because the theme of this conference turned out to be about internal migration and does not necessarily tie in with projects they told me about earlier during interviews. Most of the people seemed to know each other. I sat in the back of the room, but despite my concealed position, the photographer constantly photographed me. When Fred introduced me to some of his colleagues during the break, he exuberantly said, "She is a researcher from the Netherlands and my future board member," I was not sure if he was joking. Then he

> asked several times if I wanted to tell them about my research and explicitly mention the name of Wageningen University. Later, he said to another colleague, "Give her your business card, and she will bring you to the EU," he gave me a wink this time.
>
> (Edited fieldnotes, April 2022)

This anecdote provides insight into Ghana's "migration" world, where it is primarily a networking opportunity for people to show their faces regardless of the exact topic. Fred's jokes about my position expose, on the one hand, the "status" of working with international organizations and, on the other, the personal "desires" that their work results in various types of international contacts and possibly even travel or funding opportunities. The directors of local migration NGOs are well-seen guests at all kinds of events and conferences on migration, from a photo exhibition at the Goethe Institute to a working group of the Ghana Migration Study Centre. Moreover, their experience, career, and status make them known to other NGO workers in the country, and even act as role models for others. However, their status and more cosmopolitan attitudes may contrast with the communities they claim to represent. Regarding education and migration history, successful development agents are outsiders in their communities (Knodel, 2021).

There is a desire among local NGO workers to enrich themselves with knowledge and skills through their NGO work. Almost all local NGO workers have participated in workshops or dialogue sessions organized by international aid organizations, especially IOM (in cooperation with GIZ) is very active in this way. These training, meetings, and conferences motivate local NGO staff to continue working in the migration sector. Local NGO workers emphasized that career aspirations, personal development goals, and the desire to acquire new skills drive them. One young NGO worker explained that these workshops are a way to upskill himself and increase his overall career opportunities in Ghana. He explained that he had learned a lot about migration through the IOM training;

> "The conference was hosted in the Eusbett hotel, and all of us were invited. Before that, I did not know that much [about migration]. I was shocked. They gave all the facts about the illegality, and the boats. And now I can recall the risks. It is horrible. (..) In Ghana we say: being rich is not only money, it's also wisdom. So I want to keep learning, new things, and meet new people. It will maybe even help me to find a job at the government one day, if God will help me" [40]

This quote shows this local NGO worker's personal desire to develop himself, and in addition, it reveals that the conference is also how he learned about the risks of irregular migration. The director of Migrant Watch also talks about how he learned a lot during these IOM training;

[40] Staff member, local NGO. Interview (18.02.2022)

> “I was mostly focused on a smaller part of the problem, the smuggling of women, but the problems of migration are actually much broader, I learned about it. I did not know about all the tragedies happening, every day, at the sea, but when IOM showed the images for the first time, I was shocked! [41]

Both quotes show how the NGO workers learned about the realities of migration through the ideological lens of Europe. Also, from their emotions - "I was shocked" - and the way they told it to me with a mix of amazement and entertainment, I detected a certain amount of Schadenfreude, an enjoyment obtained from the troubles of others. Given the pleasure/pain dimension of the Žižekian notion of jouissance, it could also be argued that involved people in the Ghanaian NGO sector could derive a form of "obscene satisfaction" and fascination from the pain the system inflicts on the Other (Kapoor 2013). Kapoor (2013) therefore points to the possibility that there is something transgressive about jouissance, in which people derive pleasure from the pain or failure of someone else, "yet such an indiscretion must remain publicly unacknowledged and unutterable (p. 35).

On a local level in Ghana, the IOM not only plays the role of a donor but also disseminates knowledge to local NGO workers through education and capacity building. This local role rhymes with the role the IOM has come to play at the global level. IOM is in the position, because of their reputation, mandate, and access to information, to 'shape' the understanding of specific 'migration challenges' and to propose 'solutions' to address them (Geiger & Pécoud, 2014), even when this is against the (migration) interests of a particular state or group. As argued by Korneev (2018), IOs have implemented projects that governments consider internal issues over the last few years. They allowed this by co-opting local political elites, well-established local migration NGOs and independent experts and involving them in training, study tours and research projects. Besides implementing migration care and control projects, actors see IOM as "experts" in the field of migration management. The authority of the IOM resonates clearly when local NGO workers speak about training or collaborations with IOM Ghana, as the following quote shows:

> "They are all people who have knowledge about the situation, not only in Ghana, but also, in other African countries, and they also have head offices in Geneva, with other UN. Migration is complicated, not something we can solve ourselves, and the government is not doing anything. Because it is so complicated, they have the experience and know how, I think we need them here in Ghana, because of the expertise we do not have.(..) I am very happy that I know IOM Ghana now, and I can call them if I have questions. I am proud of my personal connection with the staff members." [42]

From how this local NGO worker talks about IOM Ghana, a certain "status" is also apparent. Contacts within international organizations and attending activities contribute significantly to

[41] Director, local migration NGO. Interview (15.03.2022)
[42] Staff member, local NGO. Interview (29.03.22)

their "social status" in their communities. Additionally, working in the NGO sector, and partnering with these IGOs, is also seen by local NGO workers as an opportunity to 'travel'. Moreover, almost all senior NGO workers and directors have done so, albeit within Ghana. Many workers from outside Accra have been to Accra for training or meetings. Senior Ghanaian development workers sometimes travel to international destinations, as international donors invite them to attend training and conferences. The opportunities to travel do not benefit everyone, but many local NGO workers know an example of one of their colleagues in the sector whose work has led to travel. The story of Pope from the introduction is an excellent example, as are the directors of the migration NGOs' stories. All of them have been somewhere for an international conference, and often they tarry long on that experience or even brag about it.
During our interview, the director of the Sahara Hustlers Association recounted the presentation he had once given in Prague for a summer school on migration organized by IOM. The photos from 2009 are still in a dusty frame on his desk and have a prominent place on the website. Full of pride, he recounted his impressions in Prague. After the interview, he drove me back to the bus station and joked that I should invite him to a conference in The Netherlands. Paradoxically, earlier in our conversation, he also extensively explained why young Ghanaians migrate irregularly: “They all go for greener pastures, they want to explore far-off lands, they think that adventure abroad will enlighten them and will make them real men.” While this man works in his own way to keep young people from the dangers of migration, his eagerness for experiences abroad also shows how deeply rooted the desire for adventures abroad is.

On a personal level, the training and workshops IOM offers motivate local NGO workers to develop themselves. Speaking the "language" for writing project plans or evaluations is also necessary on an organizational level. "If you do not speak the IOM language, you can forget about the proposals", stated an NGO employee. In order to stay close to an international organization as a local NGO, development brokers must speak the development language to keep abreast of the international partner's objectives and agenda (Olivier de Sardan 2005, 182–183; Bouilly, 2010; Pian, 2010). The training is a way to stay up-to-date and maintain contact with other NGOs and international organizations. Related skills, maintaining a network, a certain level of education and using international project management language are crucial to raising money as a local organization (Bierschenk, Chauveau, and Olivier de Sardan 2002, p. 23; Olivier de Sardan 2005, p.174). Most local NGO workers also need to work on their professional performance. NGO brokers must be creative and participate in specific training that helps them make their NGO more trustworthy, efficient and credible (Knodel, 2021). As a result, some more experienced NGO workers are increasingly qualified and are examples of lifelong learning. The three directors of migration NGOs in Ghana are an excellent example of this. However, they have not consistently implemented IOM projects. They still often attend IOM training, seminars, events or briefings to "stay in the game”. Not only are local NGO staff a target group for this type of IOM activities, but other relevant stakeholders are also introduced to the migration narrative via IOM training. My meeting with a GIS officer is an example of this:

I walked into the Migration Information Centre parking lot in Takoradi with Phillip, an employee of one of the local NGOs working with IOM. On IOM Ghana's Facebook page, I had already seen photos from the day the office was officially opened almost six years ago. It looked busier and more prominent in the photos; however, in real life, the small bungalow appears more remote along a wide, quiet road. There is only one car in the large parking lot. In a small reception room sits a woman in uniform with a computer, a fan, and a guest book. People talk back and forth in the local language in the main room of the building, and the women ask if we can leave our information. The guestbook seems empty. I quickly look at the dates of previous visitors and see some dates ending with 2020. I write down the date, March 4, 2022, and my name. I wonder, are we the first real visitors since then?

Next to the empty desk, on the floor, a poster is displayed. "I am a migrant," it says. I quickly take a picture secretly while we walk to the main room of the bungalow. At least four people in uniform, and a few other guests, are watching TV. On the wall are many group photos of GIS officers with certificates and IOM logos; it looks like graduation ceremonies of successful migration courses. I also saw a photo of a group of GIS officers visiting Italy hanging on the wall in the narrow corridors. When we arrive at the office of the big boss, I am allowed to ask a few questions, but the recording is not allowed. However, I did not have a chance to ask questions since he started to explain his job extensively. First comes a long story about rubber boats, young men and women falling into the hands of smugglers, and finally, he talked about the function of this MIC: they provide the correct information and save lives. He also talks about IOM and how well they trained them. He admits due to covid. Unfortunately, this MIC is quiet, and almost nobody comes to visit. Later on, he also admits, also unfortunately, that they receive little funding to actually go to schools to disseminate information. As I listen to his story, which is consistent with the IOM brochures, I wonder if this man would have been aware of "illegal" or "irregular" migration even without the IOM. I also wonder what the impact of putting money in this MIC is, and whether it will actually save lives.

(Edited fieldnotes, March 2022)

Figure 11:"I am a migrant" poster in the corner of the MIC. Source: author, March 2022

This anecdote shows that IOM spreads a narrative around migration management by training different stakeholders involved. IOM Ghana's huge focus on 'capacity building' of stakeholders, especially by informing many people about what exactly irregular migration is, seems to have become an end in itself within IOM Ghana's migration management approach.
The website of IOM Ghana is also full of photos of groups of GIS officers proudly showing their certificates, but also local NGO employees, Ghanaian policymakers and journalists belonging to this group whose so-called capacity needs to be improved. In this way, the campaign narratives and IOM's perspective on how migration should be framed and managed, which intend to reach "potential migrants," have mainly an actual effect on the perceptions of involved local actors.

To conclude, this chapter provided insight into how the migration sector works in Ghana, with the reputation and role of the IOM coming out strongly. Local NGO workers are eager to learn more about the topic through training and conferences, in addition to taking advantage of these opportunities to network and gain contacts with international organizations. Personal and organizational motivations drive them, which include their career objectives. Local NGO workers are introduced to the IOM rhetoric and repeatedly come into contact with it through their work.
The first conclusion of this chapter is that, in a similar way that the provision of information seeks to "discipline would-be migrants," it also seeks to discipline those who need to implement the policies. As explained in the previous chapter, this self-governing assumes that would-be migrants regulate themselves through their own risk management and morality. Local NGO workers are also exposed to this emotionally suggestive information, both in images and language, through training. The way IOM introduces its framing of the migration narrative in the development sector is a way to conduct local NGO workers' conduct.
Second, what emerged clearly from the stories of "successful" NGO workers, is the repeated exposure to IOM's rhetoric and narrative in many different ways—through following training, attending conferences, writing project proposals and justifications, and branding personal websites and stories. "Successful" local NGO workers have appropriated and internalized this rhetoric, visible in how their stories align with Europe's fantasy of migration control. They talk with conviction about regular/irregular/illegal migration, detailing the dangerous sides.
An essential second conclusion is that the repeated submission of local NGO workers to IOM language and images is a form of gentle persuasion and repetition, making a particular "order" or "way of regulating" feel as if confirmed as Belief (Kapoor, 2013, p.7). The migration information sector magnifies these tendencies by the receptive and pervasive verbal and visual circulation of the distinction between desired and undesired movement.
The more invested or involved the local actors are, the more they unconsciously accept this order. Following the Zizekian notion of ideology based on the non-rational element of Belief, people accept a specific order of law unconsciously, and reasoning and rationalization come afterward. We believe in something without reason, and ideology embodies our unconscious beliefs (Kapoor, 2013, p. 7).
What also emerged in local NGO worker's jokes and comments about their opportunities to travel is, on the one hand, the deep-rooted desire to explore and experience foreign countries; on the other hand, shimmering through those remarks, that traveling for one's work, through

one's contacts at an international organization, falls within the "desirable" form of travel. They attach a certain status to this desirable form of traveling. Local NGO workers unconsciously follow the narrative that 'irregular' ways are less good.

Finally, in how local NGO workers speak about the dramatic side of the story - shocked- a particular enjoyment also emerged: revealing the relationship between pain/pleasure that Zizek captures in his notion of *jouissance*. There is enjoyment in seeing, or experiencing, other people's pain and realizing that you do not suffer those dangers and suffering. This exposure to pain and suffering, and the EU's attempt to deter Ghanaians from it, does not make local NGO workers question or oppose the EU regime. However, they rationalize the EU policies that produce pain and suffering.

7. Local Campaign Experiences: Between Care and Control

Philip is an ambitious young man. He studied in Kumasi and has been doing different types of volunteering work since senior high school. Now he is the project manager of one of the most prominent local NGOs, BOK Africa[43], implementing migration projects of IOM Ghana in the Brong-Ahafo region. The logo of this local NGO is even explicitly displayed in IOM Ghana's annual review. When Phillip picked me up from the bus station, he was wearing his white campaign t-shirt, a cap with the logo of BOK Africa, and slippers with the Ghanaian flag on them. I interviewed him for the second time in his small office in Sunyani, primarily set up to receive international counterparts from Accra. Before we met in real life, I had been in extensive Whatsapp contact with Philip for a few weeks, and we had already talked on the phone about his work. Philip's pride in his work struck me immediately. He had just returned from a trip to Ethiopia to attend the 4th African Youth SDG Summit. It looked like the office had not been used in a long time. He excused himself from the dusty flyers on the desk and offered me a warm water bottle, "Sorry, I turned the fridge off." When I asked him about his travels, he proudly talked about how well-organized it was and how much he learned about the SDGs. In detail, he described what the hotel was like, how many international friends he had made, and most importantly, how special it was to travel outside Ghana. Now that he has been to Ethiopia, Philip only wants to see more of the world and hopes to succeed in going to Europe for work. However, he explained that obtaining a visa is difficult for him and his colleagues. The other day, the Spanish embassy rejected his colleagues' visas to attend a conference on migration in Barcelona. As a joke, he added, "Europe wants us to tell them that migration should be with a visa, but getting our visa approved is like winning the lottery."

Philip's joke exposes how his travel experience, his aspirations, and personal encounter with the difficulties in obtaining a visa feeds a cynical attitude towards Europe. In this chapter, I analyze how local NGO workers experience the implementation and execution of migration projects based on their perception of the narratives and their interactions during the implementations. The experiences of local NGO workers during campaign activities reveal how the "formal" migration narrative is put into practice, with local NGO workers playing a role as "translators" (Mosse, 2005). By looking specifically at how local NGO workers deal with EU-imposed discourses, this chapter looks at forms of "translation" that might represent (the absence of) "counter-conduct" (Odysseos et al., 2016). To what extent is this EU-imposed migration discourse, aimed at governing the mobility dreams and desires of potential migrants, subtly modified, resisted or escaped? First, this chapter zooms in on the different ways local NGO staff perceive "good" and "bad" migration to lay bare how they see their own role in relation to the care and control objectives of European migration governance. The second part of this chapter analyzes how actual campaign activities are experienced, which also exposes the personal difficulties of several local NGO workers.

[43] https://bokafrica.org

7.1 Local Perceptions of 'Good' and 'Bad' Migration

The information campaigns in Ghana clearly distinguish between the "good" and the "bad" way of migrating. The "good" way of migration has different approaches and labels, namely "safe," "legal," and "regular." As outlined in Chapter 5, this narrative is an integral part promoted by the EU's migration regime, which is strongly emphasized in working with local NGO partners – for example, in toolkits or training – and what they actively disseminate through all campaign activities and migration projects. In a conversation with the Policy Officer of the EU delegation in Accra, he emphasized this as follows:

> "Of course, we as Europe, are not against traveling, we think it's good, migration has lots of benefits, we support these kinds of initiatives, however it has to happen in a good and legal manner, which means that people should apply for a visa, which we call the regular way. But also, they need to be able to work in Europe, we should provide them with jobs that Europeans do not want to take. You can not simply leave without preparation. (…) Do it right, and everyone actually benefits." [44]

The above quote shows how this Policy Officer uses the terms regular/legal/safe interchangeably to describe the "good" way of migration, blurring the exact meaning of the different terms. Also, local NGO workers interpret in different ways what "good migration" means and how potential Ghanaian migrants can achieve it. Most local NGO workers interpret "good" migration primarily as travel with the correct legal documents, i.e., no fake passports or not without a visa. This approach is mainly a legal interpretation. To achieve this "good" way of migration, the local NGO workers should point potential migrants to embassies, migration information centers, or specially designed websites. On those websites, potential migrants can find information on how to apply for a Ghanaian passport. In addition, for each destination country, there is often specific information on how to get a visa. In this approach, "bad" migration is interpreted as crossing a border without proper legal papers, as explained by a local NGO worker:

> "If someone is not taking the legal way, then they do not pay the fee to obtain a visa at your embassy, but they just go without it, or pay it to someone illegal. People try to find all these ways, to still cross the border at the sea, to enter [Europe]. But they will get arrested by the police. (...) And then, they violate the laws of your country. We also have all these people entering Ghana without permission, causing troubles" [45]

This interpretation mainly refers to the fact that potential migrants should comply with the laws and regulations of the destination country. This local NGO worker especially pointed to the idea that Ghanaians are also troubled by migrants from neighboring countries who reside illegally in Ghana. He recognizes the problems faced by illegality:

[44] Policy Officer, EU delegation to Ghana. Interview (12.03.2022)
[45] Staff Member, local NGO. Interview (29.03.2022)

> "I am against illegal migration, because it is not good that people just enter another country without having the permission, or the papers. They are undermining the sovereignty and borders of that country. (...) In Ghana, they end up being homeless, and being criminals. (...) I get that Europe also wants to avoid people from illegally entering." [46]

This local NGO worker argues against "illegal" migration by pointing to countries' sovereignty and territorial integrity. This reasoning indicates a general understanding of why the EU 'protects' its borders. Another prevailing interpretation of "good" migration is "safe" migration, local NGO workers mainly point to the risks: "you travel in the right way if you are aware of what can happen to you, and you can make an assessment of the risks." This interpretation of "save" migration is independent of whether the migrants have the correct legal papers but focuses mainly on calculating the risks during the trip itself. Accordingly, good migration means that potential migrants have informed themselves about the dangers. In contrast, an unprepared and irresponsible mode of travel results in migrants who may find themselves in unsafe situations because of their unawareness of these risks. This interpretation is focused more on the migrant's point of view rather than from the perspective of the destination country.

Other local NGO workers define "good migration" not only in legal terms but also perceive it as being prepared to travel in a broader sense. If someone considers migration to Europe, they must first obtain skills and certificates in Ghana. Some local NGO workers state that potential migrants must fit the receiving countries' needs and have a working permit. Some local NGO workers talk about the "experience" required in Europe to build a life there, and good migration relates to offering something to the European labor market. As described as follows:

> "If you want to travel well, if you want to migrate to Europe, you need to think about what you can offer them. Like skills or diploma's, something they need. (..) Migration is not just packing your bag and going there, it is more" [47]

This interpretation gives more substance to what "desirable" migration looks like. The local NGO workers who describe "good" migration in this way are often also involved in projects to train local youth to increase opportunities in Ghana. However, this NGO worker does not interpret 'desirable' migration from the perspective of the rights of the migrant. In particular, they talk about 'desirable' migration for the destination countries rather than what would be desirable for Ghanaian migrants.

These different interpretations by local NGO workers about what actually constitutes "good migration" show much ambiguity about what it means in practice and how Ghanaians can achieve it. In particular, "regular migration" is perceived as confusing. Some emphasize the

[46] Staff Member, local NGO. Interview (26.03.2022)
[47] Staff member, local migration NGO. Informal conversation (01.03.2022)

story of legally crossing a border, while others focus more on preparing potential migrants for the risks of the journey. Although the migration narrative from Europe is firmly built around the manufactured division between regular/irregular, many local NGO workers are searching for what exactly falls into both categories. Local NGO workers add nuance to their interpretation of the migration story, emphasizing their personal essential aspect. Therefore, local NGO workers who are more active in programs around information about legal options have a different approach than local NGO workers who are more focused on "labor migration" possibilities. However, their views on migration still follow the rhetoric of the EU migration regime, reducing the heterogeneity of people with travel aspirations to binary opposites, creating the category of "illegal migration" from the perspective of the destination country (Deridder et al., 2020). In addition, the semantic and linguistic confusion reflects the ambivalence of what migration actually means for local NGO workers.

When local NGO workers share their interpretations of "bad" migration, common narratives appear about the need to protect the vulnerable lives of Ghanaians. These descriptions also strongly reveal the role local NGO workers see for themselves. This "protection" narrative is explained in different ways, but mostly through detailed descriptions of the dangers of illegal migration and the suffering of migrants on the route, as the following three examples make clear:

> “The smugglers do crazy things with them. They will beat you if you do not pay enough, they will make you walk through the hot dessert. The young boys are all together in a van, they risk death in the desert, even before they reach the water.” [48]

This local NGO worker emphasizes the role of human traffickers in relation to why irregular migration is seen as the 'bad' way of migration. In addition, he goes into details of the route migrants take to Libya, highlighting the dangers. Another local NGO worker also goes into detail about the dangers in the desert and the role smugglers play:

> "They sometimes have to walk for days, without water, without shoes, and then under the hot sun. That is even hotter than it is here, you will die there. (..) If you survive the desert, then the police are powerful, how will you cross the border? If you die, no one will find you in the desert. All the money they gave to the smugglers, also from the family, is all gone as well (..) I want to avoid my brothers from believing their [the smugglers] stories " [49]

This quote highlights how the motivation of this NGO worker, who wants to prevent Ghanaians from dying this way, reflects the 'danger narrative' of the information campaigns. Furthermore, the motivation also stems from avoiding lives getting wasted on the route to Europe. The following quote also highlights this, but with a focus on the sea crossing:

[48] Staff member, local NGO. Interview (01.03.2022)
[49] Director, local Migration NGO. Interview (15.03.2022)

> "They [the migrants] cannot swim. We don't teach that in Ghana. And then you have to get on a dinghy full of people, and what if the boat capsizes? What then? Don't count on a life jacket! (...) You can only pray that God will help you. That is why we are telling them about it, not to risk their lives; Their belief won't stop them" [50]

These three quotes show different sides of the dangers of the journey to Europe, which they substantiate with detailed descriptions of the dangers. Evident in above explanations of local NGO workers is their focus on the "scenes of exclusion" (De Genova, 2013), as they all refer to the dangers on the Mediterranean Sea and actions of the border police. This "danger" narrative, which local workers can recount in detail, evokes a sentiment among local NGO workers to protect the lives of potential migrants, which is made explicit by the detailed descriptions of suffering. They specifically see a role for themselves as NGO workers to keep Ghanaians from suffering and exploitation, as this NGO worker describes his role:

> "If only they knew better, they would not do it. Because nobody wants to go through it, it is a traumatic journey. (..) But smugglers tell them good stories about life abroad, and they promise them lots of things that are not true. So I want to tell the real story and help them. I want to go and talk to them, and share about the dangers and exploitation, because otherwise, the mother will get a call that it is over, that is heartbreaking." [51]

This NGO worker emphasizes that he is the one who is able to share the right information with potential migrants in order to save them from their bad destiny. Consequently, most local NGO workers see themselves in a "rescuing" role for unwitting migrants. The way local NGO workers talk about migration, in terms such as rescue, protection and exploitation, reflects Walters' (2010) description of how the irregular migrant appears as a particular psychosocial type that exists in public perception, whose identity is formed around victimization. The motivation to protect vulnerable lives is consistent with many local NGO workers' perceptions of irregular migration. Most local NGO workers explicitly stated that they are "against illegal migration." This attitude is explained in different ways. On the one hand, local NGO workers point to the role of smugglers and human traffickers. For them, to be against "illegal" migration is first and foremost to be against the infrastructure of human smuggling and trafficking that many migrants fall victim to. They attribute the cause of the suffering and dangers of migration to the role of human smugglers or traffickers, who they say persuade potential migrants to undertake a journey with false promises. As the director of Migrant Watch explains:

> "They promise all good things, give them false passports or tell them stories of how much they can earn. They are good at what they do, recruiting them. (...) And then suddenly, someone from your community left, without having a chat about it. And if they are women, they often get trafficked to end up in prostitution. Or really bad

[50] Staff member, local migration NGO. Interview (07.03.2022)
[51] Director, local migration NGO. Interview (01.03.2022)

> conditions, to work day and night. (..). What we do here, is give them options, and also, more important, tell them the truth about irregular migration " [52]

The local NGO workers link the 'protection narrative' to 'anti-migrant smuggling' and 'anti-human trafficking' discourses. What stands out in these statements is that the cause of the exploitation and suffering of migrants is thus external, namely "smugglers" or the "whole opportunistic infrastructure" (De Genova, 2013). In the statements, local workers often interchange the terms smuggling and trafficking. The interchangeable use of these terms shows that migration facilitation is generally problematized and criminalized (Mùsaro, 2019). This semantic confusion is present in NGO workers' language and also the campaigns they implement. These campaigns not only help to blur the distinction between the realities of human trafficking and smuggling, but they also help to classify migrants as voluntary/forced, desirable/undesirable, and legal/illegal. The generalized "smugglerization" of migration issues is induced by the binary imaginary of legal and illegal migration (Tazzioli & Garelli, 2018; Tazzioli & Walters, 2019).

How local NGO workers talk about "bad" migration reflects a humanitarian representation of the borderlines as ‘spaces of emergencies' (Walters, 2011). The humanitarian rhetoric that came forward in the motivations of local NGO workers, discouraging migration in Ghana to 'protect' vulnerable Ghanaian migrants, therefore, exposes an element of the performance of the humanitarian border (Walters, 2011) 'behind the curtain' (Carlotti, 2021). In this process, images spread through campaigns and media about border zones' humanitarian circumstances mobilize local NGO workers to act out of protection. The motives of local NGO workers in Ghana exemplify the existence of (trans)national care networks, where local NGOs' involvement in discouraging migration is justified from a humanitarian perspective. The discourse around the redefinition of the border as a "zone of emergency" affects local actors in Ghana since they are mobilized to stop migration from this humanitarian point of view. However, they are far from the geographical place where the spectacle unfolds. So to what extent are they aware of what is happening at the borders, and to what extent can they form their own opinions about it?

Consequently, the Border Spectacle 'behind the curtain' in Ghana does not directly contrast with the security apparatus of European states (Walters, 2011). The literature mainly describes how, at actual humanitarian borders, such as in migration hotspots like Lampedusa and Lesbos, control measures directly and visibly contrast with the 'care' actions of humanitarian organizations. This is not the case for local NGO workers in Ghana, who see their role from a humanitarian principle, but for whom harsh 'border control' is not directly visible. For the cause of the dangers and problems of migrants on their way to Europe, NGO workers in Ghana mainly point to the role of smugglers. However, the direct role of violent border regimes, criminal restrictions to mobility, and immigration politics remains out of sight. This suggests that actual migration control measures for Ghanaian NGO workers have

[52] Director, local Migration NGO. Interview (15.03.2022)

mostly an abstract meaning and do not directly conflict with their humanitarian reading of the situation.

7.2 Implementation Experiences: Discussion and Dissatisfaction

Phllip's joke in the introduction of this chapter, which compares obtaining a visa to winning the lottery, something that does not happen often and for which you have to have luck on your side, exposes frustration about the feasibility of obtaining a visa. In addition, there is also a cynical undertone in this joke about Europe's role in this story. 'Europe wants us,' Phillip states, indicating that this is something he, and perhaps those around him, do not entirely agree with. Phillip is not alone in complaining about these so-called "legal pathways." Local NGO workers express dissatisfaction with the feasibility of these legal pathways, for example, as follows:

> "Even if you have all the documents, like your insurance, the passports, etc, then the chance is big that they still do not want you there. You take time, and money, to go through the whole process; you know that is like you are proving them everything about yourself, and then, most of the time, it gets rejected anyway." [53]

More local NGO workers complain about the accessibility of legal pathways. They argue that the procedures are complicated and lengthy and that not every potential migrant understands them. In addition, all embassies are in Accra, and many indicate that this is not easily accessible to everyone, while a "smuggler or recruiter" often operates in the region. According to many local NGO workers, this also explains the appeal of the alternatives offered by smugglers, as the "regular route" seems inaccessible to many potential migrants.
On the one hand, local NGOs complain about the procedure itself; on the other, cynicism about the unfair outcome of this procedure shines through. Their own experiences and desires reinforce this attitude. When Philip tells about his travel experiences, for work, to another country, his strong desire to explore the world to travel outside Ghana shines through. Local NGO workers are aware of the strict regimes and rules for obtaining visas to which they are all subject, as Ghanaians. This is highlighted by one of Phillps' coworkers as follows:

> “If you are not rich, or you don’t have a brother on the other side that can help you, you have no chance at all. First, you need a Ghanaian passport. After that, many more documents, such as a work permit and insurance paper. (..) This will cost money, but you also have to prove that you have enough money for security.” [54]

In addition to frustrations about the inaccessible and unrealistic legal paths, there are especially frustrations about the immobility of Ghanaians. This frustration manifests itself in statements about the unfairness of not being able to travel as Europeans can, as Phillip emphasizes in the same conversation:

[53] Staff member, local NGO. Informal conversation (12.04.2022)
[54] Staff member, local NGO. Informal conversation (20.03.2022)

> “You are here, nobody asked you anything about how much money you earn. You probably have a credit card, and then they assume that you will have enough money. And like you are exploring Ghana, you are young, that’s how we want to explore as well. But we cannot go anywhere like that. (..) We first need to prove that we can afford your expensive lifestyle” [55]

As an example, Phillip cited my situation, a student from the Netherlands who can "just' travel to Ghana for research. In other encounters with local NGO workers, my situation is also highlighted. After an interview with one of the local NGO directors, after a lengthy conversation about how this NGO contributes to stopping migration, he says: "Next time, please come visit me, I will not go anywhere, I will be stuck here." From this comment, and the way Phillip cited my situation, the sense of the unfair distribution of mobility, and opportunities to travel, resonates strongly. These perceptions of local NGO staff about opportunities for mobility, and frustrations with immobility, are consistent with what Gaibazzi (2015) observed in The Gambia. In regions of departure, policing measures and restrictive visa policies furthermore produce negative feelings of physical and existential immobility or of 'entrapment' (Gaibazzi, 2015, p. 115-133). These feelings are strong among local NGO workers and conflict with the narrative they are supposed to convey in the campaigns, promoting the legal route. Phillip himself describes these conflicting feelings as "giving them false hope" and that this sometimes makes him feel uncomfortable during campaign meetings:

> “To tell them [local youth] that they have a chance to get it [a visa], it feels like lying. There is certain path that we can explain to them, that they can follow, to be successful, but we all know that this path is a path of false hope” [56]

During the campaigns, for one of the other local NGO workers in Sunyani, talking about legal pathways led to a difficult discussion with a group of local youth. One staff member told me that he discussed with a group of boys during a campaign and asked them about their migration aspirations. After an open conversation about the challenges of living in Ghana and the dangers of the journey to Europe, he started talking about the opportunities to migrate safely. He shared the website of WAKA WELL (an initiative of IOM Ghana) with them, where they could look up the visa requirements for Germany step-by-step. One of the boys in the discussion group reacted angrily to this information, saying that the NGO worker only came here to stop them and not to help them because "legal pathways are a disillusionment." The aid worker explained that after this confrontation, he tries to avoid the "legal pathways" topic in discussion groups and thus primarily focuses on the risk narrative.

What is striking about the feelings of frustration of local NGO workers towards the accessibility of legal paths is that their explicit frustration is not so much to do with the broader migration regime but that they are particularly frustrated with the complex visa

[55] Staff member, local NGO. Informal conversation (07.03.2022)
[56] Ibid.

procedures. Local NGO workers focus their dissatisfaction on what De Genova describes as the "stringent criteria, predicated upon suspicion" (De Genova, 2013). For example, Philip realizes his colleague is suspected of not returning to Ghana after visiting Spain for his work. He realizes that the Ghanaians are "the unwanted others". According to De Genova, this results from the spectacularization of the border and illegalizing migration, where every potential migrant represents an "unwanted non-citizen, stigmatized upon allegations of opportunism, simplicity, and undeservingness." (De Genova, 2013). Phillip and his colleagues are very much aware of the distrust and suspicion from the governments of destination countries. Feelings of entrapment and immobility are thus related to strict visa procedures. One of Phillip's colleagues explained that when he engages in discussion with young people during one of the campaigns, he places particular emphasis on the story of risk:

> “If I speak, with a school class, about migration, I mostly talk about the risks, and what can go wrong, to warn them. But the whole story of legal opportunities, it is complicated (..) they will not understand about all the things you need to travel, and also, they will never be able to fit into the requirements anyways (..) So I emphasize the risks of dying and exploitation, simply to protect them.” [57]

In this quote, the skepticism comes through promoting the legal path and what exactly is or is not the right way to migrate, and so this NGO worker only particularly emphasizes the story of the risks in his interaction. Similarly, Philip, who makes many critical comments about the campaign story about the legal paths, also sounds more convincing about the other aspect of the campaign. He sees this “risk” narrative as the most crucial aspect of interventions or projects around migration. This shows that they put their spin on the migration story during the execution of the campaigns, no longer fully conforming to the IOM’s “official” campaign narrative. In addition, they also have their approach to the “usefulness” of sharing information about risks and dangers. One of the directors of a local migration NGO stated that information about the risks is not only crucial for stopping the potential migrant himself but also for starting the conversation about the risks and downsides of migration in communities. Accurate information can bring nuance to the current image of migration by starting the conversation. Information campaigns also aim to deal with the stigma of migration in society. He explained that there is more between successfully migrating and thus staying alive or dying. He thinks it is necessary to talk about the possible traumatic experience when migrants return home:

> “At least their families, and the rest of the community, are also aware of what is happening. Then when they go and come back, some with trauma, we can understand what has happened. (..) The stigma and disappointment will still be there, but we may be able to break through something. We can’t stop them with this, but we make returning more easy.” [58]

[57] Staff member, local NGO. Informal conversation (07.03.2022)
[58] Staff member, local Migration NGO. Informal conversation (22.03.2022)

In this quote, this NGO director explains that the campaigns are, therefore, also helpful in opening the conversation in Ghanaian society about migration as a counterpoint to the idealized image that migration can always end in a success story. This also allows communities to be more understanding of returned migrants. What also emerges in the above quote is that he wonders whether the campaigns will stop people at all, i.e., whether the "control" function is adequate. Doubts about the "stopping" effect are more common in conversations about the function of information, as highlighted in the following quote:

> "If they do not have any information, they will just start praying, and ask God to bring them there. Now, we give them the reality, of course, this young boy, he will still ask God please help me there, let me be the lucky one, but maybe he will not pay all his money to the wrong person, or he knows that it is not going to be easy at all. (...) But he will leave anyway despite all our warnings." [59]

Both quotes show that local NGO workers certainly see the benefit of spreading information about migration risks, but they question whether the campaigns will stop people. However, despite that, the local NGO workers see that the campaigns are helpful in other ways. Either because, through the campaigns, there is a more nuanced view of the realities of migration (among migrants and their communities), and in this way, can break the stigma surrounding returning migrants by paying more attention to the difficulties and traumatic experiences. Alternatively, the information is beneficial to make potential migrants less vulnerable during their journeys, for example, by sharing information about the role of human traffickers so that a potential migrant at least knows what to expect. The latter is also a way of protecting potential migrants. Another local NGO worker takes this a step further, even expressing it explicitly:

> "Without our information, they simply just go without knowing what the hell will happen to them. They are vulnerable to any kind of danger. (...) But by providing them with information, about the route and all that, they are prepared in a way. Because they will go anyway. (...) Also, I want them to go if they want to, they have the right to go!" [60]

The local NGO worker sees his involvement in these campaigns as a way to protect people by informing them of the difficulties. However, he also strongly supports their decision to leave. He explains his difference with the "official" goals of the campaigns, since he supports the idea of migration as a human right for everyone. He justifies his participation in the projects because he still wants to make potential migrants feel more secure en route. These particular instances further demonstrate that, beneath the seemingly constant surface of migration management practices and reasoning, varying narratives and interpretations connect to the various positionalities of local NGO workers involved (Kluczewska, 2019).

[59] Campaign volunteer, local migration NGO. Informal conversation (15.03.2022)
[60] Staff member, local NGO. Interview (08.03.2022)

7.3 The Future of Mobility

We sat down at a local bar at the end of the morning, when I had already spent several hours with Philip, first in his dusty office and later at the migration information center. Several of his friends joined us. Earlier that day, Philip laughed when I asked him if he talks much with his own family and friends about migration to Europe. "No, that is my job and they will never say if they have plans." In a circle of plastic chairs, we sipped a beer. One of them asks what brought me to Sunyani -"not really a place for tourists"- and I briefly explain to him that I'm researching migration for my studies, which is why I am visiting Philip. I did not expect the boy to continue asking substantively about the subject. However, he surprised me with his follow-up question, "What is your dream country to travel to?" he asked.
Moreover, one of the other guys at the table starts asking me about all my travel destinations in and outside Europe. It is already the end of my second month in Ghana, and the more conversations I have had about migration to Europe, the more discomfort I feel when I list the countries I have visited, and there are quite a few. However, the men around me are inquisitive and ask about what I have seen or experienced there. I told them I wished they could cross the border with a Ghanaian passport as easily as I could with my Dutch passport. The man beside me joked, "But if we could travel everywhere with a passport, it would be boring." To which one of my other tablemates added, "No risk, no story"!

There is undoubtedly some truth in these jokes by the two Ghanaians: in the dreams of these young men to explore the world outside Ghana, there is a strong resonance of the need to travel because of the adventure it offers them and to see the risks involved precisely as an opportunity to prove their manhood. A world where mobility is "managed" with visa procedures clashes with the entrenched social mindset in West Africa; adventurous migration is a quest for personal liberation, and risk-taking is also a testament to migrants' ability to overcome obstacles in their path (Bredeloup, 2014). In our small talk, several examples emerge of a second cousin or neighbor boy who, without even saying anything, left with the runaway and is now living a "successful" life somewhere abroad. The way they talked about them, out of admiration, shows how strongly they believe migration can have a happy end. The effective mobility of fellow Ghanaians represents the main 'counter-conduct' (Odysseos et al., 2016) to the externally driven narrative designed to immobilize and/or return them. Even a recent report highlights how West-African migrants have developed alternative information-gathering practices and notably tend to avoid humanitarian actors and international organizations associated with migration deterrence efforts during their journey[61]. The conversation continues about their dreams, and one of Philip's friends explains it as follows:

> “I want to be that guy, who travels first, and then comes back to the village, buys a big house for the family, and then tells everyone about Europe. But first, I want to enjoy traveling, I want to go to Germany. (..) I see it as an adventure, the whole journey as

[61] https://www.diis.dk/node/24638

> well, with new experiences waiting for me. (...) You will become a real man, and then come back" [62]

Later, when Phillip takes me home by cab, I ask him what he thinks of his friends' reactions. Their presence has allowed him to remove his "NGO hat" a bit. He is firm in his answers, speaking out for the freedom of movement: "We should all have the right to move around and cross borders," he stated, as reaction to the dreams of his friends. In talking to his friends, he also seemed to go along with these dreams, but when he turned to me again, I especially experienced his personal struggle between "the good" and "bad" ways of being mobile. He also argues that his friends do not know any better. He calls their adventurous ideas naive. As he says, "the solution is to give us more visas, more and easy access to your countries!" He painted a picture that in the future, it will be possible for him and his friends to "just" apply for a visa, then travel to the Netherlands or Germany and back to Ghana. Although Philip is well aware of the seemingly impossible visa and immigration policies worldwide and shares the urge for adventurous travel abroad with many young Ghanaians, he also keeps on explaining how following those visa procedures are solutions for the current chaotic situation of migrants facing risks and dangers. Phillip is not alone in that. For example, the director of Migrant Watch is convinced that "circular" migration will one day be an option for a large group of Ghanaians. In addition, other local NGO workers point to the option of more Erasmus places for students to make mobility more accessible, also knowing that this will only be for the happy few. Despite their awareness of the many snags in the current system, their deep-rooted personal desire to travel, and their fantasies of freedom of movement, they still seem to be attracted to the idea of a world where migration can be managed for their benefits.

To conclude, this chapter focused on the experiences and perceptions of local NGO workers. The different interpretations of "good migration" among local NGO workers expose the semantic and linguistic confusion among them, simultaneously revealing the ambivalence of this framing of migration management. Local NGO workers primarily based their interpretations of bad migration on the dangers of human smuggling and trafficking. Humanitarian rhetoric emerged strongly, with local NGO workers feeling mobilized by this rhetoric to provide "care." At the same time, the visible side of migration control at actual borders remained out of sight for them. The different interpretations of campaign narratives and experiences of implementation exposed the contradictions between care and control in the involvement of local staff in migration projects.
These contradictions were most evident in their attitudes toward the campaign narrative on legal routes. As a result of their encounter with this issue, it became apparent that they added nuance in the "translation" of the formal narratives into practice. Local NGO staff members have their interpretation of the narratives, also choosing which aspect of the campaigns they particularly emphasize, based in part on their previous campaign experiences. More often, the story around risk is emphasized because local NGO workers find it the least controversial and most realistic. However, this, too, was found to be approached differently by different NGO

[62] Informal conversation (07.03.2022)

workers. They disseminate information about the risks mainly from a protection and care motivation rather than a control perspective - the "control" goal of the campaigns sometimes clashes with their beliefs and aspirations.

Local NGO workers struggle with their commitment to the desire to be mobile (themselves and their communities) and the need to provide protection. Despite their various ways of questioning the narrative of the campaigns (and even questioning the usefulness of the campaigns), the discourse continues to appeal to local NGO workers. To some extent, they imagine alternative ways of dealing with migration. Mobility dreams and the belief in the free movement are kept alive by local NGO workers, despite the EU-imposed discourse aimed at curbing those mobility dreams. This manifests in local NGO workers choosing which aspects of the story they highlight and which they give less attention to, representing a form of "counter-conduct." Keeping mobility dreams alive, however, confronts local NGO workers with the struggle over the "right" and "wrong" types of mobility. The dichotomy between the accepted and unaccepted version of migration is still present in their representations, even though they know that this accepted version of mobility is beyond their reach. Local NGO workers still endorse European migration management from the perspective that it will benefit them someday, possibly in the future. In this sense, there is an absence of counter-conduct. However, with their criticism, cynicism, and imagination, they have changed the narratives in practice to a limited extent.

8. Conclusion: Migration Management as Ideological Fantasy

This research started with a description of one of the most tangible places of migration management in Ghana, a quiet Migration Information Centre, where the sight of unused discolored flyers with EU logos displaying pictures of sinking dinghies on the Mediterranean Sea raises the question: For whom does this way of governing migration have actual significance? For the TV-watching GIS officers in the MIC, for the residents of Sunyani, primarily young people, who dream of a better future abroad? For IOM Ghana, showing its European donors that they implement "tailored-made" projects to build "local capacity," or for European policymakers and politicians to be able to tell their citizens that the EU is doing everything they can to keep "the Other" there, far away from "Us"? After all, the MIC is one of many forms of migration management in Ghana. These questions point at the political project behind a world of migration control, in which much time, energy, and money are spent by residents of "rich" countries to control, direct and restrict the movements of a small group of residents of "poorer" countries (Andersson, 2014, p. 281). In this concluding chapter, I provide three arguments to discuss how local experiences in Ghana reveal the ambivalent nature of migration management. First, I will argue why the ambivalence of this discourse is functional; second, I argue that migration management can be seen as ideological because of its depoliticizing tendencies in practice; and third, I will try to identify the perverse appeal of "*managing migration for the benefit of all*."

This research, through qualitative research methods and semi-structured interviews, has focused on the various migration management projects and initiatives in Ghana, which involve a variety of local actors: from rappers to volunteers. Particular attention is paid to the role of local NGO workers as "brokers" between the local community and their international partners to give agency to local actors and to highlight the embedding of the experiences of Europe's migration management interventions in local implementation dynamics (Rodriquez, 2017). The analysis presented in this research has shown that the perceptions, positions, and experiences of local NGO workers reveal how the European Union develops certain narratives to justify the existence of migration-discouraging projects and how these narratives simultaneously function as legitimation for those practices. However, the activities and interventions often deviate from the humanitarian rhetoric underlying them (Geiger & Pécoud, 2010), which my meetings and conversations with local NGO workers have made clear.

Functional ambivalence

The information campaigns and the various associated activities seek to deter Ghanaians who have or are about to develop migration plans. The implementation of the campaigns ensures that the migration story is brought into social life through public visibility, on social media, on the radio, and on the streets. The message itself is twofold, on the one hand, sharing the dangers and risks of migration, and on the other hand, highlighting the opportunities in Ghana and the possibilities of traveling regularly. The descriptions and images of the border and route produce a mediatic performance. Through these images of full boats of vulnerable migrants in an empty desert, a spectacle of the border is produced (De Genova, 2013). On the one hand, the conditions themselves, the heat, and the raging sea are supposed to deter; on the

other, it is primarily the infrastructure of smugglers and human traffickers, both on the route to the border and at the border itself, in Libya. Representations of this Border Spectacle aim to stop the Ghanaian population and must work 'beyond' migration control. Should these "soft" measures be successful, the population in countries of origin will adapt through self-governing to the proper behavior. The information campaigns aim to disrupt mobility dreams of potential migrants before they start to move by making them believe that their desires and dreams are dangerous and potentially deadly. By emotionally targeting their own risk management and morality, the campaigns ultimately try to self-discipline potential migrants.

This research has shown that this specific representation of migration also has a performative effect on the actors involved to induce their opinion to feel the need to protect (De Genova, 2013). Local NGO workers are spectators of the Border Spectacle. Migration management as a discourse in the Ghanaian field is performative because it is not simply descriptive or reflective of existing migration practices but has the power to shape and influence how migration is understood and managed. Through language, images, and narratives, the discourse of migration management creates specific categories of migrants. It reinforces certain ideas about the relationship between migration and national security, economic development, and social stability. The performativity of the migration discourse exposes the mobilization of "the humanitarian" border (Walters, 2010), whereby the "humanitarian" representation of the border ultimately serves to justify mobility control. By incorporating humanitarian concerns, a moral transfer takes place for the responsibility for what is happening to Ghanaians on the move. However, the responsibility for their well-being is transferred to local Ghanaian NGO workers, instead of Europe’s strict border regime that causes such risks and creates an ‘industry of illegality’ (Andersson, 2014). Local NGO workers in Ghana strongly feel that they are discouraging migration for humanitarian reasons, as an act out of care and protection. The humanitarian framing, whereby migrants must be protected from exploitation and mistreatment, has thus a mobilizing effect among local NGO workers. After all, who is against protecting vulnerable people from the dangers of human smuggling and trafficking?

How does the goal of soft "migration management," based on protection, differ from "hard" migration management? This 'soft' mode of migration management does not challenge 'hard' measures but accompanies them. Ostensibly humanitarian but selective border control practices link violent forms of deterrence with forms of care and cover militarization with a humanitarian tinge (Stierl, 2018). Migration management in Ghana appears to be primarily an umbrella under which many different initiatives can be placed, ranging from projects that lean more toward control (border police training) to framing a project for developing female entrepreneurs under the guise of "creating opportunities at home." In practice, this umbrella is functional. Migration management relies on coalitions with various actors based on widely shared consensual objectives, with room for different interpretations (Pécoud, 2018). This emerged strongly in the diverse interpretations of local NGO workers in Ghana and the diversity among their interests. Fading humanitarian, development, and security interventions also offer new opportunities in terms of funding. For example, development projects are

suddenly linked to migration objectives. In the case of Ghana, different actors and interests are mixed together, "channeling this diversity toward control" (Pécoud, 2018).

The ambivalence of migration management exposes the blurred lines between care and control. This care and control dialectic (Walters, 2011) came strongly to the fore in the personal stories of local NGO workers, who, on the one hand, passionately want to develop their country and protect vulnerable people but also feel the desire to explore the world themselves. These personal contradictions expose how local NGO workers justified their involvement in the migration projects by mainly focusing on the "care" aspect, which has a naturalizing effect on actual control objectives. Local NGO workers balance their desire to be mobile and the moral need to prevent those desires from becoming fatal for fellow Ghanaians.

Migration Management as Ideology

"Why is Europe talking about managing us? We are no cage full of monkeys. We can manage our own dreams." - Robert, 25 years old taxi driver in Accra and University graduate

Migration management as a concept already betrays itself, following Kapoor's argumentation on how "desire" speaks through "slips of the tongue" by pointing at verbal tactics (Kapoor, 2014). "Migration management" implies that migration can ultimately be managed. However, the movements of people, including the movements of refugees and asylum seekers, are unpredictable and chaotic by nature. These movements involve individuals with emotions, aspirations, fears, and dreams. Management sounds neutral and apolitical and has a solid technocratic connotation, contrary to the complex and chaotic reality of people's movements, particularly due to conflict of social unrest (Crisp, 2003). Where is public attention being diverted? What are the absences? The dirty side of this story is that the risks to people on the move have a political cause and are not simply "out there." One aspect that remains grossly unaddressed is that the dangers migrants face, and the increasingly dangerous migration industry surrounding them, are the result of a repressive European policy of border violence and restrictions.

Based on the findings of this study, migration management in practice has strong depoliticizing tendencies. The representation of migration consists of the spectacle and show of migration unfolding at the so-called "hot spots" in the Mediterranean and the desert. It is photogenic imagery from which a strong image of "crisis" emerges. As Kapoor (2014) states, "Images, more than words, make it possible to convey devastation and suffering quickly and dramatically" (p. 85). The stories of this "migration crisis" are sensational stories of suffering, where both the "victim" and the "culprit" are easy to pinpoint, as vulnerable ignorant migrants fall prey to the opportunistic migration industry (Andersson, 2014). However, this mediatization of the spectacle at the border focuses only on "subjective" violence (Žižek, 2008), external violence that is symptomatic of underlying structural violence. From the depiction of "the migration crisis" arises a hyper-focus and tendency to "act now," resulting in a short-term attitude of "we have to solve this" at the expense of a complex long-term solution. The European Union's Emergency Trust Fund for Stability and Addressing root

causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa (EUTF for Africa), a fund that made a lot of extra money available as a political response to the migration crisis, shows the contradiction in its title. Although it is aimed at addressing "root causes," thus suggesting that structural problems are addressed, it does so under the guise of an "emergency." It shows "the spectacle audience" that immediate action is being taken. Following this reasoning, the MIC in Sunyani can be seen as a way of governing the European public by showing: we are doing something. This mainly suggests strong rhetoric but doubts the actual impact on the ground (Pécoud, 2016).

The IOM, which focuses its interventions globally to combat this crisis, also depends on this mediatization for its functioning. As Kapoor (2014, p. 93) identifies, a permanent "emergency regime" is created that makes humanitarian NGOs dependent on more and more crises. The IOM thus benefits from the global neoliberal capitalist continuous production of emergencies, which legitimizes its actions and existence. In this way, the IOM has no interest in finding a solution but mainly in keeping their migration management business in business. The IOM takes on various roles in Ghana, from training journalists to strengthening border security, from running return programs to implementing campaigns. This is consistent with the diverse theorization of the IOM in contemporary migration governance, with conflicting interpretations of the IOM's role revealing different views on whether it is worth making the IOM an object of study. Some scholars call for more research to shed light on its underestimated influence, while others see no reason to study such a marginal and ineffective organization (Pécoud, 2016).
However, Pécoud (2016) suggests that IOM should be seen as a symptom of most, if not all, of the changes currently affecting the politics of migration. IOM portrays an environment in which a wide range of actors are involved in the politics of migration. It also represents a world in which controlling human mobility has become a significant concern and in which many other critical global issues (such as development, security, or climate change) are now related to migration in one way or another. The history of IOM shows that migration was usually considered a peripheral issue not worthy of an IO or a matter of absolute national sovereignty. This is changing, and the developments of IOM give us a unique vantage point to see these changes (Pécoud, 2016). IOM also shows a society where the line between protecting and managing people is blurred. This creates a structural connection between migration, security, development, and human rights, resulting in a mix at the core of IOM's work (Pécoud, 2016). This is not a situation that results from something the IOM itself creates. However, the IOM reflects and benefits from this current state of affairs, and questioning and explicating the IOM in Ghana allows for ideological maneuvering to be exposed.

The experiences of local NGO workers show, on the one hand, the authority the IOM enjoys in Ghana. However, political accountability for what they do, and political debate about their interventions, is absent. The way the IOM operates on a project basis in Ghana is a symptom of its apolitical nature. One of the critical reasons NGOs can act as managers is because they tend to "emphasize projects, not movements" (Petras, 1999, p. 434). Projects are atomized and artificial environments, often imposed from outside and divorced from broader power

structures (Kapoor, 2013). This projectization masks the neoliberal attitude of the IOM: IOM follows the needs of the EU, and they jump into the gap that funding from an 'emergency' fund makes possible. They are contributing in this way to a post-democratic landscape. These post-democratic tendencies were also evident in the 'participation' of local actors in Ghana. The IOM raises the suggestion of partnering with 'local partners' to shape migration governance, but in practice, it appeared that there was little room for input from local actors and that 'stakeholders' were consulted once the critical decision about the project had already been made. In particular, local migration NGOs in Ghana, with knowledge and long experience of migration in Ghanaian society, are bypassed in the decision-making of projects. Mainly, IOM determines and therefore puts its stamp on migration governance in Ghana. However, "consulting" local actors in dialogue sessions does give the appearance of involving local partners.

Mobility as Fantasy

Ideology criticism, in Žižek's opinion, entails two steps: first, a "symptomatic reading of the ideology by detecting what the ideology ignores or covers, and second, the extraction of the "ideological kernel of enjoyment and belief" (Zizik, 1989, p. 125). Ideology's power lies precisely in its capacity to retain a certain sarcastic distance, giving us the impression that we are superior to ideology. He makes the point that more often than not, the issue is not a lack of knowledge but rather our irrational desires and urges that keep us loyal to ideologies despite the critical distance. Identifying these makes it possible to explain why an ideology can still hold a certain sustained appeal despite (or perhaps because of) its dirty sides.

My encounters with local NGO workers in Ghana and the time I spent with them not only brought insight into the functioning of migration management but also provided an understanding of who they are, what they dream about, and how they relate to the topic of migration. The attraction of gaining experiences abroad proved deeply rooted in Ghanaian culture and was reflected in their jokes, comments, and fantasies. These encounters with local NGO staff also revealed their contradictory personal attitudes toward conducting the campaigns. In addition to practical objections on how the campaigns function, it revealed especially cynicism and frustration with the infeasibility of legal migration options, among them the sentiment that Europe's primary purpose is to immobilize Ghanaians, clashing with their aspirations and ideals. This resulted in feelings of 'entrapment' (Gaibazzi, 2015). The critical distance became particularly clear in the last chapter: local NGO workers are very aware of the unfair distribution of opportunities for mobility and the freedoms that European citizens enjoy but which they, as Ghanaians, will never be able to enjoy.

Furthermore, local NGO workers experience a disproportionate emphasis on the "legal pathways" of the migration story, not rhyming with reality. Because what is actually done to enable legal and safe ways for Ghanaians to travel? In the perception of local NGO workers, migration management promises but does not deliver.

The narrative of European migration management is based on the artificial duality of "regular" and "irregular" migration, outlining two contrasting worlds. "Irregular migration" represents a dangerous, chaotic, unregulated, and illegal world. Irregular migration also has a

divided enemy: those facilitating this illegal mobility (the smuggler). This image contrasts with the image of "regular" migration; structured, controlled, safe, beneficial, and positive. With this type of mobility comes a promise of a world where everyone, including Ghanaians, can benefit from mobility. The migration management paradigm gives a false sense of belonging and stability, even a sense of satisfaction. Here the Žižekian notion of *enjoyment* as a political factor can be extracted. Ultimately, it is an attractive idea despite, or perhaps because of, its cruel aspects. Local NGO workers complain about the complicated procedures and joke that applying for a visa is like winning the lottery, allowing themselves a cynical and ironic distance. However, they also strongly believe in the promise of a world where they can enjoy mobility because of their desire for experiences abroad. For local NGO workers in Ghana, migration management is an attractive and enticing idea without it being rationally enjoyable for them. The ideological kernel of *enjoyment* emerges most concretely in the websites and flyers outlining visa procedures, a simplified way to offer an "orderly" alternative to irregular migration. How local actors in Ghana talk about that chaotic side of irregular migration, pleasure, based on the spectacle, can be detected. Local actors "witness the unfolding of other people's traumas from a distance" (Kapoor, 2013, p. 39). Finally, the careers of local NGO workers also revealed the different ways they are materially invested in migration management, both because of the promise of travel opportunities and the promise of "social" status that contacts with international organizations bring them. Their investment in this industry also explains the desire to continue believing in migration management.

Ultimately, Europe promotes a system of mobility containment that encourages and rewards the sedentism of African populations, with the result that global inequalities are (re)produced (Fremantle & Landau, 2020; Stock et al., 2019). The promise of managing migration 'for the benefit of all' covers up the exclusion of African populations, legitimizes 'dirty' practices to control their mobility, and promotes and produces a perverse system of mobility injustice. Migration management is doing ideological work by not confronting the antagonism between including and excluding people on the move but naturalizing itself.

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