Chapter 11
Impact: Consequences and Recommendations

With what result? Poor fool that I am, I’m no whit wiser than when I began!
(Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Faust)

Abstract  In this chapter attempts to offer some few insights we garnered from our study from a perspective of impact: Consequences and Recommendations. To us, what is needed is a joint effort of African countries and European powers—first and foremost those with colonialist past—to reduce the strength of push factors, i.e., factors that increase desires to emigrate from Africa. Secondly, we see a need to reduce the impact of falsely perceived pull factors, i.e., false conceptions of ever-greener pastures in Europe. For migrants who already have arrived in Europe a more welcoming climate is urgently needed—in the interest of social peace in Europe! Racism continues to show its ugly face everywhere.

Introduction

Unfortunately, the final chapter of this volume is less voluminous than one would wish for, because good advice is not easily formulated. A recommendations section of a book like the present one clearly has a strong normative touch. It is a political statement, with all the connotations the term ‘political’ has.

What our study has clearly shown is that African migrants do not come ‘sick,’ but are often made sick in Europe. The repercussions of traumatic experience at home are obvious, but they are not overly strong. There are migrants suffering from PTSD, but posttraumatic stress disorder is not at the center of problems African migrants face in Europe. Racism and related welcome strategies—to use a cynical formulation—are much more likely to cause general mental health problems that did not exist before.

This is a semi-official translation of “da steh ich nun ich armer Tor und bin so klug als wie zuvor,” cited from Goethe’s drama ‘Faust,’ first scene [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Faust_(Goethe)/Scene_I]. Faust is often seen as Germany’s national drama, written by the most prominent poet of Germany.

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E. Idemudia and K. Boehnke, Psychosocial Experiences of African Migrants in Six European Countries, Social Indicators Research Series 81, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-48347-0_11
How does one reduce racism? The only reasonably simple answer to this question is offered by research subsequent to the contact hypothesis. There is sufficient evidence that contact reduces prejudice even in its more blatant form of racism. This means that detaining African migrants in camps is absolutely counterproductive if the aim is to generate a healthy relationship between receiving societies and new arrivals. Detention from that perspective has to stop. African migrants must not be treated as if they needed to be quarantined because of a contagious infection.

If European societies think that African (and other) migrants are ‘not needed’ in Europe (itself a dubious conclusion in light of demographic change and future scarcity of young people to fill retirement funds to support the many older native citizens of Europe), then they have to engage in reducing the impact of push factors in the migrants’ homelands. Not that reducing the thrust of push factors were only the task of European countries, civil society in Africa has to also take a share in that change process, but Europe has a history of being co-responsible for bad governance and government in Africa.

Opening European markets for African products (and not just souvenir-like folklore products, but products and services that are indeed needed in Europe) is the call of the day in our view. Subsidizing the import of certain African goods to Europe might even work wonder in keeping people who produce these goods in their homelands. Current practices work to the opposite. European products (and products from other rich Western countries) are dump-sold in Africa, and—even physically—destroy African producers of the same type of good, thereby strengthening the push factor, forcing people to places, where these dump-sold goods are after all being produced.

Repatriation instead of deportation should be another response to non-successful attempts of Africans to migrate to Europe. The degree of not being welcome seems difficult to reduce. In this situation support for start-up programs in their homelands might be an inexpensive option to be offered to Africans who have ‘sniffed European air,’ but have not been able to firmly set foot into European societies. This would also be a safeguard against brain drain (pulling out the best), because it supports ‘brain circulation’ (Stewart, 2013).

The whole debate of how to react to African emigration need not be a human rights debate, although Europe has to acknowledge that human rights guaranteed by the UN Declaration of Human Rights are grossly violated by European countries both through a ‘bulwark Europe’ policy and through economic exploitation practices. It would be enough to establish trade relations on an equal footing and sharing the benefits of European investment in Africa fairly between investors and those who produce the added value in Africa.

Here we already come to a close of this very brief concluding chapter: Africa does need help to help itself, it also needs help to reduce its emigration rates. Van der Lugt (2018) shows that China seemingly has found a way to work for this aim in Africa, quite clearly also in their own best interest. Not that Europe should copy Chinese strategies, but pursuing a policy of ‘actively coping’ with African economic and political challenges is the call of the day.
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