

# Extraordinary Decisions<sup>®</sup>

## High-Risk Migration Through the Sahara Desert

24th International Migration Conference • Global Citizenship Education • 12 to 14 June 2024 • Universität Klagenfurt • Austria

### Topic

Migrant agency and states' securitisation of migration: Implications for migrant participation and expanding notions of political inclusion to strengthen integration into host societies.

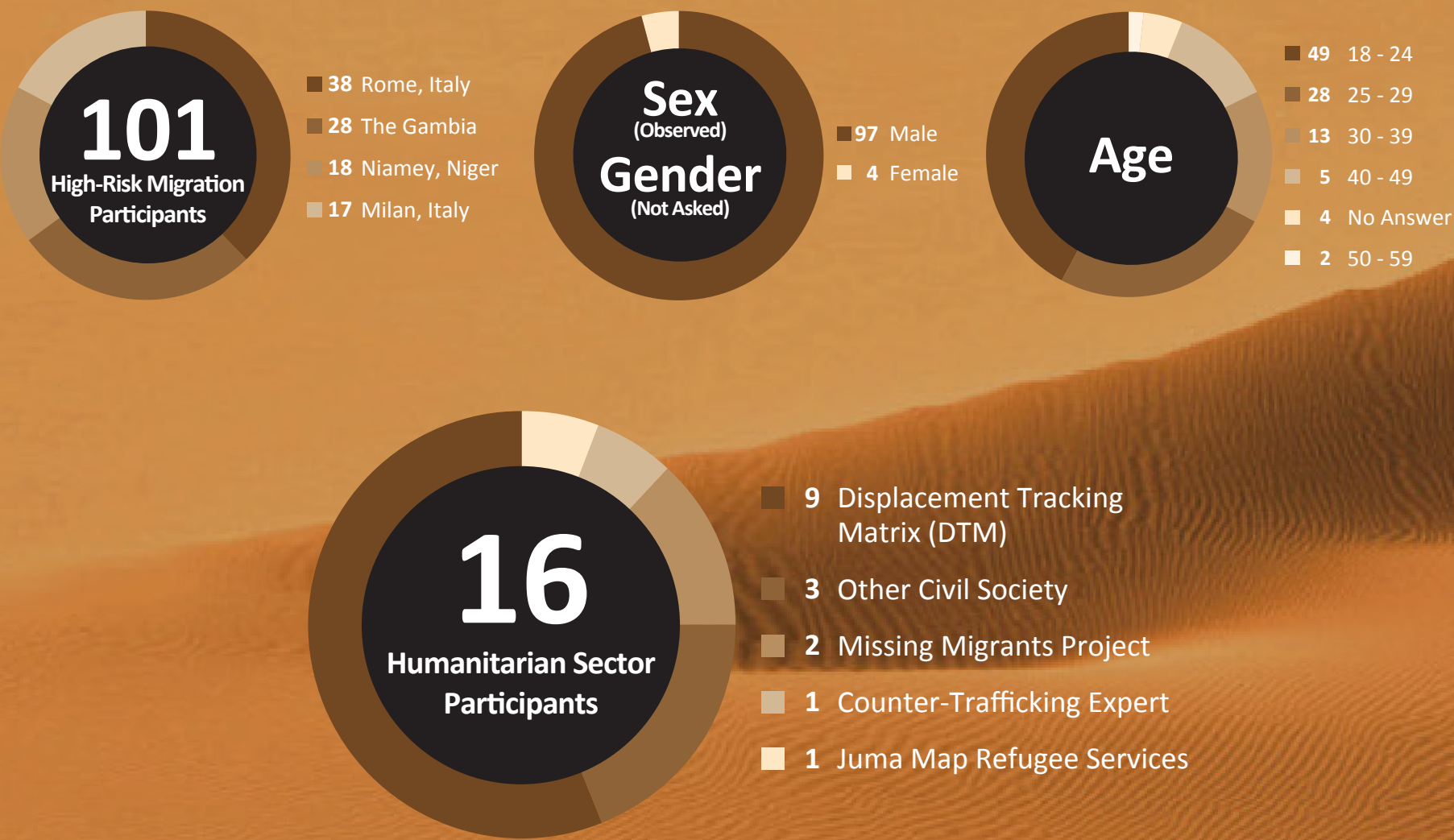
### Question Presented

How does analysing migrants' survival strategy on high-risk migration routes help us better understand states' moves toward increasingly securitised and extended enforcement regimes?

### Conceptual Framework

#### *Securitised Migration and Extraterritorial Enforcement*

This paper highlights two closely related elements of migration governance at the supranational and state levels: securitised migration and extraterritorial enforcement. The EU's securitisation of migration—framing and treating migration as a security threat rather than a set of economic and social processes—provides the conceptual context for understanding EU moves to harden enforcement and extend it into Africa. Research provides a better understanding of how the extension or extraterritorial enforcement of the EU migration regime has contributed to intensifying the risks on the Sahara and Mediterranean migration routes. This action has motivated migrants to attempt to derive network social capital as part of their survival strategy.



The fieldwork for this research involved open-ended, semi-structured interviews with 101 persons who were or had been migrants on high-risk migration routes through the Sahara Desert. Participants were nationals of eleven countries, including Benin (2), Cameroon (4), Gabon (2), Ghana (5), Guinea (2), Ivory Coast (3), Liberia (11), Mali (8), Senegal (22), Sierra Leone (14) and The Gambia (28) (see figure 4.1). In addition, interviews were conducted with 16 staff members of humanitarian organisations with prominent expertise in migration. These interviews were conducted remotely with participants in London, United Kingdom (1)—Juba, South Sudan (1)—Istanbul, Turkey (1)—Vienna, Austria (1)—Berlin, Germany (2)—Rome, Italy (3)—Geneva, Switzerland (7).

Data collection took place in two phases and at four locations, Niamey, Niger—Rome and Milan, Italy—and The Gambia—the recruitment of participants involved multiple-entry, non-random purposive sampling. (Etikan et al., 2015; Etikan & Balla, 2017).

Methods of analysis used. Multiple strategies were adopted, consistent with best practices for qualitative research (Creswell & Miller, 2000; see also Creswell, 2016). First was the primary practice, open and axial coding (Weston et al., 2001). The second was triangulating data to reinforce the discussion and implications.

### Results

#### *Six Factors in Deriving Social Capital Through Networks During High-Risk Migration*

The challenges migrants face on high-risk migration routes are enormous. Challenges on the Sahara and North American routes have similarities, including physical hardships from negotiating harsh desert terrain and conditions to abuse at the hands of authorities and human smugglers (Szabo, 2017; see also Cabrera, 2010; International Organization for Migration, 2020a). There are additional factors intensifying risks, including some distinctive Saharan migration dynamics. These six factors include (1) having limited resources, (2) having no contacts at the intended destination, (3) lacking knowledge of migration routes, (4) travelling alone, (5) vulnerability to authorities and (5) vulnerability to human smugglers and other actors.

#### *Six Ways Migrants Derive Social Capital Through Networks During High-Risk Migration*

These high-risk migration factors motivate migrants to develop social capital through networks as a survival strategy. The following sub-sections present how migrants derive this social capital through these networks. These six ways include (1) forming groups, (2) humanitarian organisations, (3) human smugglers, (4) informal labour networks, (5) social networking applications and (6) support of kinship connections.

#### *Network-Derived Social Capital: An Integration Survival Strategy*

Migrants face an increasingly securitised integration context in European Union destination cities. Securitisation increases their risks, as do some of the factors noted earlier: having no contacts at the destination, limited resources and being vulnerable to authorities. In response, they exercise agency and seek to derive network social capital in crucial ways as part of a resilient survivor strategy. They respond by seeking to maintain ties developed in transit or to form new groups and, thus, to derive horizontally oriented forms of bonding and bridging social capital. They also often seek to gain access to humanitarian organisations' services and derive more vertically oriented forms of linking social capital. In addition, many migrants continued to rely on the linking capital of their vertical ties with smugglers. They were using these connections to navigate the complexities of their new cities.

### Contribution and Significance

While there are many contributions this research makes, two fundamental theoretical advances are offered to understand the implications of securitised migration and the closely related extraterritorial enforcement of migration. Highlighted first are critical tensions around theorisations of free movement in regional organisations. Numerous researchers have sought to explain why organisations such as the EU, among others, have developed internal free movement regimes (Heinikoski, 2022). However, there has been relatively little discussion about how the extraterritorial enforcement of migration by the EU has posed challenges to ECOWAS' principles of free movement among its Member States and the progress toward free movement by the African Union.

This research raises additional questions about extraterritorial enforcement of migration and neo-colonial power. It asks, for example, whether migration agreements between EU Member States and African Union Member States formerly colonised by Europeans represent forms of neo-colonial power more than shared attempts to manage shared challenges. Then follows a discussion on how the analysis of migrants' attempts to derive network social capital within destination countries calls attention to a possible reinforcement of neo-colonial power internally related to securitised migration.

### Conclusions

This research and record of scholarship reexposes deep concerns about the treatment of migrants. Along with the responsibility to teach and pass on what we know, this platform is also an opportunity to act, advocate for innovation, influence outcomes, spark debate, and give altitude to ideals that help empower the individual and motivate change.

One critical reform is to make more significant community connections with migrants to support a more inclusive integration experience. The proposition is that the more active participation there is, the more room there is for migrant engagement and the representation of the body of politics as agents (Tazzioli, 2015; Monforte & Morales, 2018). One way to encourage migrant community connections is by implementing democratic tools such as 'mini-publics'. Mini-publics comprise randomly selected citizens or another proxy to ensure robust representation to engage in a particular issue that affects everyone (Elstub, 2014; Escobar & Elstub, 2017; Guziana, 2021). The more migrants pivot to political participation and representation—the more integration has excellent prospects of success.

### References

Cabrera, L. (2010). *The practice of global citizenship*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.

Creswell, J.W. (2016). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: choosing among five traditions*. 2nd ed. Sage: Thousand Oaks.

Creswell, J.W., and Miller, D. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory Into Practice*, 39(3), 124-130.

Elstub, S. (2014). Mini-publics: Issues and cases. In Elstub S and McLaverty P (eds), *Deliberative democracy: Issues and cases*. Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh, pp. 166-188.

Escobar, O., and Elstub, S. (2017). *Forms of mini-public*. newDemocracy Research and Development Note. 4. newDemocracy: Walsh Bay.

Etikan, I., Alkassim, R., and Abubakar, S. (2015). Comparison of snowball sampling and sequential sampling technique. *Biometrics and Biostatistics International Journal*, 3(1), 1-2.

Etikan, I., and Bala, K. (2017). Sampling and sampling methods. *Biometrics & Biostatistics International Journal*, 5(6), 215-217.

Guziana, B. (2021). Only for citizens? Local political engagement in Sweden and inclusiveness of terms. *Sustainability*, 13(7839), 1-25.

Heinikoski, S. (2022). *The history and politics of free movement within the European Union. European borders of justice*, Bloomsbury, London.

International Organization for Migration (IOM). 2020. *Nearly 1,000 migrants returned to Libya in the first two weeks of 2020*. 14 January. IOM: Geneva.

Monforte, P., & Morales, L. (2018). The participation, mobilization and political representation of migrants in Europe. In *The Routledge handbook of the politics of migration in Europe*. Routledge: London, pp. 126-136.

Szabo, D.W. (2017). *Journeys across the Sahara and the decision to return: Primary determinants in a migrant's decision to abandon a journey*. BGovIntRel Honours Dissertation. Griffith University: Brisbane.

Tazzioli, M. (2015). Which Europe? Migrants' uneven geographies and counter-mapping at the limits of representation. *Journal for Critical Migration and Border Regime Studies*, 1(2), 1-20.

Weston, C., Gandell, T., Beauchamp, J., McAlpine, L., Wiseman, C., and Beauchamp, J. (2001). Analyzing interview data: the development and evolution of a coding system. *Qualitative Sociology*. 24(3), 381-400.

