

HOLDING ON TO EUROPEAN RESIDENCE RIGHTS VERSUS THE DESIRE TO RETURN TO ORIGIN COUNTRY: A STUDY OF THE RETURN INTENTIONS AND RETURN CONSTRAINTS OF GHANAIAN MIGRANTS IN VIC

EL DILEMA ENTRE LA ADQUISICIÓN DEL DERECHO DE RESIDENCIA EN EUROPA Y EL DESEO DE RETORNAR AL PAÍS DE ORIGEN: DESEOS DE E IMPEDIMENTOS PARA (EL) RETORNO DE LOS INMIGRANTES GHANESES EN VIC

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***Abstract:** The article analyses the extent to which migrants desire to secure permanent residence rights in Spain is a strain on return migration. Through qualitative research studies among Ghanaian migrants living in Vic in the Barcelona province of Spain, the paper shows that while most migrants interviewed desire to return to settle in Ghana one day, they are not willing to surrender their residence rights in Spain. For that reason prospective returnees desire to first secure the right to leave and re-enter Spain without obstacles, through the acquisition of permanent residence permit and citizenship status. Others prefer that part of the family remains in Spain as a form of insurance for members who return. The paper suggests that return migration policies that require that migrants*

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surrender their residence rights in Spain are less likely to motivate Ghanaian migrants to go back home.

Keywords: *Ghanaian migrants; Spain; Vic; Return intentions; Residence rights.*

Resumen: *Este artículo analiza la disyuntiva que tienen de los inmigrantes ghaneses entre la necesidad de asegurarse el permiso de residencia permanente en España y sus deseos de retornar. A partir de una investigación cualitativa entre inmigrantes de origen ghanés en Vic, en la provincia de Barcelona, el trabajo demuestra que, aunque la mayoría de los entrevistados desean retornar a Ghana algún día, de momento no están dispuestos a renunciar sus derechos como residentes españoles. Así, los potenciales retornantes prefieren asegurarse primero la residencia permanente o la nacionalidad española. En otros casos, aun dándose el retorno, una parte de la familia permanece en España, como estrategia para facilitar un virtual reingreso en nuestro país. Los resultados de la investigación sugieren que las políticas de fomento del retorno que implican la renuncia a la residencia adquirida en España tienen, a fecha de hoy, un impacto muy limitado entre los migrantes ghaneses.*

Palabras clave: *Inmigrantes ghaneses; España; Vic; intención de retorno; derecho de residencia.*

INTRODUCTION

According to Cachón (2002: 98) the «sedentation» of labour migrants, admitted for temporary settlement in northern European states during the post-War period, started in the mid-1970s as a result of restrictive policies introduced by the host states to control immigration. The new policies were motivated by the economic crisis that Western economies were experiencing during that period. However, the policies backfired because a lot of the temporary migrants refused to leave due to fears of not being able to re-enter the immigration country in the future. Instead the immigrants sought permanent residence status and invited their relatives left in their home countries to join them.

The above scenario best describes the present situation of migrants from developing countries living in Spain. Spain rapidly transmuted from migrant sending to migrant receiving country

from the 1980s (Arango, 2000). But, for long time, Spain did not consider itself as an immigration country and immigration was largely associated with seasonal and temporary employment. Labour migrants were issued with renewable temporary residence permits, convertible to permanent residence permits after five years of residence. However, because of the seasonal, temporary and precarious nature of migrant labour in Spain, it was believed that the migrants will leave sooner or later. Moreover, some of the migrants were believed to be in transit to the northern European states¹.

Yet, with the passage of time, the migrants who came to Spain (as temporary or transit migrants) did consolidate their residence status and converted into permanent settlers and citizens. Because of this Spain inadvertently turned rapidly into an important immigration country in Southern Europe. Cachón (2002: 103-108) identified three phases in Spain's recent immigration history. The first phase, which is situated in the period before 1985, was characterised by limited volumes of immigration from Europe and South America (the latter consisting largely of political refugees). In the second phase, situated between 1986 and 1999, a «new immigration» began, which converted the phenomenon into «social fact» in Spain. During this phase, the ethnic and national origins of the immigrants, as well as their religious background, were greatly diversified. In the third phase, starting from 2000, the immigration transformed into a «social problem»; it generated many social conflicts and provoked political and social reactions, and the need to deal with it. External and internal control measures were therefore intensified to barricade the country's borders in order to reduce inflows. These included border controls, hardening and intensification of visa application procedures and prerequisites for obtaining or renewing residence permits for those who have already entered Spanish territory². The problem that surge then is: are the migrants here to stay or they are just in passage?

¹ For details about the characteristics of Southern European immigration see R. KING, «Southern Europe in the Changing Global Map of Migration», in R. KING *et al.* (eds.), *Eldorado or Fortress: migration in Southern Europe*, New York: Palgrave, 2000a, pp. 1-26.

² For more details about border control in Spain see Alscher (2005).

The fact is that the immigrants are here to stay. A survey conducted by Spain's National Statistical Institute (INE) on migrants' intention to return, which took place at the beginning of 2007, prior to the economic crisis, showed that just 7.8 percent of those interviewed thought they would leave Spain after five years of stay. While 11.5 percent were undecided, the majority (80.6 percent) thought they would stay on after five years of residence (Pajares, 2009: 171).

In spite of migrants' tendency towards permanent settlement, immigrants in Spain have continued to be perceived as temporary settlers by governments. In September 2008 when Spain was at the height of economic recession the Spanish government, through the Royal Decree 1800/2008 for the implementation of the Royal Legislative Decree 4/2008, allowed for advanced and accumulated payment of unemployment benefits to foreign workers in Spain who have lost their jobs that decide to voluntarily abandon Spain (EMN, 2009; Pajares, 2009: 176-181). This return programme, which was intended to encourage migrants, perceived as temporary settlers, to return to their home country, has broadly failed to achieve its objective (EMN, 2009). This is because, among other causes, migrants who subjected themselves to the return programme were supposed to surrender their residence permit and all documents that link them to Spain; a risk that a lot of them were not ready to take.

In this paper we want to examine the extent to which migrants in Spain's intention to hold on to their residence right is a strain to return migration. Our assumption is that in order to predict return migration flows, and the level by which government return policies can motivate return, it is rather important to understand the return intentions of the migrants, the conditions under which they plan to return, the objectives that the migrants want to achieve before they return, the timing of return and return constraints. The paper focuses on Ghanaian migrants living in Vic, in the province of Barcelona. It examines their return intentions before, during and after migration; and the extent to which their desire to hold on to Spanish residence rights affects their return migration projects.

Migration from Ghana to Spain began during the late 1990s and gathered greater momentum after 2000. In 1998 only 624 Ghanaians were living in Spain; however by 2009 the number had increased to

approximately 15,179, out of which some 11,586 had residence permits³. Most of these migrants initially desired to amass resources and then return to Ghana. However, as Manu and Asante (2005: 293) have rightly observed, «while many [Ghanaian] migrants expected their stay to be temporary, they have been forced to stay on because conditions in Ghana and in the host societies have combined to make it impossible to accumulate sufficient capital to return to Ghana to live comfortably».

THEORY AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

While there are a lot of people who move with the intention to return, changing personal attributes and conditions in the host and home countries influence those intentions (Bovenkerk, 1974). Consequently, migrants' intention to return may not often coincide with actual return behaviour. In her study of Pakistani migrants in Britain, Bolognani (2007: 63) reported that the first generation Pakistani migrants in UK had a five-year duration plan, but their settlement turned into a permanent one.

In fact, the complex relationship between migrant's desire to return to their home country and actual return has generated a debate about what is generally described as «the myth of return», «return illusion», «return ethos», or «return ideology» (Bolognani, 2007; Brettell, 2007; Anwar, 1979). According to King (2000b: 12) the concept:

«Expresses a contrasting set of beliefs and actions whereby, no matter how settled, migrants talk and behave as if one day they shall return. However, this orientation to eventual return is at variance with the objective realities of migrants' lives in the destination country where factors such as regular and well-paid work, family settlement and children's education make it increasing unlikely that they will ever return».

Anwar (1979) has argued that the «myth of return» rather reinforces and strengthens migrants' ties with their homeland. And some authors consider it as a defence strategy against assimilation

³ All figures used in this work, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from official data sources of the year 2009 (cfr. www.ine.es).

in the face of unease about the cultural differences in the host country (cfr. King, 2000b: 12).

Notwithstanding the above observations, migrants' intention to return to their home country may not always remain a dream or a myth in spite of the fact that return migration could be obstructed by many difficulties. This is because migration is not a one way process, and just as Ravenstein (1885) has stated in his «fourth law», «each main current of migration produces a compensating counter-current». There is also a lot of empirical evidence to support these claims⁴. In a recent publication, Ghosh (2000: 182) recalled that 30 percent of immigrants admitted into the United States for permanent residence between 1908 and 1957 returned to their country of origin. More than 50 percent of immigrants who entered the United States from Mexico between 1980 and 1990 returned after two years of residence and this proportion rose to 70 percent after ten years of residence.

The earliest attempt to classify migrants according to their return intentions was done by Bovenkerk in a biographical essay. His conceptualisation is based on the hypothesis that pre-migration return intentions may not always match with eventual outcomes, and while it is true that some people migrate with no specific idea about whether they shall return or not, significant numbers of migrants move with the hope to return home one day. He therefore matched migrants' duration intentions with actual return behaviour and came out with four typologies illustrated in table 1 below.

TABLE 1
MIGRATION DURATION AND RETURN INTENTION MODEL

<i>Actual migration movement</i>		
<i>Duration intention</i>	<i>Non-return</i>	<i>Return</i>
Permanent	(1)	(2)
Temporary	(4)	(3)

Source: Frank Bovenkerk 1974.

(1) Intended permanent migration without return.

(2) Intended permanent migration with return.

(3) Intended temporary migration with return.

(4) Intended temporary migration without return.

⁴ For classical empirical studies on return migration see: Cerase (1974), Bovenkerk (1983), Gmelch (1987), King (1986), and Böhning (1986).

Intended permanent migration without return comprises of migrants who do not plan to return prior to migration, and never return after migration. This form of movement characterised most of migration movements to North and South America, Australia and New Zealand during the *mercantile period* (1500-1800) and the *industrial period* (1846-1924) of European emigration, greatly motivated by the desire to break ties with the old land and make a new start in the new land (Massey, 2003: 1).

Intended permanent migration with return consists of migrants who plan to settle permanently prior to migration, but change their initial settlement intentions after migration. This behaviour is the result of adaptation problems, homesickness, family issues, life cycle issues, political ideologies and government policies which oblige migrants to return home (cfr. Cerase, 1974).

Intended temporary migration with return refers to migrants who depart with the intention to return and do, in fact, return. This form of return is motivated by the type of work contracts that migrants have at the time of migration. Seasonal workers may return at the end of contract. During time of economic recession, temporary workers may not have their work contract renewed and may therefore return. Others may return because they have achieved their original objective of accumulating enough savings to invest at home or have accumulated enough human capital to enhance their earnings back at home. Some recent empirical studies have emphasised that this type of return generally takes place within the first five years of migration (Dustmann and Weiss, 2007: 6).

Intended temporary migration without return includes temporary migrants who convert into permanent settlers. International students who stay on after their studies also constitute this group. During the post-War migration in Europe, majority of the immigrants who had been admitted through temporary recruitment schemes stayed on. This behaviour is largely motivated by restrictive migration policies and suggests that free movement facilitates circular migration while migrants tend to settle permanently when they fear they would miss the opportunity to gain access to the former immigration country once they return to their origin country. As Gentileschi (2009: 17) has argued, «the opening of the frontiers leads to an increase of mobility, but in both directions».

Migrants' return intentions are influenced by many factors. Achievement of migration objectives, savings accumulations, life

cycle motives and improved economic and political conditions in the origin country could motivate return migration. By contrast, the desire to keep residence permits, family reunification and offspring upbringing in the host country as well as acquisition of new consumption behaviour may make return improbable. Additionally, if the conditions that stimulated migration in the home country still persist and migrants are unable to accumulate sufficient savings to make living in the origin country possible, return becomes less probable (Kirdar, 2009).

In a study of return intentions from Germany, Waldorf (1995) observed that return migration intentions are influenced by migrants' personal attributes, residential and job satisfaction and by three time-dependent variables, namely: years prior to retirement, the duration effect and temporal trend of migration. During his research on return migration from Sweden, Klinthäll (2004) observed that return rates increased considerably when the immigrants reached the legal pension age of 65 years. He observed a gradual increase of return migration at age 51, which peaked at age 65 and started declining again. This suggests that migration is sometimes a life cycle dislocation project and while some migrants may like to go home early (Dustmann and Weiss, 2007), others may prefer to return home after pension age.

Economic success may negatively or positively influence return. Constant and Massey (2003) have suggested that while family and emotional attachment to the birth place may motivate return migration of labour migrants from Germany, immigrants that are well integrated in the labour economy in Germany are less likely to return than the least employed. Reyes (1997) also found the same results among Mexican migrants in California. Her sample survey showed that return was higher for migrants with lower education, low wages and for illegal immigrants. Kirdar (2009: 427) on the other hand, has contrasted this position. His study of return behaviour of labour migrants from Germany suggests that in the case whereby migration was a consequence of an optimal life-cycle location decision and the migrants' intention was to accumulate savings, they will return after they have accumulated enough savings in Germany to make important contribution in their home country. Consequently, long term unemployed immigrants are more likely to stay in Germany. In a similar manner, Carling (2004) also observed that Cape Verdean migrants in the Netherlands who were unsuccessful were less likely to return.

Ghanaian migrants in Western countries maintain strong emotional and economic linkages to their homeland (Mazzucato, 2008). A lot of them believe they would return to settle in Ghana one day. Over 90 percent of Ghanaian migrants surveyed in Toronto thought they would return to settle in Ghana some day (Owusu, 2003). However, their return behaviour is largely attributed to economic success than to failure. This was echoed by Berkhout and colleagues (2005: 82) when they wrote: «Ghanaian people are most likely to come back after being (at least partly) successful abroad. As we iterated many times, Ghanaians are proud people and, consequently, are very hesitant to return home, when no serious financial improvements have been made». Besides, success may not have to be taken in economic terms only. Migrants' ability to secure European residence rights and maybe citizenship status may amount to a greater degree of success for a lot of Ghanaian migrants in Europe. Other factors such as social exclusion, adaptation problems, the quest for better living conditions and unemployment are motives for return or onward migration among Ghanaians in Europe. However, our hypothesis is that return is still an unlikely enterprise for Ghanaian migrants in Spain to embark upon when it compromises their right to freely re-enter and live in Europe.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is based on data drawn from various sources. Primarily, municipal district registry data (*padrón municipal*) and secondary literature were relied upon to estimate the demographic and socio-economic profile of the Ghanaian migrants in Vic. Additionally, in-depth semi-structured questionnaire was administered on 17 first generation Ghanaian migrants in Vic during the months of December 2009 and August 2010. The sample of interviewees included ordinary Ghanaian migrants and key figures such as group and association leaders, church leaders and people with long duration of stay in Spain. The selection process of respondents was based on purposeful non-random sampling technique. Other key informants outside the research population were interviewed. They included a Nigerian lawyer who was employed as unskilled labourer in a meat processing industry, three Ghanaian couples from Manresa who

were church leaders in Vic and a Netherland-based Ghanaian who owned a shop together with his wife in Vic.

The interviewees were from three ethnic groups in Ghana, namely, Akan, Ewe and Kulango. However, majority of interviewees were Akans from the Ashanti and Brong Ahafo regions of Ghana, which also reflected the ethnic composition of the Ghanaian migrants in Spain.

Five (5) out of the seventeen (17) of the interviewees were women. Four (4) had come to Spain to join their husbands. The other one had come to Spain by her own means. Out of the four who came for family reasons two had separated from their husbands. Most men interviewed in Vic had entered Spain by Sea from Morocco or Libya, while a few had come to Spain from another European country where they have previously lived. Fifteen (15) of all the immigrants interviewed were in their thirties or early forties. Only two (2) persons were over fifty years old. Ten (10) had employment. All, but one, of the interviewees who had employment were working in the meat processing industry, mainly in the butchering and dressing sectors as unskilled labourers. Only one (1) out the five (5) women interviewed had a job as at the time of the interview. The rest used to have a job but were unemployed during the time of the field work.

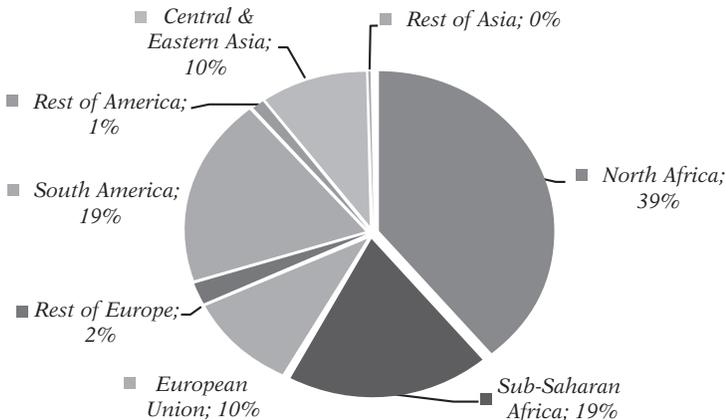
The data gathered during the interviews included age, place of origin, ethnicity, religion, migration trajectory, number of years in the host country, nationality, location of family, employment, migration objectives, contact with Ghana, return plans and investment in Ghana. Most interviews were conducted in local Ghanaian languages spoken and understood by our respondents. They were recorded and later transcribed. In the next sections we will provide a profile of the Ghanaian migrants in Vic, followed by analysis of their home orientations, return projects and the conclusion.

PIG MEAT PROCESSING AND MIGRANT LABOUR IN VIC

Vic is the capital and largest city in Osona *comarca*⁵ and is located some sixty-eight kilometres north of Barcelona. Long before Spain converted into an immigration country, Vic had been

⁵ A *comarca* is an administrative division in Spain comprising of a number of municipalities.

attracting migrants from other parts of Spain, particularly from Andalucía, Extremadura, Castilla y León and Castilla-La Mancha (González, 2005). However, during the late 1980s, migrants from Nador and the rural areas in the Rif's mountainous region of Morocco began to arrive in the town. This new type of immigration gathered force and significance with the arrival of additional migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa (Ghana and Nigeria); Latin America (Ecuador and Colombia); and from Europe (Georgia, Bulgaria and Ukraine), during the late 1990s (González, 2005: 459). Therefore at the end of 2009, there were 9,875 migrants in Vic, representing over 24 percent of the total population of the town, while Moroccans formed the most dominant group with 3,300 persons, followed by Ghanaians (1,024), Ecuadorians (857), Indians (512), and Chinese (498).



Source: Own elaboration of Municipal District Registry data (Padrón Municipal) sourced from Institut d'Estadística de Catalunya website (www.idescat.cat).

In 2009 Ghanaian migrants represented over 10% of the migrant population in Vic and more than 2% of the total population of Vic. Therefore Vic is the only town in Spain where Ghanaian immigrants have such demographic impact. They moved there from Barcelona and southern Spain during the late 1990s due to the availability of industrial labour. The vast majority of the Ghanaian men in Vic came to Spain through Libya while the women later arrived through family reunification. However, some of the Ghanaian set-

tlers in Vic moved there from other European countries due to the possibility to easily regularise their residence status in Spain.

Most of the Ghanaian migrants in Vic are within the working age, as illustrated in table 2 below. About 78% are between 25-49 age groups, while those between 30-39 years constitute about 54% of the total Ghanaian population in Vic. The most striking aspect however, is that females account for a meagre 16%. Moreover, the females above twenty years represent just over 11% of the total Ghanaian population in the town. This shows that family reunification rates are at their lowest. This is very uncharacteristic of Ghanaian migration patterns in Europe. It is however, important to note that 11% of the Ghanaians population in Vic is made up of children below fifteen years old, which suggests a greater tendency towards permanent settlement.

TABLE 2
GHANAIAN POPULATION IN VIC BY AGE AND SEX IN 2009

<i>Age Group</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>%/Ghanaian Population</i>	<i>%/Total Immigrant Population</i>
0-4 yrs	52	34	86	8.40	0.87
5-9 yrs	13	8	21	2.05	0.21
10-14 yrs	≤4	4	6	0.59	0.06
15-19 yrs	12	4	16	1.56	0.16
20-24 yrs	30	5	35	3.42	0.35
25-29 yrs	99	27	125	12.30	1.28
30-34 yrs	285	34	319	31.15	3.23
35-39 yrs	205	36	241	23.54	2.44
40-44 yrs	105	14	119	11.62	1.21
45-49 yrs	37	4	41	4.00	0.42
50-54 yrs	11	≤4	13	1.27	0.13
55-59yrs	0	0	0	0.00	0
60-64yrs	0	0	0	0.00	0
65+	0	≤4	≤4	0.10	0.01
<i>Total</i>	<i>851</i>	<i>173</i>	<i>1,024</i>	<i>100.00</i>	<i>10.37</i>
<i>%</i>	<i>80.11</i>	<i>16.87</i>	<i>100</i>		

Source: Institut d'Estadística de Catalunya, (own elaboration).

The pig meat processing industry is one of the main economic sectors which have attracted Ghanaian and other Sub-Saharan Af-

rican migrant labour to Vic. Pig farming and pig meat processing are the leading economic activities in Vic. However, other economic sectors such as construction, hospitality industry, domestic service, as well as leather and minor companies in the metal and machinery industry have also attracted migrants labour to Vic (Espinoza and Rosés, 2002: 215).

Demand for cheap and exploitable labour in the meat processing industries, characteristic of southern European economies (Calavita, 2005), may explain the main reason why Sub-Saharan African migrant workers are needed in Vic. Espinoza and Rosés have argued that this industry, which is the most vibrant sector in Osona, offers category of jobs generally considered as difficult, dangerous and exploitative and consistently refused by the local population. For that matter immigrants are concentrated in that sector. The authors reported that the immigrants are placed in the extremely cold slaughterhouses that are dangerous to human health in the long term (Espinoza and Rosés, 2002: 216). Moreover, due to religious restriction on pigs, more Sub-Saharans than Moroccans work in this industry, despite the fact that the latter constitute nearly 40 percent of the total immigrant population in Vic. Additionally, Espinosa and Rosés observed that the Moroccans who were first to arrive in Vic have difficult access to jobs in relation to the newcomers, namely, the Sub-Saharans and Latin Americans, because, having lived there for long time, they knew their labour rights and wanted to vindicate them. The authors observed that «the Sub-Saharans, on the contrary, who are in a more precarious economic situation, have no single idea about the legal system in force in Spain or about their rights» (Espinoza and Rosés, 2002: 217). The consequence is that they accept any job in any condition.

The migrants in the meat processing industry normally start work at five o'clock in the morning. They work between eight and twelve hours a day, six to seven days a week. The salary is very low, ranging between €900 and €1,200. Both men and women are employed in this sector, but there are more men than women. The working conditions of the migrants in this sector, as we have already hinted, are very poor. Apart from difficult working hours, the sector presents high cases of irregularity and abuse. Many migrants work without contracts. Some work many years in the sector with-

out a fix contract⁶. Others are given sub-contracts and employed as self-employees (autonomous) which is a new strategy to exploit the migrants. Migrant workers under such arrangements are not entitled to unemployment benefits or holidays with pay. Few Ghanaians are working in the other employment sectors and due to the economic crisis, there is growing unemployment among the migrants. For that reason some have left to work in farms in the south or dislocated temporarily to other European countries.

There are several Ghanaian alimentary shops in Vic mostly owned and run by women. Ghanaian fashion shops and hair dressing salons are also present in the town. A few women also prepare and sell Ghanaian dishes like *Enkran dokono* (Accra kenkey), which are normally purchased in their homes or at the Ghanaian Pentecostal church premises during Sunday church services.

In the next section we shall explain the return migration projects of the Ghanaian migrants in Vic and the extent to which their desire to secure and maintain permanent residence rights in Spain is a strain on return migration.

RESULTS

The migration profile of Ghanaian migrants in Spain suggests, to a greater degree, a pattern of migration aimed at permanent or long-term settlement. This behaviour could be traced from the time the migrants leave Ghana; the years it takes to reach Spain and to acquire Spanish residence permit. Moreover, concentration of the migrants in Vic and in meat processing industry is to secure residence stability, and permanent jobs not offered in other sectors such as construction, agriculture and service where migrant labour is highly utilised in Spain. Though family reunification levels are low, this is mainly the result of harsh socio-economic conditions and

⁶ One Ghanaian lady who has been working in the same company for nearly four years said her employers have never wished to make her permanent. They give her a six-month contract, which is renewed for another six months, and then she is asked to go and stay home for another six months (to take unemployment benefits) after which she is re-incorporated. She told me the ladies in her company normally start work from 3 pm to 11 pm, and those who want to do extra hours work till one o'clock in the morning.

restrictive migration policies. The tendency to settle permanently in Spain is strongly articulated in the following statement:

«I came here in December 2000. I left Ghana in 1999 and went to Libya. I spent one year five months there then I moved to Morocco with friends. We spent seven months in Morocco. We first stayed in Rabat, but there was no «connection» there to come to Europe, so we moved to their second capital called Tanger and stayed between three to four months in a hotel. Then we got a «connection» and came to southern Spain by boat. From there we moved to Madrid. We got stranded in Madrid because at the time we arrived there were few «darkee» people in Spain. We slept at bus and train stations because we had no money to go to Barcelona. Finally we found a «brother» who gave us lorry fare to go to Barcelona... We struggled in Barcelona... we slept on the street at a place called plaza Catalunya. Then a group called CC.OO. said they would help us. They invited us to their office to interview us and write our statement, but in the beginning we did not trust them. We thought it was a trick. However, they truly helped us and getting to the ending of 2001 we were issued with residence permits... However, we needed working permit to be able to work. So we were advised to go to the south for the famers to help us... So I worked in an apple plantation for two months and when I got the work permit I came to Vic to look for a job... I now have a permanent residence permit. My wife came in May 2008... My intention is to return one day with capital, but it is not easy to return... Right now I prefer to be able to go home and come back, and return probably after pension (V12)⁷.

Like this interviewee, a lot of the Ghanaian migrants entered Spain illegally through unconventional borders after crossing the Sahara desert by land and the Mediterranean Sea by boat. This route, which has become risky and time-consuming in recent years (Carling, 2007) has been used by a lot of Ghanaian youth with low educational profile to move to Spain. The journey could take between eight months to three years.

Apart from economic motives, the opportunity for migrants to secure legal residence permits in Spain, which is an important step to be successful in Europe, is one of the main reasons why the Gha-

⁷ The numbers in parenthesis refer to the source of the information. The migrants interviewed were numbered. For details of the interviews see the appendix.

naian migrants come to Spain. Indeed some of them who have previously lived in another European country have come to Spain to settle for this reason.

«I left Ghana in 1998 and went to Amsterdam on a business visa. But my intention was to study. I spent about eight years there then I came to Spain... because, though I was working while I was in Amsterdam, I could not acquire a residence permit. And if I had been accosted on the street I had nothing to prove that I was a resident... I therefore came to Logroño... I now have a temporary residence permit and I am about to apply for a permanent residence permit... I will surely apply for it» (V.5).

Another respondent, Kwadwo, who left Ghana in 2001 and went to Germany after his undergraduate studies in Ghana, came to Spain because he could not acquire a residence permit in Germany. When he received the Spanish residence permit he went to UK to study for master's degree in information management, then he returned to Spain to work. In a similar story, Kwaku also first went to UK in 1974 to study. Then after studying in Germany and Norway he returned briefly to work in Ghana in the late 1980s. However, things did not go well while he was in Ghana, so after just six months there he decided to come to Spain to settle. Therefore, these migrants specifically chose Spain because it is much easier to secure legal residence there than other European countries.

Additionally, some of the migrants who enter Spain by Sea usually go to other European countries to settle and work as illegal migrants, yet they eventually return to Spain to acquire a residence permit to settle there. Normally, when these immigrants first enter Spanish territory as illegal migrants, they register with their passport at the local council upon arrival. After three years they are able to use this registration document (*impadronamento*) or any other document at their disposal to prove that they have lived constantly in Spain for a period of three years in illegal status to apply for a legal residence permit. This ordinary process to acquire residence permit in Spain is called *arraigo*. Therefore, some Ghanaians, upon entering Spain and registering, prefer to move onward to other European states. They return to Spain to apply for residence permits when they are not been able to acquire legal residence in the other European destination.

«When I arrived in Spain in 2002, my friends invited me to Italy, because it was possible to do farm work in the south without work permit. When I arrived there I got the job but there was no means to get the residence permit there. I therefore, returned to Spain in 2004 when the time was getting up for me to apply for the residence permit» (N. 2).

Kofi, who narrated a similar story, was also in UK between 2003 and 2005. He had arrived in Spain in 2002. Therefore, the main objective of Ghanaian migrants who enter Spain is to secure residence permit and not just to accumulate financial capital to go back to Ghana.

How then do we conciliate the migrants' tendency towards permanent settlement with return migration? In fact, while it is true that the Ghanaian migrants maintain strong emotional ties with Ghana while they are overseas and they desire to return one day, they also seek long-term residence rights in the host countries, which they do not easily relinquish. Will the migrants therefore return to live indefinitely in Ghana after they have secured legal residence rights in Spain?

In fact, the Ghanaian migrants' intention to hold on to their European residence right and to be able to move between Ghana and Europe without restrictions is a big strain on return migration. During our field research in Vic we found that even migrants who are making serious preparations to return to settle in Ghana also want to keep their residence permits. Those in illegal residence status are unlikely to abandon Spain. Before the migrants leave they first ensure that they are able to re-enter Spain in the future without obstacles. In fact, during the interviews we asked the migrants whether they were willing to surrender their residence permit to the host state in return for financial support to return home. Our objective was to test their reaction to the return migration programme that was under implementation in Spain for unemployed labour migrants with right to receive unemployment benefit who wished to return to their home country⁸. The response of the migrants is summarised in the following interview:

⁸ Although Ghanaians are not entitled to this benefits. The agreement gathers only 20 countries: Andorra, Chile, the Philippines, Dominican Republic, Argentina, Colombia, Morocco, Tunisia, Australia, Ecuador, Mexico, Ukraine, Brazil, Unites States, Paraguay, Uruguay, Canada, Russia, Peru and Venezuela. http://www.planderetornovoluntario.es/index_uno.html#uno

«I am making serious preparation to go home... I told you I have my masters. I want to have a certificate in Oracle or Microsoft to be able to compete in the job market [in Ghana]... Even though I want to go back to Ghana, I want to have the freedom to be able to visit Europe... I will not opt for the voluntary return programme» (V1).

In addition to his intentions to keep his Spanish residence permit, this interviewee also wanted his wife to come to Spain first, acquire the residence permit before they both return.

«I want my wife to come before I return to Ghana... I have done a thorough planning. I think she will come here, get the residence permit, just like the one I have, before we go back to Ghana» (V1).

This also suggests that until the migrants secure permanent residence permits or citizenship they are not likely to return to live in Ghana. This implies that in the context of restrictive immigration regime, the acquisition of legal residence status is an important value and migrants are not willing to relinquish their permits even if they have to return to their home country. Therefore, temporary migration projects are difficult to achieve when there are many restrictions on free movements.

Acquisition of Spanish residence permit is, no doubt, an important value for Ghanaian migrants in Spain. Otherwise, there is no explanation why a migrant would decide to bring his wife to Spain to acquire the residence permit when he is planning to return. While some migrants prefer to stay in Spain till they have acquired Spanish citizenship before they relocate to Ghana, some have deliberately decided not to opt for citizenship (in order not to lose their Ghanaian citizenship) but to secure a permanent Spanish residence permit, which will allow them to maintain residence rights simultaneously in Spain and in Ghana. This was the project of an interviewee who is a shopkeeper and has lived twenty-one years in Spain:

«I will not give up my residence permit. I want to leave room to be able to go home and return... I didn't apply for [Spanish] citizenship because I have to go back home. I am always thinking about Ghana. I have plans to do something there and if I claim citizenship here they would not allow me» (V17).

During the time of this research, the economic recession in Spain was at its heights and a lot of migrant families had limited means of sustenance. Therefore, some of our respondents who initially thought they would live permanently in Spain were also planning to return, due to difficult socio-economic conditions. One lady said:

«When I was coming [to join my husband] I did not think I would return to live in Ghana. However, things are hard here so I think I have to get some capital and go back home to settle» (V.3).

Yet return migration is a difficult enterprise to embark upon due to the fear of losing residence rights and the desire to build a family in Spain. Moreover, some parents believe their children have brighter future in Spain than in Ghana. One of the main strategies of prospective return migrants is to let part of the family stay in Spain. This is to maintain linkages with Spain after return.

«If God permits, I will go home and work there for a while in the course of this year. The time I have scheduled to return has passed already. I had an accident so I decided to hold on.... But I don't think I can go home for good. I want my family to stay here for the children to continue with their education.... In my opinion, I will say if I can cater for them [children] well they have a brighter future here» (V. 9).

While migrants who have their families in Spain prefer to educate their children there, the fact of letting part of the family stay in Spain during return is also to ensure that the returnee can fall back on the family in Spain for assistance and re-enter Spain (through family reunification) in case the return project fails. This strategy is in contradiction to Spanish government's assisted return schemes which enjoin on beneficiaries to leave Spain together with all dependent family members and to surrender all documents (residence permits; health insurance cards; residence registration cards etc) that link them to Spain (EMN, 2009: 31).

The migrants' desire to maintain residential ties with Spain also has great impact on the timing of return. The settlement patterns, i.e., a greater tendency towards family settlement, also suggest that most returns would possibly take place after the migrants have reached pension age. But even in this case, the migrants would maintain economic and family ties with Spain when they return.

For example, James who is fifty-six years old said he will return after pension age. His wife also said she will return with him. The couple has completed building a house in their hometown in Ghana where they plan to live. However, they said they wanted to ensure that their children who are still in Ghana have come to Spain and are well settled before they go back to settle in Ghana.

Additionally, all migrants we interviewed who had all or part of their family in Spain owned the house they lived in. This was quite striking because, while it is true that they could sell their houses when they decide to leave Spain, home ownership in the immigration country might suggest, to a certain degree, an intention to settle permanently. This means that, in spite of economic problems, indefinite return migration is not an immediate solution for Ghanaian migrants in Spain. Some of the migrants also said the socio-economic situation in Ghana is worse. Therefore, when certain basic necessities such as a house and an income generating activity have not been secured in Ghana, return is not a reasonable solution:

«When you have completed your house [in Ghana] and you have a car, the next thing is to start a store or a company, otherwise you cannot go back» (V.6).

In a worse situation, the migrants will rather move to another European country taking benefits of their acquired residence rights in Spain, which permit them to move freely within the European Union (EU) with right, though limited, to settle in another EU country.

CONCLUSION

Since the 1970s immigration policies in Western Europe have tended to be more restrictive. While regional integration has favoured movement of people with relatively equal level of economic development, poor people from developing nations find it more and more difficult to cross the borders of the developed nations to seek better opportunities⁹. The ethical and political implication of this has been analysed in detail by Carens (1992). The unexpected out-

⁹ For details about border controls in Spain see S. ALSCHER, *op. cit.*

come of the restrictive immigration policies is that once migrants who have greater obstacles to circulate freely in the developed nations attain the right to live there, the fear of losing that right is very great. Therefore they are not willing to leave without being assured of the right to re-enter. This situation appears to be the main headache of the Ghanaian migrants in Spain who intend to return. For that reason, their main objective is to secure permanent residence status or citizenship before they leave.

During the time of return some couples want one partner to stay in Europe as insurance for possible re-entry in case the return project fails. Therefore, for majority of Ghanaian immigrants in Europe, the residence permit is a treasure; it provides a lot of opportunities and should never be renounced for any other motive. The migrants consider acquisition and maintenance of Spanish residence permit as an important step to guarantee their success in Europe. It gives a lot of advantages and removes all limits regarding free movement and rights.

Since indefinite return could amount to losing the residence permit and its associated rights, return intentions are realised within the context of transnationalism. This behaviour seems to have escaped earlier classifications of return migration patterns, as it is in the case of Bovenkerk. There appears to be a growing tendency towards transnational residence patterns and «double-engagement» of migrants and returnees between host and origin country. While empirical studies have shown that return peaks after pension age, it is also necessary to ask if retirement returns are indefinite, as migrants will definitely maintain economic and family ties with the former immigration country, since these migrants will still receive pension from the former immigration country and their children are likely to remain there. Additionally, when migrants return to an underdeveloped country, such as Ghana, where access to basic social services, such as quality health care, is lacking they are likely to rely on the former immigration country for such services. This is the reason why the Ghanaian migrants want to keep their residence rights even after return.

However, the migrants' intention to acquire and hold on to their Spanish residence rights amount to a severe alteration to temporary migration projects and early returns. This is because prospective returnees have to stay in the immigration country more years than expected to acquire such permits and once they have them they are

not able to abandon the immigration country for over a limited period of time (usually six months). This situation shows that, perhaps restriction on free movement rather provokes longer settlement durations of migrants than more liberal regimes. This is in line with Lee's (1966: 53) assertion that «intervening obstacles» as a result of restrictive or more liberal migration policies strongly influence the volume and size of flows. In more liberal regimes, migration flows between host and home countries are more dynamic.

Based on our analysis, therefore, we think that Spanish return migration policies that require beneficiaries to surrender their residence permits would not motivate Ghanaian migrants to go back home. On the contrary, if migrants are able to acquire permanent residence or citizenship rights within a shorter period of settlement in Spain, which permit them to stay longer periods or even indefinitely in their home or other country without losing these rights, such policies are more likely to aid return migration flows of Ghanaians from Spain. Further studies could investigate how this behaviour is applicable in other migrant communities.

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APPENDIX:
CHARACTERISTICS OF GHANAIAN MIGRANTS INTERVIEWED IN VIC

No	Age	Sex	Origin	Ethnicity	Years in Spain	Spanish Nationality	Job	Family Location	Observation
V/1	32	M	Accra	Ewe	9	No	Yes	Ghana	MA in Information Management
V/2	35	M	Sekwa	Kulango	8	No	No	Ghana	In Italy between 2002-2004
V/3	37	F	Badu	Kulango	9	No	No	Spain	Invited by husband but separated
V/4	32	M	Nkoranza	Akan/Bono	8	No	Yes	Ghana	In UK between 2003-2005
V/5	38	M	Ejuso	Akan/Asante	12	No	Yes	Ghana	Lived 8 years in Amsterdam
V/6	39	M	Dormaa	Akan/Bono	9	No	No	Ghana	
V/7	40	F	Cape Coast	Akan/Fanti	6	No	No	Ghana	
V/8	41	M	Nkoranza	Akan/Bono	11	No	Yes	Spain	
V/9	45	M	Berekum	Akan/Bono	17	No	Yes	Spain	
V/10	36	F	Berekum	Akan/Bono	11	No	Yes	Spain	Invited by husband
V/11	40	F	Berekum	Akan/Bono	7	No	No	Spain	Invited by husband but separated
V/12	56	M	Nkoranza	Akan/Bono	10	No	Yes	Spain/Ghana	President of Brong Ahafo Association
V/13	45	F	Dormaa	Akan/Bono	6	No	No	Spain/Ghana	Invited by husband
V/14	34	M	Badu	Kulango	9	No	Yes	Spain	
V/15	43	M	Badu	Kulango	5	No	Yes	Ghana	
V/16	34	M	Sekyer-Domase	Akan/Asante	8	No	No	Ghana	
V/17	51	M	Mampong	Benin	21	No	Yes	Spain	Left Ghana in 1974 for studies in London, Germany and Sweden