

I | Introduction

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Many African migrants who reside in Europe nurture a hope to one day return, either permanently or on a more temporary basis. Increasingly restrictive migration policies make many migrants hesitant to 'return', as that might imply closing the door to Europe (de Haas 2006; Schoumaker et al. 2013). Yet, in the wake of developments in Africa and in Europe, it is possible that the impetus to return might increase in the coming years. The economic crisis in parts of Europe has made the lives of migrants particularly difficult, as manifested in their further marginalisation in labour markets but also in the upsurge of xenophobic, anti-migrant discourses and practices. At the same time, many African economies are growing at a fast rate¹ and have an increased demand for skilled labour.

Contemporary policy discourse has come to attach great expectations to African returnees, portraying them as 'agents of development'. Return migration – particularly to sub-Saharan Africa – occupies a central position in current policy debates on migration and development. In recent years, governments in the global North, international agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have come to expect returnees to play an important role in the development of their 'home countries' (see, for example, European Commission 2011; Global Forum on Migration and Development 2012). As Sinatti and Horst (2015: 144) note, return is emerging as a key issue in the most recent policy documents on development in the European Union (EU) as well as in various member countries – representing 'a new chapter within the migration–development debate'. Also, some African migrant sending countries, such as Senegal, Cape Verde and Ghana, are promoting return migration, at least of highly skilled migrants. Hence, in the contemporary policy discourse, returnees are often portrayed as agents of development who will bring back economic capital, knowledge and skills as well as social connections, values and attitudes gained in 'a developed North'.

Yet little attention so far has been directed to the experiences of return migrants themselves or to the structural factors shaping returnees' possibility of assuming the role of 'the new developers'. While there is an extensive literature on how African migrants contribute to 'development at home' through

¹ See the Africa section on the World Bank website: www.worldbank.org/en/country.

remittances (for example, Bardouille et al. 2008; Mohapatra and Ratha 2011; Pérouse de Montclos 2005), the experiences of African return migrants have received only scanty attention (for an exception, see Grabska 2014). This silence is even more problematic given the often great – and individualised – expectations put on these migrants in policy debates.

Based on original qualitative ethnographic and interview material with return migrants in Ghana, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Senegal, Somaliland, Burundi, South Sudan and Cape Verde, this book fills a gap in current knowledge on African return migration. It aims to further our understanding of the constraints and opportunities attached to migrants' efforts to return and to reintegrate within 'their society of origin'. What kind of capital (social, economic and cultural) have migrants acquired abroad and how useful is that capital for their capabilities when settling in their place of return? How can returnees' stories shed light on their ability (and willingness) to occupy this role as 'new developers'? In short, this book aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the structural factors that shape this willingness and ability, highlighting the interplay between return migrants' experiences and the political, social and economic circumstances in the societies to which they return.

The book problematises the common tendency in Northern policy to locate the 'useful' social, economic and cultural capital firmly in the migration experience. According to this dominant perspective, it is the various forms of capital that migrants obtain in Europe that are valuable and will somehow automatically provide the skills required for a 'successful return' – not only for the migrants themselves but for society at large. By contrast, this book highlights the fact that 'successful return' is a manifestation of a multi-directional transfer of different forms of capital, also acquired 'at home' before migration and upon return. Moreover, the contributions show that the capital obtained in Europe is not always advantageous and can sometimes even hamper successful entrepreneurship and other forms of economic, political and social engagement. While the structural context in the destination country (the prospects provided in terms of education, skilled job opportunities and savings) plays a crucial role, so too do the migrants' own capacity to transform this capital, and acquire new capital, upon their return.

Hence, the book highlights mismatches between policy assumptions and migrants' actual practices, opportunities and willingness to act as 'new developers'. This mismatch is reflected in, on the one hand, the tendency to conceptualise the migration experience as something that is inherently useful, and, on the other hand, the propensity to ignore the challenges posed by the circumstances encountered upon return. As the contributions reveal, there are numerous challenges attached to transforming the migration experience into something useful, both for the migrants themselves and for the society of origin. Successful return migration is not primarily dependent on the vari-

ous forms of social, cultural and economic capital obtained abroad, but on the various obstacles posed by the structures encountered upon return and the returnees' ability to transform the 'migration capital' they have attained.

A qualification is needed. While the book casts doubt on the celebratory story of return migration and development, its intention is not to refute the development contributions of returnees. Clearly, many individual returnees play a significant part in economic and political development. Rather than discarding such contributions, the book highlights the importance of critically evaluating the expectations placed on returnees in migration and development policies, and demonstrates the various challenges migrants face upon their return.

In the following parts of this introductory chapter, we first elaborate further on current tendencies in policies relating to returnees' contributions to development, highlighting driving forces and limitations. We then present the conceptual and analytical framework guiding the contributions to the book, further elucidating the concepts of 'development contribution', 'return' and 'returnees', as well as the theoretical framework that views return as being contingent on economic, social and cultural capital.

The celebratory story of returnees' contribution to development

Migrants' skills and knowledge transfers also constitute assets for development. These could translate into remittances, technology transfers, links to professional networks, investment and – arguably – a better integration of origin countries into the global markets.

This statement by the European Commission (2011: 7) sums up some key assumptions in current policies on migration, return and development. A major supposition is that migration to Northern countries is an enriching experience that leads to the accumulation of different forms of capital that are valuable to the developing countries in the South. The main idea is that the capital obtained is used for investment and business activities, which in turn promote jobs and economic growth. As Black and Castaldo (2009) argue, returnees' development of small-scale businesses is often construed as being part of the solution to reducing poverty in Africa. In line with this, European donors are funding new programmes to help returnee entrepreneurs set up businesses in their country of origin (Sinatti and Horst 2015: 145). In addition to business activities, returnees are exhorted to also take up political office, work for different types of international organisation and engage in reconstruction processes after armed conflict (Hammond et al. 2011; Kleist and Vammen 2012).

This celebratory story of return has been manifested in a number of new programmes. As Kleist and Vammen (2012) point out, return programmes – both forced and more voluntary versions – date back to the 1970s. Rejected asylum seekers and irregular migrants have mostly been sent back against their

will and have been prohibited from returning to the country of immigration. Other return programmes have targeted regular migrants but have imposed conditions on their return, such as the loss of legal status in the European country of residence. Overall, these approaches have failed, since migrants have been unwilling to participate (de Haas 2006; Kleist and Vammen 2012). However, while return programmes are not a novel phenomenon, there has been an increase in new examples in recent years, and these have taken slightly new forms. Influenced by the policy discourse on circular migration, and acknowledging migrants' transnational involvement and mobility, contemporary programmes focus more on temporary return for short- or long-term qualified work assignments and, unlike before, they often include the right to maintain legal status in the country of immigration. These programmes seem to have had some success in engaging highly skilled migrants in home country development (Kleist and Vammen 2012: 59). However, in general, the impact of such programmes is rather disappointing. Research demonstrates that the majority of returns are spontaneous, and that returnees often have little knowledge of state-led initiatives (Boccagni 2011; Kleist and Vammen 2012). This is also reflected in the research presented in this book, where an overwhelming majority of the returnees have returned on their own, without any assistance from, and often little knowledge of, existing return programmes.

Understanding the increased policy attention to return migration In European migrant receiving countries, the promotion of returnees as 'the new developers' can partly be understood as a reflection of more general discourses on the limitations and failures of state-centred development programmes (Turner and Kleist 2013). Conceptualisations of returnees as the new developers gain purchase through representations of the African state as weak and failed, characterised by corruption, and with inefficient bureaucracies and 'bad governance' more generally (Abrahamsen 2000; Hansson 2013; Harrison 2004). Along with their other efforts to go beyond the state by supporting business initiatives and various forms of NGO activity, development organisations have increasingly come to see returnees as part of the solution. Hence, the increased attention to return migration in development policy fits well with the contemporary neoliberal understanding (Åkesson 2011; Turner and Kleist 2013) in which the responsibility for development is moved from politics and the state to individuals. While the focus of much development intervention is still on state building to ensure good governance, the neoliberal approach entails partly new techniques of government, by a multitude of different actors, and through the production of self-governing responsible subjects (Abrahamsen and Williams 2011; Duffield 2010; Hansson 2013). Transferred to the field of migration, neoliberal policies present migrants as being responsible for positive social and economic changes in their countries of origin. Migrants are

encouraged not only to send remittances, but also to return with money, new ideas and entrepreneurial skills as well as access to influential transnational social networks.

Moreover, returnees – who supposedly are both rooted in African contexts and in tune with European development thinking – are cast in the role of brokers who can mediate between donors' ideas about development on the one hand and institutions, cultural norms and practices in recipient countries on the other. As Turner and Kleist (2013) argue, the category of the broker is by no means a novelty in European–African relations. Colonial administrations, missionary societies and development organisations have all used brokers as go-betweens and role models. The returnee as represented in migration and development policy has an affinity with the *assimilado* in the Portuguese African empire and the *évolué* in the French colonies. The returnee – like the *assimilado* and the *évolué* – is often portrayed as somebody who has accepted European values while simultaneously maintaining a rootedness in the African context. The brokers' exposure to European values has been represented as a guarantee that they will transmit 'civilisation' during colonial times and 'development' in the postcolonial era.

In addition to being assigned a dubious task, this broker position entails vulnerability, reflecting its liminal location between the European and the African sphere (ibid.). Returnees often experience exclusion in multiple places. In Europe they are often defined as 'African' and 'immigrant' outsiders, while people in their country of origin may criticise them for having lost their culture and their understanding of local realities. Also, people who return after having escaped conflicts or deep economic insecurity are often condemned by those who have stayed behind – named as disloyal opportunists who escaped the hardships only to take advantage of the new opportunities when they arise (Grabska 2014; Stefansson 2004).

However, while reflecting trends in development discourse and practice, the celebratory story of return migration also takes place against the background of the 'fight against illegal immigration' and the elaboration of restrictive and security-oriented control instruments. As Sinatti and Horst (2015: 145) remark, there is a significant overlap between the latest surge of interest in return and efforts to remove unwanted immigrants from destination countries. The wish to control the entrance and exit of migrants to the European territory, and to keep out unwanted migrants, implies that 'return is coupled with the terms "removal" and "readmission", and is a means for the turning back of undesired immigrants such as irregular stayers, rejected asylum seekers and people living in marginal conditions' (Sinatti 2014: 279). Thus, in the discourse of European policy makers, the issue of return also reflects the management and control of migration (Cassarino 2004).

This restrictive understanding is also reflected in the policy debates on

circular migration that emerged around 2005. In 2008, the Global Forum on Migration and Development praised circular migration as a win-win solution, combining the interests ‘of highly industrialized countries in meeting labour needs ... with [those] of developing countries in accessing richer labour markets, fostering skills transfer and mitigating risks of brain drain’ (2008: 75). This was followed by similar statements and policy documents from a range of institutions, such as the EU and various member states (see, for example, European Commission 2011). In these texts, migration is portrayed as a ‘triple win’ solution: in receiving countries, circular migrants are expected to meet temporary labour shortages while countries of origin will gain access not only to remittances but to the skills and experiences of the migrants, while the migrants themselves benefit too. Yet, as argued by Hansen and Jonsson (2011), this policy is shaped by demographic projections and efforts by the EU to channel migration to its own benefit – in a similar way to previous European labour migration policies.

However, the celebratory story, which describes migration as part of the solution to ‘development problems’, is articulated and reproduced not only by European governments. Attracting highly skilled migrants to return is also the explicit objective of some migrant-sending African states. This tendency is especially strong in countries with a long history of migration and a substantial diaspora. Governments in these states in particular are reaching out to migrants they assume can contribute with major investments and sought-after knowledge. From the perspective of the sending country, these are the ‘policy ideal returnees’. Senegal, for instance, encourages ‘the return of a small portion of migrants with sought-after skills’ (Sinatti 2014: 281), Ghana courts ‘especially highly skilled migrants to return’ (Kleist, in Chapter 4), and Cape Verde ‘promotes and attracts returnees with qualifications that are essential for the development of the country’ (Ministério das Comunidades 2014: 89, our translation). When it comes to the majority of migrants – that is, those who do not belong to the category of highly qualified professionals – countries of origin are generally less interested in their return. A massive return of large numbers of migrants is not a desirable option as it would bring about a decrease in the inflow of remittances, and at the same time increased competition for employment in already strained labour markets.

Problematic assumptions in the celebratory story of return and development There are a number of problematic assumptions in this celebratory story of the development potential of return migration. Firstly, there is a lack of attention to structural constraints in the country of return and the subsequent challenges in transforming the migration experience into something ‘useful’ – the silence on this issue resonates with neoliberal notions of development more generally. The transfer of skills and capital is portrayed

as an easy task; returnee entrepreneurs bring needed capital that is simply absorbed by the country of origin. However, and as concluded by de Haas (2010), the development potential of migration is fundamentally contingent on more general conditions in the country of origin or return. The extent to which migration can contribute to local, regional and national development depends on the more general context, in terms of public infrastructure, social facilities, legislation and market access, among other things. Reforming these elements requires structural reforms and state intervention and cannot be achieved by individual migrants. As de Haas points out, policy discourses celebrating migrants as providers of ‘self-help development “from below” shift the attention away from structural constraints and the real but limited ability of individuals to overcome these’ (ibid.: 258). The crucial importance of the various challenges posed by the political, cultural and social structures encountered upon return is highlighted throughout this book. As the contributions demonstrate, there are numerous problems attached to transforming the migration experience into something ‘useful’, both for the migrants themselves and for the society of origin.

A second omission in the celebratory story relates to the tendency to conceptualise the migration experience as something that is inherently useful. The assumption seems to be that migrants returning from Europe inevitably have acquired useful skills, experiences and social connections. One obvious aberration is the fact that this narrative neglects the workings of racism and discrimination in the host societies. Whereas the public debate on the integration of non-European migrants points to a number of serious failings, such as housing segregation, marginalisation and exploitative working conditions, the return and development discourse represents the migrants’ sojourn in Europe as highly rewarding. While the educational levels and qualifications of African migrants are usually higher than those of non-migrants, they are often over-represented in low-skill occupations (de Haas 2006; Schoumaker et al. 2013). This means that African migrants in Europe are often subjected to high levels of discrimination in the labour market and are overworked and underpaid in monotonous, unskilled jobs that provide limited access to influential social networks or ‘new knowledge’. Moreover, many migrants are often primarily concerned with the economic and social reproduction of family members living in different places (Åkesson et al. 2012). This situation is not conducive for gaining new skills and knowledge, and it stands in stark contrast to the ‘spin’ created by policy makers in the field of migration and development who celebrate migrants as the innovative new heroes of development (Glick Schiller 2012).

A further, related, shortcoming in this storyline of migration to Europe being inherently useful is located in the familiar echo of Eurocentric colonial imageries. Just as in the colonial library that has continued to shape mainstream development discourse (Eriksson Baaz 2005; Escobar 1995; McEwan 2009;

Nederveen 2001), Africa is portrayed in terms of 'lack' and 'void' – as a site where people who have lived in Europe can simply come and transfer skills and technology. One problem with this imagery – and one that is connected to the argument above about the need to recognise structural constraints in the countries of origin – is the idea that social and cultural capital acquired in Europe is universally applicable. Yet, as several contributions in this book demonstrate, the capital obtained abroad is not always helpful for returnees, but can even be debilitating. While the structural context in the country of immigration (for example, the opportunities provided in terms of education, skilled job opportunities and savings) plays a crucial role, so do the migrants' capacity and ability to transform this capital, and acquire new capital, upon their return. In Nauja Kleist's chapter on Ghanaian elite returnees, she shows that even the most privileged return migrants meet serious challenges when trying to transform and use capital acquired abroad. Moreover, and as argued by Maria Eriksson Baaz (forthcoming), the view that migration to Europe is inherently useful can be seen to feed 'return failures'. Migrants often embrace the dominant discourse – imagining the country of origin or return as an underdeveloped space and themselves as 'more developed and advanced'. Consequently, successful entrepreneurship is often (initially) assumed to require little in the way of preparation – in turn making returnees less inclined to engage in in-depth preparation and market analysis. According to Cassarino (2004), this is fatal, as returnees' preparation for their return is absolutely fundamental to their ability to become actors of change and development.

An additional problem with the tendency to conceptualise migration to Europe as inherently useful is that it implies a claim to proprietorship, with Europe portrayed as the 'owner of development' and the provider of 'development-useful capital'. In many European policy texts, the benefits of migration are located in migration to, and return from, Europe, thereby neglecting useful capital acquired through South–South migration. Migration experiences from other African countries – which, in this familiar cataloguing of societies into developed and underdeveloped, traditional and modern, tend to be situated in the same category of tradition, lack and void – are rarely assumed to be accompanied by capital associated with modernity and development. Such categorisations of societies as modern versus traditional obscure the ways in which modernity is (unevenly) global beyond North–South distinctions and how modernity is experienced differently over space and time (Appadurai 1998; Tomlison 1999). An example of this is provided in the contribution of Katarzyna Grabska to this book, which demonstrates how adolescent girls returning to South Sudan from other African countries are seen as agents of change – bringing 'development' that is both attractive and threatening.

A third problem with the celebratory story of return and development is the assumption that all returnees nurture a desire to contribute to their country

of origin. This idea seems to be particularly salient in European policy texts, compared with policies in the sending countries. Whereas sending countries underline the necessity to court and promote themselves to their expatriates in order to gain their loyalty, European policy makers in the field of migration and development tend to simply assume that all migrants harbour an inherent desire to assist their 'homeland'. This assumption rests ultimately on methodological nationalism (cf. Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002) and the idea that an individual is rooted in a specific country and has special responsibilities towards this homeland. Turner and Kleist (2013: 202) argue that the idea that migrants have a particular desire to support development 'at home' has been propelled by the dominance of the transnational perspective in migration studies, as this perspective has the tendency only to see – and emphasise – migrants' continuous re-creation of ties to their country of origin. However, such assumptions also clearly and simply reflect familiar and more long-standing essentialist discourses, defining cultural and national identity in terms of 'one, shared culture, a sort of collective "one true self", hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed "selves", which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common' (Hall 1990: 223).

In this storyline, 'return' is the 'natural ending' of migrant trajectories and a wish to 'assist the homeland' is construed as a natural desire – and indeed a duty in relation to 'the people of shared history and ancestry'. As is reflected in the contributions to this book, some migrants certainly do feel an urge to support development in their 'homeland', but it is the implied inevitability and duty within this notion that is problematic (Sinatti and Horst 2015: 25). It renders other motivations – which often play a crucial role in decisions to return – improper and disloyal. Research shows that the main reason behind both out-migration and return is that people want to improve their own and their families' lives in different ways (cf. Castles and Miller 1993; Nyberg Sørensen and Fog Olwig 2002). While some returnees (see Chapter 3 by Laura Hammond) articulate a wish to contribute to development, mobility – including return – is often not primarily about people's desires to support national development. Rather, such aspirations sometimes arise as a secondary effect of leaving one's country behind.

After this overview of the increased policy attention paid to return migration and its shortcomings, let us focus on the conceptual and analytical framework of this book – elucidating how we conceptualise 'development contribution', 'return' and 'returnees', and how return is shaped by access to economic, social and cultural capital.

Conceptual and analytical framework

Return, returnees and stayers As indicated above, dominant conceptualisations of 'return' and 'returnees' tend to reinforce sedentary and essentialised

understandings of migration, identity and belonging. Moreover, they also reflect a mismatch between policy makers' objectives and the realities of ongoing transnational movements of people. As this book demonstrates, transnational returns or circular migration (Skeldon 2012) are often the preferred strategy for many migrants in European countries, especially for those who return to insecure and unstable conditions. Transnational returns extend over a long period of time and involve much movement back and forth between the country of origin and the country of immigration; a prerequisite for this kind of return is often citizenship in the country of immigration (Eastmond 2006; Hansen 2007).

The somewhat problematic concepts of 'return' and 'returnee' used in this book should be read with this in mind. In contrast to dominant conceptualisations, we do not understand 'return' as being the 'natural ending' but rather as a partial return to a place where the migrants once lived. Hence, and as we will see, most of the returnees in the cases analysed should be seen as transnational returnees or circular migrants. Nor do we view returnees as being people with an inherent identification with and duty to assist an assumed 'homeland'. Rather, this book describes the experiences of people engaged in a partial return to a place where they once lived. While many display a strong identification with this place and call it their homeland, they also often articulate strong feelings of estrangement towards this homeland, describing themselves as 'outsiders', as 'different' and 'not really fitting in'. Moreover, they also often identify themselves with the country they partially left, describing themselves as also – and sometimes even mainly – Europeans.

As many of the chapters in this book show, relationships with 'stayers' are of key importance for returnees' reintegration. Yet, like the notion of returnees, the concept of stayers is inherently problematic. In mainstream research, stayers are understood to have been resident in a place migrants left behind. Yet many 'stayers' have moved, either internally – for instance between rural and urban areas – or across borders without having assumed an identity as migrants. This is frequent in Africa, where cross-border movements continue to be a part of many people's livelihoods (Bjarnesen 2013). Accordingly, people described as 'stayers' by returnees (or researchers) may have a history of movement between places.

Development? The meanings attached to development in this book also differ from those in the dominant celebratory stories of development and return. As highlighted above, the general notions of development in such discourses often reflect familiar Eurocentric assumptions about where 'development' and 'development-useful capital' are located. This book takes a critical stance towards such representations, and the contributions question the assumption that capital obtained in Europe is inherently useful. In order to

further problematise such conjectures, the book also includes a chapter on adolescent girls returning from Kenya to South Sudan. This chapter clearly demonstrates that the resistance and struggles around meanings of ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’, and about what constitutes desirable development, that are typically associated with North–South migration dynamics are not unique to this particular form of migration and return.

This book also goes beyond the more narrow and economistic notions of development in policy texts on migration and discusses development contributions in terms of their contribution to social change more generally. Many studies on the migration–development nexus are quantitative and take the form of measuring remittances, diaspora contributions to community development organisations and investments in the country of origin (cf. Maimbo and Ratha 2005; World Bank 2011). Moreover, some studies on return migration are preoccupied with determinants of return (and a new departure after return); levels of education and skills before, during and after migration; and levels of (re)integration in the host country and country of origin or return, measured mainly through employment rates or levels of self-employment (cf. Kilic et al. 2009; Lianos and Pseiridis 2009; Schoumaker et al. 2013). Such data is undoubtedly crucial in providing a better understanding of general patterns of migration and return. In addition, it provides some general clues about the benefits and limitations of migration and possible development contributions by returnees, for instance by measuring the levels of education of returnees and their levels of employment upon return.

However, such studies tend to offer limited insights into crucial circumstances in the countries of origin or return and the various challenges shaping returnees’ opportunities. They often fail to provide a better understanding of the crucial ‘why’ questions. For example, why do returnees tend to choose one business over another? Why do so many seem to fail in their attempts? As emphasised above, studies on migration and development tend to lack any in-depth understanding of the structural conditions in the countries of origin or return and how these shape migrants’ ability to assume their role as ‘the new developers’. In contrast, it is the interplay between the capital acquired by migrants and the political, social and economic circumstances in the societies to which they return that is the focus of this book.

While the contributions in this book go beyond narrow definitions of ‘development contributions’ as signifying levels of economic investment, contributions to development organisations and education before migration and upon return, some chapters address the more classical issues of entrepreneurship and investments. However, rather than merely measuring levels of monetary flows, they examine the qualitative aspects of these engagements. In the chapter on Congolese returnees (Chapter 2), Maria Eriksson Baaz explores how returnee businesses differ from stayee businesses, demonstrating both similarities and

differences. In her discussion of Cape Verde (Chapter 8), Lisa Åkesson explores the contribution that Cape Verdean returnees make to everyday economic life by probing into the types of business in which they are engaged and how such choices can be understood given the challenges posed by the specific economic conditions in the country. Similarly, in her contribution (Chapter 5), Giulia Sinatti describes the gap between the optimistic policy view in Senegal and the challenges of return migration by focusing on the types of business engagement undertaken by returnees and by showing how a return that is financially sustainable for a migrant and his or her family may not necessarily be in line with the government's goal of national economic growth. Moreover, the chapters on Ghana by Nauja Kleist (Chapter 4) and Somaliland by Laura Hammond (Chapter 3) both centre on returnee contributions through engagement in local and national associations and various development initiatives. But also here the focus is on the dynamics of such engagement, the constraints and the local and national readings of, and responses to, such initiatives, rather than simply measuring financial contributions.

Return as shaped by various forms of capital This book analyses the conditions of return by drawing on theorisations of various forms of capital. One of the main assumptions is that returnees' opportunities to accumulate different forms of capital are fundamental for their ability to engage in activities that may be positive for development. As explained earlier, the book seeks to address questions around what kind of capital (social, economic or cultural) migrants have acquired abroad and how useful that capital is for reintegration. The notion of capital also occupies a central role in the policy discourses elaborated above. However, in contrast to such policy discourses (and, to a certain extent, research on return migration), which tend to focus on economic and human capital, our understanding and use of the notion of capital are wider and draw upon a critical reading of Bourdieu (1986; 2005).

In broad terms, capital can be defined as 'anything that can be used to influence the behaviours of others or to aid in achieving desired goals' (Smart 1993: 390).² Hence, from this perspective, cultural and social capital produce 'returns that in some way benefit its holders in a similar way as financial capital' (Field 2003: 70). Moreover, like financial capital, cultural and social capital can be accumulated, invested, spent and lost over time (Wilk and Cliggett 2007: 187). This approach, which recognises history, process and change and the fact that capital 'takes time to accumulate' (Bourdieu 1986: 241), is particularly relevant to an analysis of return, since the capital acquired by returnees has often been gathered over a long period of time and in different places.

² However, Bourdieu (1986) underlines the fact that there is a difference between capital and other kinds of resources, as only capital is convertible into other forms of capital.

One of Bourdieu's fundamental ideas is that capital is unequally distributed among individuals, and that this determines their possibilities of success. For Bourdieu, the unequal distribution of different forms of capital is absolutely vital for social hierarchies, and he maintains that this distribution 'represents the immanent structure of the social world' (ibid.: 242). Thus, he underlines the importance of power relations. Yet the unequal distribution is not totally determinant for social hierarchies, but is mediated by the way in which individuals strategise when employing their capital in order to pursue their goals, a situation that leaves some room for individual agency. The distribution is also influenced by the valuation of certain forms of capital, which is determined by the context – or, in Bourdieu's vocabulary, 'the field'.

While some contributions concentrate on economic capital, the main focus of this book is on cultural and social capital. Transdisciplinary migration studies tend to use the term 'human capital' to refer to returnees' transfer of knowledge, ideas and skills. However, we have chosen to refer to this as 'cultural capital'. Researchers using the concept of human capital sometimes, in line with the celebratory policy narrative, lean towards a reifying approach and represent returnees' skills and knowledge as a ready-made 'package' picked up abroad and simply applied in undifferentiated homeland conditions (Åkesson forthcoming). In order to distance ourselves from this approach, we have chosen the term 'cultural capital'.

The role and dynamics of social capital occupy a particularly central position in this book. As the contributions show, returnees often face challenges when they try to (re)create social relationships and networks that may be useful for their economic, social or political activities in the country of return. According to Bourdieu (1986), the value of individuals' social capital depends on how many connections they can mobilise and on the social, cultural and economic capital possessed by each of these connections. However, and in contrast to this view, this book underlines the importance of confining the notion of social capital to 'useful' connections, and not to include *all* kinds of networks and social connections (see Anthias 2007; Whitehouse 2011). As Field (2003) points out, Bourdieu – in common with other leading theoreticians on social capital, such as Coleman (1994) and Putnam (2000) – tends to see social capital as benign for those who possess it. This is a tendency that is also prominent among developmentalist policy makers, who in the neoliberal era, often see social capital as a mechanism for promoting economic growth and bypassing the state (Whitehouse 2011). However, social relationships are not always beneficial for the individuals embedded within them. As is demonstrated in several contributions to this book, the 'dark side of social capital' (Field 2003) is a burden to many migrants who feel that obligations towards their families and communities stifle their individual initiatives and opportunities (Whitehouse 2011). This is especially true for returnees who are perceived to

be successful and 'rich', and thereby obliged to share their resources with relatives, neighbours and friends. These returnees' experiences are captured by the anthropologist Keith Hart, who argues that 'those who manage to enrich themselves [are] a widespread target for the aspirations, hopes, fears and antipathies of their less fortunate fellows' (1975: 16). However, returnee entrepreneurs often have to strike a balance between investing in their businesses and meeting the demands of kin.

In analyses of social capital, a distinction is often made between, on the one hand, networks of kin, friends, neighbours and other homogeneous groups of people, and, on the other, networks of socially heterogeneous people. Putnam (2000) refers to the first kind of ties as 'bonding ties' and the second as 'bridging ties'. As some of the chapters in this book show, returnees who have been abroad for many years often lack access to bridging ties outside the family and a small group of friends, which can hamper their efforts to start a business or engage in the social and political development of their homeland. Putnam defines 'bridging social capital' as a connection between different strata of a society; a social hierarchy is therefore implicitly embedded in the concept. As we will see in the chapters by Åkesson, Eriksson Baaz and Heggli Sagmo, access to influential politicians and other 'big men' is often a prerequisite for a 'successful return'.

The positionality of returnees As stated earlier, this book is based on original qualitative ethnographic material and interviews with return migrants. While the contributions of Grabska and Hammond also rely on interviews and ethnographic data collected from members of the communities to which the migrants return, the book is mainly based on fieldwork among and interviews with returnees, with the aim of highlighting the experiences of returnees themselves. This focus raises pertinent questions about knowledge claims: what do such experiences represent? What can returnee stories actually tell us?

While this book takes the narratives of the returnees seriously in that it assumes that the stories they tell about their experiences have something important to convey to us about the challenges involved in return – as well as the political and economic context to which they return – it has to be recognised that such stories are necessarily partial. Importantly – and in contrast to significations often attached to notions of the diaspora experience, as well as portrayals of returnees as 'brokers' – we do not assume that returnees occupy a privileged knowledge position compared with stayers or others. Listening closely to returnees' experiences can contribute to a better understanding of the conditions of return, but their stories certainly do not reflect an 'objective' reality beyond the workings of dominant discourses. As mentioned earlier, returnees' images of themselves sometimes mirror the imagery promoted in policy documents.

In Chapter 2, focusing on returnees to the DRC, Maria Eriksson Baaz (see

also Eriksson Baaz forthcoming) demonstrates that returnees tend to embrace the dominant imagery that portrays the country of origin or return as an underdeveloped space and themselves as ‘more developed and advanced’ by virtue of having resided in a developed Europe. Those who remained in the country of origin are sometimes depicted as inferior, echoing classic colonial representations of Africans as underdeveloped, unreliable and lazy (McEwan 2009; Eriksson Baaz 2005). Such images of self and of stayee others – reflecting the complex and contradictory ways in which colonial discourses continue to shape contemporary identities (cf. Hall 1996; Appiah 1992) – are just one reflection of the particular positionality of returnees, making any claim to a privileged knowledge position inherently problematic. Hence, while returnee stories are useful in shedding further light on the conditions of return, their accounts cannot be read as conveying objective and impartial information about return or the countries of return.

Lastly, it should be emphasised that returnees constitute a vastly heterogeneous group – differentiated in terms of age, social class, access to various forms of capital and (in relation to this) gender. Yet, while returnees constitute a differentiated group, current research suggests that return – to a greater extent than migration – is primarily dominated by groups already privileged before migration (Schoumaker et al. 2013). Moreover, while return is gendered in different ways in different countries, in some of the cases presented in this book, return is mainly a male experience. This gendering reflects gender norms in combination with efforts to ensure a safe return, in terms of both security and economy. Return is often a risky endeavour in a number of ways. Some of the countries discussed here, such as South Sudan, Somaliland and DRC, are marked by a history of widespread violence and are still often described as unsafe for women and children. In particular, return entails a number of risks for the household economy. Reflecting gendered norms – associating men/masculinity with the provider role and risk taking, and femininity with nurturing and child rearing – returnees’ businesses are often managed by men at first, with the family staying on in Europe. Initial incomes upon return are also often insufficient for paying school fees, health costs and other expenses for the whole family. Thus return is often a male experience – and this is also reflected in the contributions to this book, except in the cases of South Sudan and Cape Verde. In South Sudan, both males and females of all ages have returned (and re-migrated) after displacement caused by the civil war. In the Cape Verdean case, a long period of independent female migration is being reflected in an increase in the number of women return migrants.

The chapters

In Chapter 2, Maria Eriksson Baaz analyses Congolese (DRC) returnee narratives from the perspective of their potential development contribution

and the challenges they encounter upon return. The chapter highlights how returnee investment and livelihood strategies often mirror those of stayers; this is reflected both in efforts to 'multiply possibilities' (Trefon 2004) and in areas of investment. However, while the chapter points to a tendency among returnees to follow general investment trends, it also shows how migration has facilitated the creation of a (potentially) profitable niche for returnees as brokers for foreign investors – a role that is clearly also potentially profitable for the Congolese economy on a larger scale. Yet, the chapter demonstrates the immense challenges attached to these – and other – investment efforts in which returnees engage. Many returnees fail and, in addition, have long histories of various botched investments. Navigating and connecting to powerful social networks and 'big men' emerges as one of the main challenges in returnee narratives, as well as the most time-consuming. While such networks (as well as their useful nodes or 'big men') cut across state and non-state boundaries, politicians and state agents who can use their positions within the state to enable and regulate business emerge as particularly vital for returnees. Yet accessing and maintaining such connections is demanding in the DRC context, which is typified by frequent rotations of office and social networks in flux, and social capital is easily lost.

In Chapter 3, Laura Hammond analyses the large numbers of returnees who have gone back to Somaliland as peace and security have returned. Many have become involved in government or development work as volunteers, consultants and full-time staff. However, as this chapter demonstrates, their contributions are not universally welcomed by local residents. Some feel resentment at what they see as diaspora returnees taking jobs that locals could have filled. Others see returnees as introducing new class hierarchies into a socio-economic environment where they had not previously been a major feature. Still others complain that returnees do not really know what local priorities and realities are, so their efforts are at best wasted and at worst causing damage because of their unrealistic views and expectations. This chapter addresses the experiences of returnees and the attitudes of local people towards them. Based on interviews with returnees and locals, it argues that, while some returnee contributions are valued, local communities are increasingly critical of their own kin who seek to 'develop' them. The chapter argues that development planners in the Somaliland government and the aid business must strike a balance between reaping the benefits that returnees offer and becoming over-reliant on this group of people, who may have limited support from their communities.

In Chapter 4, Nauja Kleist presents a case study of highly skilled male return migrants, or 'policy ideal returnees', from Europe to Ghana. Since the beginning of the 2000s, changing Ghanaian governments have promoted return migration to Ghana, especially of highly skilled migrants who are seen

as having the potential – and responsibility – for contributing to national development. This perception is shared by the male elite returnees who see themselves as having obtained important knowledge and resources through their experiences abroad. In relation to this positioning, the chapter develops two arguments. First, the possession of local social and cultural capital, as well as a thorough mastering of the local ‘rules of the field’, is a precondition for these returnees to manage the many challenges relating to return, and, in particular, to contribute to development processes. Thus, the chapter demonstrates that the idea of simply transferring capital to development processes in the country of origin is fundamentally flawed, even in the case of the ‘ideal’ returnees studied here. Second, the chapter argues that the highly skilled male return migrants articulate their position in Ghana as ‘big men’: successful, wealthy and powerful men who take responsibility for and are engaged in their local communities. Their positioning as development agents mirrors popular policy notions of return migration, but it is also intertwined with understandings of ‘bigmanity’ (Utas 2012) and the mastering of different registers of legitimacy and power. In addition, the chapter points out that the trans-local elite with experiences of internal Ghanaian migration may sometimes constitute a more promising group for resource mobilisation than international migrants.

In Senegal, return migration has also been the focus of policy interest, with authorities advocating the repatriation of financial resources, emphasising the potential of migrant investment to promote economic growth. In Senegal’s diaspora policies, return migration and returnees’ business investments are viewed as having the potential to help in the country’s development. In Chapter 5, Giulia Sinatti identifies three underlying myths on which this policy thinking is based. First, migrants are seen as preferring consumption to economic investment. Second, migrants are assumed to automatically acquire useful capital while abroad. Third, migrants have a natural commitment to homeland development. The chapter compares these policy myths with ethnographic insight into the efforts of Senegalese returnees to establish independent economic activities in their home country. Contrary to policy assumptions, Sinatti’s case study shows that the state and migrants converge on the importance attributed to investment. However, policy underestimates both the significance of home-held capital in shaping business outcomes and the importance of social capital accumulated at home before and after migration. Moreover, the chapter demonstrates that there are strong mismatches in the underlying logics and (development) expectations of policy makers and migrants. Senegalese policy aspires to control the returnees’ economic initiatives and direct them towards state-identified target sectors. However, the return migrants’ savings and investments are private resources and they tend to invest in activities that are not subordinated to the government’s own goals of national economic

growth. As a result, policy makers downplay migrant businesses and often dismiss them as ‘conspicuous consumption’.

In Chapter 6, Tove Heggli Sagmo explores returnee experiences and strategies in Burundi, a country that has suffered a long period of violence and instability that has created substantial changes in the political, social and economic landscape. Understanding these changes, which are often referred to as the ‘new rules of the game’, and their implications for individuals is a challenging task for those who return or consider returning. Based on fieldwork and taking its point of departure from Bourdieu’s notion of *field* as an arena of struggle over the valuation of different kinds of capital and behaviour, this chapter analyses returnee experiences of the ‘rules of the game’ in the economic field in Burundi. It demonstrates that the economic field in Burundi is structured around trust as an important symbolic capital. Finding people to trust and being trusted by centrally positioned individuals are key to becoming a successful entrepreneur. The chapter demonstrates that trust building is a lengthy and time-consuming task that requires physical presence in Burundi and that return visits are therefore a crucial preparatory activity. Citizenship abroad, access to economic capital and relevant skills are some of the main forms of capital that facilitate this process. Far from all returnees have the necessary capital to be successfully established in the economic field, or even to be in a position to influence the ‘game’ itself.

Chapter 7, ‘Threatening miniskirts’, by Katarzyna Grabska, can partly be read as an antidote to many of the other chapters in the book, where the majority of the returnees are relatively privileged men. In Grabska’s chapter we meet young females returning from forced displacement. The chapter explores the experience and consequences of the return of displaced South Sudanese Nuer adolescent girls following Sudan’s civil wars (1983–2005). Based on ethnographic research in Kenyan refugee camps and South Sudan, it analyses the perceived and actual contributions to social change of returning displaced adolescent girls. At times, returning young women and girls are perceived as agents of change, bringing education, valued foreign experiences and new knowledge, but their attempts at greater autonomy, freedoms and gender equality are often judged as threatening. This chapter demonstrates that displacement might not only result in a loss but also create an opportunity to construct new social norms in the context of interactions between returnees and those who stayed behind. In this case, the adolescent returnee girls contributed to (re)negotiations of gender orders, gender identities, aspirations and norms. Thus, the chapter shows that social and cultural capital accumulated by migrants and refugees needs to be deconstructed in its gendered and generational dimensions and in its place- and context-specific meaning. The chapter emphasises the double meaning of the capital accumulated by these young female migrants: a source of social change as well as of stigma and marginal-

isation. Furthermore, it challenges the policy assumption that only migrant capital accumulated in Europe is associated with modernity and development.

The final chapter, by Lisa Åkesson, focuses on the constraints and opportunities Cape Verdean returnees encounter when trying to set up a business. In recent years, the government in the island state of Cape Verde has come to see returnees' businesses as a solution to the high rates of unemployment and to the country's economic dependency on the outside world. Both the government and various development organisations hope that return migrants will play a key role in investment and entrepreneurship. In light of this, the chapter explores the contribution that Cape Verdean returnees actually make to everyday economic life. This exploration builds on 15 years of intermittent fieldwork in Cape Verde in combination with recent interviews with returnees. In these interviews, the returnee business owners underline the fact that the specific economic conditions in Cape Verde are absolutely crucial in determining their room for manoeuvre. The chapter discusses the multi-layered economic challenges the return migrants have to confront, and, in addition, analyses 'bridging' social ties, which the returnees describe as vital for succeeding with a business. In particular, it looks into ties to politicians and to custom officers, the latter being a category of officials who are particularly important in their role as gatekeepers to the outside world. This case study concludes that, in terms of cultural and social capital, it is uncertain whether returnee business owners in general are more resourceful than their colleagues who have stayed behind. Due to discrimination and segregation in countries of immigration, most migrants do not accumulate skills or knowledge that is useful for entrepreneurship. Moreover, they often lack insights into the workings of the local market and they possess a limited social capital, especially in terms of bridging ties. Yet despite this, there are a few returnees with extremely varying backgrounds who develop an entrepreneurial spirit and become good at recognising and exploiting the limited openings in the local market.

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