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Migration and the African Timespace Trap: More Europe for the World, Less World for Europe

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ABSTRACT

Drawing on an ever-evolving corpus of scholarly, political, and public texts, this article reflects on the temporalisation and territorialisation of Africa in response to Europe's 'migration crisis.' Re-awakened fears of the African other and its own divisive internal politics have presented Europe's leaders with a dilemma: how to contain African ambitions to move while remaining true to their self-professed commitment to individual freedom, universal rights, and global progress. To solve it, Europe has updated longstanding colonial narratives and identities by constructing a timespace trap. This trap justifies exclusion as readying Africa for an elusive global future. Employing temporal forms of socio-spatial governance, the Europeans dangle a global and mobile future to Africans willing to mould themselves into externally defined parameters of moral respectability. Adherence to immigration regulations authored and often imposed by Europe, together with a demonstrated commitment to family, community, and country mark one's suitability to enter a global future. But meeting these legal and moral standards effectively means building a sedentary life dedicated to 'development at home'. Together with allies across sectors and continents, they are realising their ambitions through frameworks that morally justify intercepting and pre-empting movement as means of empowering and perfecting Africans. Doing so effectively excludes Africans from a shared, global humanity while discursively shielding Europe's liberal commitments.

Introduction

Non-time Imposes on Time the Tyranny of Its Spatiality

Aimé Césaire

Through initiatives coercive and discursive, Europe seeks to contain Africans' ambitions to move. Yet, in monitoring, intercepting, and forestalling African

mobility, European leaders face a dilemma: enacting a range of racialised and spatialised exclusions that often appear crudely coercive (Dünnwald 2015; Andersson 2016; Akkerman 2018) while remaining true to the community's professed commitment to expanding individual freedoms in service of global progress (Bicchi 2006; Franck et al. 2017; Manners 2002). These include the freedom of movement, curtailed by European interventions not only for those moving out of but also within the African continent, while at the same time hailed as 'a fundamental right guaranteed by the EU to its citizens' (European Union n.d.).

Europe tries to resolve tensions between coercive boundary making and internal liberalism by setting a timespace trap for Africans. The trap justifies raising borders and externalising its project of socialisation and subjectification so that in the future it may eventually allow 'in' the Other. Justifying exclusionary strategies by paternalistically 'perfecting' Africans and readying them for the universal liberal project (European Commission 2019b) performatively protects Europe's commitment to human rights and freedoms. Together with allies across sectors and continents, they have translated these objectives into frameworks that morally justify intercepting and pre-empting Africans' movement (Landau 2019; Knoll and de Weijer 2016, 7; Minter 2011; Andersson 2016). Within this rubric lies the rub: Only the deserving are allowed to move, but demonstrating deservingness requires adherence to ever more restrictive if amorphous moral codes connected to legality, safety, and responsibility. In effect, qualifying to move in the future means surrendering the desire to do so in the present.

In disingenuously dangling a global and mobile future to Africans willing to mould themselves into externally defined parameters of moral respectability, Europe asserts a form of temporal, pastoral power over would-be African migrants. Adherence to immigration regulations together with a demonstrated commitment to family, community, and country mark one's suitability to enter a global future. But meeting these legal and moral standards effectively means building a sedentary life dedicated to 'development at home.' It is founded on a fundamental irony: only Africans willing to suppress desired mobility in ways adhering to what are often European authored legal and social moralities can access the fruits of European prosperity and freedom. In doing so, Europe constructs an exclusionary normative apparatus premised on protecting and perfecting African lives and futures in ways that disguises its own discomfort with African immigration (Commission of the European Communities 2002, 5; Landau 2019; Minter 2011, 13; Knoll and de Weijer 2016, 7).

With its focus on shaping responsible Africans, Europe justifies strategies of emplacement: of 'a future in their home countries' in which Africans are appropriately committed to family, community, and country. Such moralising initiatives are premised on governing two elements of time. The first requires erasing reciprocal responsibility stemming from an entangled, colonial past in which

African labour and resources were extracted in support of European prosperity. The second means establishing the entry conditions to mobile, global futures.

Ostensibly to protect development and a prosperous future for all, these restrictions work together to lure Africans in to the global progress premised on mobility while indefinitely excluding them from it. The apparatus described here is neither unified in motivation or form (Akkerman 2016; Akkerman 2018; Andersson 2016; Nyberg Sørensen and Gammeltoft-Hansen 2002; Schapendonk 2018), but nonetheless collectively produces a timespace trap. The actors involved are located on a wide spectrum of cooperation, complicity, coercion and co-option (Bangré 2006; Pian 2014). Yet, even those in opposition to mainstream liberal Europe, left or right, and those explicitly rejecting the framework of migration management, contribute to a promise of African futures through containment alone. For example, despite dramatically dissimilar motivations – sheer desperation about migrant deaths vs blatant racism – both the search and rescue NGO Proactiva Open Arms and Germany's far right movement *Identitäre Bewegung* (Identitarian movement) uncomfortably converge. One envisions migrants having, 'a life project in their native countries' (Proactiva Open Arms 2018). The other hopes to, 'create opportunities for people to stay and prosper at home instead of destroying Africa through emigration[1]' (Identitäre Bewegung n.d.). Despite their differences, almost all concede that it is responsible – for states and for African migrants – to build lives at home.

The article describes three overlapping elements of spatio-temporal control shaping and maintaining the trap: promises of protection within a common, global future; instruments of perfection; and mechanisms of punishment. 'Promises' are the fundamental principles of the trap. Here, the language of universal rights and reciprocal ethics is supplanted by privileges earned. Where Africans condition themselves and behave appropriately – namely demonstrating patriotism and commitment to law and local family – they can earn the keys to the kingdom: Europe's liberal, mobile future. 'Perfection' encompasses interventions intended to shape the 'other' to conform with Europe's spatialised vision of African futures that privileges sedentarism and respect for law and procedures. The final element, 'Punishment,' includes a series of punitive measures that reinforce separation and discourage deviance. These include ever more restrictive laws and policies justified by Africans' intransigence and resistance. The continual need to apply such measures in turn becomes reinforces Africans' questionable suitability and compliance for a mobile future.

Combined, 'promise, perfection, and punishment' lend distinctly moral and temporal valences to migration management. Rather than offering objective criteria for inclusion, they form a productive complex that centres on responsibility, not rights. Moreover, they use both past behaviour, future potential, and desire as means of discipline and exclusion. Reframing migration from an intrinsic human trait to a privilege earned through responsible behaviour and appropriate forms of longing, Europe has positioned itself as the arbiter of morality. This reinforces

a hierarchical relation akin to a priest and parishioner or teacher and student. Europe then sets the term of advancement and retains the right to redefine the terms. Europe thus elevates its internal liberalism as the ever-receding end point of history; sets the criteria for accessing it; and enacts Janus-faced interventions promising global futures while justifying exclusion and control. The remainder of the article documents the intricate connection of control over space *and* time in constructions of African migration that underlie these responses.

Approach and Methods

This article reflects on an emerging archive on the retemporalisation and territorialisation of Africa in response to Europe's 'migration crisis.' It draws on an ever evolving yet inherently incomplete corpus of scholarly, political and public texts to reveal the intersections of spatial and temporal control within migration management. Our empirical material is diverse and necessarily diffuse. Where possible, it includes reports and policy positions promulgated by the European Union, the European Commission, European agencies (e.g., FRONTEX), or member states making reference to Europe or European values and beliefs. Our review of these documents extracts concrete policy proposals and actions along with the discursive framing enabling or necessitating such initiatives. To bolster our analysis of Europe's moral projections, we rely on news reports, press releases, and public debates over immigration, African development, and Europe's futures. These also include reports compiled by critics, African governments, and civil society on both sides of the Mediterranean. Together these form a dense, sometimes confusing, and often contradictory archive. Our efforts are oriented at identifying and elucidating its underlying ethos. This is a fundamentally interpretive task and one we undertake fully aware of its limitations.

This article travels within two meta-trends in the study of politics and the social. The first is the spatial turn which, borrowing from human geography and urban studies (Massey 1999; Castells 2010), recognises both the distinctions and interconnectivity of processes occurring in specific spaces and time. Our work brings together these insights on reterritorialization through trade and the circulations (see Sassen 2012; Bauman 2002; Brenner and Schmid 2012) with a longer standing literature on politics, territoriality, and mobility (Torpey 1999; Vigneswaran 2013; Spruyt 2005). Temporality as a component of governance represents the second trend. The regulation of human mobility through the use of time has attracted much recent scholarly attention. Much of this work is concerned with waiting, stoppage, deferral and delay as disciplinary techniques or by-product. This article takes a somewhat different approach by considering how people's orientations towards time and space are connected to governing mobility, racialisation, expropriation and historical elisions. Here too we borrow from human geography

(Massey 1999), political science (Cohen 2018; Lori 2019), anthropology (Jeffrey 2010) and even literary theory (Bakthin 1982) to reflect on the close connection between temporalization and subjectification.

Often conceived of as 'alternative templates or frames of reference for accounting for social, economic or political phenomena' (Agnew 1996, 27), even less attention has been paid to the intersection of time *and* space (Klinke 2013, 675; Nanni 2017). This article picks up this thread, looking at how the control of space (defining its purpose, demarcating its boundaries and regulating the movement of bodies, ideas and identities within it) intersects with the control of time (allocating or restricting it, defining its meaning, marking ruptures, demarcating eras, establishing its reference points, memories and histories that naturalise particular orientations to pasts and futures).We argue that it is exactly this intersection that helps to illuminate the often puzzling or empirically ill-supported debates and responses to actual and potential movement from Africa. This includes insights into the construction of threat ostensibly emanating from African migrants (of crowding out and dragging Europeans back in time); the logic of Europe's defence mechanisms; the nature of its global alliances; and responses to transgression, defiance and emergent counter narratives. Through such identification, we hope to abet those working to erode spatial and temporal separatism behind contemporary policy developments. Beyond politics, it is intended to further unsettle methodological nationalism across the social sciences while opening new avenues for exploring questions of justice, alterity, and the politics of citizenship and representation.

Although central to the exercise of power and authority, studies of time have tended to focus on the creation of particular sites under direct, coercive control. These include prisons, refugee camps, detention and deportation centres, reception offices, and so forth (see, for example Cohen 2018). There is far less which seeks to understand the macro or continental construction of alternative temporalities through a mix of coercive and discursive apparatuses (McNevin 2020 is a rare exception).

The work here serves as a marked contrast to the materialism and teleologies informing much work on space-time compression or global time in an era of extended supply chains (Harvey 1991; Bauman 2000; Sassen 2010). While drawing on a recognition of global entanglement, our approach highlights two elements often overlooked in these accounts. First, it elevates the status of discourse and social subjectification in reshaping territory and values in an era in which images, ideas, and material circulate globally in ever more intricated configurations. Second, it points to fractures in global time-space. This is not a question of some areas being left behind due to poor infrastructure or even poorer natural resource endowments. Rather, these fractures are consciously created – a form of division or disconnection that is central to global hegemonic ambitions.

Setting the Timespace Trap: promises

Official discourses of contemporary 'Europe and Africa' consider the two continents a 'partnership of equals', built on the principles of mutual respect, jointly defined interests, and global interdependence. In this global alliance, Africa and Europe's common fate depends on collaboration to build a safe and prosperous future for all (BMZ 2017, 4, 7). Oriented steadfastly towards the future, the narrative refers back to the two continent's history only at the point of African independence, considered the era Africa's 'aid dependency' that now needs to be overcome. In severing history at this particular point, the discourse disconnects current actions, relationships and agendas from those of the colonial past – which is either never or only vaguely alluded to – and related discussions of redress or injustice: 'as we face the challenges of the 21st century', state Jean Claude Juncker[2] and Dlamini-Zuma,[3]'there is more that unites Africa and Europe than divides us. We share a common history of thousands of years. Today more than ever we need to work together to build our common future and to work jointly on the defining global issues of our age' (Juncker and Dlamini-Zuma 2016). The narrative thus relies on a fictive *tabula rasa* where all come as equal partners, where, if there are any hangovers from the past at all, Europe could only be blamed for being too generous and charitable – and, in being so, created a dependency that Africa must now be nudged out of to take on responsibility for itself. As a statement by Germany's chancellor Merkel during a visit in Senegal emphasise, Europe's wishes for Africa to take on responsibility and stand on its own two feet (Merkel and Sall 2018).[4] The *German Marshall Plan with Africa* similarly declares its wish 'to strengthen the responsibility of African states,' asserting that, 'the times of 'giver and taker' need to be dissolved' (BMZ 2017, 4). As former president of the European Commission Juncker said,

> 'to speak of the future, one must speak of Africa, Europe's twin continent . . .. we need to invest more in our relationship with the nations of this great and noble continent. And we have to stop seeing this relationship through the sole prism of development aid. Such an approach is beyond inadequate, in fact it is humiliating. Africa does not need charity, it needs true and fair partnerships. And we in Europe need this partnership just as much' (European Commission 2018).

What Europe is doing now is designed to address inequality and power imbalances as if they exist free from historical obligation. While absolving itself for Africa's poverty and political fragmentation, Europe holds Africans hostage to the past.

Emphasising the importance of Africa's participation in charting a course of action towards the future, the joint 'management' of migration is central to

this new partnership. As explained by outgoing High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Mogherini, it,

> 'cannot be governed, if it is not governed by all of us together . . . I think we are on the right track to change the paradigm from the old traditional partnership based only on development cooperation to an equal partnership of friends. But let me say more than friends: brothers and sisters' (EEAS 2018a).

Cast as a 'revolutionary' move towards global governance (EAAS 2018a), joint migration management is meant to break down historical north-south inequalities both in terms of the nature of governance itself as well its objectives.

The goal of 'safe, regular and orderly' migration is the primary objective of migration governance as outlined in the 2019 Global Compact. The United Nations' sustainable development goal (SDG) target 10.7 adds a particularly telling 'responsible' to this list.' This mix of legality and morality provides a means of assessing and disciplining actual and would-be African migrants. Dangerous journeys in unseaworthy boats go beyond the 'tragic consequences' for migrants themselves, but threaten their continent's development, morality, and global norms (Daykin 2006). Movement is presented as exacting personal, emotional, economic and political risks and costs at all levels, from individuals to nation-states (Knoll and de Weijer 2016, 7; Minter 2011, 12; Malkki 1992; Brachet 2011, 9; Bakewell 2008, 1345–46; Lindley 2012; Kleist 2015, 129). While European identity incorporates global orientation and mobility, Africans must recognise that 'when someone is born on a continent, he must stay there and find a way out' (Senegalese man quoted in Bangré 2006). Discursively, Europe facilitates this process by a mixture of glorifying the importance of every single African in 'building' Africa, threats and modern morality tales that work to suppress alternative imaginations (Bangré 2006; Pian 2014, 182; Aguillon 2018, 14). This assigns the right to stay or return as the prerogative of African citizenship, rather than as coercive territorialisation (see Conklin 1998, 436).

Europe accuses those arriving 'irregularly' of crowding out those 'genuinely' needing protection (European Commission 2015 c, 7; see also European Commission 2015b, 2). In a similar vein, EU home affairs commissioner, Ylva Johansson states that, 'if we can't return those who are staying illegally in the European Union, it will be more difficult to build legal pathways. So these are linked to each other' (EUobserver 2020). Beyond protection, irregular migration becomes evidence of moral shortcomings. For Germany's 'Africa Commissioner', 'you can't have a lifestyle as we have in Europe, without working like Europe . . . human rights must guarantee a dignified life to every human being . . . but there is no legal right to a good life anywhere in the world: for this, Africans have to work hard as well'[5] (Nooke, n.d.). Those allegedly unwilling to 'work hard' in this way, a German campaign warns that 'you may have heard life is easy, but the reality is different . . . even if granted protection, life is expensive and it is hard to find a job' (German Federal Foreign Office 2018a). Thus, Africans remain timespace trapped:

until they are up to speed – to be achieved following Europe's instruction but on Africa's own steam – they cannot have what Europeans have. Critically, they cannot have it the easy way and 'fast forward' by leaving for European shores, arrogating and threatening to derail a velocity that is not theirs.

Within the dissemination of these norms, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) plays a uniquely prominent role. In a plethora of campaigns, publications, YouTube videos and even a mobile phone app, the IOM tirelessly disseminates the carefully curated monologue of 'irregular' migration as a (literal) dead end (IOM West and Central Africa 2019a; TV360 Nigeria 2018; IOM 2018; 2019 c). According to this, leaving without permission has no chance of success – an African cannot access the future through the 'backway'. If he tries, he or she will end up either dead or imprisoned. Fruitless without exception, an 'irregular' departure also means returning to disappointed expectation and alienation from family due to secret departures or an empty-handed homecoming. Even if he or she manages to stay alive, she or he would have wasted time and resources you could have put to better use. Acknowledging the error of his immoral ways, Abdoulie, a Gambian returnee, says, 'I don't think about the backway anymore. I just want to work and make my kids, my wife and my parents proud.' (IOM 2019d).

Thus, underlying the promise of a common future is thus a stand against 'irregular' and 'disorderly' mobility and the equation of claiming European space 'irregularly' with irresponsibility. Europe establishes the principle that the willingness to stay at home and contribute there is a critical marker of the responsibility needed to – eventually – access a global, mobile future. To do so, Africans must be spatially confined for now. The timespace trap thus lures Africans by offering a trade-off that requires a fundamental temporal recalibration and historical erasure. Africans can pursue a global, mobile future, but they must first surrender claims to European space and resources as recompense for colonial and imperial exploitation and oppression. Perhaps most critical about the foundations of the promise are the definitions of virtue and responsibility – and the position of Europe as arbiter of those distinctions. Shifting the language from rights or utilitarian calculation into a moral realm not only offers promises of prosperity but of perfection. Adherence not only will make Africans wealthier; it will make them better. Although African states are 'partners' in realising this goal (more on that below), it is ultimately Europe or others in the 'wealthy west' who determine when it is appropriate for Africans to move. Moreover, by paternalistically positioning itself as the guide to Africa's future, Europe justifies restrictions in ways concordant with commitments to personal freedom and progress.

Crafting the Sedentary Subject: perfection

Shifting the debate towards the duty and right to stay at home, Europe casts blocking Africans from entering Europe as a distinctly moral act. Far beyond the humanitarian gesture of saving migrants from drowning or desiccation, their interception, return and exclusion becomes a form of paternalistic perfecting. Staying in Africa is responsible; it is where Africans can claim dignity and live their best lives. Doing so enables them to invest in properly raising and training future generations to, eventually, join the world of global mobility.

In the quest to perfect the sedentary African subject, European narratives reproduce well-trodden colonial identities and long-standing narratives legitimising itself as the driver and reference point of progress, of what it means to be mature, rational and modern. The African, on the other hand, is acted upon, not acting on his own. Africans continually prove themselves reckless, occasionally petulant, immature, and irrational. No more so then when the take extraordinary risks to cross deserts and seas or die doing so. Every overturned dingy or marooned desert convoy offers further evidence that Africans need instruction, reform, guidance, and role models. In this narrative, Africans are victims of themselves, threatening their own futures with their mobility desires. Stuck in the traditional and tribal, Africans are only dragged into progress with great difficulty. Their continent remains stuck, delayed at best and timelessly stagnant at worst. Africa's 'archaic structures' are only ever tackled if and when they become subject to Western concern and action (Berliner Zeitung 2018). As discussed in report by a German delegation, which considers 'the model of western democracy, based on the politically mature individual who takes his or her own decisions independently on the basis of pragmatic preferences' as culturally unsuitable for West African countries (Essam et al. 2019). Africans remain immature compared to Europe, and need to be steered and guided into the future (Atkinson 2009). Like a stern governess, Europe is an authority that disciplines where necessary, but reluctantly and constructively (more on this below). Europe has Africa's best interest at heart, obliged by their privilege to help enable a future for Africa(ns). This is not to compensate for the past, but to enable Africans to be responsible and moral beings. Protecting and enlightening Africans is simultaneously a responsibility, calling, and burden.

Interrogating the distinctive roles Africans and Europeans are meant to play under this emerging schema reveals how policies and practices conflict with the narrative of equal partnership in the global here and now. Practically, a trap confines the Other in 'another time' and space (Klinke 2013, 677), restricting Africa's ability to full inclusion and participation in global circulation of ideas, people, and moralities.

Despite the distinctly moral nature of the task at hand – to craft 'responsible' Africans, the ideology of 'safe, regular and orderly migration', including the legal categories and concepts constituting it, migration management is translated as a neutral, technocratic framework, increasingly aided by 'impartial' and futuristic technologies (European Commission 2019a; iBorderCtrl n. d.; Breyer 2019; Deahl 2018; Kallius 2017) that benefits everyone rather than serving particular interests alone. Collectively, this constructs migration management as an emergent international 'best practice', giving it the legitimacy of working together on the global behalf, enabling access to the benefits of an advantageous time-space location for a select few while indefinitely excluding the vast majority from it.

The timespace manipulations inherent Europe's diverse interventions are a collective and global effort, undertaken by governments, leaders across the political spectrum, civil society and humanitarian organisations across both continents (Mayault 2017; Pian 2014; Aguillon 2018; Dünnwald 2015; Bergmann et al. 2017; Müller 2018; Collett and Ahad 2017; RMMS West Africa 2017). This is not the place for extensive review of the collaborations aimed to containing and crafting future Africans. Others have done so in ways that are often detailed and dystopian (Brachet 2016; Lopez Curzi 2016; Diallo 2017). Many interventions they describe are classic biopolitical initiatives to count and categorise people so authorities may better attend to them (see Casas-Cortes, Cobarrubias, and Pickles 2015). These include new research observatories, massive interventions in population registers, and experimental research to determine what forms of messaging are most persuasive in convincing Africans to stay home (Schans and Optekamp 2016; Browne 2015; Andersson 2016; Schneider 2012). This political economy of knowledge allows authorities to identify the people most likely to meander in ways that threaten themselves and others. That the first imperative of the Global Compact on Migration calls for enhanced migration data is no coincidence. Nor is the effort to carefully parse those who are truly deserving of asylum as an increasingly select group whose future is justifiably outside their homelands. (Importantly, each case of dramatic tragedy producing a recognised refugee becomes further justification for addressing 'root causes' and promoting development at home.) Like never before, the European Union and international organisations seek to understand Africans and use that knowledge to produce a shared understanding of what work is needed to model and modernise the observed populations.

In institutionalising a discourse of sedentariness as the gateway to moral and material progress, the European Union is relying heavily on varied forms of educational interventions designed to prevent idleness and reveal the creativity and localised productivity that comes from local investment. Combining both disciplining and positive emplacement, these narratives spin stories of humble but plentiful opportunities at home, kickstarted by small European investments, if

only migrants were willing to put in the effort. In a European funded three day 'business training', Nigerian Osemene discourages young Nigerian returnees from attempting to migrate again. For this, he claims, they must 're-engineer ' their 'old and destructive mindset ' to become 'someone who has a future ' (Howden 2019). A Gambian returnee states, 'the advice I have for those who embark on the backway, is to not even try the journey. Because with the money you spend on the journey, if you invest the money in the Gambia, within three months, or within three or two years, you can become a millionaire. This is what I didn't know' (IOM West and Central Africa 2019a). A returnee from Chad explains 'thanks to IOM, I was given the chance to work and earn money to start realizing my dream. I have started a small business selling food. Although it is not much, I am determined and willing to make it successful' (IOM West and Central Africa 2019b).

In a level of almost absurd, Foucauldian subjectification, the European Union – together with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) – has introduced a series of public awareness and education campaigns designed to reshape Africans attitudes towards mobility. Some of these echo celibacy clubs that seek to reinforce aversion to premarital sex through peer pressure and stigmatization (Patterson 2008). IOM's programmes in Ghanaian schools ask high schoolers to commit to staying at home and only consider migrating when they are mature, materially secure, and can legally do so (IOM West and Central Africa 2019a). In the meantime, they must be content and build communities at home. A similar campaign in Cameroon encourages young Africans to embrace the motto that 'mon avenir c'est ici' – my future is here (IOM West and Central Africa 2019b). In June 2019, Pastor and Human Rights Lawyer Simon Mbevi rhetorically asked Kenyans assembled at the 'Fearless Summit' in Athi River,[6] 'What choices have you made . . . Have you run away?' As they pondered, he followed his own prompt, 'I submit to you, the divine instruction is we must make do with what we have.' Although perhaps not sponsored by Europe, he is amplifying its message. This form of moralising helps frame global desire as something for others, something unpatriotic and ungodly. In Senegal and other sending countries, European awareness campaigns remind people of the pain caused by leaving. Whether by reiterating stories of mothers' who have lost children at sea (Mayault 2017; Bouilly 2016) or of others bankrupted in a breadwinner's absence, these efforts seek to stigmatize mobility and naturalise the sedentary imagination.

The account outlined may overstate the level of coherence and intentionality behind many of the initiatives we describe, and understate the role of those actors who genuinely remain outside of the co-production. There is no singular a master plan and many of the individual interventions offer undeniable benefits. Vocational education; reproductive health; local economic initiatives are all valuable in and of themselves. Support for them helps to align development actors who might quibble with the overall containment goals of these efforts. Yet if moneys are available, their own imperatives for support and action drive their complicity.

Frustrating Futures: punishment

The discourse of migration as a moral failure, as discussed previously, enables the legitimate disciplining by European saviours who prevent Africans from placing themselves and their continent at risk. Confinement, even if it is coercive, of Africans in Africa becomes 'the right thing' to. This adds migration management to a long list of European interventions cast as an ultimately correctional service that, even where it involves force, is ultimately for Africa's own good (Atkinson 2009; Conklin 1998; Ross 1990).

Where socialisation and cooperation do not succeed, coercive physical interventions re-inscribe a Europe empowered to grant access to global space and time at its sole discretion.

Through processes of recategorization linked to shifting legal frameworks, many of the Africans arriving in Europe are now undocumented or illegal. Where they may have once been coded and considered as asylum seekers or refugees, more restrictive entry standards prevent them from even making such claims. Continually describing Africans as both illegitimate and undocumented reinforces the immorality of their movements. They have broken the law and a basic human commitment to decency. They have transgressed by trying to escape the timespace trap. Outside of the domain assigned to them, they now threaten their continents' development and progress and must accordingly be responded to.

From protracted status determination processes or the denial of documentation to refusing migrants rescued at sea disembarkation in European ports, the suspension of migrants in time and space is as central to disciplining those who attempt to escape the timespace trap and those who must be prevented from leaving in the first place. For the sake of brevity, we can only illustrate this here with outlining two yet core aspects of transgression disciplining in discourse and practice.

The first aspect is Europe's pushing of migrants not only back in space but in time to legitimately suspend their human rights in spaces 'subtracted' from the laws of the global and the modern (Policante 2015:53). This is visible, for example, in the obstruction and suspension of search and rescue operations and 'push backs' of intercepted migrants into the hands of the Libyan coastguard (Paoletti 2010; Frontex Consultative Forum and on Fundamental Rights 2018). An exacerbated Sebastian Kurz, then chancellor of Austria, exclaims tellingly: 'It can't be that a few NGOS counteract the clear objectives of 29 European leaders. And they are not only doing this with the goal to save lives but to bring people to Central Europe jointly with people smugglers . . . .if it is not European, but Libyan or Egyptian boats that do the rescues, then *we don't ever have to deal with complex legal questions in the first place* ' (translated from German, emphasis added (FAZ 2018)). Coercing migrants into limbo – rendering them unable to progress, putting their life on hold – re-establishes Europe's prerogative to position Africans in time and space at its own discretion.

The other aspect is the discursive denial of African agency which we can observe, for example, in Europe's unyielding construction of 'irregular' migration as evidence of, victimhood, immaturity and inability to access 'true' information. According to this dominant narrative, most African women are coerced into migration by human traffickers and all migrants attempting to cross the Mediterranean have been deceived by scrupulous smugglers or dishonest relatives. Claiming a monopoly on truth, campaigns such as Italy's 'aware migrants' or Germany's 'rumours about Germany' (German Federal Foreign Office 2018b) explain to migrants that 'the decision to embark on the dangerous journey to Europe is such an important one that it should be based on facts, not rumours. Unfortunately, many irregular migrants make the decision to set out for Europe based on inaccurate information and rumours spread by people smugglers who are interested in profit, not the benefit and safety of the migrants. This website aims to counter rumours with an accurate description of the reality of irregular migration towards Europe.

While empirical research documents convincingly that migrants embark on migration journeys despite knowing of the risks involved, (Mbaye 2013, 13; see also Schans and Optekamp 2016), a million small and big 'epistemicides' (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018; Tucker 2018, 222) Wilson 1957, 411) consistently recode African agency and knowledge as ignorance, naïveté or recklessness (Merkel and Sall 2018; Berliner Zeitung 2018). This too links to long-standing colonial identity constructions of Africans as creatures much closer to nature than Europeans, moving by 'impulse' and instinct, not intention (Daykin 2006, 626; Chadwick 1948, 114,127; Conklin 1998).

Where Africans are cast as immature and irrational, compelled by forces beyond their control, there is no space to accept and validate that Africans move with agency. This, in turn, legitimates continued European leadership, initiative and authority. Acknowledging migrants' agency would mean to destabilise the relationship between European rescuers and the African rescued, between the former who can access the global future and the latter who have to wait their turn. As Fanon argues, 'there is nothing more sensational than a black man speaking correctly, for he is appropriating the white world' (Fanon 1952, 19). On the other hand, 'to speak pidgin means: you stay where you are' (Fanon 1952, 18).

Conclusion: liberal Absolution and Disparate Futures

As 'legitimate' as Europe's coercive response to timespace incursions may be within a European morality and future, the application of archaically coercive methods still threatens Europe's self-image. How can it allow people to be left at sea to die (see Kingsley and Shoumali 2020) while remaining a 'positive global force' promoting democracy and human rights worldwide (European Commission 2017, 8)? Drawing on the tools of both temporal and spatial control across both

continents, Europe has thus devised strategies that are effective yet absolve liberal actors from the inherently illiberal acts they author(ise).

The identities of the timeless or delayed African and the modern, progressing European are as central to current entanglements between the continents as they have been in the past. Despite promises of shared flourishing and common futures, the discourse of migration management retains longstanding colonial concepts of disparate futures – of futures *entangled but discrete*. The inbuilt political, social, economic and spatial ill-foundations of migration management push the threshold for African inclusion further out of reach rather than bringing them closer, rendering the possibility of meeting in the same time and place all but impossible. 'Pathways' – literal and symbolic – remain an eternally intangible and elusive option for the vast majority of Africans (Conklin 1998, 434–35).

Given the longevity of confining Africa to apprenticeship, much points towards Europe's need to keep this process eternally incomplete. Under the tried and trusted guise of leading Africa(ns) into progress, this ensures a perpetual African dependency and deficiency that must be alleviated by Europeans in great spectacle, but that can never be allowed to be fully overcome. Europe has to continue rescuing Africa to rescue itself, keeping Africans in a perpetual training circle without ever having to realise true equality and integration. As in the past, the inbuilt inequality between the continents is thus carefully guarded rather than alleviated.

Containment development – positioning improved economic welfare and mobility as mutually exclusive – maintains a relationship that keeps identities, polities, bodies and spaces close enough to grant Europe liberal absolution without ever genuinely allowing for true integration and a genuinely common and shared future. Limiting the focus to safeguarding the right of Africans to stay conceals that real freedom and dignity mean to have a choice: to stay *or* to move. Warding off its own 'isolation and divisions' and ensuring its own 'freedom, protection and progress' (Macron 2019, 4), Europe effectively imposes on Africa the former and denies it the latter. Contrary to analyses positing restrictive migration policies as betraying the liberal universalism on which Europe's polities and futures are founded, we position 'migration management' as an integral part of its reproduction.

Notes

1. Translated from German by the author.
2. then president of the European Commission
3. then president of the African Union Commission
4. translated from German by the author
5. translated from German by the author
6. According to their website, the fearless summit, 'is an annual gathering of church and marketplace leaders who are passionate about bringing godly change in every sector of society.' https://fearlesssummit.org/(accessed 16 November 2019).

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