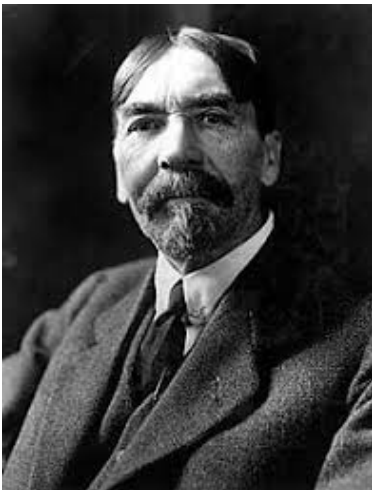


An Evening With Chinua Achebe

Through his fiction and non-fiction works, Nigerian author Chinua Achebe has sought to repair the damage done to the continent of Africa and its people as a result of European colonization. This is best exemplified in his most famous novel “Things Fall Apart,” one of the first African novels written in English to achieve national acclaim. Set in the 1890s, the novel deals with the impact of British colonialism on the traditional Igbo society in Nigeria. Published in 1958 — just two years before the end of a century of British rule in Nigeria — the novel celebrated its 50th anniversary of publication in 2008. “An Evening with Chinua Achebe” featured the author reading from his celebrated work.

Thorstein Veblen ~ The Theory Of The Leisure Class



Thorstein Veblen Photo:
en.wikipedia.org

The institution of a leisure class is found in its best development at the higher stages of the barbarian culture; as, for instance, in feudal Europe or feudal Japan.

In such communities the distinction between classes is very rigorously observed; and the feature of most striking economic significance in these class differences is the distinction maintained between the employments proper to the several classes.

The upper classes are by custom exempt or excluded from industrial occupations, and are reserved for certain employments to which a degree of honour attaches. Chief among the honourable employments in any feudal community is warfare; and priestly service is commonly second to warfare. If the barbarian community is not notably warlike, the priestly office may take the precedence, with that of the warrior second. But the rule holds with but slight exceptions that, whether warriors or priests, the upper classes are exempt from industrial employments, and this exemption is the economic expression of their superior rank.

Brahmin India affords a fair illustration of the industrial exemption of both these classes. In the communities belonging to the higher barbarian culture there is a considerable differentiation of sub-classes within what may be comprehensively called the leisure class; and there is a corresponding differentiation of employments between these sub-classes. The leisure class as a whole comprises the noble and the priestly classes, together with much of their retinue. The occupations of the class are correspondingly diversified; but they have the common economic characteristic of being non-industrial. These non-industrial upper-class occupations may be roughly comprised under government, warfare, religious observances, and sports.

PDF online: <http://moglen.law.columbia.edu/LCS/theoryleisureclass.pdf>

Boris van der Ham & Rachid

Benhammou ~ Nieuwe Vrijdenkers - Twaalf voormalige moslims vertellen hun verhaal



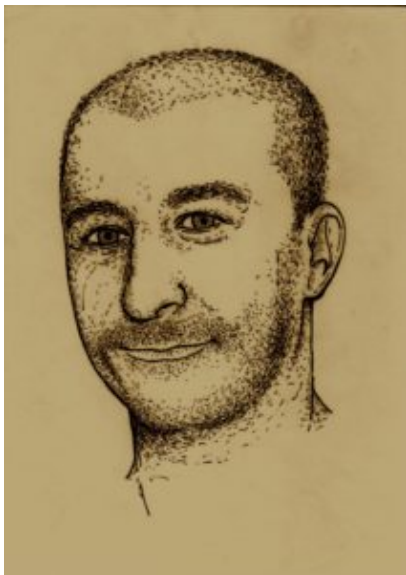
*Boris van der Ham -
Tekening Joseph Sassoon
Semah*

Twaalf Nederlandse voormalige moslims die zich hebben losgemaakt van de religie van hun ouders, de islam, worden geïnterviewd door de voorzitter van het Humanistisch Verbond *Boris van der Ham* en cultureel ondernemer en freelancejournalist *Rachid Benhammou*. De twaalf vertellen persoonlijke verhalen over hun keuzes, maar voor allen is het een moeizaam en vaak verwarrend proces geweest, met name in relatie tot de familie en de gemeenschap. Het afstand nemen van je religie betekent vooral een sociaal offer. De strijd binnen de gemeenschap, waar de groep belangrijker wordt gevonden dan het individu, is zwaar. Om de familie niet te kwetsen blijft dan ook meer dan de helft van de geportretteerden anoniem. Vaak geldt “Zolang anderen het niet weten, deert het ook niemand”, aldus Said El Haji, een van de geïnterviewden.

De invloed van internationale ontwikkelingen op hun leven in Nederland, met name de Palestijnse kwestie, is groot. Ook de invloed van social media speelt een belangrijke rol, in positieve zin doordat voormalige moslims actief kunnen zijn

met gelijkgestemden bij o.a. online discussiegroepen, maar het heeft ook negatieve effecten. Vanaf de 80er jaren is vanuit Saudi-Arabië via satelliet-tv veel invloed uitgeoefend en werd een zeer conservatieve islam gepredikt. Door de komst van satelliet-tv en Arabische zenders uit het Midden-Oosten ging men de islam strikter beoefenen en ging met zeer negatief over het Westen en over Nederland denken.

'Karim', een anonieme Marokkaanse Nederlander, beschrijft de eerste generatie gastarbeiders, meestal ongeschoold, die Nederland als het beloofde land zag. "In de jaren negentig kwam er opeens een golf van nieuwe informatie op hen af. Met de komst van satelliet-tv en internet kwam er een ander soort islam de huiskamer in geslingerd. Die van het wahabisme en salafisme uit het Midden-Oosten."



Rachid Benhammou
Tekening Joseph Sassoon
Semah

De eerste generatie was wel enigszins beïnvloedbaar maar bleef over het algemeen trouw aan de Marokkaanse islam. Maar een deel van de tweede generatie omarmde die nieuwe stromingen wel en vindt dat de eerste generatie zich te westers begon te gedragen of gewoon te weinig deed om 'de juiste' islam te verspreiden. Toen 'Karim' jong was werd de islam in Nederland ook gepromoot: "Breng je kinderen naar de Koranschool. Leer ze Arabisch." Dat neemt hij de Nederlandse overheid kwalijk. Zij gingen blind mee in de lobby van Arabische landen. En de beïnvloeding vanuit het Midden-Oosten ging verder: op

tv keek je naar het nieuws uit Israël, over hun vijandschap met de Palestijnen. “Dat gebruikte de propagandamachine van de radicale islam weer om daarmee ‘onze onderdrukking’ aan te tonen. De voortdurende boodschap was dat moslims anders zijn dan andere gelovigen.” In de eigen gemeenschap kwam het vaak neer op slachtoffertje spelen in een land waar je juist ultiem vrij bent te denken en zeggen wat je wilt, aldus ‘Karim’. Maar ook hij doet zich in het publieke domein anders voor dan hij in werkelijkheid is, en noemt zichzelf ‘de bewuste hypocriet’.

Farid El Mourabit en Halima Boutahar, beiden geboren in Marokko, staan met foto op de voorkant van het boek. Fatima El Mourabit is trots dat ze afstand heeft kunnen nemen van een religie waar ze zich niet mee kon identificeren. Ook Farid El Mourabit maakt er geen geheim van dat ze atheïst is en expliciet geen moslima: “Er is niet zoiets als een moslimras”. Er zijn grote verschillen in de etnische achtergronden en culturen als het gaat om uitingen van de islam. “De mix van lokale cultuur en islam levert elke keer iets anders op”. Beiden hebben grote persoonlijke offers gebracht.

Ook Celal Altuntas, schrijver van Koerdisch-Turkse afkomst, schuwt de openbaarheid niet. Hij schrijft kritische stukken over de islam, waardoor hij regelmatig wordt bedreigd. Een verlegen dorpskind dat voorbestemd was imam te worden, een tijdelijke PKK-strijder, vervolgens vlucht hij via Turkije naar Europa en komt uiteindelijk in Nederland terecht. In zijn eerste vijf jaar in Nederland neemt hij stap voor stap afstand van Allah. Met name was Socrates’ *‘Durf te denken’* hierbij van invloed. Nu geeft filosofie houvast in zijn leven. Hij wil expliciet niet zijn zoals veel atheïsten, die vanwege de sociale druk voor de vorm meedoen met de ramadan. En om maar geen discussie te krijgen noemen ze zich toch maar moslim. “Ik wil daar niet aan meedoen en domweg meelopen met de kudde. Om precies die reden voel ik trouwens ook niets bij de term ‘ex-moslim’. Mensen die zich ex-moslim noemen, hebben zich nog niet helemaal verlost van de islam. Ze leven nog in een bepaalde angst. Angst dat Allah misschien toch wel bestaat.”

Hij is ook openlijk kritisch over de politieke situatie in Nederland. Hij schetst het gevaar dat sommige politieke partijen de hele islam in een bepaalde hoek drukken, omdat de kritiek op de islam hierdoor wordt vermengd met buitenlanderhaat. “De andere kant van Nederland trapt in het slachtofferschap en knuffelt nog steeds. Niet omdat men pro-islam is, maar als middel om de rechtse

partijen te bestrijden. En daar profiteren juist de radicalen van.”

Uit veel verhalen komt naar voren dat de ouders die uit landen kwamen met een milde vorm van islam, pas in Nederland onder invloed kwamen van een meer radicale islam.

Hamid Sekalle, wiens vader uit het Rifgebergte in Noord-Marokko kwam, komt op zijn zeventiende in de Utrechtse wijk Kanaleneiland terecht, waar hij zich al snel thuis voelt. Hij leert pas op latere leeftijd bidden, op zijn school droeg geen enkele meid een hoofddoek, hij is een liberalere vorm van islam gewend, zonder haat naar de anderen of radicale denkbeelden. Maar in Nederland wordt dat anders. In Nederland komen imans aan het woord die in Marokko nooit getolereerd zouden zijn. Maar in Nederland leert hij ook kritisch denken en gaat hij zijn religie scheiden van zijn cultuur. Zijn eindconclusie is dat angst de brandstof van religie is, waardoor God voor hem ineens heel klein wordt. Inspiratie haalt hij nu uit de wetenschap en hij gelooft niet meer.

Ook ‘Shirin’, geboren in Afghanistan, opgegroeid in Pakistan, en later met het gezin in Nederland terecht gekomen, was gewend aan een milieu dat vroeger behoorlijk religievrij was. De cultuur van het Afghaan-zijn was veel prominenter aanwezig, en een van die elementen van cultuur was beleefdheid. Beleefdheid ging voor alles, ook voor religie. Maar op een bepaald moment werd ook in deze gemeenschap de islamitische identiteit voor sommigen belangrijker dan de Afghaanse. Na een intensief denkproces besloot ze geen moslim meer te willen zijn.

Auteur Said El Haji, geboren in de Rif in Marokko, groeide op vlakbij Rotterdam. “Als ik mezelf een labeltje wil geen, dan noem ik mij agnost. Tegenover de hardheid van mijn vader die geen twijfel kende over de absolute waarheid, wil ik geen alternatieve hardheid zetten. Ik weet niet of God wel of niet bestaat. In de Koran staat veelvuldig “Allaho alaaam”, oftewel: “Alleen God weet het.”

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The Coming Storm: Italy Under An All-Populist Government And EU's Impasse



*C.J.
Polychroniou*

A clear pattern has emerged in European societies since the outbreak of the euro crisis in 2010. Voters across the socioeconomic spectrum are casting their votes in support of populist, anti-establishment movements and parties whose leaders offer an inward vision of the future combined with a strong dislike for the political culture of liberal democracy and the values professed by the European Union, including overt skepticism over the single currency, the euro.

However, as yet, it is only in Italy that the political pendulum moved so far to the right that an all-populist government was eventually allowed, after Italian president Mattarella blocked the nomination of Eurosceptic economist Savano for the position of the Ministry of Finance, to be formed under the leadership of a nonelected prime minister, an unknown law professor, Giuseppe Conte, whose academic credentials, as stated in his professional CV, appear to lack truthfulness.

But this is a hardly a consolation to Brussels for there is probably no more problematic country in all of western Europe today, save Greece, for undergoing such epigenetic political changes.

Sure enough, the fact that the anti-establishment Five Star Movement, founded in 2009 by the comedian Beppe Grillo and the ingenious blogger Gianroberto Casaleggio, and the reactionary Northern League (il Carroccio), founded in 1991 with the principal aim of advancing a system of fiscal federalism in order to halt

the flow of resources from the northern to the southern regions of Italy, managed to pull jointly a majority of the votes in the March elections and thereby sweep away the mainstream but otherwise dysfunctional political establishment of the postwar era bodes well neither for Italy nor for the EU.

Given Italy's fiscal and overall economic state of affairs, it is actually through sheer luck that a full-blown financial crisis has not actually erupted in the eurozone's third largest economy, and eighth largest in the world by nominal GDP. The country's public debt to GDP ratio stands currently at 131.80%, which is the highest level since unification in 1861, and the fifth largest worldwide. Such high levels of public debt to GDP ratio are simply prohibited under the Frankenstein-like creation of the European Monetary Union, where a single currency zone exists among scores of highly diverse economies and political cultures but without a fiscal union or fiscal transfer mechanisms to address competitiveness imbalances, which are quite severe between North and South.

Lest we forget, the Greek debt crisis exploded in early 2010, with the private international credit markets sending borrowing costs to stratospheric levels, when the country's public debt to GDP ratio was believed to have been around 128%. The fact that about 60% of Italian debt is held by residents has provided indeed something of a safety cushion against a yield market backlash, but this is unlikely to continue indefinitely given the shaky standing of the country's banks, which hold more than 75% of the debt owned by residents — a concern which will be magnified now that a quacky populist government will be in charge of Italy's public finances.

Indeed, markets have already shown increased nervousness to the formation of an all-populist government cabinet. The gap between Italian and German government 10-year bond yields has grown significantly lately (by more than 75 basis points between April to May), and the gap will surely grow if the economic policies advocated by the leaders of the Five Star Movement and the Northern League, respectively, are adopted by prime minister Giuseppe Conte.

Both the Five Star Movement and the Northern League advocate a potpourri economic agenda which appears attractive to rich and poor alike, such as sharp tax cuts (both parties favor a flat 25% tax rate) and welfare handouts while promising at the same time to get rid of illegal immigrants and curb further immigration.

If implemented, the tax cuts will worsen significantly the country's fiscal condition as less revenues will pour into public coffers and lead to further inequality and popular discontent not simply with regards to the condition of the national economy but also over the euro and the draconian fiscal adjustment measures that the all-populist government will be forced to implement under pressure from Brussels, Berlin, and the bond markets.

The political situation inside Italy is also quite precarious, leaving little room for dramatic policy decisions, such as an exit from the eurozone.

While a significant portion of the Italian population is quite skeptical if not outright against the single currency, the majority of citizens continue to support the euro and would oppose withdrawal from the eurozone. It is precisely because of this reality that the anti-euro rhetoric was significantly toned down by both the Five Star Movement and the Northern League during the campaign prior to the March elections. And the original selection of Saviano for the position of the Minister of Finance was clearly not part of some planned strategy aiming to release Italy from the straightjacket of the single currency regime but, rather, a move designed to counter the weight of Germany with regards to eurozone fiscal and economic policies, with the threat of a withdrawal from the euro to be used as a potential negotiation tool, a diplomatic leverage.

In this context, it is clear that the all-populist government of Giuseppe Conte is caught between a rock and a hard place: whatever policies will seek to implement will face challenges and resistance both inside Italy and on the international front, mainly from Brussels and Berlin, but with the international credit markets also acting as a deterrent to extreme and unfriendly policies to the economic universe in which Italy finds itself at the present historical juncture.

However, it is almost a given that the all-populist government in Rome will soon find out that its incoherent economic agenda (and we should not forget that while the Five Star Movement draws its support primarily from the poor and working segments of Italian society, the Northern League enjoys support primarily among the rich in the Northern regions) will be extremely difficult to implement. And, if it does manage, somehow, to turn it into actual policy, it is also certain that it will generate mass discontent inside the country by virtue of increasing the gap between haves and have-nots, while leaving intact the deep and structural problems facing Italian economy, with unemployment being the most serious one for the well-being of the nation, while creating at the same time bigger deficits

and heavier public debt levels. In either case, (“business as usual” or the enforcement of an incoherent economic agenda), Eurocrats will surely begin to lose a lot of sleep from now on over the disturbing political and economic developments in Italy that will surely follow under the Giuseppe Conte government.

Having said that, it should be stated in no uncertain terms that the coming of extreme populism in Italy to age is a natural and expected outcome, whose root cause lies with the EU itself. Indeed, given the inability or unwillingness of the EU to proceed with the kind of meaningful and necessary reforms that would allow the largest economic block in the world to function in a way whereby monetary stability does not hinder economic growth and the interests of the European corporate and financial world do not override the interests of the general population, the surge of extreme political movements that tap into popular discontent should be seen as neither a surprising or irrational development

Indeed, as long as the EU continues with its long-standing state of impasse over architectural reforms in the European Monetary regime, extreme populism in western Europe will find fertile ground for spreading nationistic, xenophobic and even racist ideas. And extreme populist movements and leaders also know that the only way to make inroads into mainstream society is by combining their nationalist, xenophobic and racist rhetoric with a catch-all economic agenda. And they do so in full recognition of the fact that if they implement their economic agenda in the event they come to power, they will actually make things far worse than they already are, especially for already heavily indebted countries such as those in southern Europe whose economies are in dire need of sustainable development, job creation programs, progressive (instead of regressive) tax systems, and higher wages.

Suffice to say, these goals for countries inside the eurozone can be attained only under the economic vision of a Social, rather than a Neoliberal Europe. Yet, the real power brokers in the EU, with Germany as the head of the fiscally reactionary club of northern euro member states, have opposed all along an alternative path to European economic and political integration, a development which has been instrumental in itself in contributing to the rise and spread of extreme populism and anti-EU sentiments throughout the continent.

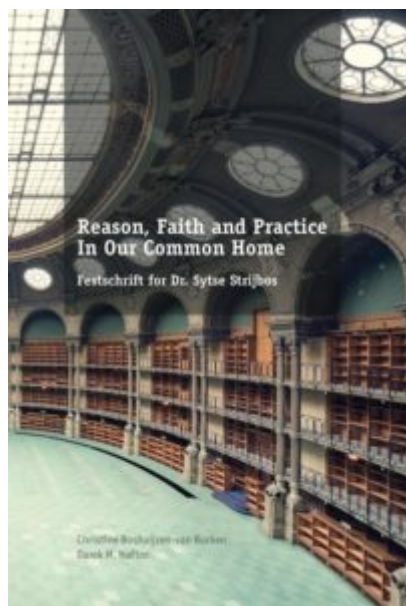
But who knows? Perhaps the coming storm in the Euroland, which will surely

come when the all-populist government in Rome will discover that having the cake and eating it at the same time is a recipe for economic and political disaster, and which will undoubtedly make the Eurocrisis of 2010-2011 look like a garden party, will finally force Berlin and Brussels to join the right side of history. If not, the vision of European integration will turn in due time into a political nightmare that will bring back memories of pre-World War II conditions.

Previously published: www.globalpolicyjournal.com

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Information About The IIDE Annual Working Conferences



As an essential for the execution of its research, the IIDE sustains an international North-South network of senior academic researchers and their PhD students who are affiliated with different universities and institutions in the Netherlands, UK, Sweden, and South Africa. *[Note: This North-South network, formerly named the Centre for Philosophy, Technology and Social systems (CPTS), operates since 2010 within the organisational framework of the IIDE]*

One of its activities is the organisation of Annual Working Conferences (AWC) at the beautiful venue of the Emmaus Priorij at the river Vecht in Maarssen, near

Utrecht, Netherlands. At these week-long events in April or May, participants present papers on their current research, receive comprehensive critical mentoring, and respond with ideas on how their research will be continued.

The formula of these AWC's has proved very successful in generating a flow of high quality papers, informing PhD research, and sharpening up ideas on a wide range of issues. The research of the past has resulted, amongst other things, in a series of Proceedings. The papers that are accepted have been sent out for a peer review. The title of each volume is borrowed from a Discussion paper which aims to foster the ongoing reflection at the AWC's on the mission of the IIDE and its broad research agenda.

The following Proceedings have been published since 2002:

(2002) *On the Connections Between Philosophy, Technology and Systems Sciences*, edited by Johannes D. Bijkerk, Jan van der Stoep, Sytse Strijbos. Amersfoort: CPTS. ISBN 90-807718-1-3.

(2003) *Towards a New Interdisciplinarity*, edited by Rob A. Nijhoff, Birgitta Bergvall-Kåreborn, Anita Mirijamdotter, Sytse Strijbos. Amersfoort: CPTS. ISBN 90-807718-2-1

(2004) *Interdisciplinarity and the Integration of Knowledge*, edited by Marc J. de Vries, Birgitta Bergvall-Kåreborn, Sytse Strijbos. Amersfoort: CPTS. ISBN 90-807718-3-X

(2005) *Towards Humane Leadership*, edited by Albert Helberg, Jan van der Stoep, Sytse Strijbos. Amersfoort: CPTS. ISBN-10: 90-807718-4-8 and ISBN-13: 978-90-807718-4-0

(2006) *Integrating Visions of Technology*, edited by Andrew Basden, Anita Mirijamdotter, Sytse Strijbos. Maarssen: CPTS. ISBN-10: 90-807718-5-6 and ISBN-13: 978-90-807718-5-7

(2007/2008) *The Problem of System Improvement*, edited by Andrew Basden, Darek Eriksson, Sytse Strijbos. Maarssen: CPTS. ISBN 978-90-807718-6-4

(2009) *Systems Thinking and Philosophy as Interdisciplinarity*, edited by Andrew Basden, Leenta Grobler, Darek Eriksson. Maarssen: CPTS. ISBN 978-90-807718-6-4

(2010) *Interdisciplinary Research for Practices of Social Change*, edited by Roelien Goede, Leenta Grobler, Darek Haftor. Maarssen: CPTS. ISBN 978-90-807718-8-8

(2011) *Re-Integrating Technology and Economy in Human Life and Society*,

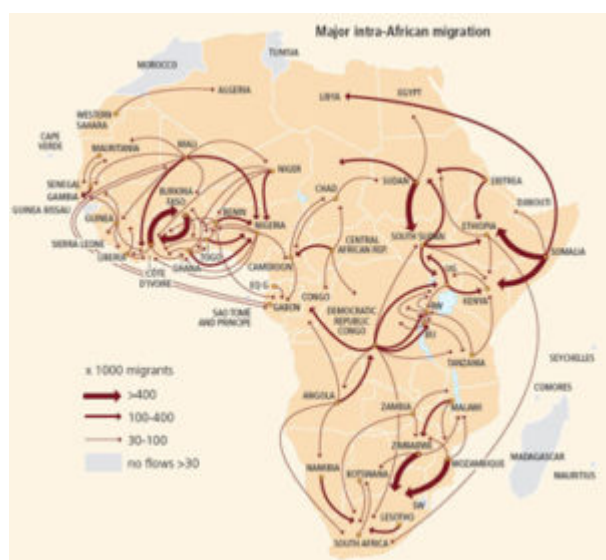
Volume 1, edited by Lucius Botes, Roel Jongeneel, Sytse Strijbos, Maarssen: IIDE. ISBN 978-90-361-0285-8

(2011) *Re-Integrating Technology and Economy in Human Life and Society, Volume 2*, edited by Christine G. van Burken and Darek Haftor, Maarssen: IIDE. ISBN 978-90-361-0287-2

(2012) *The Role of Education in Economy and Society*, edited by Lindile L. Ndabeni, Darek M. Haftor, Sytse Strijbos, Amsterdam: Rozenberg Publishers. ISBN 978-90-361-0322-0

(2014) *Social Change in Our Technology-Based World*, edited by Mark Rathbone, Fabian von Schéele & Sytse Strijbos, Amsterdam: Rozenberg Publishers. ISBN 978-90-361-0420-3.

Ton Dietz ~ Working Paper: Destination Africa. The Dynamics 1990-2015



In September 2017 the African Studies Centre Leiden published a Thematic Map about Africa's international migration in 2015. At the backside the 2015 data published by UN-DESA were used to show the total international immigration data per country, linked to the position of these countries on the Human Development Index for the same year. Also the data for intercontinental immigration per country were given.

These were clearly showing that immigration was much higher for the African countries with a relatively high HDI score than for the African countries with a low HDI score. Intercontinental immigration was much lower than international

immigration, because most international migrants stay within Africa. The thematic map showed that out of 20.4 million people who were stated to be 'immigrants' (= born in another country) only 2.5 million came from outside Africa. A map was shown with all major intra-African migration flows as measured in 2015. And two maps were included showing how many people had immigrated to the 54 African countries, and what the numbers and relative importance was of inter-continental (non-African) immigrants per country, linked to the 2015 HDI scores. So far so good. But there is much more to show.

For this preparatory note for the 'Destination Africa' conference we added a dynamic picture: looking at the changes between 1990 and 2015. And we also looked at the dynamics of the patterns of migration: where did the people come from who have been counted as 'immigrants in Africa' in 1990, 2000, and 2015. An interesting question can also be answered: what is the colonial hangover? And is it true that Europe is losing ground?

This is volume 141 of the series ASCL Working Papers.

[Read the Working Paper.](#)