



Narratives on the free movement of people in West Africa

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Current partial narratives ignore relevant contexts that support a broader understanding of migration and mobility from a Global South perspective. This presentation draws on policy documents and academic literature to identify six dominant narratives on the concept of free movement of persons in West Africa, thus contributing to a holistic understanding of migration and mobility in the region. This presentation also shows that pro-mobility narratives are indicative of how regional integration and its acceptance by states have evolved as responses to colonial imputations of migration in addition to the promotion of neo-liberal economic development and Pan-Africanism. While external narratives may influence migration and mobility in West Africa to a certain extent, nationalist interests evident in narratives around security and identity politics have more immediate effects on migration policies and practice, diffusing into the regional level. Adopting the lens of Third World Approaches to International Law (focusing on the historical evolution of the Global South and the effects of colonialism, neo-colonialism and the stages of political and economic development), the presentation will examine how the concept of the free movement of persons in West Africa is evolving based on the interactions between external and national narratives, emphasizing the importance of recentring African narratives in regional migration governance regimes.