



CONFRONTING MIGRATION NARRATIVES

Aspirations and ability to move in Ghana

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Migration context in Ghana – a brief overview

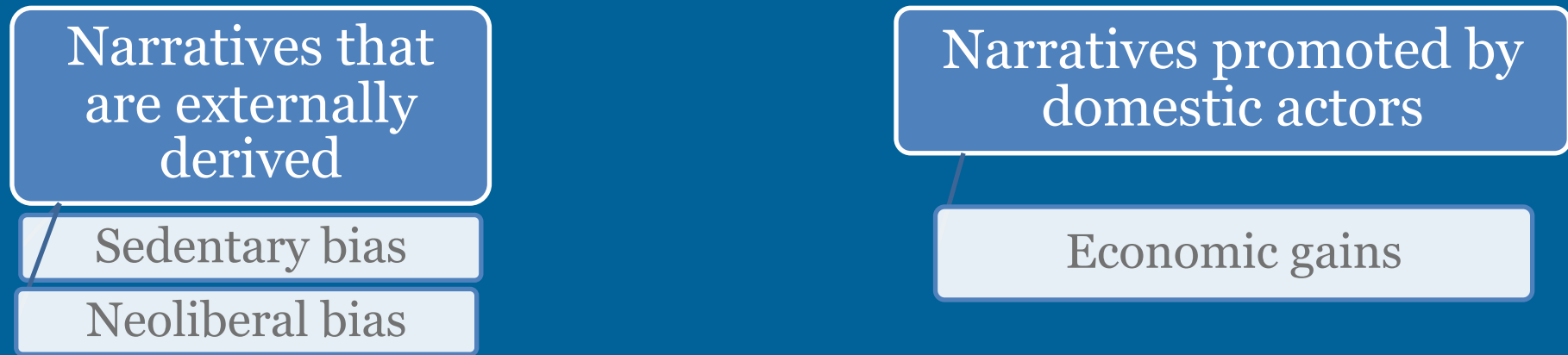
- Ghana has been a significant country of emigration/immigration in West Africa
- Remittances contribute about USD 4.7 billion to the country's GDP
- Elaboration of national migration policy frameworks e.g NMP
- Wider context: EU externalisation impact; regional migration agendas





How have narratives changed?

- Less emphasis on potential of migration and transnationalism to contribute to development
- Migration deterrence and pre-empting departures (targets ‘would be migrants’)
- Root causes narrative – promote economic opportunities and development





Methodology

- Documents and secondary literature, semi-structured interviews; and other participatory methods
- Interviews were conducted by the authors during separate projects and field trips in 2016 and 2018.
 - Migrant youth in London (UK) and New York (USA) and non-migrant youth in Greater Accra and Ashanti Region (Ghana)
 - Ghanaian government officials, the EU Delegation to Ghana, civil society actors active in migration-development initiatives and migrant associations



FINDINGS



External actors: Sedentary bias

- Awareness raising campaigns

*“You try to explain to the people that Europe is not very keen to host as in the past, and that they **will not have many chances** as maybe others did in the past. **There are risks** that they are taking in crossing the desert and then they will arrive in Europe, where they **can’t work because they don’t have papers**. (EU Delegation to Ghana, 2018)*

- Emphasise poor conditions experienced in Europe as an irregular migrant
- Emphasise dangers of the migration route



External actors: Sedentary bias

- Recruitment of ‘local voices’ to lend credibility to dissuasion campaigns
- *"If GIS go to the communities to explain this, they don't believe it. Because it's GIS, Ghana Immigration Service. If it's us, as Europeans, they will not believe it. But if it's an association of people that are Ghanaians, and from the communities from the North for example, they will pay attention. (...) That is why in our campaigns we are working with schools, and parents and families – it's crucial. And it's crucial that we work with Ghanaians and these associations of Ghanaians, that have already crossed the desert and they faced all these difficulties.*
- Recruitment of failed migrants and returnees in campaigns



External actors: Neoliberal bias

- Migration ‘alternatives’
- Entrepreneurialism as a solution
- Key characteristics of such project interventions:
 - Target both aspiring and return migrants (also reflected in location of projects)
 - Underpinned by ‘self-help’ development narratives
 - Focus on personal endeavour and private sector solutions (e.g. business formation)



Domestic state actors: Economic gains lens

- Active policy of diaspora engagement
- Diaspora/migrants' net 'worth' to the state is determined
- Little focus on social/civil services to the diaspora; or on extending migrants' social protection and rights in Ghana



Confronting narratives: what shapes youth aspirations?

- Globalisation; Representations of other places through media, relatives abroad, technology (eg Google)
- Educational and employment options in Ghana, incl
 - Public sector retrenchment
 - High graduate unemployment
- Initial move to city (Accra, Kumasi) and day-to-day realities of city life



Conclusion

Narratives of dissuasion

- Contend with youth aspirations and an ongoing culture of migration
- Obscuring EU role in rendering migration journeys risky
- Undermines regional integration agendas and free movement protocol in the region?

Economic gains lens by domestic state actors – extending migrants' rights in Ghana mainly taken up by CSOs