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COOPERATIVE MIGRATION POLICY, UNCOOPERATIVE REALITY: THE E.U.'S IMPOSSIBLE "MANAGEMENT" OF WEST AFRICAN MIGRATION

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This paper examines the Center for Migration Information and Management (CIGEM), which the European Union opened in Mali in 2008 to dissuade Malians and other West Africans from attempting to migrate to the E.U., among other objectives. After briefly discussing migration theory, this paper examines the current status of Mali-E.U. migration. It proceeds to assess CIGEM's goals and its strategies to dissuade unauthorized migration. The paper argues that CIGEM will fail to affect the flows of migrants from Mali to the E.U. because the center does not address the structural reasons for migration in today's globalized world. The paper ends with a call for a more honest discussion of labor migration realities and recommends that the E.U. develop a circular, temporary labor migration policy.

I. INTRODUCTION

In October 2008, the Center for Migration Information and Management (*Centre d'Information et de Gestion des Migrations*, CIGEM) opened its

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doors in Mali's capital city, Bamako. Created to serve as an information clearinghouse for potential and returned labor migrants in Mali and West Africa, CIGEM opened with ceremonies and speeches from government officials from Mali, France, and the European Union (E.U.). Louis Michel, the E.U. development commissioner, predicted that CIGEM would "pave the way for managing migration flows more effectively" (Traynor 2008). He argued that migration "should be supported, structured and managed optimally" (*Idem.*). The French immigration minister, Brice Hortefeux, used the occasion to warn the assembled guests that "[i]llegal immigration is a wild dream, rushing towards an Eldorado that doesn't exist anymore" (Agence France-Presse 2008). Mali's president, Amadou Toumani Touré, simply stated that "a solution of [100] percent security is not realistic but neither is [a 100] percent humanitarian solution. The real trouble is finding work for young people" (*Idem.*).

The three officials' remarks illustrate both the complex dynamics of labor migration policy and the simplified discourse surrounding the issue. President Touré's insistence on addressing labor *and* migration as two sides of the same coin is perhaps the most nuanced perspective. Michel and Hortefeux, however, only address parts of the issue—and not the key parts at that—as this paper will illustrate. Michel's faith in a technocratic solution is simplistic, and Hortefeux's dire warnings will fall on deaf ears. Both represent an incomplete engagement with the dynamics underlying contemporary labor migration from the global South to the global North.

Over the past few years, increasing numbers of Malians have attempted to migrate to Europe (Adepoju et al. 2010, 60). For example, Malians were more than ten percent of all undocumented immigrants caught attempting to enter Spain in early 2007 (*Idem.*). At present, there are an estimated 200,000 Malians in Europe, the great majority of which reside in France (*Idem.*). Mali has become simultaneously a country of origin, destination, and transit for migrants. CIGEM, the first in a planned series of E.U.-funded migration centers in Africa, was created to address the growing outflows of Malians and other West Africans to Europe.

CIGEM is a prime example of the recent phenomenon of "cooperation" between receiving and sending countries to staunch the flows of migrants from the global South to the global North; similar agreements exist between, among others, the U.K. and Nigeria, Spain and various Latin American countries, and Libya and Italy (Adepoju et al. 2010, 48-59). This cooperation is often no more than an attempt by receiving countries to externalize the enforcement of their migration policies. Receiving countries generally give aid or some small number of guaranteed work visas to the sending

country. In exchange, the sending country agrees to accept its repatriated citizens back from the receiving country and to monitor its own borders more effectively. This article sets out to examine cooperative labor migration policies and, in particular, CIGEM's approach. The relationship between the E.U. and Mali and their apparently conflicting interests in CIGEM provide an excellent case study of the effectiveness of cooperative migration management policy.

The central argument of this paper is that CIGEM's policy to discourage migration, on its own, will fail to decrease the number of Malians willing to attempt the journey. While the policy aims to address the issue of unauthorized migration, it does nothing to change the underlying economic structures that encourage it, thus making the continuance of the status quo all but inevitable. To advance that argument, this article examines CIGEM in the context of larger theoretical debates on migration. After discussing migration theory and the migratory status quo in Mali and Europe, the article describes CIGEM as an institution. The article proceeds to examine the long-standing disconnect between migration policy and reality, and concludes by recommending that the E.U. create a large, circular, temporary migration program.

II. WHY DO PEOPLE MOVE? THEORETICAL EXPLANATIONS FOR MIGRATION

The question of why people move is at the heart of migration theory and labor migration policy. Without understanding the reasons behind human migration, it is all but impossible to enact policies that effectively regulate it. A comprehensive theory of labor migration is beyond the scope of this article. Nevertheless, a brief overview of three main schools of thought will provide a basis for evaluating CIGEM and its likely scope for effective intervention in migration flows from Mali to the E.U.

Two older theories deserve a brief mention. First, the "faucet" theory is a combination of neoclassical economic market theory and a belief that bureaucratic regulation can lead to changes in aggregate behavior; the idea is that a receiving country can turn the flow of labor migrants on and off like a tap through the use of policy (Castles 2002, 1145; Castles 2004, 208; Massey et al. 2002, 9). The faucet theory has been proven false time and time again—examples range from the continued migration of Mexican agricultural workers to the U.S. after the Bracero program ended in 1964 to the failure of Germany's *Gastarbeiter* (guest workers) to return "home" after work dried up in the 1970s, and beyond—and yet policy makers and politicians invoke it still to argue for higher fences, stricter

deportation laws, and fewer rights for “illegal aliens” (Martin et al. 2006, 32; Massey et al. 2002, 8). In contrast, demographic theory posits that “population growth [has] a direct correlation with the propensity to migrate” (Baldwin-Edwards 2008, 1455). Empirical evidence, however, has shown no correlation between birthrates and emigration/immigration (*Idem.*, 1454). Echoing President Touré, what matters is a country’s ability to absorb new workers into the labor force. As Baldwin-Edwards argues, “[E]mployment creation, rather than simple population increases, [is] the crucial determinant of future emigration pressures” (*Idem.*).

Migrant Agency Theories

A key failure of the faucet theory was its inability to understand migrant agency and the role of individual and group choice. Migrant agency theories challenge policy makers to look at migrants not as “isolated individuals who react to market stimuli and bureaucratic rules,” but as “social beings who seek to achieve better outcomes for themselves, their families and their communities through actively shaping the migratory process” (Castles 2004, 209).

Migrants themselves, their families and communities, and the migration industry all play a role in initiating and/or sustaining migration flows. For example, chain migration—when an initial wave of migrants to a receiving country is followed by other members of the same sending community—is now seen as a key factor facilitating future and continuous flows of migrants (Massey et al. 2002, 18-19).¹ Moreover, migrants may choose to stay in a receiving country for reasons other than wages, such as allowing their children to go to school in that country, or raising enough money to return home to marry. However, it is important to look beyond the individual migrant to his/her family and community; families often use one member’s migration to “maximize income and survival chances” and “to manage risk over long periods” for the collective, and often work together to raise the money necessary to attempt migration (Castles 2004, 209; Massey et al. 2002, 11-12).

In addition to the migrant’s family and community, there is also a migration industry made up of service-providers who rely on continued migration for their livelihoods (Massey et al. 2002, 19-20). Encompassing everyone from wire transfer agencies to people smugglers to phone card vendors, the migration industry has a long-term interest in maintaining or increasing migration flows.

Finally, policy analysts in the developed world must remember that migrants coming from poor, inefficient, corrupt, and even violent coun-

tries will not see destination country migration laws as neutral rules to be obeyed but as “opportunity structures to be compared and negotiated” (Castles 2004, 209).

Globalization Theories

Globalization theories attempt to explain migration patterns as a consequence of our current global economic situation. These theories are contextual; they provide possible explanations for the decision to migrate *now*. For example, the extension of global markets, especially for staple foods, into poor countries creates migrants of former subsistence farmers and peasants (Massey et al. 2002, 13-14). Globalization is also exacerbating the “North-South divide”—the inequality between residents of wealthy, developed countries and those of poorer countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America (Portes and DeWind 2007, 6; Pritchett 2006, 14-27; UNDP 2009a, 32-33). As levels of global inequality increase, there is more pressure to leave the South for the increased opportunities and better living conditions of the North—or the closest approximation thereof.² Castles argues that “the perceived ‘migration crisis’ is really a crisis in North-South relations, caused by uneven development and gross inequality” (2004, 211).

In addition to increasing inequality, globalization is transforming the decision to migrate and the consequences of migration. Increased flows of information and goods across borders create “cultural pressures for mobility” in the global South (Castles 2004, 211). Images of lavish developed-world lives flow into the developing world via satellite TV, and migrants themselves tell (sometimes exaggerated) stories of the easy wealth available in their host countries.³ Migration compounds these flows of information by providing, through remittances, the necessary capital to buy a television or phone and to pay for the monthly costs. While access to American television shows or a brother’s stories of the good life in Europe are likely not the sole reasons behind most migration decisions, it is quite possible that such cultural factors do play a role.

The decision to migrate no longer has the drastic consequences that it once had. Cheaper and more accessible international travel makes migration itself easier (Castles 2004, 211; Pritchett 2006, 31). Circular or repeat migration patterns are becoming more common (Castles 2004, 211). Additionally, transnational communities now exist to allow migrants to live *across* rather than *within* national borders (*Idem.*, 212). In the absence of border crackdowns and strict enforcement policies that make circular migration all but impossible, there is no longer a need to settle permanently or stay in the host country for years or decades at a time; globalization has

added fluidity and ease to the migration experience, encouraging more people to migrate and weakening the strictly national logic of most migration policy makers.

Structural Theories

Structural theories of migration look beyond migrant agency to the basic nature of the systems that frame and order people's lives in sending and receiving countries. These theories lay bare the incentives that motivate both Mali and the E.U. to maintain the status quo.

It is important to note that “[b]oth emigration and immigration countries can become structurally dependent on migration” (Castles 2004, 210). In fact, some theorists would argue that unauthorized low-skilled labor migration has become a structural component of modern-day, globalized capitalism (Baldwin-Edwards 2008, 1457; de Haas 2008b, 1318).

Migrant-sending countries can become dependent on the various types of assistance that migration brings, directly and indirectly. For example, many sending countries today receive more money in remittances than in foreign aid.⁴ These remittance flows finance the purchase of food and other necessities back home, pay for sturdier houses and school fees, and are often invested by village associations in infrastructure projects that the central government cannot or will not undertake. One Malian elder put it thus: “Without the remittances from migrations we would not have anything to eat. We depend on God and on our children who went to France” (Findley 2004).

Emigration also relieves pressure on the home labor market (de Haas 2008b, 1316); in a country like Mali, where unemployment is estimated at anywhere from 30–60 percent (CIA 2010; Herrou 2008), emigration means fewer people competing for scarce jobs at home. Moreover, there are arguments that migrant-sending countries can use their supposed control of outbound migration flows as a bargaining chip in negotiations with receiving countries in order to obtain more foreign aid (de Haas 2008b).

Receiving countries, on the other hand—especially those in the developed world—have become dependent on immigration to keep average prices low, while maintaining high average wages for native workers and sustaining difficult-to-staff sectors of the economy. Low-skilled labor migrants tend to work in the informal sector, a structural component of globalized capitalism which has been credited with “achieving increased competitiveness in the context of relatively fixed high wage costs” for native workers in the formal sectors of developed economies (Baldwin-Edwards 2008, 1454–55).⁵ With native wages fixed at fairly high levels,

undocumented migrants fill the remaining low-wage jobs in the informal sector; their cheap labor allows some products in the market to be sold at low prices, increasing the purchasing power of native workers' salaries. In fact, informal and formal markets in construction, agricultural work, food service, domestic work, and other service jobs are often dependent upon migrant labor to stay competitive.⁶

Economic globalization can further compound this structural dependence. Smaller companies and certain labor-intensive industries—such as agriculture, landscaping, and janitorial services—cannot relocate abroad or outsource to a less-developed country to take advantage of cheaper wages as other companies and industries can. Instead, they often transform their employment offers into less remunerated, less skilled, and ultimately more precarious jobs that native workers reject, freeing them up for unauthorized labor migrants (Massey et al. 2002, 17). Those migrants, for various reasons, accept the low salary offered, which allows smaller employers and the economy as a whole to “avoid[] the economic risks—particularly structural inflation—that national workers induce when they demand salary increases” (Taran 2004, 275). If the employer cannot go to the developing world, the developing world will come to it.

Thus, as the above theories illustrate, the reasons why people move are complex and interconnected. The theories are not contradictory, but are in fact complementary, as each mechanism works at a different level or moment of the migratory process (Massey et al. 2002, 13-14). Massey et al., who propose a comprehensive theory of migration, place their emphasis on the “social, economic, and political transformations that accompany the expansion of markets”—i.e., on the socio-politico-economic structures (*Idem.*, 21) that emerge from global capitalism and globalization. Similarly, this article proposes an analysis of CIGEM based upon the primacy of structural economic factors in continued unauthorized labor migration from Mali to the E.U.—presuming, in short, that labor migration policy “is doomed to failure unless it addresses the causes of [...] economic [...] migration in current patterns of global inequality” (Castles 2004, 223). Globalization and migrant agency theories *do* inform certain aspects of the migratory process, but are not assumed to be at its heart. Globalization theories, with their period-specific focus on existing economic, political, and social structures, certainly complement structural theories. Agency theories, while an important criticism of the older “faucet” theory, do not address the macro-level processes and rules that organize migrants’

movements in the world. This article also assumes the self-sustaining nature of migratory flows, as all parties involved become accustomed to and eventually dependent on migration. With these assumptions in mind, this paper argues that as long as Mali stays incredibly poor and the E.U. remains structurally dependent on low-wage, low-skilled, unauthorized labor from abroad, current patterns of migration will continue.

III. THE STATUS QUO

In order to understand how CIGEM will ultimately have no impact on the status quo of unauthorized Mali-E.U. migration, it is important first to understand what the situation looks like today. Migration is a structural element of Malian society, and low-skilled labor migrants like Malians play an important role in European economies, where they earn many times more than they could back home. Theory shows that migrants will continue to leave Mali and other poor countries for jobs in wealthier countries, including European countries. Europe profits from their labor—both specific employers and the general population that enjoys lower prices on certain goods and services—but European governments and the E.U. are unwilling to acknowledge migrants' contributions and are becoming more and more unwelcoming of migrants for political reasons.

Structural Patterns of Malian Migration

Mali is a large, landlocked country in the middle of West Africa with a stable society and government (U.S. Department of State 2010; Martin et al. 2006, 134). It is one of the poorest countries in the world: it ranks 178th out of 182 countries in the 2009 *Human Development Report* (UNDP 2009b) and has a per capita gross domestic product of only \$1,200 in PPP 2009 dollars (CIA 2010). Only 26.2 percent of Malians fifteen years of age and older are literate (UNDP 2009a, 174); students attend school, on average, for only seven years (CIA 2010). Approximately one-third of its population of twelve million is currently outside of Mali (Findley 2004; Traynor 2008; Agence France-Presse 2008).

Migration is a structural element of Malian society, an “apt response to the cyclical swings of poverty” in the country (Findley 2004). Most Malians are subsistence farmers; lacking both irrigation and modern farming equipment, they depend on the rain to water their crops and tend to harvest very small yields. There is little work available beyond farming; the industrial sector is small, limited in scope, and located mostly in Bamako. Malian migrants—almost all men—typically work outside their villages during the dry season, sending money to their families “to close

the production-consumption gap,” and return home for the rainy season (Findley 2004).

Remittances from migrants back to their home villages are an important source of income for many families and communities in Mali. Malian migrants send home more than U.S. \$200 million per year, or more than double what the country receives in official development assistance (UNDP 2009a, 162). Kayes, Mali’s westernmost administrative region, is especially dependent on its emigrants; it is estimated that 80-90 percent of remittances received in Kayes are spent on “current consumption” (Martin et al. 2006, 139). Remittances can provide half of a household’s annual income (Jónsson 2008, 21).

In addition to the economic factors influencing emigration from Mali, there is also a long history of migration in the area dating back to empires of the fifth century (Gendreau 2007, 11). Mali’s colonial relationship with France encouraged migration both before and after Mali’s independence in 1960 (Jónsson 2008, 5); France was extremely welcoming to migrants because of its acute post-war labor shortage, and from 1960 until 1974 it was very easy for Malians to relocate there. However, following the oil crisis of the early 1970s, it became much harder for Malians to enter France legally (*Idem.*, 5-6). Some ethnic groups, in particular the Soninke, have developed a culture of migration in which leaving home is a rite of passage for young males (Jónsson 2008).

Today, the majority of Malian emigrants stay within West Africa (Gendreau 2007, 58). Most Malian migrants that leave Africa go to France, where the Malian community is estimated to number 120,000 (Findley 2004). Newer destinations for Malian migrants include the U.S., Libya, and Spain (Findley 2004; de Haas 2008a; Carling 2007).⁷ Mali has also become an important transit country for African migrants looking to get to Europe (van Moppes 2006, 9).

Low-Skilled Labor Migrants in European Economies

The practice of funneling foreign labor into “frequently unhealthy, physically taxing, dangerous, monotonous or socially unattractive” jobs has been documented at least since the post-1945 rebuilding boom in Europe (Castles and Miller 1998, 166-80). The four to eight million unauthorized immigrants who are estimated to be in the E.U. today continue to work in those same industries (Migration News 2009a). Migrants and native workers rarely compete for these jobs; indeed, that is one reason why high unemployment (for native workers) can co-exist with high levels of unauthorized immigration (Duvell 2006, 31-32; UNDP 2009a, 86). Native

workers are rarely willing to take the low-paid, low-skilled jobs seemingly “reserved” for migrants.

Unauthorized, low-skilled labor migrants in the E.U. generally find work in agriculture, tourism, food processing, construction, textiles, and services (Duvell 2006, 32). Malians, in particular, work mainly in manufacturing and the service economy, and to a lesser degree in construction and public works projects (Gendreau 2007, 12). Many of these industries rely on migrant labor, and often on unauthorized labor, in order to stay competitive (Duvell 2006, 32). Within those industries, there is still room for native labor; however, native workers generally occupy the more highly-skilled and better paid positions. Even low-skilled native workers, often thought to be the most vulnerable to competition from migrant labor, can retain an advantage due to their language skills and local knowledge (UNDP 2009a, 86).

In addition to filling jobs in existing industries, the presence of migrants can actually create new industries. Migrant labor keeps prices lower overall in the receiving country by keeping wage costs low for employers, which then allows lower-income native households to hire domestic help or other migrant service providers, creating a new market for migrant laborers’ services that did not previously exist (Duvell 2006, 32; UNDP 2009a, 85).

Europe and Migrants: Political Culture and Law

E.U. member-states—especially in Western Europe—have become much less welcoming to non-European asylum seekers and low-skilled migrants over the past fifteen years or so, despite the fact that their globalized economies are just as dependent upon migrant labor as ever, if not more so. This article does not purport to explain this shift, but highlights it to draw attention to the hostile political and cultural climate in Europe that prevents progressive change on the issue of low-skilled labor migration from Mali and other poor countries.

Not only has political rhetoric aimed against immigrants become more acceptable and popular among the electorate, but also far-right parties have enjoyed increasing success at the polls. In fact, most Western European countries have at least one major far-right, anti-immigrant political party that has achieved significant electoral success (Encarnación 2004, 167-68).⁸ Many recent campaigns have featured overt anti-immigrant messages. The Northern League in Italy, for example, which was the country’s most popular political party in the 1990s, ran a campaign in 2008 with a poster of a Native American next to a warning that Italians could well end up in reservations in their own country if they do not stop the inflow of im-

migrants (Kimmelman 2008).

Governments have responded by tightening their immigration laws and imposing harsher penalties on unauthorized migrants, often linking residency requirements to “cultural assimilation” tests like those in France and the Netherlands that require citizens of certain countries to take civics courses and sign assimilation pledges or pass integration tests before migrating to those countries (Murphy 2006; Gendreau 2007; Human Rights Watch 2008). The E.U. itself is moving ever closer to a Union-wide migration policy, with an especially intense focus on integrating its asylum, unauthorized migration, and deportation policies (Dauvergne 2008, 144). There has been an overall political and cultural hardening towards immigrants in the E.U., made worse by the recent economic downturn and its effects on the indigenous workforce, which has made the continent less willing than ever to confront the root causes of unauthorized labor migration from poor countries like Mali honestly and directly.

IV. THE CENTER FOR MIGRATION INFORMATION AND MANAGEMENT

Having examined theory and the current situation in Mali and the E.U., this paper now turns to CIGEM. This article does not assert that CIGEM was created as a complete “solution” to the “problem” of Malian and West African migration to the E.U.; its small budget alone precludes that possibility. However, the following analysis does assume that policy changes and new institutions are meant to do *something*—the E.U. did not create CIGEM and allot it money in the hope that nothing would change. In particular, the E.U. created CIGEM to see what possibility exists for a sending country to control and limit the number of its citizens attempting to enter the E.U.

CIGEM was initially conceived as a labor recruitment center for E.U. countries in search of low-skilled African labor.⁹ Plans changed, however, and now, as Louis Michel noted at CIGEM’s grand opening, “Maliens will not walk into this centre and then as if by magic walk out again in a European capital with a job” (Guindo 2008). Today, its main purpose is to act as an information clearinghouse for potential and returned labor migrants to the E.U. from Mali and other West African countries.¹⁰

In addition to creating and funding CIGEM, the E.U. has also agreed to give Mali 426 million over a period of five years, mostly for poverty-reduction projects that are supposed to reduce pressures to emigrate (Adepoju et al. 2010, 61).¹¹ This aid was in return for Mali’s signing of a “migration control agreement” (*Idem.*). While the practice of linking de-

velopment aid to sending country cooperation on migration enforcement is problematic in some ways, the E.U.'s recognition of the economic basis of Malian emigration is encouraging. Nevertheless, despite the backdrop of E.U. development assistance, CIGEM is still attempting to reduce emigration through information and some limited employment assistance alone, which will most likely fail to limit the number of Malians willing to attempt a trip to Europe.

Objective, Missions, and Services

CIGEM's stated objective is "to contribute to defining and putting in place a migratory policy for Mali, adapted to constantly evolving regional, national, and international dynamics, with a particular focus on the links between migration and development" (CIGEM 2010). CIGEM also has four "missions," or more immediate goals for the center's day-to-day work, including: (1) providing information on legal avenues for migration and the risks of irregular migration; (2) providing services to potential and returned migrants; (3) improving the center's knowledge and understanding of migration; and (4) working with the diaspora on development and remittances issues.

In order to carry out its objective and missions, CIGEM's work is broken up into three *services*, or departments: Migrants, Malian Government, and Malian Diaspora.¹² The Migrants department handles the center's second mission of providing services to potential and returned migrants. This department provides information on legal migration and the risks of illegal migration.¹³ The Migrants department also creates a "professional profile" for each migrant to help them find work, and provides information on local employment opportunities to returned migrants. These "profiles" are not recruitment devices for European employers; CIGEM is merely trying to increase the "employability" of potential and returned Malian migrants so that they will be less likely to try to leave the country (CIGEM, "Foire aux Questions").

The Malian Government department works with and "supports" the Malian state by helping it to understand the "migratory phenomenon," and by supplying information and analysis on national, regional, and international migration and on the Malian and West African labor markets. This department is also supposed to improve the Malian government's capacity to produce, manage, and analyze data on migration. Finally, the Malian Diaspora department supports CIGEM's fourth mission of working with Malians abroad to facilitate remittance transfers and to support various co-development projects.

The above description—the official one from the CIGEM website—does

not highlight the center's focus on attempting to limit irregular emigration from Mali. However, Abdoulaye Konaté, CIGEM's director, has said in the media, "Deterring illegal immigration is indeed one of our goals," although, he hastened to add, "it is not the only one" (Mondial Nieuws 2008). Even granting that CIGEM is attempting to address a variety of migration-related issues, it is still quite clear that limiting, deterring, and discouraging unauthorized migration is one of its major goals. Indeed, media reports written after CIGEM's inauguration highlighted the center's goal of "curb[ing]," "stem[ming]," and "battl[ing]" unauthorized migration to the E.U. (Agence France-Presse 2008; Traynor 2008). Its attempts to do so take the form of providing information and some help in looking for a job in Mali and West Africa.¹⁴ CIGEM-produced materials describe the center's plan to prevent illegal migration as a "campaign against illegal migration, trying to make people aware of the dangers involved and trying to provide potential migrants with alternatives" (CIGEM 2008, "Press Pack," 17).

Very little is available about CIGEM's day-to-day activities, which makes it difficult to evaluate the center's performance; the only statistics published to date state that CIGEM received 302 visitors in its first month, including 261 potential migrants (86 percent), 22 voluntary returned migrants (7 percent), and 19 deportees (6 percent) (Michel 2009, 62-63). About half of these visitors had no formal education whatsoever, or only some primary schooling. Only one out of every five had finished secondary school; the remaining visitors had gone past primary school but had not finished secondary school. Most of them said that they wanted to leave Mali to find better job opportunities and economic stability—however, "they did not rule out the option of staying in the country if they could find interesting employment or vocational training" (*Idem.*). Unfortunately, far too little of either is readily available in Mali.

Conceptualization and Control

CIGEM is technically a Malian governmental institution: most of its staff is Malian and it works under the Malian government's Ministry of Malians Abroad and African Integration. In reality, however, CIGEM is European in many ways; indeed, media reports written at the time of CIGEM's opening portrayed it as an E.U. creation in Mali. The Center is a pilot project with a planned life of only four years (Defis Sud 2008, 12). A European Commission official, Giacomo Durazzo, described it as a "joint initiative" between the Commission, Spain, France, and West Africa, but the center's main source of financing is, in fact, the E.U.'s

Ninth European Development Fund, which earmarked—10 million for its budget (Defis Sud 2008, 12; Guindo 2008). The Malian government only donated the building (CIGEM, “Moyens Financiers”). The eventual verdict on its success or failure will certainly not be made by the Malian government—unless it can come up with the millions of euros needed to continue the center’s work—but by its E.U. funders, the destination countries working for a decrease in migration from West Africa. Durazzo said in an interview that the eventual goal was for CIGEM to become a “genuine Malian institution,” implying that it is presently a Malian institution in name only (Defis Sud 2008, 12). Such technical sovereignty over the institution only further obfuscates CIGEM’s actual decision-making and priority-setting process; it is a nod to Mali’s official status in international law as a co-equal nation-state, but does not give the Malian government any real control over the long-term fate of the institution.

It is unclear what role the Malian government played in the decision to accept CIGEM in its capital city. Durazzo, responding to a question on whether or not Mali requested that CIGEM be located there, said only that “Mali is an engaged party” (*Idem.*, 13). Aminata Traoré, former Malian Minister of Culture and Tourism and currently an anti-globalization activist, put it more bluntly when she said that “Mali did not request anything. This was a unilateral European Union initiative” (Herrou 2008). Traoré described the Malian government’s thinking as, “a bad project is better than no project at all” (*Idem.*). CIGEM thus appears to have been created and conceptualized almost entirely by the E.U., with Mali serving a minor role as official supervisor and test case.

V. POLICY FAILURE AND PRESERVATION OF THE STATUS QUO

The description of CIGEM in the preceding section of this article illustrates that the center’s attempts to limit emigration from Mali focus on providing information and some employment consulting. That information and help is supposed to tip the balance for Malian migrants, change their cost-benefit calculation, and encourage them to stay in Mali. The discussion of migration theory in Part I illustrates why these assumptions are often, if not consistently, wrong. There is a perennial gap between migration policy and actual migration outcomes. This gap will likely be seen yet again with respect to CIGEM. The consequences of these foreseeable policy failures are, all too often, to shift attention to individual migrants and away from the economic structures that encourage their unauthorized migration.

The Gap between Migration Policies and Outcomes

The gap between migration policy and migration outcomes is quite extreme. Indeed, it appears that “the more that states and supranational bodies do to restrict and manage migration, the less successful they seem to be” (Castles 2004, 205). “Border crackdown” policies simply divert unauthorized entries to a more dangerous area, and discourage circular migration—migrants’ repeat entries and exits to and from a receiving country, which allow them to maintain jobs in receiving countries and ties to family and community in their home countries—by making re-entry harder. Guestworkers settle into their receiving country and decide not to return to their home countries after their work contracts end. This persistent gap makes unauthorized migration seem like an inevitability, and while it occasionally hurts receiving states who are seen as incapable of “controlling” their borders, it mostly seems to shift blame and attention to the migrants themselves, portraying them as dangerous lawbreakers instead of valuable workers.

Two main theories on this gap deserve mention. Each understands the meaning of “policy failure” differently. First, the gap between migration policy and practice could be a policy failure in the descriptive sense—the policy fails to achieve its stated objectives. Policy makers simply have not had the right tools to manage migration (Castles 2002, 1145; Baldwin-Edwards 2008, 1456), or have been unable to enact progressive migration policies because of the political power of anti-immigrant, far-right parties in liberal democracies (Castles 2004, 214; Baldwin-Edwards 2008, 1456).

Second, it is possible that there is no policy failure at all, because the state’s real goals are served by the supposed failure of its official policy. It could be that policy makers criminalize the movement of poor people across borders in order to keep them more readily exploitable when they eventually arrive in the states that ostensibly do not want them there (Castles 2004, 214). In this scenario, migration policies have “hidden agendas”—i.e., “politicians are content to provide anti-immigration rhetoric while actually pursuing policies that lead to more immigration, because this meets important economic or labor market objectives” (*Idem.*). Migration policy becomes a useful hypocrisy that serves political and economic ends at once, usually without significant costs to the state.¹⁵

Both of these theories are correct in part. It is widely known that “many governments implicitly tolerate irregular migration” (UNDP 2009a, 35). At the same time, no state has the infrastructure or resources to control all flows of people across its borders. So, do states tolerate unauthorized migration because they simply cannot enforce their own laws? That seems

doubtful—government policies *do* matter. As Pritchett points out, “[t]he real barrier to the movement of people across borders is *coercion*—people with guns stop them” (2006, 7). Only three percent of the world’s population is composed of migrants (UNDP 2009a, 21); many more people live in “involuntary immobility,” wanting to migrate but lacking the resources or the nationality to do so (Carling 2002, 5). Migration policy is both powerful and powerless.

CIGEM’s Failure to Address Structural Issues

CIGEM’s strategy with respect to individuals in Mali who are looking to migrate is to provide them with information on the dangers of irregular migration and the methods of legal migration, without providing them access to the European labor market. Given the restrictive immigration policies of E.U. member-states at present, the likelihood that any of CIGEM’s visitors—80 percent of whom have not completed secondary school—will be desirable candidates for an E.U. visa is slim. With the migration theories of Part I of this article in mind, it would appear that nothing in the potential Malian migrant’s calculus would have changed: he still has low prospects for employment in Mali, has the necessary information and family support to get to the E.U., family members who are counting on him to go, and the prospect of steady, if illegal, employment in Europe. Nevertheless, faced with the very real dangers of crossing the Atlantic to the Canary Islands or the Sahara desert to the shores of the Mediterranean, CIGEM’s approach—assuming that the E.U. created the center in order to lower the number of unauthorized Malians attempting to enter Europe—hopes or assumes that would-be migrants will stop, reconsider, and ultimately decide to stay home.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)’s 2009 *Human Development Report* on migration argues that CIGEM “can provide potential migrants with accurate (if disappointing!) information about opportunities for work and study abroad” and thus empower migrants (103); however, the UNDP is ignoring the fact that migrants have alternative sources of information—namely, other migrants—and powerful motivation to leave. Because the center—and European migration policy in general—ignores the structural aspects encouraging migration in today’s globalized world, the networks that count on and facilitate migration, and the relative ease of the migratory act, it appears clear that CIGEM will rarely prevent the migration of low-skilled Malian workers.

By ignoring the real dynamics at the heart of migration, CIGEM shifts the focus away from the structural reasons for migration and to the deci-

sions made by individual Malians, thereby maintaining the debate on unauthorized low-skilled migration exactly where it is today and slowing any movement towards a more effective system. The danger of the CIGEM strategy is that with cosmetic programs and projects in place—programs and projects that use progressive rhetoric but do nothing to address the real dynamics of the situation¹⁶—and an economic system that not only thrives on but also requires unauthorized, low-skilled migrant labor to staff the informal sector in developed countries, there is no political motivation to do more. CIGEM is a pilot project. If the E.U. does not learn from this experience and realize that information and government-to-government assistance are fairly powerless in the face of globalized markets and fierce inequality, it will continue to implement with sending countries similarly ineffective “cooperative” migration agreements that fail to get at any of the root causes of current migration flows.

VI. CONCLUSION: MIGRATION POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Unauthorized labor migration is a problem—but mostly for migrants. They are denied the benefits of legal status while performing some of the least-remunerated and most socially undesirable jobs in the global North. This form of labor migration should, in fact, be seen as more of a solution than a problem, both for employers in the E.U. and other receiving countries, and for families and communities in sending countries whose lives are vastly improved by remittances.¹⁷

No amount of well-intentioned information from institutions like CIGEM is likely to slow the flows of migrants once receiving countries' economies rebound from our current economic crisis and demand for workers picks up. Such “cooperative” migration policy institutions, if conceived along the lines of CIGEM, seem ineffective—they will not affect migratory flows and they completely ignore the structural aspects of migration. CIGEM's other goals—studying migration and attempting to lower the cost and increase the effectiveness of remittances—are unobjectionable, but do not need to be linked to attempts to stop or decrease outflows of migrants through information campaigns, attempts which will likely fail. The E.U. should end this pilot project and convert CIGEM into a research institution; the E.U. could use its time and money more effectively by addressing the structural realities of migration and undertaking a public information campaign in Europe on the benefits of immigration to receiving countries.

The E.U. should begin to develop a circular, temporary labor migration

program that would allow Malians and residents of other poor countries to fill jobs in the E.U. with proper work and residence authorizations. The details of such programs are complicated and the arguments for and against various arrangements could fill volumes.¹⁸ Nonetheless, such a program, if conceived on the appropriate scale, has the potential to lower significantly the number of migrants from countries like Mali attempting to reach Europe without authorization. Moreover, it would vastly increase the probability that the human rights and dignity of Malians and other poor migrants would be respected while they live and work in the E.U. Finally, it could contribute to economic development in sending countries and eventually lower the numbers of people from the developing world wishing to migrate. Although such a program would be a political challenge, it appears that migrants will reach Europe to fill necessary jobs no matter what; the only question is whether they enter legally.

This paper ends with a general call for a more honest discussion of migration policy by all players: the E.U. and other receiving countries, Mali and other sending countries, employers, migrants, and the citizens of powerful countries whose votes can determine so much for the residents of poorer countries. Instead of unrealistic statements like those from Louis Michel and Brice Hortefeux at CIGEM's opening, we should aim for a deeper discussion of migration realities. CIGEM is an illustration of an incomplete engagement with the real dynamics behind unauthorized low-skilled labor migration in today's world. Whether this form of migration can be considered a "problem" or a "solution to a problem" for the nation-state system or global capitalism, it affects the lives of millions of poor people in the global South. A more honest discussion and a deeper understanding of the reasons behind migration, and of the consequences of this migration for everyone involved, could eventually result in more realistic policies that acknowledge what is at stake and work more to the advantage of the migrants themselves.

NOTES

¹ The author witnessed this while living for two years in a village in northwest Mali; the men in the author's village learned how to migrate to France and other countries from friends and relatives who had made the journey before, and most men from the village who went to France ended up living together in a specific Parisian suburb.

² In reality, only 37 percent of all international migration flows are from the South to the North. Most migrants from the global South move to another developing country, often because it is easier and less costly than attempting to migrate to a rich country (UNDP 2009a, 22).

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- ³The author witnessed this in her village in Mali. A few families had satellite televisions, and almost every family had access to the state-owned television station which played Latin American soap operas every night. Cell phones arrived in the author's village in early 2004, allowing families easier and cheaper contact with their relatives abroad.
- ⁴See, e.g., BBC 2008; International Fund for Agricultural Development 2008. The World Bank, whose remittances estimates include informal transfers and are generally higher than those of central banks, has estimated that global remittances to developing countries reached \$305 billion in 2008. Top remittance-receiving countries were India (\$45 billion), China (\$34 billion), Mexico (\$26 billion), the Philippines (\$18 billion), and Poland (\$11 billion) (Migration News 2009b).
- ⁵For a discussion of the informal sector as a structural component of capitalism, see Baldwin-Edwards 2008, 1454-55. See also Roberts 2008, 5 (suggesting that high rates of immigration into developed countries have contributed to a prolonged economic boom in those countries).
- ⁶See de Haas 2008b, 1315 (noting the existing demand for such labor in southern Europe and Libya and the growing demand for it in northern Europe); Baldwin-Edwards 2008, 1455 (citing the sectors with the highest degrees of informal employment as construction, agriculture, hotels and restaurants, and personal and domestic service, and noting that "it is precisely these sectors in which illegal (as well as legal) immigrants are to be found"); Castles 2004, 210 ("The US agricultural sector needs undocumented Mexican workers in order to keep production costs low.").
- ⁷Jónsson's field work in the Kayes region also found families with relatives in England, Japan, South Korea, and various African countries (2008, 7-8).
- ⁸See Starr 2008; Kulish 2008. Examples around Europe include France's Front National, Austria's Freedom Party and the Alliance for Austria's Future, Italy's Northern League, Netherland's now-defunct The List, Norway's Party of Progress, the U.K.'s British National Party, Greece's Hellenic Front, Portugal's Popular Party, and the German People's Union.
- ⁹Media reports show that CIGEM was initially conceived of as a job center. See Roberts 2008, 14 ("The EU is planning to establish job centres in north Africa, beginning with one in Mali, to offer a legal route to jobs in Europe, and also provide some language training."); Traynor 2008 ("The aim is that individual EU countries, for example France and Spain, will use [CIGEM] to offer seasonal work for temporary legal migrants. The commission hopes the Mali project will be the first of a network of European migration centres across west Africa."). A 2006 E.U. document on the Union's Global Approach to Migration highlights that migration centers were proposed not only to provide information to potential migrants but to "play a role in facilitating the management of seasonal workers." European Commission 2006, 7.

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- ¹⁰The main logo on the CIGEM web site shows a globe that highlights Africa and Europe. Mali is pictured in dark green, with other West African countries from Senegal to Niger and Nigeria in light green, creating the impression that the center is meant to cover all of West Africa, although the web site's description of CIGEM only discusses Mali. *See* CIGEM.
- ¹¹Initially, however, levels of migration rise with development, because more people have the resources to migrate (UNDP 2009a, 24-25). Thus, some economic development in Mali, which is one of the world's poorest countries, would like increase emigration rates in the short term.
- ¹²CIGEM labels these departments as (1) Reception, Information, Orientation and Accompaniment; (2) Study, Research, Training and Documentation; and (3) Operational Support, but those names are a bit unwieldy and fail to capture the intended beneficiary/ies of the work.
- ¹³CIGEM had not yet completed drafting the documents that it will distribute to migrants at the Center as of February 2009. E-mail from Mamadou Bangaly, Department Head, Etude, Recherches, Formation et Documentation, to author (Feb. 6, 2009, 12:52 AM) (on file with author). Subsequent requests for information from CIGEM received no response.
- ¹⁴CIGEM's "Foire aux Questions" page notes that the Center will help Malians find employment opportunities "principally in the sub-region [West Africa]." CIGEM, "Foire aux Questions."
- ¹⁵*See also* Castles 2002, 1152; Wickramasekara 2008, 1253; de Haas 2008b, 1315 and 1318.
- ¹⁶Indeed, Louis Michel's remarks at CIGEM's opening day described migration as "a natural phenomenon, an opportunity to be seized and not a curse," and said that the calls for tighter border security "are empty promises designed to distract a public shocked by the images of hundreds of Africans – exhausted, close to death, washed-up on beaches like driftwood . . . The only response to this pattern of human migration – that is both intelligent and honest – is to ensure a two-way dialogue with the countries of origin or transit, to explore enhanced legal co-operation and to offer better development assistance" (Guindo 2008).
- ¹⁷Although low-skilled native workers often oppose the arrival of low-skilled immigrants out of fear of losing their jobs, multiple studies have found that "the *aggregate* effect of immigration on the wages of local workers may be positive or negative but is fairly small in the short and long run" (UNDP 2009a, 85). This is not to say that native workers' wages and job prospects are not affected by immigration, but that such effects are localized and could be alleviated with targeted job creation programs. Overall, immigration does not lower indigenous wages.
- ¹⁸For some suggestions, see Castles 2007, 49-55; Pritchett 2006, 105-137; UNDP 2009a, 95-112.

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