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Ghanaian Immigrants in a Northern Italian Town: Between Social Exclusion and Onward Migration to the UK

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Abstract

This paper examines the linkage between exclusion and onward migration of the Ghanaian migrants living in Italy to the UK. It is based on an ethnographic research in the region of Veneto. The paper shows that Italy's adoption of partial exclusion or subordinated model of integration, the weak position of the African migrants in Italy's employment sector, lack of employment opportunities for African women and the second generation, blocked mobility, lack of access to housing due to racial discrimination and hostile attitudes of the Northern League party are the main forces behind the onward migration.

Keywords Onward migration · Ghanaian migrants · Italy · UK

Introduction

In this paper, I examine the factors behind the onward migration by Ghanaian migrants living in Northern Italy to the UK. Italy hosts one of the largest Ghanaian diasporas in Western Europe, yet a lot of the migrants move onward with their family to the UK. Whereas some of these onward migrants consist of short-term settlers who leave Italy shortly after arrival or during the first five years of residence to search for jobs in other (often European Union) countries, there is a large number of long-term family settlers who move after they have acquired permanent Italian residency (carta di soggiorno) or Italian citizenship. Some of those who move have a secure job and a family in Italy. This group is the main focus of this paper. Why do they move onward? A recent study among Bangladeshi migrants in Italy has also shown that there a positive relations relation between the acquisition of Italian citizenship and the likelihood of

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relocating with the family to the UK (Della Puppa & Sredanovic, 2016). This occurrence has not been sufficiently addressed by onward migration literature such as the works by Constant (2019), Van Liempt (2011), Van Heelsum (2011), Toma and Castagnone (2015), Ahrens et al. (2016) and Warfa et al. (2006).

Drawing on social exclusion and ethnic penalty literature, I examine the linkage between exclusion and onward migration of the Ghanaian migrants in Italy. I focus on access to the labour market, housing, the social welfare system and gender-based exclusion in the employment sector, to determine the extent to which social exclusion is connected to, and motivates, the onward migration projects of the Ghanaian migrants in the research community. I also examine how parents' desire to find better future for their children due to fears of exclusion also motivates the onward migration behaviour. I argue that the weak position of the African migrants in Italy's employment sector, limited employment opportunities for African women and the second generation, blocked mobility, lack of access to housing due to racial discrimination, Italy's adoption of partial exclusion or subordinated model of integration and anti-immigration politics particularly by the Northern League party are the main forces behind the migrants' relocation to UK.

The Ghanaian Diaspora in Italy and Onward Migration Trends

Ghanaian migrants started settling in Italy during the late 1970s due to deteriorating socio-economic and political conditions in Ghana, and after their mass deportation from Nigeria in 1983 (Agyeman & Fernandez Garcia, 2016; Agyeman, 2011). The possibility to enter Italy through unconventional borders facilitated these movements. Additionally, some of those whose residence or asylum applications had been rejected in Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium and other northern European states during the 1990s moved southward to Italy or to Spain where it was easier to obtain a legal residence status (Agyeman & Fernandez Garcia, 2016). The first settlers lived and worked in Napoli, Palermo and other southern Italian towns. They were recruited into the informal economic sector as farm labourers, domestic and construction workers, retailers and in other temporary (sometimes daily) jobs. Subsequently, they moved to northern Italy to work in small- and medium-sized industries after they obtained legal residence status (Andall, 2007).

At the end of 2018, there were approximately 51,000 (ISTAT, 2018) Ghanaian migrants officially resident in Italy, with about 70% concentrated in the northern regions of Lombardia, Emilia Romagna, Venezia, Piemonte and Friuli-Venezia-Giulia. They are scattered in small towns and villages in the industrial provinces of Modena, Reggio Emilia, Parma, Verona, Udine, Brescia, Pordenone and Vicenza. Most of the early settlers were men, but from the 1990s, reunification of female spouses and children from Ghana gathered greater momentum due to easing of family reunification laws in Italy. Consequently, females account for 33%, while the proportion of children under eighteen years constitutes about 25% of the total. Majority have permanent settlement status, yet this does not stop them from abandoning Italy.

Although it is difficult to determine the real volume and destination of the onward migration by the Ghanaian migrants, official estimates show that 3717 Ghanaians left Italy between 1995 and 2018, representing an average of 155 departures per annum as shown in the graph (Fig. 1).

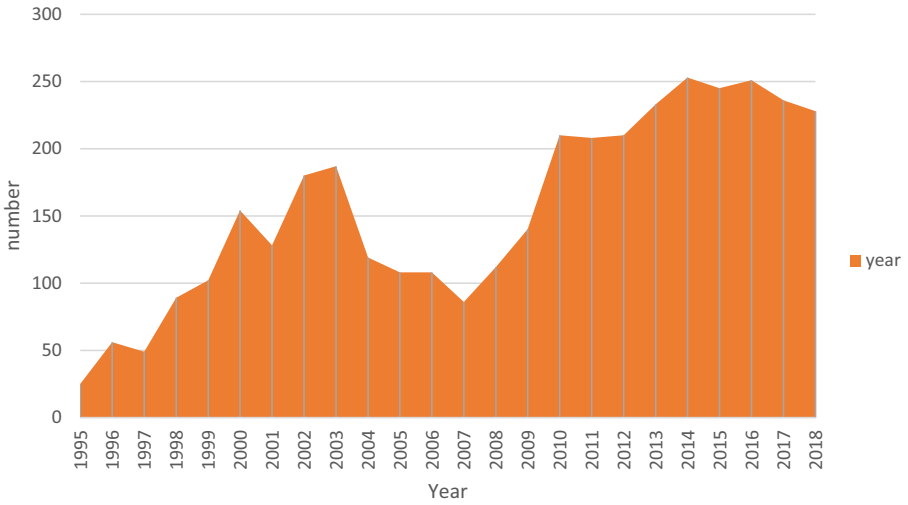

Fig. 1 Annual departures rates of Ghanaian migrants from Italy. Source: Author's elaboration from ISTAT data

In the decade between 1995 and 2005, the outflow of Ghanaians from Italy peaked between 2000 and 2003. This is possibly due to the Bossi-Fini Law[1] which came into effect around that period and created a lot of panic among the migrant groups in Italy.[2] After 2003, the departure rates dropped to 1999 levels until 2009 when it started to rise again to the peak registered in 2014 with 253 departures.

Official data showing annual departures, however, far underestimates and masks the real departure rates of Ghanaian migrants from Italy. For example, an examination of the annual growth rate of the Ghanaian population in Italy between 2005 and 2018 shows a significant drop since 2014 and reaching a peak in 2016. Moreover, the Ghanaian female population has been greatly affected, dropping from 20,945 in 2013 to 17,158 in 2018, as shown in Fig. 2

This indicates that there are more Ghanaians leaving Italy than it is recorded. This fact is corroborated by Gentileschi (2009) who has also argued that there are more departures of migrants from Italy than is recorded. Based on Caritas/Migrantes data sources, she estimated that between 1990 and 1999 and between 2001 and 2005, around 63,000 and 50,000 immigrants per annum left Italy respectively. However, according to ISTAT data, the average departure rate was 8000 persons per annum

[1] Law 189/2002 is known as Bossi-Fini Law after the two politicians, Umberto Bossi and Gianfranco Fini, of extreme right political parties who proposed it. The law overhauled key aspects of Italy's immigration policy concerning migrants' employment, settlement, integration and pension rights. It strictly linked migrants' right to stay in Italy to employment. Article 6 introduced the 'Stay Permit Contract' (contratto di soggiorno) between the Italian employer and the foreign worker, which obliged the employer to provide accommodation for the immigrant employees and to cover the expenses of return migration.

[2] The Bossi-Fini Law abolished the provisions made by Law 335/1995 which offered immigrants who wanted to return to their home country prior to pension age the possibility to claim back their pension money. Instead, starting from September 2002, labour migrants who decided to leave Italy after they have made sufficient contribution must present an application at the Instituto Nacional de Previdencia Sociale (INPS) and return their residence permit to the border police at the point of departure. When they reach the pension age of 65 years, they could then claim pension pay from their home country. A lot of migrants anticipated the law and left Italy before it came into force.

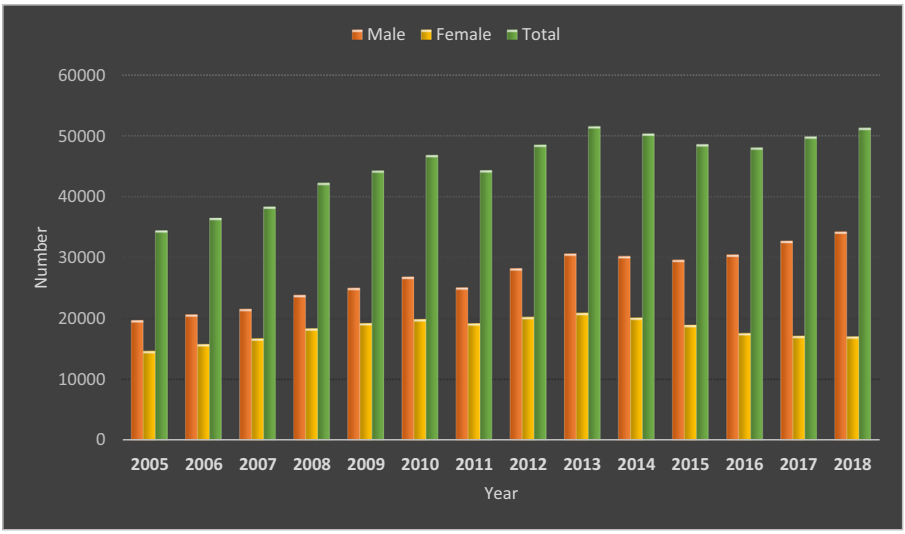

Fig. 2 Population of Ghanaian migrants in Italy from 2005 to 2015. Source: Author's elaboration from ISTAT data

during the decade between 1995 and 2005. The main reason why it is difficult to obtain accurate figures on migrant departure rates is due to the fact that a lot of the migrants move out of Italy after they have acquired the Italian citizenship (Della Puppa & Sredanovic, 2016). Additionally, most long-term residents who leave Italy do not surrender their Italian resident permits which makes it more difficult for municipalities to capture them among those who have left the country in their register.

Literature Review

Intersection Between Social Exclusion and Onward Migration

Social exclusion, according to Barnes (2005: p. 8), is "the multi-dimensional and dynamic process of being shut out, fully or partially, from the economic, social and systems that determine the social integration of a person in society". Burchardt et al. (1999: p. 230) explain that, "an individual is socially excluded if (a) he or she is geographically resident in a society and (b) he or she does not participate in the normal activities of citizens in that society".

It is argued that migrants' exclusion could be a strategy or an outcome of the policies of migrant integration by states. King and Mai (2004) have pointed out that, though the notion of integration is problematic, contested and subject to deferent definitions due to its different forms of application, it nevertheless indicates the different degrees of migrant inclusion and participation in the economic, social, cultural and civic activities of the host country, varying from assimilation to pluralism and to segregation or exclusion (Bonifazi et al., 2003). Strategies of migrant exclusion may include policies, practices, models and outcomes, which aim to undermine full membership and attachment of migrants into the socio-economic and political fabric of the host nation. Exclusion undermines migrants' right to welfare regimes, decent housing, decent

employment and equal treatment. This situation often spills over to migrants' children. Exclusion can therefore be deliberate, with the goal to keeping migrants at the margins of the host society (Calavita, 2007).

When a person's ethnic or racial origins becomes the basis for exclusion, it is known as ethnic penalty. According to Garcia et al. (2016: p. 74), ethnic penalties "refer to processes of disadvantage suffered by ethnic minorities for belonging to a specific ethnic category. In the labour market, ethnic penalties include those processes by which employers hire or promote job candidates, not based on their labour market skills (i.e. human capital), but on ethnic, religious, or racial attributes".

There is a growing body of literature that is establishing the linkage between ethnic penalty and onward migration. Onward migration is "any nonreturn repeat move, i.e., a move whose destination does not duplicate any previous area of residence" (DaVanzo, 1983: p. 553). In international migration, this refers to a movement from a current country of residence to another country other than a migrant's home country or any country where a migrant has previously lived. Onward migration is also referred to in the literature as re-migration, relocation or secondary movement (Constant, 2019; van Liempt, 2011). Recently, Kislev (2017a), studying the onward migration trends from Western Europe to the USA, observed that immigrants of non-Western racial origin in Europe face social exclusion due to their racial and ethnic characteristics which "correlate with lower economic achievements". He argued that there is an ethnic penalty suffered by these migrants in the employment sector in European countries (Kislev, 2017b), which was the main motive behind their onward migration to the USA. In their study of onward migration trends of Nigerian migrants within the European Union, Ahrens et al. (2016: p. 86) observed that in situations where migrants struggle to realise their socio-cultural integration because they "are treated as racialised 'others'… onward migration may be considered as a means for naturalised third-country nationals to realise certain aspects of their integration process in another member state".

Constant (2019) has also argued that that migrants' decision to move onward and choice of a new destination are determined by economic, socio-cultural, ethnic and political factors. Research that draws on human capital theories shows that migrants move onward to where they expect job security and greater returns on their education and experience (Takenaka, 2012). Studies that rely on ethnic network theories also argue that migrants tend to move to places where family members, co-nationals and people of similar ethnic and racial characteristics are concentrated (Toma & Castagnone, 2015; van Heelsum, 2011). Colonial connection has also been identified as a motivating factor behind the onward migration behaviour among some immigrant groups (van Liempt, 2011; Della Puppa & King, 2018). Some studies also attribute onward migration to the nomadic life of some ethnic groups, and thus analyse it from the perspective of a *habitus*. For example, the intra-European movement of Somalis has been attributed to nomadic culture, but recent studies have contested this claim showing that frequent movement is accompanied by stress, ill health and loss of close relatives and kin, and thus, most Somalis are rather forced to move (van Heelsum, 2011; Warfa et al., 2006).

Exclusion in Italy and Onward Migration

Italy is regarded to be "adopting de facto a deferential or partial exclusion model" of migrant integration (King & Mai, 2004: p. 456). Ambrosini (2013a: p. 183) describes

this as "subordinate integration" which refers to a situation whereby "immigrants are relatively well accepted in the labour market and, gradually in society too, as long as they remain at the lowest levels of the social and professional scale, ready to perform the least pleasant tasks". It is also argued that since Italy became an immigration country, legal reforms have made it more difficult for migrants and their children born in Italy to acquire Italian citizenship, which is fundamentally based on *ius sanguinis* principles, whereas, on the other hand, the reforms have made it easier for Italian nationals who emigrated many years ago and their offspring to preserve, acquire or reacquire Italian citizenship (Campomori & Caponio, 2017; Pastore, 2004).

Some studies have also shown that the Bossi-Fini Law passed in 2002 and subsequent immigration policies have diverted Italy from "reasonable integration" to "subordinated integration" of its migrants barricading the possibility of Italy becoming a multi-ethnic society (Ambrosini, 2013a, 2013b; Caneva, 2014). This situation has been exacerbated by the socio-political context in Italy and the growing influence of the radical right-wing political party, the Northern League (Lega Nord), whose populist appeal and electoral fortunes are anchored on its anti-immigration slogans and stance against a multi-racial Europe (Doerschler & Jackson, 2018; Caneva, 2014; Ambrosini, 2013b).

Due to the influence of the radical right-wing parties and insular culture, the presence of African migrants in northern Italian towns has generated a lot of controversy in recent decades. A recent study by Perrino (2019) in the region of Veneto showed that many Italians in the region vote for the Northern League because of their perception that immigrants are invading their towns and depleting the welfare system. For decades, African migration is treated as a threat to Italian ethnic identity, moral standards and social welfare system (Kaag, 2008; Salucci, 2009). These perceptions of threat also resonate among the host populations of other Southern European states such as Spain where there is a presence of African migrants (Agyeman, 2020). Saitta (2011) has argued that because of the African migrants' distinct racial trait, they represent the symbolic enemy which the right-wing political parties in Italy have constructed to pursue their political agenda.

In the light of the above observations, Africans and other non-white migrants in Italy pay a penalty when accessing societal resources such as employment, housing and welfare (Della Puppa & King, 2018). In an ethnographic work in a small northern Italian town, Kaag (2008) succinctly described a case in which Senegalese migrants had been forced to live at the margins of the local community due to lack of access to housing and accusations of lowering moral standards. Andall (2007) has also argued that Ghanaian migrants have a weak position in northern Italian industrial labour market. She has also evidenced the degree of exclusion and identity crisis that second-generation African migrants face in Italy. She (Andall, 2002: p. 400) has observed that the everyday life experiences of young black generation in Italy "suggest that being black and being Italian are mutually exclusive". Agyeman (2011) has also shown that African women living in small industrial towns in northern Italy struggle to gain access to the employment sector forcing majority of them to remain at home as house wives. On the basis of these arguments, I show in this paper that the practice of onward migration among members of the Ghanaian community in Northern Italy is as a result of the social exclusion they face in that country.

Methodology

Data Collection

Data for this paper is based on an ethnographic research among Ghanaian migrants in a small Venetian town called Schio situated some 30 km north of the provincial capital Vicenza. The first set of interviews, involving twenty-three participants of which nine were females, were conducted during the summer of 2010 to examine the return and onward migration intentions of Ghanaian migrants (Agyeman & Fernandez Garcia, 2016). At each interview session, the items covered included the migrants' personal information, return or onward migration intentions and reasons behind those decisions. The interviews were conducted in the migrants' homes in Akan or English language and later transcribed. They were then broken into sub-themes and analysed thematically. In 2020, there was a follow-up interview with nine of the participants who were earlier interviewed in 2010. Of these, five had relocated to the UK, and four were still in Schio. In addition, expert interviews were conducted with two non-migrants who have in-depth knowledge about the Ghanaian community. The interviews in 2020 focused on the reasons for onward migration or decision to stay in Italy. Whereas the 2010 interviews were conducted face-to-face, the 2020 interviews were done through phone calls. The present location of the migrants that had migrated was traced through the network of the Ghanaian community in Italy and through social media platforms. In order to protect the identity of interviewees, pseudonyms have been used for the coding.

Schio, with a total population just under 40,000 inhabitants, rose to prominence during the beginning of the nineteenth century when Alessandro Rossi constructed Italy's biggest textile industries there. Along with textile firms, small- and medium-sized ceramic, chemical, steel and leather industries developed in this town during the post-World War II period. Therefore, Schio occupies an important place in northern Italian industrialization, based on a pattern of clustered large, and several medium- and small-sized family-owned industries in small towns and villages known as industrial districts. Due to industrial growth during the 1980s and 1990s, high demand for cheap labour, low birth rates and ageing, Schio, just like other northern Italian towns, started to attract migrants from Eastern Europe, Asia and Africa (Colombo & Sciortino, 2004). In January, 2018, there were about 4900 international migrants in Schio, representing nearly 12.5% of the total population. Ghanaian migrants represent the largest black African community in the town with a total of 246 legal residents (http://www.comuni-italiani.it/024/100/statistiche/stranieri.html). Along with Senegalese migrants, Ghanaians were the first Sub-Saharan Africans to settle in Schio during the late 1980s (field research notes, 2010). They moved from southern Italy to the Veneto region and settled in small towns in the provinces of Verona, Padova and Vicenza (Agyeman & Fernandez Garcia, 2016; Andall, 2007). Since then, a lot of them have started a family, and their resident population has oscillated between 200 and 500. However, the population has not grown much over the years because the moment the migrants acquire Italian citizenship, they move with their families to settle in England or the USA (field research notes, 2010).

Profile of Participants

The first set of interviews collected in Italy in 2010 focused on first-generation migrants who had lived in Italy for at least five years. Participants were selected purposively according to their duration of stay in the immigration country, sex and social position. Effort was made to ensure that participants were spread across different social positions. Due to the fact that majority of Ghanaians in Italy have matrilineal family background, women have strong influence in family decision-making processes (Wong, 2014). For that reason, I ensured that women were proportionally represented in the sample. Nine out of the twenty-three interviewees were females. The demographic characteristics of the migrants at the time of the first interview, and during the second set of interviews for those who have migrated to the UK, are shown in Table 1.

The participants of the 2010 cohort were largely middle-class migrants between the ages of thirty-three and fifty-eight years. They were long-term first-generation settlers of which more than 80% had lived in Italy for between ten and twenty years. In addition, most participants were family settlers, with close to 90% living in Italy with all or part of their family. At the time of the interview, approximately 70% of the participants were over 40 years of age. Most participants had up to secondary school education level or had vocational training. Fifty-two percent of male and 44% of female participants were employed. During the second round of interviews in 2020, two of the four participants in Italy had retired from active employment, whereas the remaining two were in their forties and working. All five participants interviewed in the UK had jobs and they had lived in the UK for between three and seven years. All of them lived with their family in the UK. Three of the participants were in Coventry, where majority of Ghanaians who have left Italy to settle in the UK are concentrated, while the remaining two were in Birmingham and London respectively.

Results: Reasons Behind the Onward Migration

Most migrants that I interviewed cited the disadvantages they face when accessing the labour market or when accessing the housing sector due to racial discrimination, the fear that their children have no future in Italy and lack of opportunities for women as the reasons for their onward migration. Majority of them believed there are better opportunities for black people in the UK than there are in Italy. Therefore, although

Table 1 Demographic characteristics of participants

Characteristics	Italy	UK
Age (average)	44 years (33–68 years)	41 years (36–48)
Educational level	Secondary/high school	Secondary/high school
Years in the host country	16 years (6–35)	5 years (3–7 years)
Employment	52% (44% for women)	100% for both sexes
Family location	87% in Italy	100% in the UK

Source: from the field data

migrants' exclusion is manifested in many ways, I focus here on employment, housing, social welfare issues, women and the second generation.

Exclusion in the Labour Market

The African migrants that settled in Schio readily found jobs in the industrial sector, yet their function evidenced a clear subordination of migrant workforce (Agyeman & Fernandez Garcia, 2016). They were hired primarily to provide unskilled labour force in the industries and to perform functions in sections of the industrial production that members of the local population despised due to the high risks they posed to human health (Ambrosini, 2013a; Andall, 2007; Colombo & Sciortino, 2004; Reyneri, 2004). Kwaku, a forty-one-year-old factory welder who came to Italy in 1991, said:

> ... it is the bad jobs that the natives did not like–*conceria* [tannery], *fonderia* [foundry] and chemical works that the *darkee* [black] people are doing.... Many of them have suffered serious accidents and illnesses and died here... Others have gone home [Ghana] to die (interviewed in June, 2010).

In addition, migrant labour represented the flexible and easily disposable part of the industrial workforce. While it is claimed that geographical cluster has helped strengthen the competiveness and internal cohesion of northern Italy's small- and medium-sized industries (Humphrey, 2003), they are nonetheless often affected seriously by the economic crisis and shocks in the global market. And due to their weak position, migrants are the scapegoats when companies have to lay off workers for restructuring. Following the 2007 global economic recession, Bonifazi and Marini (2014) found that male foreign workers from non-European Union nations were the most affected due to the type of work contract they had. Kofi, a Ghanaian migrant who has relocated with his family to Coventry, said:

> I had a good job in Italy. In fact Italy has done a lot for me. However, I lost my job and for more than a year, it was my wife who was working. I will get up in the morning, drop my wife at her workplace, then return home to wait for her to finish work, then I will go back to pick her home in the evening. At a point, I said to myself, did I marry my wife for her to work to take care of me? Is it not me who has to work to take care of my wife? So I went to UK (interviewed on 15th February, 2020).

Of the Ghanaian migrants in Schio, an Italian Catholic priest who has worked with them for over two decades said: "In the past six/seven years some [Ghanaian] families have started to 'migrate' to other European countries, especially in England, but also in Germany… Some go there to find work, because in Italy, either they never had a stable job or they lost it".[3] Besides this point, migrants also face the problem of blocked mobility, as there are little possibilities to take training courses to upgrade. Yaw, a fifty-eight-year-old who came to Italy in 1986, said:

[3] Interview with the chaplain of the Ghanaian Catholic Community in Schio on 28 May 2020.

> it is about one year, eight months that I am at home … this crisis …I am in *cassa integrazione*[4] till unknown time. Nobody knows when I shall start [work] again... I have worked continuously for 18 years in the same factory. And now they have put me in *cassa integrazione*...Since I have not gone to school here I worked all along as a manual worker...We were producing cutting machines (interviewed in June, 2010).

However, some of the migrants who re-migrated to UK said, job was readily available. One of the migrants reported that he was unemployed in Italy for nearly two years; however, when he went to the UK, he was invited for a job interview a day after he registered at the local council. Another said that work in the UK is more flexible than the factory work he did in Italy for nearly fifteen years.

Besides, within the industrial communities in Northern Italy, African migrant's participation in the labour market is skewed in favour of males (Agyeman and Fernandez Garcia 2016; Agyeman, 2011). Apart from the domestic service sector, women have fewer chances of gaining access to the labour market irrespective of their human capital. In addition, due to the high degree of trust required between employer and employee in the domestic service sector, most African women have a disadvantage in accessing this employment sector due to racial discrimination and stiff competition from Eastern European women. Mary[5], a married woman with three children who was also a leader of a women's association in Schio and a teacher in Ghana before migrating, said:

> we don't find work here...for example, when you make applications for jobs, like cleaning, they will tell you there is an offer but they don't need a *darkee* [black] ... When you are *darkee* the person would not employ you to work for her... But some people are not like that (interviewed in June, 2010).

Moreover, it is extremely difficult for the women to combine motherhood with work because of lack of flexible working hours. A lot of domestic work requires twenty-four-hour sit-ins which is impossible for married women with children. The experience of Cecilia, a thirty-seven-year-old mother and fifteen years in Italy at the time of interview, is a good example. She had no job at the time of the interview. She said:

> I have worked before but it was difficult to combine work with child bearing...Because we had a child I chose to work in a restaurant. My husband worked during the day and I during the night. I usually closed around 2:00am during week days and around 5:00am on Saturdays. This was the same situation I went through when I gave birth to my second born.... I decided to search for a new job where I could work during the day. I joined a cooperative...They got me small work here and there but not stable. They only came in bits (interviewed in June, 2010).

[4] *Cassa Integrazione Guadagni* (CIG) is a welfare system in Italy managed by INPS to provide financial assistance or top-ups to workers who have been temporary laid off or whose working hours have been reduced due to low production levels or other temporary financial difficulties the employee's company might be going through.

[5] Mary has since 2016 migrated to Coventry in the UK with her family.

However, in Akan matrilineal system, migrant women, no less than men, are expected to have financial autonomy and to contribute to the upkeep of their nuclear family in the diaspora and to extended family members back in Ghana (Wong, 2014). Therefore, their inability to work in Italy is a big frustration for them and is a strong motivation to leave.

Housing Exclusion

During her research among Ghanaian women in Vicenza, Berlato narrated that on 24 April 1996 when she visited one Ghanaian lady to interview her, she found the lady was copying phone numbers of apartments for rent being advertised in a local newspaper. Berlato (1996) wrote:

> after the interview she requested me to make the calls for her and recommended that I should ask for the price and whether they rent to blacks.

Ghanaian migrants who first settled in Schio faced housing crisis and still do because of local landlords' unwillingness to rent to blacks and lack of sufficient public housing facilities. Yaw, a fifty-eight-year-old who came to Italy in 1986 and settled in Schio in 1989, said:

> The time we came here [in 1989] accommodation was another problem. I went to Caritas[6], the Catholics, here and there. There was no association or organization to help us apart from Caritas. We were so congested in the Caritas guest houses that we had to do in successions. Somebody had to sleep one month and leave the place and allow somebody to stay there. That was the routine. Otherwise, and I did that for about three weeks, you go to the train station after all the trains are gone, you buy a ticket, pretending you are travelling to Milan then you sleep in the arrival hall. Gradually, the priests convinced people in the churches to help us (interviewed in June, 2010).

Due to lack of trust on the part of the autochthonous population towards the African settlers and racial prejudice, it was through the support of the Catholic Church that the migrants gained some degree of acceptance (Agyeman, 2011). In 1990, when the accommodation crisis for migrants became a serious issue, Caritas secured permission from the local authority in that year to temporary house the African migrants in a famous four-story building, at Via Don F. Faccin, which was a rest house for the aged, but had nearly become empty and also in bad shape due to lack of tenants. During my fieldwork in Schio in 2010, some African families still lived in that building. Later, through a campaign by Catholic priests and nuns in churches, some local landlords developed a bit of trust and started renting out to the Africans, making them promise to maintain the property well. In spite of all these efforts, housing is still an issue for the migrants even though the situation has improved over the years. In another interview with this same person in 2020, he said:

[6] Caritas is a confederation of social service organizations by the Catholic Church that provides social assistance to the poor.

> Now things have changed. Whereas in previous years you needed somebody like your employer to guarantee for you before you can rent an apartment from home owners, now things have become very easy. These days you don't need guarantees and you can apply for accommodation today and get it today (Yaw, interviewed in January, 2020).

However, he added that low-cost accommodation facilities from local government agencies remain in short supply due to increased immigration and high competition. He added that those who are lucky are able to get, but not everyone. In Italy, the public housing system does not provide enough accommodation to migrants, and groups at high risk of social exclusion (Kaag, 2008), and due to more restrictive housing regulations that prevent landlords from easily kicking out defaulting tenants (King & Mai, 2004), landlords do not want to rent to Africans. Consequently, a lot of the migrants who rent from private property owners often pay more than the market price, with much of the rent money being paid through the back door. In 2010, Kwasi, a fifty-year-old working in a chemical industry who had been in Schio since 1990, said:

> though I had a job it was difficult for me to find an apartment to rent. For example, I am paying €460 for this apartment whereas just €160 per month is stated in the [written] contract.... So I pay only €160 through the bank and pay the rest cash in hand to the landlord. If there is any district help for people paying too much rent I am not entitled... Some years ago there was a help like that and a migrant from Senegal went to the district office to reveal the truth about his landlord in order to benefit from the help and it generated a lot of problems for us (interviewed in July, 2010).

In order to evade tax, landlords like to reach such terms with the African migrants, which the migrants have to accept if they really want accommodation. Once they breached such deals by going public about the practice, they are punished. Italy also has strict regulations about the number of persons per square meter that can live under one roof. This has led to situations whereby some migrants are unable to register their addresses in the apartments they live in, which implies that they may not belong to the district they live in, and are therefore not entitled to any form of welfare assistance from that district. However, those who have migrated from Italy claim they do not find it difficult to receive housing support in the UK. They claim the welfare regime there is more egalitarian and accessible to migrants. This also confirms the experiences of Bangladeshi migrants who have relocated from Italy to the UK (Della Puppa & King, 2018). Some of the interviewees also claim that Africans and other minority groups are home owners in the UK, so the issue of race does not really count when looking for a new apartment to rent.

Social Welfare Exclusion

Migrants' rights to welfare claims are highly restricted and contested in Italian migration politics (Stocchiero, 2008). These include unemployment benefits, pension, childcare and other forms of social security. For example, due to low birth rates, Italy has introduced a "Baby Bonus" (Euro 1,500 cheque) for every child born. But,

ironically, a lot of migrants' parents who are rather those relatively contributing more to whip up the population are frustrated when they find out that they are excluded from such benefits because they do not have requisite residence or citizenship status. In 2010, another female interviewee, Ama, a mother of three, who was preparing to join her husband in the UK at the time of the interview, said:

> when I gave birth to KL [her second child], a law came out that those who have Italian residence, or passports should go for €1,000. When we went for that money they said we were not Italians so they did not give us. All immigrants who received that money were made to refund it...yes the money was taken back from the immigrants (interviewed in June, 2010).

While attributing the difficult economic situation of migrant families to discrimination by public authorities, she also believed public help is insufficient even for families that are working:

> life here is difficult. The state doesn't help even when you are working. What is added to my pay for all my children is approximately €150 per month. If you give only fifty Euros a month to a baby like MH (she was referring to her youngest daughter who was seventeen months old), what can it do? Even this morning I have spent more than fifty Euros on her. Here when you have children life is very difficult (interviewed in June, 2010).

Despite having lived in the town for many years, there is a strong feeling of insecurity and marginalization within the Ghanaian community. Most migrants and community leaders believe it is hard to be part of the Italian society, and there is fear that future immigration policy could strip them of their rights. This feeling of uncertainty and threat is often heightened whenever there is a major policy debate about immigration in Italy, as was the case with the Bossi-Fini Law. Okrah, one of the Ghanaian community leaders who was 58 years old and 26 years in Italy at the time of the interview, said:

> that time we all had the fear that even if we stayed here and worked up to pension age we might not be given the pension. That was the fear we had...I had the visa to go to the United States of America ... But a time came I said no, age is beating me (interviewed in June, 2010).

Apart from adversarial policy and institutions, Ghanaian migrants also struggle to gain acceptance on the interpersonal level due to what they believe to be racial discrimination. This has shaped their social relations, access to housing, jobs and friendship ties. Kwabena, a fifty-year-old minister of a Ghanaian community church who has lived in Schio since 1990, said:

> let me give you an example, a few days ago I was returning from Vicenza by bus. I sat in the middle seat and there was another empty seat beside me. People came and occupied the seats behind and in front of me. And even though the bus was full and many people were standing on their feet no one came to sit at the empty seat beside me...My children have often returned from school with tears,

> complaining they have been racially abused. Other times it is their school authority who have brought me reports that my children have attacked someone. (interviewed in August, 2010)

Although the stark majority of Ghanaian migrants is Christian, as is the case with the Italian population, this has not helped much in forging strong social relations between the migrants and local community members. The Ghanaians have established parallel religious institutions in which the native population is absent (Agyeman, 2011). Additionally, intermarriage between Ghanaians and Italians is very rare. Therefore, in spite of high concentrations of Ghanaian migrants in northern Italian regions, though scattered in small towns and villages near to one another, this group does not feel part of Italy.

The Second-Generation Exclusion

Ghanaian parents I interviewed complained there was discrimination in the Italian schooling system against foreigners. Some interviewees claimed African migrants' children were being unduly channelled into vocational and technical schools against the will of parents and their wards.[7] They believed this practice was discouraging their children from attaining university education. Mary, who at the time of the interview was preparing to join her husband in the UK, said:

> Part of the reason why we are leaving is our children. Here in Italy, especially in this Vicenza zone, when the child goes to school to a certain age, they [teachers] will tell him to stop school and start work ... So we think that it is good to let the children study in Britain in order to give them a brighter future.

An Italian Catholic priest in Schio who has worked with the Ghanaian migrants for over two decades said:

> But, there [are] also people who have a job, who have a work here in Italy, but they go abroad (England) because they say that life there is better, and the future for their children is more certain. That is all I can say about the phenomenon[8].

In 2010, some of the Ghanaian parents I interviewed in Schio complained their children who have graduated from the vocational and technical schools have not been able to find jobs due to racial discrimination. In fact, there was a widely held view within the Ghanaian community in Schio and other parts of northern Italy that it is useless to educate a child in Italy because a black person will not be given a white collar or professional job to do. Opanyin, one of the Ghanaian elders in Schio who came to Italy in 1977, said:

[7] School teachers in Italy have the power to determine whether a child can proceed to a high school or has to go to a vocational/technical school after middle school. Those who follow the second path are trained for blue collar jobs and are literally blocked from proceeding to the University.

[8] Interview with the chaplain of the Ghanaian Catholic Community in Schio on 28 May 2020.

> your child will complete school only to be washing bowls in the restaurant, a work which even an illiterate can do with ease (interviewed in June, 2010).

A deacon of one of the Ghanaian Churches who has been in Schio since 1998 also said:

> they [Ghanaian migrants' children] don't find job to do.... because of that, if your child is even attending school here, I see that it is useless in some sense. Because when he completes school, what work is he going to do? You understand? Is he going to do the kind of jobs that we are doing? But even now this *opperaio* (unskilled labour), those of us who are in it already do not have work to do. So ...what shall be their fate? This is actually a difficult situation (interviewed in July, 2010).

Some of the Ghanaian parents interviewed also thought English education is superior, equalitarian and offer better prospects for migrants' children. This has, therefore, become a strong push factor for onward migration to the UK or the USA. In fact, the Ghanaian families that abandoned Italy said securing a better future for their children is one of the main reasons for their departure. Similar findings were observed by Della Puppa and King (2018) during their study of Bangladeshi migrants. In one of the interviews, Francis, who moved to London in 2015 with his wife and two sons, said:

> Here in the UK whatever level of education that a child attains, he will get the correspondent employment and he will be respected (interviewed on 17th May, 2020).

Another migrant who has moved from Schio to Birmingham with his wife and three children said his children struggled to integrate in the Italian education system, and even though they were born in Italy, their school teachers often complained they were not good enough in Italian language lessons. However, in the UK, his children have been able to integrate better and are doing well in school. This reality broadly confirms Andall's (2002) conclusion about identity and integration crisis facing second-generation African migrants in Milan. In fact, besides education and labour market integration, the second-generation also faces a lot of crisis regarding citizenship and belonging. Although those born in Italy can apply for Italian citizenship when they are eighteen years, most of them are not sure it will be granted even when they apply because, as Andall (2002) has pointed out, its concession is not a right, but based on the discretion of the public officer in charge.

Conclusion: Connecting Exclusion to Onward Migration

In Italy, there is a lot of talk, heated debates and politicking around the issue of immigration and the perceived threat of foreigners taking over the nation. Anti-immigration sentiments have been vexed and capitalised upon by some political parties to improve and consolidate their electoral fortunes. Behind this apparent debate and contestations for space in favour or against immigrants, there is, however, a silent but growing trend of migrants taking a second look at their situation in Italy and seeking for

escape routes. In this paper, I have shown that exclusion or subordinated integration of migrants in Italy is the main reason behind the onward migration of the Ghanaian migrants that have settled in Schio in northern Italy.

The migrants who abandon Italy (with their family) after several years of settlement do so in reaction to exclusion. Having lived in Italy several years and established a family there, they would not be moving if there were no elements in the Italian society that undermined the effect of long-term settlement on attachment to Italy. Due to their relatively low education and their role in Italian industrial economy as unskilled labourers, it is also hard to believe that those who move on acquire skills that give them a leverage in the new destination countries. Moreover, Italy has the second largest Ghanaian diaspora in Europe; therefore, those who move on are not principally motivated by the desire to reconnect with a larger Ghanaian diaspora. It is rather the result of exclusion, demonstrated by the migrants' weak position in Italy's labour market, gender-specific discrimination in the labour market, blocked mobility for the second generation, racial discrimination and hostile attitudes of the Northern League party towards the black minority that has motivated onward migration.

Ghanaian migrants in northern Italian industrial economies are hired primarily to supply unskilled labour force and to perform functions that most host society members are unwilling to do, due to the high health risks involved. The migrants are unable to accumulate human capital to improve their position in the labour market. They are easily fired during periods of low production, and this has seriously affected those over forty-five years old who struggle to return to the labour market after they have lost their jobs. Apart from that, females have fewer chances to participate in the labour market, except the domestic service sector. Yet, due to racial discrimination, competition from Eastern European women and motherhood demands, fewer Ghanaian women find domestic service jobs.

The crux of the matter also lies with the second generation. Whereas most parents expect their children to study to the university level, per the school selection process they find themselves trapped in a system that does not permit them to attain higher education. A lot of the children are pushed into vocational and technical education institutions, yet they do not find jobs after schooling. This is largely because most companies still want to hire migrants who have lower skills and weaker negotiating power, and not migrants' children who have been educated in Italy and are professionals. Therefore, for most Ghanaian parents who plan to move, onward migration is an obligation rather than a choice.

Finally, immigration policy and its application at local level justify Italy's partial exclusion model of integration. This situation is further compounded by the convenient scape-goating of black people by the Northern League party. In sum, Melotti (2004: pp. 167–168) has argued that the Italian concept of "nation" has always oscillated between one that is more "romantic, objective, naturalistic and ethno-cultural of the German type, and one that is rationalistic, subjective, voluntarist and ethico-political of the French [republican] type". The first type which played an important role during the Italian resurgence inflames diffidence and fear with regard to immigrants, while the second is inclined towards assimilation. None of these provides the path to achieve a plural society. Therefore, it appears that as Italy is bound to achieve and consolidate a subordinated integration of its immigrants and to also establish a new migrant underclass, the onward migrants are those who desire to flee from this harsh reality.

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