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# Onward Migration of African Europeans: Comparing Attitudes to Migration Motives

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# **Onward Migration of African Europeans: Comparing Attitudes to Migration Motives**

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**Abstract:** Studies on the mobility patterns of African refugees who fled to Europe have shown that Somalis especially tend to move onward from continental Europe to the UK. African migrants have long been moving to Sweden, known for its liberal migration and naturalization policies. However, these migrants are among the least integrated in Sweden, both socially and economically. This paper aims to increase our knowledge of onward migration, both in terms of migration attitudes and actual migration motives. We compare onward migration attitudes among African Swedes in Sweden with reported migration motives of those who migrated onward to Australia, and patterns of onward migration from Sweden. Results show that very few migrants have definite plans to move, but most are unhappy with their socio-economic situation and are subject to discrimination, though being grateful for all Sweden has offered them. Quantitative analyses show a massive recent increase in onward migration, especially among Somalis. Onward migrants are more often male, single and very few are employed despite reasonable educational levels, before they move onwards, mostly to the UK. Onward migrants to Australia report having moved in order to improve their livelihood prospects; furthermore they feel more accepted and fare much better in Australia.

**Keywords:** onward migration; international migration; integration; comparative research.

## **1. Introduction**

The mobility patterns of African refugees who have fled to Europe have been of growing interest to researchers over the last decade. Those gaining citizenship in a European country have been observed to have high mobility levels, mostly expressed in the considerable numbers choosing to migrate onward to English-speaking countries such as Canada, Australia and the UK, where many have relatives (Bratsberg et al, 2007; Lindley and Van Hear, 2007; Valentine et al., 2009). This relatively unexplored field has mostly been approached by qualitative methodologies, focusing predominantly on Somali migrants who leave the Netherlands and Denmark for the UK (Bang Nielsen, 2004; Lindley and Van Hear, 2007; Moret et al., 2006; Van Liempt, 2011a, 2011b; Van den Reek and Hussein, 2003; Zimmermann, 2009a, 2009b), while Hassanen (2013) focused on Sweden. Most studies indicate that migrants experienced difficulties fulfilling their integration aspirations in their first European destination country and this was the main reason for onward migration. However, although on the increase, this migration flow is still poorly understood.

In Sweden, migrants from the Horn of Africa (Somalia, Eritrea and Ethiopia) have been seeking refuge and thereafter joining their families in Sweden since the late 1980s (Statistics Sweden, 2010), but the majority arrived in the last few years. At present, they make up half of all African migrants (Statistics Sweden, 2004). As a group, they are diverse in terms of gender, class, history, as well as culture and heritage. Yet, they not only share a common geographical origin but also a common culture. These migrants face great difficulties in achieving integration in Swedish society. They have high unemployment levels, are overrepresented among jobs that are both low-skilled and low in status, and live in strongly segregated areas (Andersson, 2007; Andersson and Scott, 2005; Rydgren, 2004; Wadensjö, 1997). Furthermore, they are young, have high fertility levels among the first generation, and have strong networks coupled with a high level of mobility (Bevelander and Dahlstedt, 2012; Westin and Hassanen, 2013). The onward migration direction is interesting because these migrants move away from a country renowned as the epitome of welfare states, where resident migrants are entitled to one of the world's most generous social welfare programmes. Moreover, this counters the narrative that migrants are attracted to welfare states and that immigrants use welfare more intensively than natives, though there is hardly any scientific evidence to support this (Barrett and McCarthy, 2008).

The aim of this paper is to compare onward migration attitudes among first generation African Swedes with Swedish citizenship to the reported migration motives of those African Europeans who have already migrated onward to Australia and observed patterns of onward

migration from Sweden. This may prevent sample selection bias that might otherwise occur when only those migrants are taken into account that stayed in Sweden. Moreover, we complement qualitative studies, consisting of in-depth interviews and participant observation of the Eritrean, Ethiopian and Somali communities in Sweden and Australia, with quantitative analyses of onward emigration, as we know so little of the actual onward migration patterns of African Swedes. We are inspired by a transnational perspective, examining how individual migrant's economic, socio-cultural and political sphere of action are widened well beyond the location of their physical presence. In addition, we are interested in the role that migration, social and family related policies play in onward migration processes. This paper aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the attitudes of migrants from the Horn of Africa towards onward migration, and how are these attitudes influenced by previous migration experiences, socio-economic status and perception of life in Sweden?
2. How do these onward migration attitudes relate to observed patterns on onward migration among African Swedes?
3. What are the migration motives of those African migrants who have migrated onwards from Sweden and other EU countries to Australia, and what is the role of previous migration experiences, socio-economic status and perceived policy difference between countries?

The scientific relevance of this study includes increasing our knowledge of the migration patterns, integration and the transnational experiences of a relatively under-studied group. While there are some studies on Somalis and a few on Ethiopians, the Eritrean community has been overlooked in the literature. Second, though the onward migration of European citizens of refugee backgrounds has increased over time, underlying mechanisms are still poorly understood.

## **2. Onward migration: mechanisms**

Onward migration, which, only in the last decade, has received some attention in the literature, may be defined as migration to third-country destinations, as opposed to return migration to countries of origin (e.g. Nekby, 2006), and is usually seen as a form of voluntary and unplanned migration between countries in the North (Kelly, 2013). Others, such as Paul (2011) have used the concept 'stepwise international migration' for low-capital labour migrants' multiple migration moves with an ultimate intentional aim of gaining access to their preferred destination countries. Horn of Africa migrants tend to flee to first asylum countries

in Africa, before a minority may undertake a secondary migration to Europe, the US or Australia (Assal, 2006). The focus of this paper is onward migration as migration to subsequent destinations, which may be third, fourth or higher order migrations. Those engaging in onward migration may not have an ‘overarching migration strategy’, as Paul (2011) suggested, but may act upon events and situations that happen over time.

Three possible mechanisms behind onward migration can be identified: pre-migration history, difficulties and conditions in the country of first asylum, and policy factors. First, compared to voluntary migration, the migration motives for forced migrants tend to be different. Circumstances in geographically proximate countries where many refugees end up first, leave much to be desired, as conditions are meant to be temporary (Moret et al., 2006; Zimmermann, 2009a). In addition, events that occur during the flight might result in situations where refugees may not be in the place they want to be (Havinga and Böcker, 1999; Moret et al., 2006; Van Liempt, 2011a), leading to increased onward migration from countries in the North.

Second, once refugees reach safety, opportunities to establish themselves in the host society become more important (Westin and Hassanen, 2013). An increasing number of studies document that an important reason for displaced people to migrate onward is being faced with difficult circumstances in countries of first asylum. Experiences of limited employment and educational opportunities in continental Europe seem to lead Somalis to move to the UK (Moret et al., 2006; Van Liempt, 2011a; Van den Reek and Hussein, 2003). In Sweden, the unemployment gap between natives and migrants has widened since the 1990 recession, with Africans having the lowest employment rates, even among those with higher levels of education (Schierup, 2006). Employment rates of 30 per cent are common for Swedish Somalis without showing progress over time (Bevelander and Dahlstedt, 2012). In addition, experiences of hostile attitudes, racism and discrimination have been reported among Dutch, Danish and Swedish Somalis (Bang Nielsen, 2004; Hassanen, 2013; Lindley and Van Hear, 2006; Moret et al., 2006, Open Society Foundations, 2014; Van den Reek and Hussein, 2003).

Comparing onward migrants to immigrants who stay in Sweden, Nekby (2006) found that higher education increases the chance of onward migration. This corroborates studies such as DaVanzo (1976), who suggested that onward migration, as opposed to return migration, is motivated by labour market factors and Edin et al. (2000) who found that the least economically successful immigrants are more likely to emigrate. Iranian migrants who migrate onwards from Sweden for instance, are characterized by low income and low

employment levels, combined with high educational levels (Kelly 2013). African migrants tend to have higher probabilities of leaving Sweden with increased duration of stay, which could be a signal of increasing frustration with the lack of integration opportunities into the Swedish labour market, according to Nekby (2006). The same study finds that onward migrants tend to have lower incomes than those migrants who stay in Sweden. Summarizing, onward migrants tend to be higher educated migrants with low incomes, implying that these migrants cannot find jobs commensurate to their skills in Sweden and therefore migrate onwards, in the expectation of higher earnings in other destinations.

Third, differences between national migration, integration, social and family policies might influence onward migration intentions and actual moves. Sweden is known for its liberal migration and naturalization policies, ranking fifth in the top 15 receiving countries for asylum-seekers in 2011 (The UN Refugee Agency, 2012). Convention refugees and persons granted asylum for humanitarian reasons are treated equally, and family reunification is relatively generous (Sainsbury, 2006). Acquiring refugee status and citizenship are important steps for refugee migrants to access social protection that was lacking previously. To become a Swedish citizen, a person must have held a permanent residence permit for a period of four years, and have no criminal record (Swedish Migration Board, 2014). Acquiring Swedish citizenship could be perceived as relatively easy compared to other European countries (Goodman, 2010) with no requirements regarding language or civics and migrants do not have to take an oath of allegiance (Sainsbury, 2006; Swedish Migration Board, 2014). In 2001, the Nationality Law introduced dual citizenship (Sainsbury, 2006). Acquiring Swedish citizenship implies free movement within the EU28, EEA and Switzerland, and thus increased freedom to visit family members, and to expand one's horizon by considering job and educational opportunities.

Swedish migration policy can be seen as embedded in multiculturalist ideology, underlining ethnic diversity in society (Schierup et al., 2006). Within the inclusive immigration regime, *resident* migrants enjoy similar rights to natives in terms of welfare and public services (Sainsbury, 2006). Sweden is often seen as an international model regarding its policies for incorporating immigrants (Schierup et al., 2006), with integration policy being part of wider welfare state policies. Refugees receive support via standardized government programmes to find housing and employment, and language training is provided for free by each municipality.

However, the Swedish model has been criticized for being ambiguous and for ignoring racial and ethnic differences (Ålund and Schierup, 1991; Hübinette and Andersson, 2012;

Kelly, 2013; McEachrane, 2014; Pred, 1997). Sweden's multicultural policy and strong focus on equality for all inhabitants has led to a reduced attention to structural inequalities between different groups (Kelly, 2013). According to Pred (1997), racism is flourishing in 'a country long stereotyped as a paradise of social enlightenment, as an international champion of social justice, solidarity and equality' (Pred, 1997: 385).

The number of migrants from Africa, Asia and the Middle East to Sweden has increased substantially since the 1980s. As opposed to earlier migrant groups, the new groups migrated mostly on humanitarian grounds and came from geographically and culturally distant societies, and were seen as different in comparison to Swedes, for instance regarding gender equality and religion (Kelly, 2013). These migrants are seen and treated as refugees as well, for instance in the sense that they need to be cared for. However, welfare dependence in the case of poor labour market access combined with the ongoing distinction between Swedes and immigrants may lead to a lack of sense of (national) belonging and poor well-being (Kelly, 2013; Open Society Foundations, 2014).

Besides specific migration and integration policies, differences in social and family policies possibly influence onward migration attitudes, as suggested by Nekby (2006). Sweden has one of the world's most expansive social welfare programmes (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Schierup, 2006). Each individual has the right to support from the system if they cannot look after themselves, for instance in the case of illness, unemployment, raising children or retiring from work. The universalistic welfare state, with its generous social benefits, the parental leave system, inexpensive health care, subsidized and high-quality childcare, child benefits, unemployment benefits, state pensions, equal opportunity employment laws, anti-discrimination laws, and policy initiatives designed to benefit disadvantaged people in society are highly praised. All legal residents, irrespective of citizenship and employment status, are entitled to social rights and income security, with an established minimum standard of living guaranteed by law (Klas and Åmark, 2001).

The use of these policies among a group that is disadvantaged in the labour market is particularly interesting. African women in Sweden use parental leave quite intensively, decreasing their access to stable employment (Mussino and Duvander, 2014). In studies on the 1990s, Hansen and Lofstrom (2006; 2009) found that immigrants in Sweden are more likely to receive welfare benefits than natives, and that refugees in particular display a great degree of 'structural state dependence', leading them to be stuck in a welfare trap. A few studies have focused on the association between onward migration and social benefit use. Edin et al. (2000) found that immigrants who emigrate from Sweden were less likely to

receive social assistance and also received fewer benefits than those who stayed. Likewise, Kelly (2013) found that Iranian migrants who moved onwards from Sweden had received less state benefits than those who stayed, implying that they are a selected group. The transnational networks of these migrants might play a role in the knowledge of different national social and family policies, and the way they are discussed within their communities.

### **3. Transnational networks**

Migration policies, the enactment of laws, and upholding them are still the domain of the nation-state and its institutions, making the state a powerful actor in the lives of migrants. In turn, migrants navigate, challenge and transcend states, often through their transnational and social networking practices. To understand if and why onward migration from Sweden occurs, we must theorize our exploration beyond policies and laws into the experiences of the migrants as actors.

Transnationalism encapsulates the idea that (groups of) people, economic structures, states and societies are connected in a continuum beyond the nation-state (Glick Schiller et al., 1992; Al-Ali and Koser, 2002; Vertovec and Cohen, 1999; Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2002). Thus, transnationalism and social networks are important concepts that shed light on the embeddedness of migrants and their families. The transnational perspective enables us to see the origin and destination countries as interlinked systems. The migrant network reflects a continuum of geographical settings, in a common system in the everyday life of migrant communities (Castles et al., 2014; Glick Schiller et al., 1992). Social networks provide information preceding emigration and emotional support, information on policies and assistance in finding employment on arrival (Castles et al., 2014; Hassanen, 2007). Access to information through the network, however, does not necessarily eliminate a degree of ignorance about conditions for migrants in specific countries in the North (Havinga and Böcker, 1999; Koser and Pinkerton, 2002); not to mention the actions of smugglers offloading migrants whenever and wherever convenient to them (Hassanen, 2007; Koser and Pinkerton, 2002).

Yet, the impact of transnational networks can widen the individual's economic, socio-cultural and political sphere of action well beyond the location of their physical presence. Conceptualizing the migration experience within transnationalism and social networking envisages an analytical perspective not exclusive to the migrant's physical location. A grounded perspective must recognize migrants' conduct within the context of a cross-cutting web of multidirectional social relationships. As Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004) assert, social

fields are a set of multiple and combined networks of social relationships through which ideas, practices and resources are irregularly exchanged, organized, and transformed.

In addition to the significance of transnational social networks on the decision of onward migration, should be added the historical and lived experience of migrants with a 'culture of migration' (Cohen and Sirkeci, 2011; Hahn and Klute, 2007). In the case of migrants from the African Horn, cognizance should thus be accorded to the importance of pastoralism and transhumance as livelihood in that region (Bang Nielsen, 2004; Kibreab, 1990). In more recent years, migration to the Gulf States for employment has also become an established tradition, in addition to the older forms of migration for religious purposes.

#### **4. Data and methods**

To understand onward migration attitudes, migration motives as well as actual migration patterns among Horn of Africa migrants from Sweden to subsequent onward destinations, we employed mixed methods. Qualitative research methods addressed migration attitudes and motives while emigration trends were examined using quantitative methods. By employing a multi-method approach we address the call for using different conceptual and analytical approaches (Axinn and Pearce, 2006; Creswell et al., 2006; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

##### **4.1 Qualitative study in Sweden**

For answering the first research question on onward migration attitudes, and how these are influenced by previous migration experiences, socio-economic status and perception of life in Sweden, qualitative methods were used. As we seek to understand and explain the social world and the everyday life of the individual migrants and migrant communities, observation, listening, discussing and reflecting on their experiences and their realities is an appropriate research method (Kvale, 2008; Sedman, 2006).

The qualitative research design consisted of in-depth interviews and participant observation, conducted in the period 2012-2013. The core material for this paper was based on interviews with 15 Somali, Eritrean and Ethiopian first generation migrants with a refugee background who acquired Swedish citizenship and lived in the greater Stockholm area, where the majority of these migrants reside. In addition, participant observation was carried out, including informal interviews in different settings. The diverse types of data collected were used as a corroborative technique to ascertain the reliability of the facts regarding migrant experiences.

Participant recruitment was based on the earlier contact of the second author with these communities, followed by snowball sampling. The second author is known to the study community as researcher and a member of community as African Swede; she is originally from Eritrea but also collaborates with the African Horn civil society organisation in Stockholm. A chain of studies among the Eritrean and Somali communities since 2000 has led to a well-established network. This positioning affords her a unique vantage point as ‘insider’ looking in, but also as an academic outsider looking in. This position has made it easier to reach out to informants and earn their trust and she has by linguistic and other cultural expressions the unique standing to perceive the underlying meanings of their value-loaded information. The interview questions for this paper were developed from her previous qualitative work in 2001 and 2009. However, despite being an insider, it was not problem-free when potential informants view the researcher as one of their own, but privileged and divorced from their more challenging lives. To meet research ethics, potential informants were informed about the purpose of the research, that it was not commissioned for any policy purposes by the state, that they had the right to withdraw at any point, and that their statements would only be used with their permission, and if so used, they would be anonymously cited. Direct questions on personal aspects were avoided in accordance to informants’ wishes.

At the time of the interviews, riots took place in the Stockholm suburbs that disrupted the city’s usual peacefulness (Evans, 2013). The riots turned out to provide many opportunities for observation and spontaneous interview since many of the residents of these suburbs, and some of the participants in the riots, were African Swedes. At times, observation and impromptu chats during the riots were followed by personal interviews. The study may have benefited from the riots, as many were not afraid to talk openly about how they felt about their life in Sweden. However, the riots may also have led to intensified feelings of the informants’ experiences in Sweden.

Regarding attitudes to and intentions for onward migration, informants were asked why they chose Sweden as a country of destination, what their expectations were of living in Sweden, as well as if they thought these expectations had been realized and how these experiences affected their future plans on staying in Sweden or migrating onward to another country in the coming years.

For this study, eight women and seven men were interviewed, aged between 27 and 52 at the time of interview. All respondents had migrated to Sweden as adults, in the period 1989-2001. Seven were from Somalia, four from Ethiopia and four from Eritrea. The majority was

employed at the time of interview, though most did not have jobs reflecting their educational levels; some were unemployed, one was a full-time student and two were on parental leave. The informants were relatively well educated, with a majority having a university degree from a developing country. The majority of the respondents were married, with a few being single or divorced.

Most interviews were audio-recorded and fully transcribed; while for others it was only possible to take notes. Interviews were conducted in the language of the informants, namely Arabic, Tigre, Blin or Swedish, and transcripts were later translated into English. Recurring themes and critical issues were identified, after which categories were created from the data. Field notes from the participant observation were organized systematically, and used to countercheck the information gathered from the individual interviews.

#### **4.2 Quantitative study in Sweden**

Complementary quantitative analyses of register data were conducted to compare the onward migration attitudes from the qualitative study with actual patterns of onward migration of African Swedes, in order to address the second research question. The data used is the PLACE database, a high quality full-population register data base that is managed by Uppsala University. All 51,950 individuals who at one point in the period 1990-2008 were registered to live in Sweden and were born in Eritrea, Ethiopia or Somalia were identified. The database contains annual information on demographic and socio-economic status, geographical location and use of social benefits. Linkage between the different datasets is based on the personal identity number. For all migrants, their demographic attributes such as age and family type; socio-economic status such as educational level, employment status and income level, and use of benefits such as unemployment and social welfare benefits are available for every year a person is residing in Sweden.

Statistics Sweden defines an emigrant as a person who moves to another country for at least one year and has sent the tax office a message on this event. This study uses register data so is dependent on the reporting of events. However, it is common knowledge that many emigrants do not report their emigration to the country they are leaving. The reporting of emigration may thus be underestimated to an unknown and perhaps substantial extent. If an emigration is not reported, Statistics Sweden will eventually find out about it from several administrative procedures, thereby delaying the administrative reporting of events. As a result, the year of emigration may not always be correct. We therefore have to take into

account information in years prior to emigration in order to have a full picture of the circumstances under which individuals emigrated.

In the study, *onward migrants* were defined as those emigrating to destinations that did not include Eritrea, Ethiopia or Somalia. It is not uncommon for Horn of Africa migrants to migrate in and out of origin countries, Sweden and other countries. The definition of onward migrant was based on the last observed year of emigration and associated country of destination. We have classified those that are registered to have emigrated to an unknown destination as *de-registered persons*, as the majority of these are de-registered after an investigation of residence (personal communication with Karin Wegfors, Statistics Sweden, 28 April 2014). In the descriptive analysis, these two groups are compared to those who do not leave Sweden: *stayers*.

### **4.3 Qualitative study in Australia**

The second research question on the migration motives of those African Europeans who migrated onwards to Australia was addressed by qualitative fieldwork in Melbourne, Australia in July-August 2013. Methods consisted of in-depth interviews in combination with participant observation. Through contacts in Sweden and Australia, local Somali, Ethiopian and Eritrean communities in the neighbourhoods of Flemington, North Melbourne, Roxburgh Park, Point Cook and Craigieburn were contacted in order to reach possible respondents. 16 adult migrants with relatively recent migration experience from Sweden, Denmark, Germany or the Netherlands were interviewed on their migration motives and the role of their life experiences in Europe, family formation, labour market attachment and social policies therein. Participant observation was carried out in ethnic coffee shops, at a community centre and at the local library. The setup of the Australian study was very similar to the Swedish study with interviews conducted by the same researcher.

Of the respondents, six were Somalis; five were from Eritrea, and five from Ethiopia. Eight were female and eight male and informants were between the ages of 30 and 56 at the time of interview. All had fled to countries in the Middle East, Ethiopia, Kenya or Sudan, whereafter they had migrated to Europe. All respondents had obtained European citizenship and migrated onwards to Australia. Before they migrated to Australia, seven lived in Sweden, four in Denmark, and five in the Netherlands. In Australia, nine out of 16 informants owned their own businesses; six were employed on a level with their qualifications; while one person worked as a taxi driver while he had been a teacher in Sweden. Among the men, the average educational level was high with most having completed their education before coming to

Europe. The educational levels of the female informants were somewhat lower. Interviews were conducted in Arabic, Tigre, Tigrinya or Blin for Ethiopian and Eritrean informants while interviews with Somalis were conducted in Arabic.

Informants were open about some issues while reserved about others. During the personal interviews they were willing to discuss questions such as, how they migrated, the role of their social networks in decision making, how they managed their lives, and so forth. However, most were reluctant to share perceptions on issues related to social policies – which we had to accept given research ethics.

## **5. Results**

### **5.1 The importance of transnational links**

A common characteristic of all interviewees is that they left their areas of origin against their will because of war and internal conflict. All have lived in different developing countries as refugees, but due to the lack of protection in those countries they migrated to Europe. For all respondents, help from their social and transnational networks was vital in this migration and possible onward migration to Australia, but also in coping with daily life. Close connections with relatives and other acquaintances are very common and part of everyday life. Different kinds of information are exchanged, ranging from information on local circumstances to financial support before arrival, and from help in finding accommodation and work, survival strategies and coaching to assistance in pursuing education after arrival.

The fieldwork in Australia showed that all informants entered the country legally. Networks functioned as the main mode through which onward migrants received information about the possibility of migrating to Australia, about local circumstances and ways to settle down. Interviewees argued that adjustment was relatively easy because of the information and help from the networks.

However, while the networks were relevant in their decision-making on onward migration to Australia, it was not a decisive factor. Having a European nationality made life much easier, because as Europeans they could extend their stay until they could show they could support themselves. Unlike other Africans who reside in Australia who have difficulty adjusting (Hassanen, 2014; Hebbani, 2014); the informants in this study had a much better life than they had in Europe. Their experiences in Europe had prepared them to adjust more easily in Australia.

## **5.2 From insecurity to a safe haven**

The life stories of the informants are characterized by different types of exploitation, corruption and injustice in countries with insufficient social and economic protection, both in their countries of origin and the countries they fled to in Africa and the Middle East. They lacked guaranteed protection, access to education and employment, and protection from being discriminated. The main reason for these migrants to come to a country in the north was to find a safe haven; to have proper refugee status for themselves and their families. Teke is one of those migrants who moved to Sweden with his family:

I was a company manager in an American company in Saudi Arabia. It was a well-paying job but the rights for immigrants were limited. Refugees cannot turn to an embassy if something happens. We lacked protection. The future of our children was in jeopardy. My wife and I decided to migrate to Sweden because we prioritized our children's future above everything we had. (Teke, 52)

Before moving, some respondents had information about the Swedish democratic and humanitarian system and about the social policies to protect its citizens. Though some hardly knew anything about the country, such as Hanse below. But all informants felt fortunate to have the prospect of living in a free and democratic state enabling them to have a dignified life instead of living in fear.

All I knew was that it was a Christian country that follows God's orders and implements human rights conventions. I had high hopes of education and a better life. (Hanse, 22)

The opportunity to become European citizens meant a life changing event for these migrants, who, in any country they had lived in before, did not get the chance to acquire citizenship or to be naturalized the way they did in Sweden. Access to naturalization means a lot to people who have been forced to leave. A European passport means rights and responsibilities, freedom to live, work and travel without being judged and harassed as they had been before. This is how Sbina expresses her feelings:

Being a Swedish citizen means that you are global, that you are respected and that you are protected. (Sbina, 48)

## **5.3 Pros and cons of life in Europe**

Positive and negative attitudes towards life in Sweden, other European countries and Australia were revealed. Positive aspects centred mostly on the advantages of living in a democratic state, where human values are respected and one has freedom of expression. Migrants declared that they would be forever grateful and loyal to Sweden for giving them security and

social protection. Negative issues that prevailed were, besides the cold climate: local language and culture proficiency, acceptance by the host society and the poor employment situation for non-western migrants, which are discussed below.

A lack of Swedish language skills restricted participation in the host society in the early days of migration. In later years, a lack of fluency in Swedish is a serious obstacle in labour market integration. A study in Malmö found that there is a general perception among Somalis that it is easier to get jobs in other countries without being fluent in the local language (Open Society Foundations, 2014). For those who moved to Australia, language was no problem because they generally had good language proficiency, acquired before or when in Europe. Another issue the informants in Sweden brought up was the cultural shock and the norms and values that were different from theirs. Informants found it difficult to socially connect with Swedish people, whether neighbours or colleagues, which is in line with other studies (Hassanen, 2013). Similar experiences were shared by informants in Australia, who had experienced life in Europe as very individualistic. Many expressed their disappointment with being isolated from the majority society.

Informants in Sweden had all experienced negative attitudes from local people towards immigrants, and had experienced discrimination, racism and islamophobia. After giving up everything in their home countries to live in a democratic country, many had been surprised by feelings of otherness and associated discrimination based on their cultural, ethnic and religious identities. It made many feel excluded and unwelcome in the host society. Following the attacks of 9/11, some informants described that they had been treated as criminals; there were regular accounts of being stopped and searched by the police. These findings are in line with recent studies documenting incidents of xenophobia and racism towards non-western migrants (Hübinette et al., 2014) and migrants suffering from racial discrimination based on their skin colour and background (Westin, 2006). In contrast to the way they were treated in Europe, Africans in Australia argued that in their new country, they felt accepted as members of society the day they arrived, regardless of gender and country of residence in Europe. They felt more at home and secure compared to the Africans in Sweden. As an African Swede who migrated to Australia said:

In Europe, people do not accept migrants as part of their country, no matter how long people reside there and no matter what kind of status people have. (Est, 36)

The informants in Australia argued that they had acquired experiences and knowledge on how things work in western countries, so settling in Australia had not made them feel as unfamiliar as they had in Europe. Their life experiences in Europe contributed to a better

interaction with the majority society and the labour market in Australia. Besides language and cultural knowledge, their social networks also helped them to adapt better in Australia.

The poor employment situation among African Swedes is well documented. Although many informants in Sweden were employed, most of them did not have jobs corresponding to their educational qualifications and skills. Many reported having settled for any job available to them in order to avoid unemployment. The informants linked the limited employment opportunities to Swedish society not embracing migrants as they do natives. Informants worked as cleaners, bus drivers, ticket sellers or in the care of the elderly. However, none of the informants enjoyed their jobs. Employment was seen as hugely important for their identity – it gives them dignity. Through their transnational networks, migrants are very aware of better livelihood prospects elsewhere, as is the case for Rajab:

My siblings who reside in Australia and in North America and the UK all have better jobs than me here. I thought obtaining Swedish citizenship would be a turning point. However, my life seems to have stopped instead of progressed. My life in Sweden is ‘sweet sour’.  
(Rajab, 27)

The informants in Sweden see access to education for their children as a major achievement of their move to Sweden and as a key to their children’s future success. However, all worry about the future. Most migrants argue that their children do not have a bright future in Sweden, as their employment opportunities are limited, due to being African and not being accepted by the predominant Swedish society. In particular, sons of first generation migrants are not motivated to complete a good education as they lack role models, corroborating findings from a focus group study among Somalis in Malmö (Open Society Foundations, 2014), which found that unemployment among Somalis led to low self-esteem, family tensions, decreased incentives to learn Swedish and for children to do their best in school (Open Society Foundations, 2014). Kemal expresses his feelings in the following way:

How can a father show his son that this is a fair and good country when the father is treated negatively and does not have a job that corresponds to his merits? I am an electrical engineer working as a bus driver. I told my son to get an education and he said to me: ‘why would I get educated to something I will never use?’ (Kemal, 38)

Compared to the informants in Sweden, those in Australia are involved in different kinds of jobs; some had jobs that do not match their qualifications but they were jobs they said they benefited from, and others do have work using their qualifications. Worries about the second generation were not mentioned whatsoever in Australia. African Europeans in Australia seem

to fare much better compared to Africans in Sweden. They all own their own houses and some have their own businesses; many work using their qualifications.

Unlike Sweden, Australia has a mortgage system that provides service matching Islamic values, which might have some significance for the ability and decision to buy property. However, our data do not reveal whether the mortgages system is a decisive element in buying property. Similarly, informants were not forthcoming with information on nationality issues and attitudes towards social policies. However, none regretted the decision to migrate to Australia, and none considered ever going back to live in Europe, although they continue to visit friends and family there. The following informants sum up their perception about the differences between Sweden and Australia:

In Europe I never dreamed of having property or nice house or living as I desire; now I am one of the people who own houses and have my own restaurant. Here my restaurant serves African food and most of my clients are not Africans but white people and other ethnic people who happen to be of non-African origin. In Sweden I owned a restaurant and my clients were only my countrymen. (Reb, 34)

#### **5.4 Attitudes and knowledge about migration and social policies**

The informants in both settings expressed great appreciation for the social protection offered by Sweden. Migrants mostly mentioned social benefits, maternal leave, free childcare, free health care, unemployment benefits and a free democratic society. The way Sweden protects its nationals through generous policies providing care from birth to death was something mentioned mostly by fathers, while mothers showed their appreciation for benefits for children and families, and the way that in Sweden, women can be independent. The following excerpt shows how an Eritrean mother views the Swedish welfare state.

Our relatives in Italy do not have the kind of benefits we have here in Sweden. Their children do not get what our children get here. To us, Sweden is the country where we want to raise our children. We will never need any kind of social support beside what is provided to us by the system. For this reason, we are very grateful to Sweden. (Hon, 35)

Many migrants feel very privileged to live in a country where ‘the state pays parents for raising children’. The fact that all children, from day-care centres to secondary schools, are served food at school is much valued. Similarly, the way children and adults have access to education in Sweden was mentioned often, usually compared to much worse situations in countries such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Some migrants appreciate Sweden’s family

policies to such an extent that they do not intend to leave the country because of it, such as this Ethiopian mother:

For someone who wants to have children, Sweden is the right place, which is why I will never leave Sweden. Although my husband has a different opinion, I have always believed that Sweden is the best country when it comes to all the services human beings need. (Esher, 36)

The fact that all residents are protected and their income is secured when they fall ill or become unemployed was mentioned by many informants. Some stress that this is one of the reasons why they think very positively about the country and that it is one of the reasons why they will never leave. However, knowledge on specific social policies among migrants seemed to be mixed and not very precise. All knowledge on procedures and rules is obtained through networks and not via the social insurance agency for instance. Knowledge is concentrated on earnings-related income, such as parental leave benefits being related to previous earnings, as Alem reports:

Before I gave birth to my two children I had tried to get a job, because I knew from my relatives that if the salary one gets if employed prior to giving birth is good, it will be enough to cover the daily and motherly expenses. To have a job is not only good for this purpose but is also good in case of unemployment at a later date. If a member of the unemployment union, one would also receive unemployment benefits. (Alem, 43)

Although Sweden has adopted a multicultural policy, many informants experienced different kinds of exclusion and racism, and felt that Swedish society is not open and positive towards immigrants even though national policies protect minority groups from being treated differently. Informants emphasized their appreciation of government policies in Sweden, but felt that the local population does not embrace these policies, which makes life difficult for them. Many contrast this with African government policies which may be restrictive and discriminatory, but at least the locals embrace new arrivals as their brothers and sisters. Informants in Australia had negative attitudes on the way people in Europe think about multiculturalism, with some claiming that European migration policies made migrants move onward to Australia.

### **5.5 Onward migration attitudes and motives**

We have established that African Swedes felt fortunate to live in a country that gives them security and social protection. On the other hand, most informants in Sweden experienced difficulties in the labour market, none of the migrants worked using their qualifications, all

claimed to suffer from discrimination and racism, felt isolated and excluded from the majority society, and most do not see a bright future for their children in Sweden. On top of this, their EU passport enabled them to move onwards, plus they have the networks to help them to find better places to live and to get help in practical matters when moving. However, does this mean that all African Swedes want to leave Sweden? Saana explains the odds are against staying:

Our children have mastered the local culture and language and all went to school here, and still they do not have access to work. What does this tell you? No matter how much we want to stay in Sweden, the odds are against us staying. It is not up to us, thus, we have to look for other places such as the UK, where opportunities are better than here. (Saana, 48)

However, not a single informant that we interviewed in Sweden indicated that they wanted to leave the country in the near future. However, none denied it would be an option either. All of the first generation migrants we interviewed were uncertain what the future would bring them in Sweden, especially with regard to their children. Many identified providing a bright future for their children as a main motive for moving to Sweden in the first place. As a solution, some send their children abroad to study in English-speaking countries, such as Teke:

When my children said to me that they want to study abroad I advised them to choose English speaking countries. Now my children are studying in USA, Canada and England. I want them to do that because these countries are known to us, they are multicultural societies, and they will have a better future in those countries than in Sweden (Teke, 52)

Survival strategies exist not only of moving onward to places where better livelihoods may be ahead, but also of coping with difficulties in the current place and trying to make the best of it. Through knowledge coming from transnational networks, migrants realize how fortunate they are to live in such a well-functioning welfare state. And maybe, one day, some will move onward to fulfil their dreams. In any case, migrants claimed to be very loyal to Sweden, to never be willing to give up their Swedish nationality and some indicated that because of this loyalty, they would never leave the country.

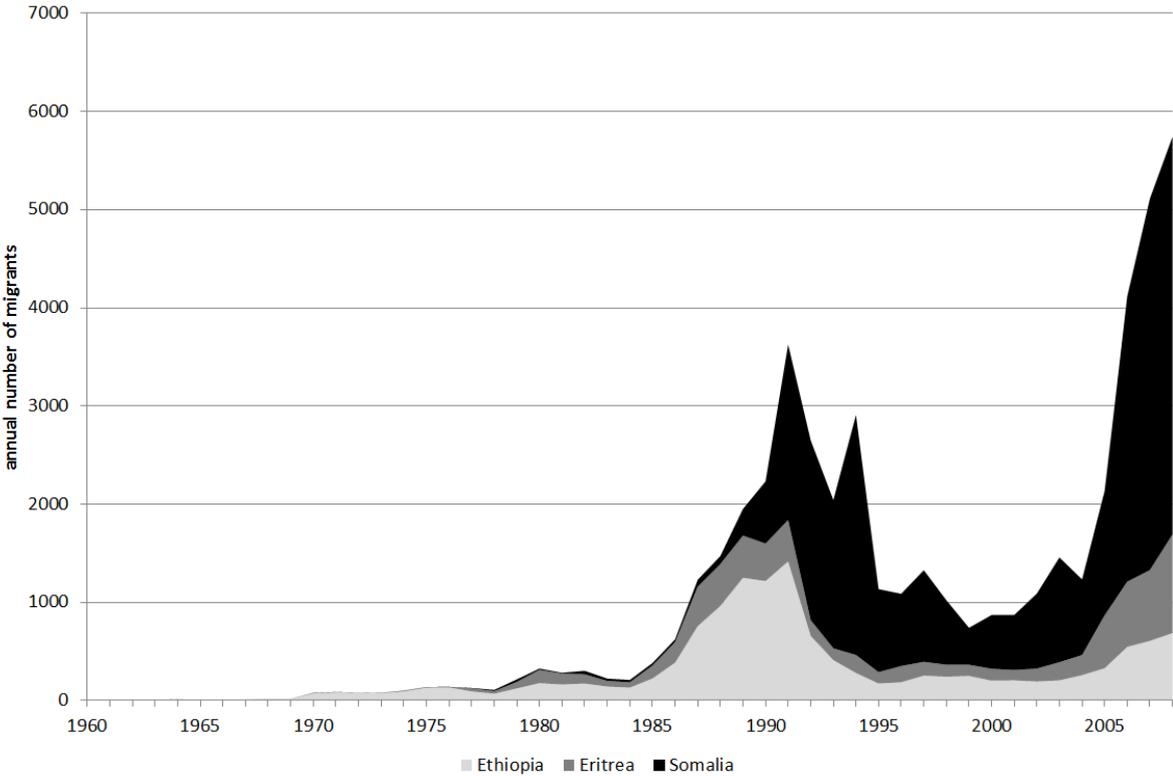
The migration motives distilled from the interviews in Australia revealed that the issues migrants in Sweden were dissatisfied with were also the main factors in their migration motives. Better livelihood opportunities made most migrants move onward, usually together with some kind of family reunion. Though thankful for all that Europe gave them, as humans they needed to 'extend their needs and desires' and have a better life. Informants in Australia

were very happy with their move, and none had plans of returning to either Europe or their countries of origin. Even so, all indicated not being willing to give up their European citizenship.

**5.6 Patterns of onward migration and selectivity of onward migrants**

Analyses of register data on all those born in the Horn of Africa and living in Sweden at some point during the period 1990-2008 (N=51,950), shows their dynamic and varying migration patterns. Figure 1 shows that there have been two main waves of Horn of Africa migrants to Sweden: the first concentrated in the period from the middle of the 1980s to the beginning of the 1990s, with the majority of Somali migrants coming a few years later than Ethiopians and Eritreans. The second wave that started in the second part of the 2000s is more substantial in numbers, and is ongoing at present. The annual number of Somalis immigrating to Sweden has by far outnumbered the other two groups, reaching about 30,000 Somali born persons in 2008 or about 57 percent of all migrants from the Horn of Africa. Ethiopian and Eritrean migration to Sweden has a much longer history, with the first Ethiopians and Eritreans arriving in the 1970s.

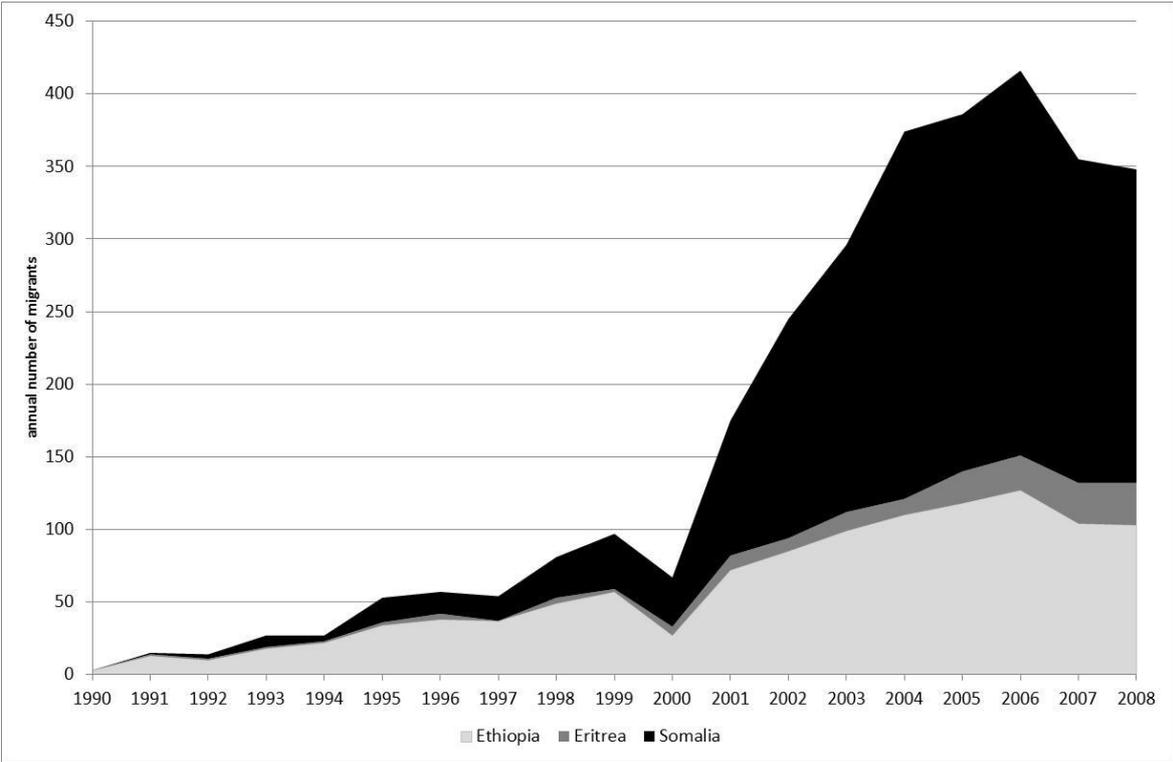
Figure 1. Immigration of Horn of Africa migrants to Sweden by country of origin<sup>1</sup>



Source: Swedish register data, first author's calculations.  
<sup>1</sup>Based on last observed reported year of immigration to Sweden.

In the period 1990-2008, 9 percent of Horn of Africa migrants emigrated from Sweden. Of these 4,406 migrants, 70 percent are onward migrants, while 30 percent returned to their countries of origin. Another 3,018 persons, or 6 percent, were de-registered from the population register as a result of the authorities not being able to locate them in Sweden. Figure 2 shows that the extent of onward migration has substantially increased over time, and especially so in the last five years. From less than 100 migrants per year in the beginning of the 1990s, annual onward migration doubled at the end of the decade, before reaching 300-400 each year a decade later. The distribution of migrants by country of origin is about proportional to those present in Sweden; Somalis make up the majority of both immigrants and onward migrants.

Figure 2. Number of annual onward migrants among migrants from the Horn of Africa by country of origin, 1990-2008\*



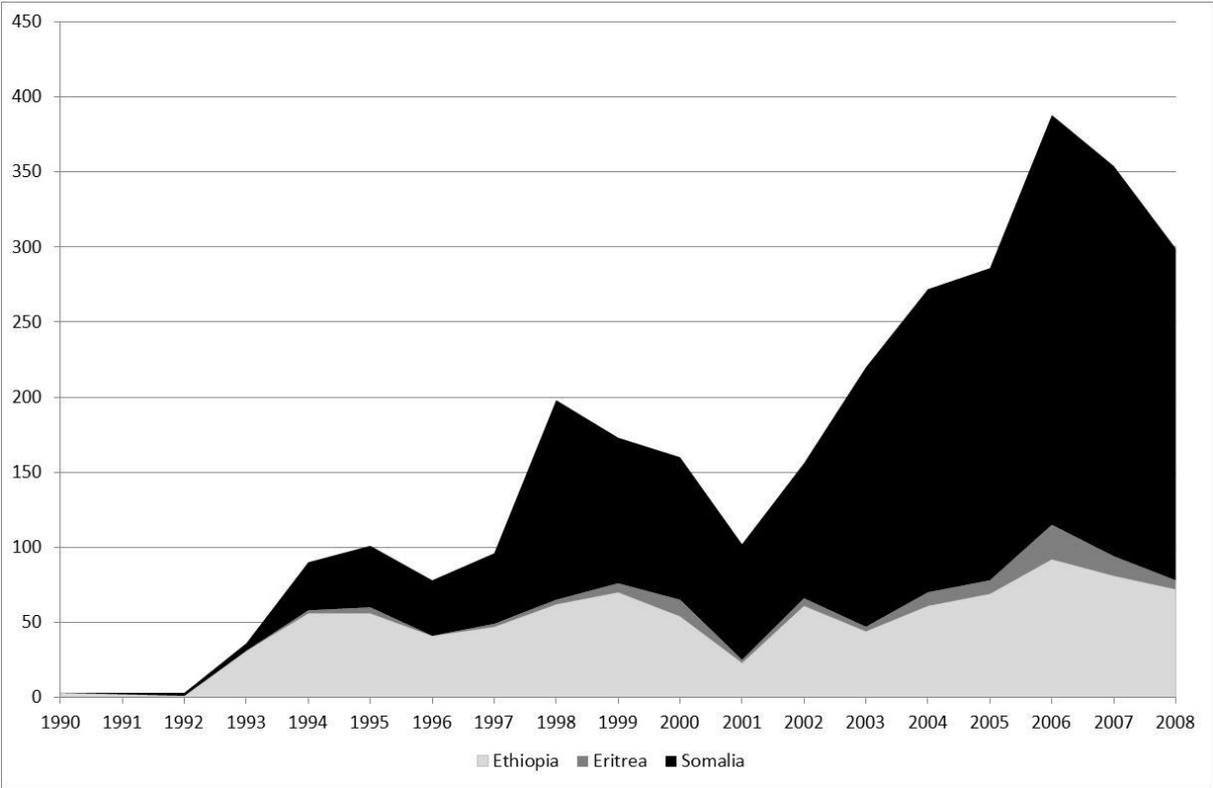
Source: Swedish register data, first author's calculations.

\* Excludes de-registered persons

In the same period, the pattern of de-registered Ethiopians, Eritreans and Somalis was almost similar to that of onward migrants, with an increase towards the second half of the 1990s and a steep increase one decade later (figure 3). Even the pattern by country of origin is

similar. Based on our qualitative work together with information from Statistics Sweden, these persons are most likely to have emigrated from Sweden without reporting to the authorities.

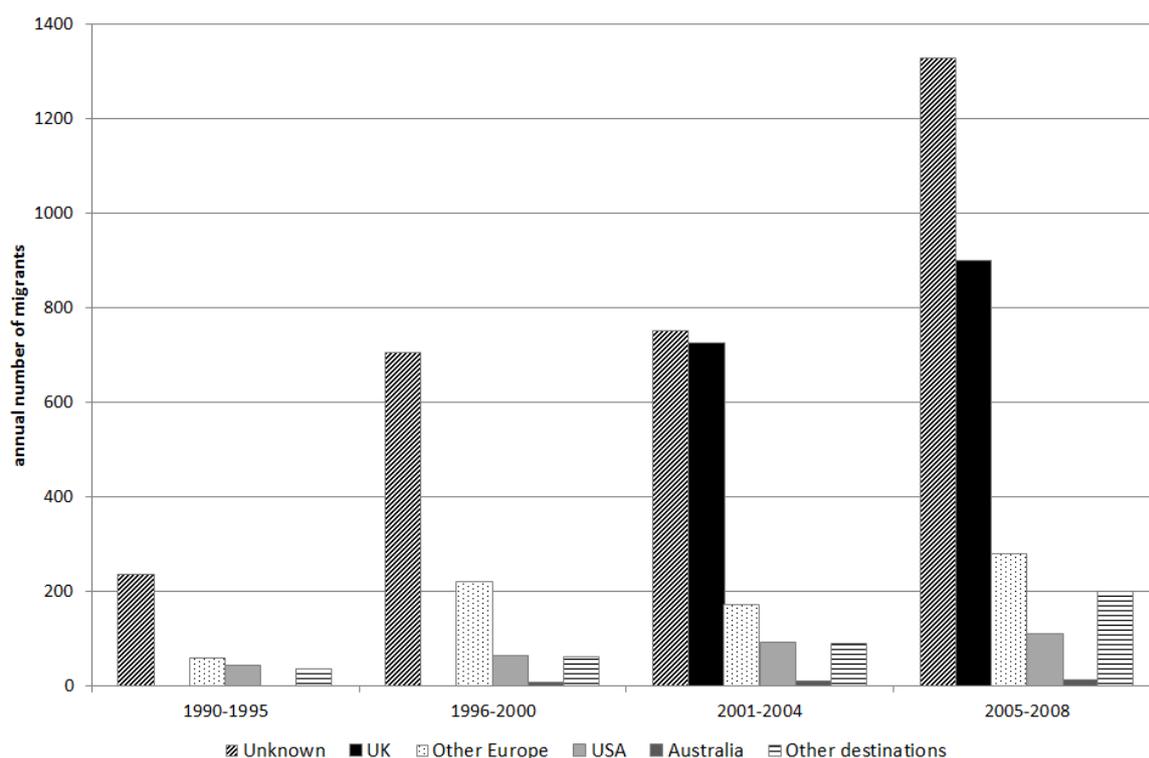
Figure 3. Number of de-registered persons counted as emigrants among migrants from the Horn of Africa by country of origin, 1990-2008\*



Source: Swedish register data, first author's calculations.

The destinations of onward migrants have changed over time, as shown in figure 4. Whereas moves to the UK were non-existent in the 1990s, they became the major onward migration destination in the last decade. Another substantial increase occurred in emigrations with unknown destinations, the earlier mentioned deregistrations. The number of migrants who reported a move to Australia is very low and this migration does not seem to be increasing over time, which is unexpected but may be underestimated.

Figure 4. Onward migration by destination country and period of emigration



Source: Swedish register data, first author's calculations.

Note: those with unknown destination country are those de-registered from the system.

Whether onward migrants are a selective group in other aspects is answered by comparing descriptive statistics on their demographic characteristics, socio-economic status, and use of social benefits, as compared those African migrants who remain in Sweden (table 1 and figure 4). Onward migrants have on average resided in Sweden for 11,5 years before they emigrate, which is longer than the average period stayers have resided there. This seems to be in line with the view that lack of integration in the host society after a substantial period of time may lead to onward migration (Nekby, 2006). Note that the average of 11 years is substantially longer than the four years that is required for obtaining citizenship.

Based on these statistics, onward migrants can be said to be slightly older, both at immigration and emigration, than those who stay. Men are more likely to be onward migrants as well as de-registered movers. In addition, onward migrants were more often singles and were less likely to live with a partner in Sweden, with even stronger effects for de-registered movers, signalling reduced local ties.

Table 1. Characteristics of onward migrants, de-registered persons and stayers

	Onward migrants	De-registered persons	Stayers
Average duration in Sweden in years	11.5	9.9	10.8
Mean age at last observed immigration <sup>1</sup>	25.5	26.6	24.8
Mean age at last observed emigration <sup>2</sup>	33.3	34.5	31.9
% Women	48.3	39.3	50.0
Family position at immigration, % <sup>1</sup>			
single	37.9	60.4	35.0
with parents	8.1	4.7	6.4
with partner <sup>2</sup>	25.5	19.2	27.4
single parent	5.6	5.6	6.6
missing family position	22.9	10.2	24.6
Family position at emigration, %			
Single	41.7	66.7	33.8
with parents	15.1	5.8	7.6
with partner <sup>3</sup>	23.9	14.8	31.4
single parent	14.5	9.9	12.0
missing family position <sup>4</sup>	4.8	2.9	15.2
Employment status: percentage employed			
one year prior to emigration <sup>5</sup>	14.0	1.9	45.5
two years prior to emigration <sup>6</sup>	21.6	4.1	45.9
Educational level at emigration, % <sup>5</sup>			
primary education	28.6	35.2	36.7
secondary education	50.6	43.3	43.3
tertiary education	20.8	20.0	20.0
Mean annual income at emigration, % <sup>5,7</sup>			
No income	71.5	94.0	44.5
<100,000 SEK	18.6	4.8	15.7
100,000-250,000 SEK	7.6	1.1	21.3
>250,000 SEK	2.3	0.2	18.5
Percentage receiving social benefits at emigration <sup>2</sup>	28.8	14.8	35.9
Percentage receiving unemployment benefits at emigration <sup>2</sup>	16.1	4.0	8.0
N	3,090	3,018	44,526

<sup>1</sup>Measured one year after immigration for onward migrants and de-registered persons; data for stayers was measured in 2008.

<sup>2</sup>Measured one year prior to emigration for onward migrants and de-registered persons; data for stayers was measured in 2008.

<sup>3</sup>Measured as a married partner or a cohabitation partner with whom one has common children.

<sup>4</sup>Note that persons with missing family position are largely recent migrants.

<sup>5</sup>Measured for those aged 22-65 one year prior to emigration for onward migrants and de-registered persons; in 2008 for stayers.

<sup>6</sup>Measured for those aged 22-65 two years prior to emigration for onward migrants and de-registered persons; in 2008 for stayers.

<sup>7</sup>Includes annual work and business related income measured in kronor.

Source: Swedish register data, first author's calculations.

In terms of socio-economic status, findings from other studies can largely be confirmed and our qualitative studies are substantiated: compared to those who do not move, onward migrants are much less often employed and have very low or now income before emigration. Only about a fifth of onward migrants and are employed two years before emigration, compared to 55 per cent of stayers. Only 2 percent of de-registered persons were employed before emigration, reflecting that a large share of these migrants already left Sweden. Figure 5 shows that Horn of Africa migrants only slowly find employment in the years after migration to Sweden, and that those that eventually leave already have a worse employment situation from one year after immigration compared to those who stay, especially so for those who become de-registered from the system. However, statistics on employment and income among onward migrants may be underestimated as migrants might reduce their work efforts before leaving (Nekby 2006). Also, migrants might register their emigration later than it actually occurred, causing a downward bias in income levels.

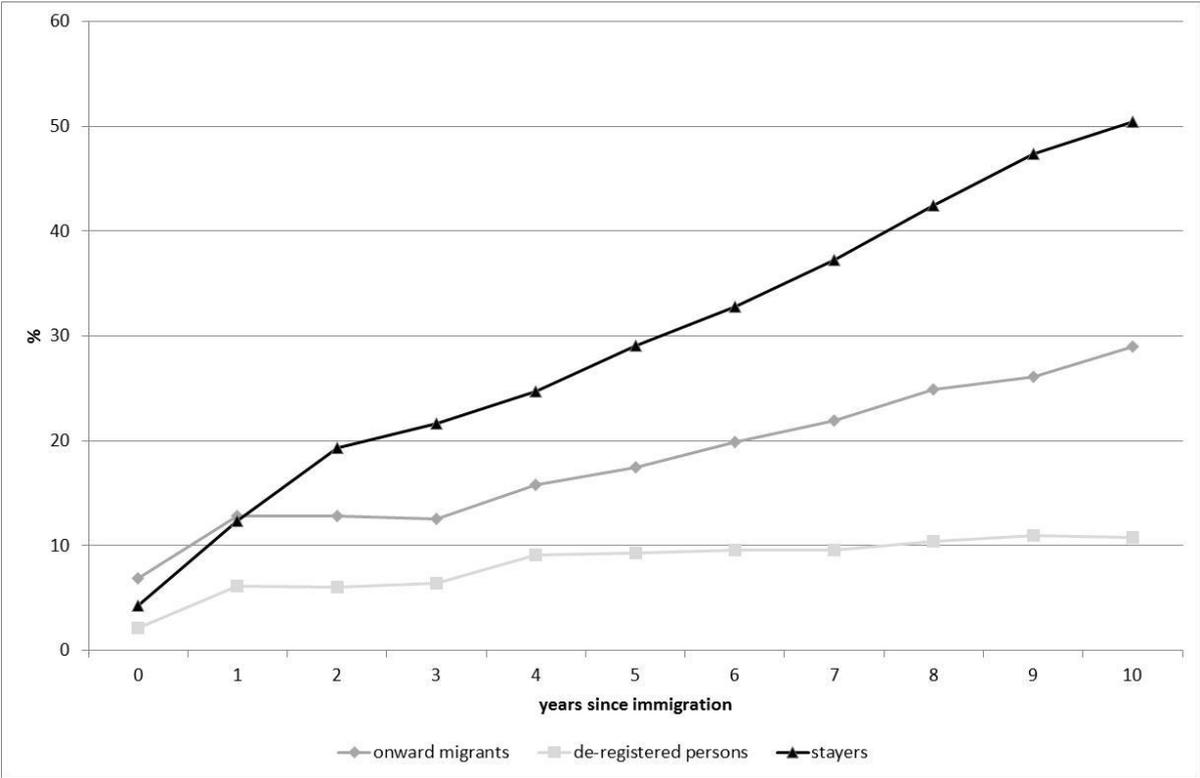


Figure 5. Percentage employed by years since immigration and country of origin\*

Source: Swedish register data, first author’s calculations.

\* based on employment after first observed immigration since 1990.

Onward migrants from the Horn of Africa are higher educated than stayers with the same background – but not as highly educated as Iranians moving from Sweden (Kelly, 2013). In comparison, de-registered persons are similarly educated than stayers.

As many as 72 per cent of onward migrants had no income in the year before emigration, but at the same time did not receive state benefits in the same amount. Stayers much more often received social benefits than those who emigrate, supporting previous findings on onward migration from Sweden. On the other hand, onward migrants are twice as likely to have received unemployment benefits.

## **6. Conclusions**

This study has examined onward migration attitudes and actual migration patterns among African Swedes as well as migration motives of African Europeans. The overall picture of the situation of African Swedes is that many have ambivalent feelings towards life in Sweden. On the one hand, they are very thankful for having reached security and a safe haven, after experiences of injustice and insufficient social and economic protection. The many benefits the Swedish universalistic welfare states offers are much appreciated. However, on the other side of the coin, life in Sweden has been very hard. Their poor employment situation, characterized by a high proportion of unemployment, and employment not matching their qualifications makes them feel lacking in dignity and excluded from mainstream society (in line with for instance Omar, 2013; Open Society Foundations, 2014). These feelings are reinforced by experiences of racism and discrimination and the overall impression of being unwelcome in Swedish society. Many feel that although Sweden has generous humanitarian migration policies and very generous social and family policies, the local population does not embrace these. The incentive to work and learn the local language may be reduced when people feel they have no opportunities for progression in the labour market and are trapped in social welfare.

Based on statistics on onward migration patterns, we have established that onward migration is on the increase, and especially so in recent years. The increase is mostly attributed to an increase of Somalis migrating to English-speaking countries, a trend which was also found in other studies, among Somalis (Lindley and Van Hear, 2007) and Iranians (Kelly, 2013). The UK is an emergent destination, confirmed in both the quantitative and the qualitative study, and is considered by many as a migration option, as many have relatives and friends there, as a place where their children can enjoy the English education system, where society is perceived to be truly multicultural, and as a destination they can travel to easily.

Those who migrated onwards to Australia indicated similar motivations for onward migration as those indicated by informants in Sweden. In Europe, they felt that their merits and cultural background were not valued. They had not been able to find jobs that fitted their competencies and skills. Many claimed to have suffered from different types of alienation and discrimination. Despite experiencing many difficulties, all still think that life in Europe provided them with useful experience and life training that made them who they are today in Australia. They learnt to be independent in Europe, to work hard in order to have a better life, and to tackle facing difficulties of adjusting to a new culture and society. In contrast to their previous situation in Europe, most migrants are doing very well, owning houses and businesses and, more often than in Europe, have jobs that correspond to their qualifications. In Australia, they feel more part of society and more accepted than they did in Europe.

A closer look at the survival strategies of migrants shows that most made some kind of trade-off to adjust themselves to their new situation. The informants who stayed in Sweden had to scale down their career visions and wishes, and settle for jobs for which they were overqualified in order to secure income and avoid unemployment. The coping mechanism is to survive and keep some dignity, leading to psychological challenges as many continue to remember what they were once dreaming of; besides the financial and time investment in one's education. But notwithstanding their difficult situation in Sweden, very few had definite plans to move onwards, though future onward migration was always seen as an option.

Refugee studies have indicated that forced migrants tend to be creative and adapt easily to life under difficult circumstances. Forced migrants do whatever it takes to survive and overcome losses, by breaking loose from old lifestyles and beginning a new life adjusting themselves to the new situation (Hassanen, 2007). The need for re-organization becomes necessary and urgent, and supporting each other through networks and accepting whatever migration offers is part of the norm.

To link policies to outcomes is difficult and not self-evident, as it is hard to isolate causal effects from social, family and migration policies on outcomes (Duvander and Ferrarini, 2013). In this paper we have contextualized onward migration attitudes of migrants in two different countries, in order to understand the different ways policies might affect individual and social behaviour. Social and economic wellbeing influences the attitude towards the host country, and how the society thinks about newcomers and how multiculturalism is practised are issues that migrants take into account when thinking about the future, but we found no direct relation to onward migration attitudes.

This study has established that the value of acquiring dual citizenship is immense for these forced migrants. Whereas a Swedish passport can offer a new understanding of the world, dual citizenship affords bearers the expansion of democratic rights and practices, and allows migrants to dream dreams of more extensive mobility (Hassanen, 2013). In addition, social and transnational networks provide information upon which migrants may act.

Nonetheless, discrimination on the basis of cultural and religious grounds also exists in other destination countries. Several studies show that Africans in Australia experience discrimination and racism in the Australian labour market for instance (Colic-Peisker and Tilbury, 2007). The United Kingdom may be a more multicultural society, where ethnic groups have better opportunities to open own businesses with a guaranteed (ethnic) market, that does not mean racism or xenophobia do not exist.

This study also demonstrates that these migrants' needs are not properly addressed in Sweden. Integration is not a one-way process, but requires input from both the migrant and the host society (Castles et al., 2002; Phillips, 2010). Integration policies might work on paper, but the local population also needs to be actively involved in welcoming newcomers and socializing with established migrants. If certain migrant groups increasingly leave Sweden to settle in other countries because of inadequate integration opportunities, policy-makers may need to revise their plans, to take into account the reasons due to which there has been increase in numbers of onward migrants.

At a later stage of this research, we hope to include migrants who moved onward to the UK as well. It is also planned to expand the quantitative analyses by adding more recent data and by following cohorts of migrants over time and examining the likelihood of onward migration by individual characteristics. Finally, future studies may focus on the future plans of the second generation of these transnational migrants.

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