

**This is a self-archived version of an original article. This version may differ from the original in pagination and typographic details.**

**Author(s):** Ndomo, Quivine

**Title:** Staying because of all odds : Lived experiences of African student migrants in Finland

**Year:** 2021

**Version:** Accepted version (Final draft)

**Copyright:** © 2021 selection and editorial matter, Jussi P. Laine, Inocent Moyo and Christophe

**Rights:** In Copyright

**Rights url:** <http://rightsstatements.org/page/InC/1.0/?language=en>

**Please cite the original version:**

Ndomo, Q. (2021). Staying because of all odds : Lived experiences of African student migrants in Finland. In J. P. Laine, I. Moyo, & C. C. Nshimbi (Eds.), *Expanding Boundaries : Borders, Mobilities and the Future of Europe-Africa Relations* (pp. 136-151). Routledge.  
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003083726-9>

# **Staying Because of all Odds: Lived experiences of African student migrants in Finland**

Ndomo Quivine

## **International migration: Changing mobilities and changing spaces**

The political, social, and economic salience of migrants to contemporary societies cannot be overstated in this epoch of demographic crisis and knowledge economy. Over the past five decades, human mobility across national borders has transformed significantly, influenced mainly by globalisation and its practices, climate change, and war and conflict. As a result, contemporary migrant geographies differ starkly from those of five decades ago. These changes to human mobility processes take place within societies that are also transforming politically and economically e.g., regional de-bordering as of the EU, rising nationalist and populist ideology, and the terrorism and securitization turn; and socially e.g., labour market precarisation and diminishing social security (Laine 2018; Yuval-Davis 2011).

In turn, the convergence of persistent dynamic human flows across national borders and global transformation processes produces an uneasy union rife with political and socio-economic dilemmas; which perhaps were most concretely portrayed in the socio-politically constructed post-2014 “migration crisis” in Europe (Laine 2018; 231; Anderson 2013). These dilemmas influence individual nation state’s interpretation of migratory acts, and the consequential migration management approaches pursued setting the stage for perversely regulated, mediated, and contested migration experiences. Moreover, contemporary state borders are no longer at the periphery of society; instead, they have been moved into the daily experiences within nation state territories (Somers 2008; Balibar 2004). Thus, the new flows of migrants into Europe, and a changing globalised Europe produces migratory processes characterised by stringent regulation within nation state territories, a feature I call pervasive internal bordering.

## **‘New’ borders for ‘new’ migration**

The contemporary border can be conceived as a processual phenomenon that constitutes administrative procedures for excluding non-citizens in order to regulate their presence and access within a community of value (Balibar 2004). This chapter adopts a multi-disciplinary, and constructivist understanding of borders based on scholarship on processes, institutions, and structures that regulate migrants’ activities within host countries (See e.g., Mezzadra and Neilson 2013; Yuval-Davis 2011; Lyon 2005; Balibar 2004). Therefore, a border is any regulatory institution and its corresponding practices, which function through differentiation to produce a hierarchy with clear distinction between citizens and non-citizens in society.

Such borders are also ‘expansionist’ widening their reach into trans-border phenomena, particularly by mandating the social state, and private social structures such as healthcare facilities, banks, schools, housing offices and employers to function as administrative personnel of the internal border (Zureik and Salter 2013; Yuval-Davis 2011). Together,

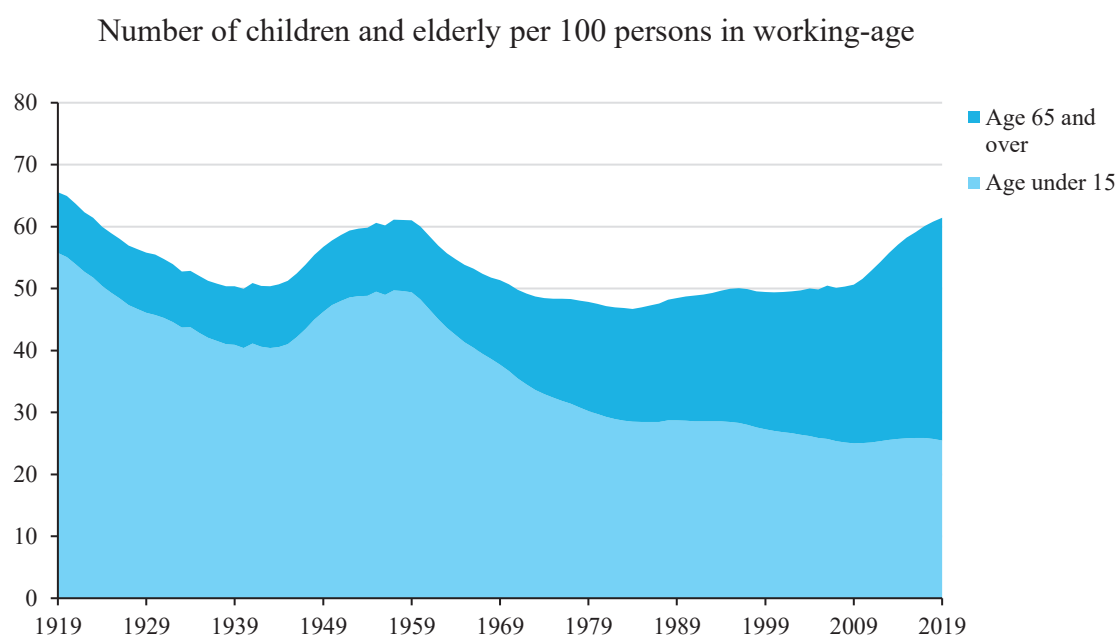
personalised bordering and administrative bordering are used to highlight the extent to which bordering permeates migrants' lives. Administrative bordering includes all the bureaucratic gatekeeping activities implemented by institutions like hospitals, banks and schools, while personalised bordering refers and implies activities of differentiation that migrants learn to exert on themselves due to '*chronic*' exclusion (Könonen 2018). Therefore, bordering is a technology of flexibility, determining who is in and who is out of specific aspects of society.

### Contemporary Africa-Europe migration: The case of Finland

The universal Nordic welfare states provide rich country context for investigating the impact of emerging trends in migration control and regulation in the Global West. With fresh fears of welfare burden, crime and other distasteful cultural norms sparked by the migration crisis, the universal Nordic welfare states come to mind due to their generous residence based welfare arrangements. Moreover, the welfare magnet rhetoric (Tervonen et al. 2018) has prompted potentially tighter formal migration control in these countries albeit with varying degrees nationally. However, in light of binding international laws and their practices such as de-bordering in the EU, these states are also turning to pervasive internal bordering techniques to manage migrants within their borders. Such techniques include activities of gatekeeping, differentiation and sorting, regulation, surveillance, and precarisation (Zureik and Salter 2013; Lyon 2005).

Net migration to Finland was only realised in the nineties. However, today, international migrants are crucial for the Finnish economy and society. For Finland, the demographic crisis is a pressing reality with various sectors of the economy experiencing labour shortages and the dependency ratio rapidly weakening (Ministry of the Interior 2018).

**Figure 1: Finland's Demographic dependency ratio in 1919–2019**



### ***Source of Data: Statistics Finland***

As a result, Finland adopted migration as a strategy for addressing its socio-economic challenges with strategies e.g., *The Future of Migration 2020 Strategy* and legislation e.g., *Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration 1386/2010*, to attract and retain international skills – students and labour. However, Finnish employers maintain a limited geographical purview of desirable migrants thus minimising the labour market integration potential of the excluded migrant groups e.g., African and Middle Eastern migrants (EMN1 2018: 6-7). Student migrants are the second biggest migrant group in Finland. In 2016, 76 per cent of student migrants originated from outside the EU/EEA, out of which 80 per cent were from Asia, while African students contributed about 20 per cent together with the Americas and Oceania (CIMO 2016). The number of applications by African students to Finland reduced significantly in 2017, due largely in part to change in legislation introducing school fees for non EU/EEA students, rising in 2018 and dipping slightly again in 2019 (Migri 2020).

However, on return migration rates, a survey on post-graduation mobility in Finland report a stay rate of eighty-five point four per cent for African graduates, eighteen percentage points above the general stay rate for all foreign graduates in Finland (Shumilova et al. 2015). An earlier empirical study of return migration in Denmark outline relatable findings indicating that migrants from the least (relative) developed countries realise the lowest return rates (Jensen and Pedersen 2007). Therefore, with a tendency to settle, African student migrants make up a significant portion of the Finnish international migrant stock, and constitute an especially interesting integration study group in post 2014-migrant crisis Europe, especially due to their ‘*unwanted brand*’. Disappointingly, previous studies e.g., Maury (2017), and participant narratives collected in this study portray a group of African student migrants staying in Finland who are forced to contend with disabling pervasive internal bordering in the legal-administrative, social, and economic spheres on a daily basis in Finland.

The purpose of this narrative chapter is to explore the daily lived experiences of a group of African migrants staying in Finland in order to understand the practices of migrant’ bordering within nation state territories in the context of post-2014 migration crisis Europe. Further, the study investigates the adverse socio-economic consequences of such practices on both migrants and host societies, and thus offers an alternative perspective to migrant decision-making behaviour especially decisions of settlement in a host country. The chapter aims to contribute to the discussion on rethinking EU-Africa relations from a migration standpoint. The rest of the chapter proceed as follows. The next section addresses the methodology of the study followed by an extensive analysis section. A section summarising the findings of the study follows and finally a concluding paragraph calls for ideological reconstruction of migration practices.

### **Mode of inquiry**

The chapter is based on an analysis of data collected through twenty-three in-depth, one-on-one narrative interviews with African student migrants from Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and Zambia who are staying in Finland. Staying here refers to the choice to continue living in Finland after studies. Nigeria, Ghana and Kenya are the biggest senders of African student migrants to Finland, while Gambia and Zambia were chosen on a convenience snowball-sampling basis. Data collection and analysis followed the procedures of the narrative approach to qualitative research (Creswell and Poth, 2018). Interviews were conducted over a period of three months between January and April 2018; and January 2020 in Helsinki – the capital, and Jyväskylä – a university town, in English with a theoretically sampled group (Corbin and Strauss 2008). Interview questions sought a holistic biographical narrative including stories from the period before migration decision, the migration decision, travel, and the process of settling in Finland.

Data analysis focused on the elements of participant stories: interaction, continuity and situation through a data driven thematic analysis (Riessman 2008). I followed a four-step procedure adapted from Creswell and Poth (2018) and Corbin and Strauss (2008: 159-274) stepwise procedures to qualitative data analysis. My analysis and interpretation uphold the constructivist ideal that the world can only be known through representation, hence the focus on told narratives and the meanings attached to them. Thus, in data analysis, I interacted with the data in an attempt to make sense of the material, guided by my understanding of migration processes which is informed by existing literature as well as own experiences as an African migrant living in Finland (Denzin and Lincoln 2011).

### **Unpacking the practices of exclusion in Finnish legal, social, and economic spaces**

In this section of the chapter, I present a narrative of systematic, extensive and, institutionally executed exclusion of a group of African migrants from various spaces of the society in which they live, study and work. The starting point and the core of the narrative is the status and ‘good’ of belonging, which emerged as a central theme in the migrant stories during data analysis. Yuval Davis (2011) describes belonging as a natural, organic, and emotive attachment to a place and a feeling ‘at home’ thus becomes a part of people’s everyday lives. These arguments are supported by the migrant stories collected in this study, where belonging is centrally situated in informants’ daily experiences. Belonging derives from full inclusion, through membership into a targeted collective with a boundary, thus enabling the included to access legal, social, and economic opportunities and resources necessary for forging a life perceived as worth living (See e.g. Yuval-Davis 2011; Somers 2008; Marshall 1992). Finally, informed by informants’ elaboration, I define belonging as the struggle for the status of valid existence in the communities and society in which one lives and contributes through duties and obligations.

Anthias (2008) explains that belonging is fundamental to migrants’ socio-economic integration in host societies. Finland is notably a homogenous country and as interview data indicates, the status of belonging is a significant socio-economic ‘*good/asset*’ for successful integration into the Finnish society. However, the same data shows that a variety of structures obstruct

migrants' access to this '*good*' by sorting migrants out of the Finnish society and its privileges. Nonetheless, informants retain the quest of belonging as a key milestone towards their objective of attaining valid presence in Finland. Therefore, the informants' quest for belonging marks the beginning of an evolutionary process of coming face-to-face with exclusion, manoeuvring exclusion, and rationalizing the decision to stay in Finland in terms of migration experiences. Data analysis highlights a positive correlation between time and human resource investment on migratory processes and settlement; in fact, most migration laws reinforce this (Anderson 2013: 103). Participant accounts demonstrate that gaining substantive acceptance into the Finnish society legally, socially, and economically is extremely challenging especially for individuals perceived as culturally distant.

I don't feel I belong, no. So many things are different here; the culture, the people... and there are issues that nobody wants to speak of here like racism, which still exists. Immigrants can only get certain kinds of improper jobs regardless of their qualifications, which shows that the system is problematic. (Participant 7)

The rest of the discussion of migrants' quest for belonging continues in three sub-sections through themed discussions of the informant group's told experiences with the legal, social, and economic spaces of the Finnish society. Each thematic discussion begins by identifying instances of internal bordering, followed by an illustration of migrants' reaction to such bordering activities. Then section 4 presents a summary of findings, followed by concluding remarks ending the chapter.

### **The Finnish residence regime and the legal other**

This thematic discussion illustrates migrants' dilemma in securing formal presence in Finland through the residence permit and the national identity card (Finnish ID) – instruments that aid bordering through sorting, regulation, and precarisation. All twenty-three participants of the study are legal residents in Finland, and all entered Finland as international student migrants on a fixed term 'B' resident permit for studies. At the time of the interviews, participants held varied residential statuses ranging from naturalised citizens to the fixed term 'B' residents; underscoring the generalising nature of bordering activities, not limited to irregular immigrants only. In this chapter, I argue that the Finnish residence permit is a legal structural bordering instrument used to manage the presence of migrants and migrants' access to various rights and opportunities in Finland while outlining implicit duties and responsibilities for migrants. The residence permit card provides a concrete tool for sorting, classifying and ultimately, 'othering' migrants via national legislation. For instance, third country student migrants receive a one-year temporary residence permit that is renewable yearly, which sets them apart from student migrants from the EU.

First, all residence cards in Finland do not function as official identity cards, thus, to access several basic services in Finland, informants obtained a national identity card, a document that is very seldom held by Finns. The Finnish ID for a migrant is also temporary, and the authority making the decision arbitrarily decides validity. De facto, the ID is a tool for identification via



differentiation and thus acts as a sorting tool. It extends the national boundary into the nation, into spaces such as an online banking site, university portal, or a nightclub where the ID regulates a migrant's access to services. Moreover, the real reason for insufficiency of the residence permit as an identification document is fuzzy, certainly unknown to migrants, but can be theorised to be regulative. Second, the Finnish residence permit is renewed at a fee of 190 euros in a process that also demands that migrants prove the capacity to cover their living costs in Finland with an income statement of no less than 6,700 euros per year (Migri 2020). These two legal status demands play a significant role in determining the social and economic activities that informants embark on upon arrival in the host country, an instrumental element of bordering in the labour market.

Third, various Finnish institutions use the residence permit to classify and categorise migrants in a hierarchy that determines inclusion or exclusion from rights and responsibilities accordingly. For instance, a 'B' permit, completely excludes the holder from all the services of the Social Insurance Institution in Finland (Kela), which are exclusively available for holders of a continuous 'A' permit. The minimum requirement for a continuous 'A' permit is full-time employment. What this means is that many international students who work part time in Finland do not have access to public healthcare, a basic social necessity for workers, especially those in risky secondary sector work like construction. Meanwhile, various institutions effortlessly sort migrants into classes through their legal statuses, a process that engenders the act of othering, which in turn reinforces the practice of personalised bordering by migrants themselves. Moreover, migrants' legal belonging, defined by a residence card category serves to reinforce other versions of bordering in the social and economic spaces in Finland.

Participant stories highlight a variety of reactions to the exclusionary tendencies of the Finnish residence regime. However, the most notable of these are joining the labour market immediately after arriving in Finland and rushing into convenience marriage.

I took up three jobs during the summer: newspaper delivery, cleaning, and home nursing. I did newspaper delivery from 12:20 a.m. – 6 a.m., slept for two hours, did cleaning from 10 a.m. – 3p.m. and home nursing from 4 – 9 p.m., slept for another two hours every day to make the 6,000 euros to renew my permit. (Participant 17)

The initial response to the limitations of the residence permit - though automatic - is acquisition of the Finnish ID, however, this is done out of necessity and does not register as an act of resistance, adaptation or manoeuvring. Secondly, in anticipation of the financial burden of renewing the first residence permit, participants took up wage work. Despite the many reasons that make migrants join the host country labour market, the need to ensure that one can secure their legal status at the end of their first year in Finland drove nineteen out of the twenty-three participants to join the labour market in their first year in Finland. Two participants sought social relationships with Finnish nationals including romantic relationships with the goal of cohabitation and a shared address; as well as acquiring the necessary human capital for obtaining, and seeking either a permanent residence permit or Finnish citizenship. These responses to the limiting nature of the Finnish residence regime have profound implications for the development of informant's migration trajectories. More important is the link between

migrants' experiences with the legal (political) space of the host country and migrants' socio-economic performance especially since this informant group unanimously sought migration to Finland to improve the opportunities available for them to forge a better life. This is explored further in the following subsections.

### **Courting the Finnish community of value**

Belonging as membership follows full acceptance into a desired social and political collectivity such as a community. As a naturalised, emotive act of attachment and identification, belonging is multi-layered as individuals can belong to another individual, to a community, a nation, a job, a union etc. (Yuval-Davis 2011). Very often, social, cultural, economic and political belonging are addressed explicitly in discourses of belonging and citizenship (see e.g., Yuval-Davis 2011; Somers 2008). In this section, social belonging refers to inclusive membership in, and recognition of migrants by, the state, and consequently by varied collectivities in society, which in turn enables members to overcome embodied markers of legal status, race, gender, and class, which otherwise serve the default role of othering, and enabling exclusion. The link between citizenship and belonging is evident (See e.g., Anderson 2013; Yuval-Davis 2011; Somers 2008). Belonging follows acceptance, which ensures admission via full membership into a collectivity, which endows recognition based on equality between humans. However, historically, such recognition is tied to belonging in a nation state by blood, thus effectively excluding migrants from belonging in their host countries. Nonetheless, the crucial role of such membership for economic and political engagement and the social wellbeing that such activities engender remains. For migrants, social inclusion is a crucial starting point in the quest for belonging, yet, informants' stories indicate that gaining meaningful acceptance into the Finnish society, thus validation, is nearly impossible for most.

Participant stories describe the Finnish society – the social collectivity of relations, recognition and acceptance – as homogenous, closed off and exclusive of certain migrant groups. Widely acknowledged stereotypes about culture and tradition, language deficiency, and cultural or ethnic based differences regulate migrants' access to Finnish social circles. When employed in decision-making, these perceptions result in unfavourable sorting, and systematic institutional regulatory practices of exclusion follow. Failure to integrate into, or gain Finnish social networks materialises in varying degrees of severity, from difficulties in securing basic rights such as a place to live, getting a desired job to admission into a desired course programme at the university. Four participants explained the difficult process they endured while looking for rental apartments in Helsinki where applicants were sorted by embodied traits through a face-to-face interview before admission or rejection.

We waited outside on a long queue for the interview. After we were seen, for reasons we can only assume related to our looks, it was not possible to see the apartment at that time. We walked out and soon after, the agent went to show the apartment to another person, this time a white person. (Participant 7)



International student migrants also face exclusion from opportunities such as a desired master's programme course. Participant five in this study explains that courses with the potential to improve his standing in the Finnish labour market were not accessible to him and other migrants like him. He was kept out through on account of language deficiency, which also ensures that migrant students do not even realise that they are excluded from their rightful privileges as international students, legally accepted to study in the university. Language is a rationalised tool for bordering and excluding migrants from varied social locations and positions in the Finnish society, while decision making administrative personnel take on a border-guarding role. Moreover, in Finland, statistical discrimination and taste-based discrimination are nearly normative. According to Ahmad (2019), however, this largely stereotypical prejudiced behaviour has been used to keep migrants out of desirable jobs while masking institutional and structural discriminative prejudices. Further, in taste-based discrimination, the populace become the border guards since it is their taste preferences determining the limits of migrants' inclusion and access. Participant stories also highlight instances of social bordering in public sites such as public transportation, recreational parks, and the work place.

I never had the urge to go for Finnish citizenship, but at some point, I just decided to go for the Finnish passport to avoid the many instance I had to explain to my Finnish children why we had to make separate ques at airports. (Participant 12)

In order to demonstrate sufficiently the impact of the pervasive social bordering patterns on the decisions made by the informant group, I introduce the concepts of precariousness, adaptation, compromise, identity management, and learning. Precariousness captures the crucial impact of endless social exclusion while the other concepts elaborate the various ways that participants responded to social exclusion. This discussion delves into participants' experiences of vulnerability because of failing to fit into the host society as full, valid members, as well as their dilemmas with maintaining and adjusting their career goals, self-perception, identity, and absolute or relative confidence vis-à-vis citizens.

Participants' reaction to social bordering was significantly elaborate and prognostic of their migration trajectory in the host country. Several migrant stories indicate feelings of invalidity and inconsequentiality arising from multiple failed attempts to integrate meaningfully in Finland through relations and networking with nationals, through work and colleagues, and through social and cultural engagements. Their acquired precarious social standing cemented their perception of exclusion and instrumentally led to acts of '*self-bordering*'. Those who experienced the most instances of exclusion from social spaces in Finland accepted the rhetoric of '*cultural distance*' and personalised their own bordering, beginning to blame their cultural and ethnic traits for their exclusion from the host society. The reaction that followed was retreating from the host society and straight into ethnic migrant communities and networks where social activities mimicked the norms of origin country. The multi-layered ethnic community networks identified – continental, national, and intimate group-based networks – organised around the value of solidarity and a collective approach to addressing immigration challenges. Networks equipped members with a unique *African migrant in Finland culture*'.

Moreover, since the networks tended to spring up around seasoned migrants, they enculturated the norm of settling, rather than return and/or on-migration.

However apart from self-bordering, the chapter identifies four different ways that participants expanded their Finland-embedded social capital, or leveraged such capital to advance their social belonging in Finland. First is marriage or cohabiting with a Finn. At the time of the interviews, six participants who had Finnish spouses/partners explained that the Finnish side of the family was instrumental in their quest for belonging in Finland as it improved their social standing (location) in society, especially improving their visibility. Second is having a Finnish child (*not necessarily with a natural-born Finn*). Ten participants had children in Finland whose wellbeing they were committed to realising through the opportunities of advanced education provisions and security among other opportunities available under the universal social welfare regime. For them, parenting a Finnish child or a child born in Finland helped to validate their presence in Finland through socially embedding interactions. For instance, school-going children expanded a parent's network to include teachers and fellow parents who sometimes grew into acquaintances or friends; parenting also involved unavoidable and valid engagements with varied national institutions such as schools, churches, and health centres, which in all embedded the parents to a defining extent to the host society. It also scaled down the conscious burden to prove one's validity through the single route of full membership in society.

The third technique is building a Finnish network. Participant narratives underscore the importance of Finnish networks in '*surviving*' in Finland, from getting a house, to getting a job. Differentiation of citizens from non-citizens, especially the culturally distant groups like African migrants is central in regulation of access in the Finnish society. The in-group does not trust the excluded group and this manifest in exclusion from several substantive and instrumental social opportunities and activities. Therefore, migrants use Finnish networks to make up for their cultural deficit. Indeed, participant twelve acknowledges that she had an easier experience compared to her mates as she had a Finnish family network from the beginning. The fourth technique is embedding the self in Finland by self-identifying as a Finn.

Collectivities (and membership in them) develop around shared culture, beliefs, profession, values, religion etc. thus generating a link between belonging and identity. Further, holistic belonging in a nation state is based on identity. Therefore, it is not unusual when migrants revert to identity politics to improve their social standing in a host society. As argued by Yuval-Davis (2011), and in this study, identity stories included narratives that refer to migrants' pasts, which help to problematize the current situation and projects a desired future trajectory. Participant 8 explains how he adopts a fluid identity to optimize his experiences in Finland.

I become whatever the other person wanted me to be. I exist in context. So, when a drunk person in a bar asks me why I came to Finland; I say I came to drink! (Participant 8)

The four techniques described above, as well as the initial reaction of retreating to an ethnic enclave are migrants' constructions of belonging, which serve a performative role (Butler 1990, cited in Yuval-Davis 2011). Such performance could be resistance, as in retreating to an ethnic

enclave; resilience as in identity reformulation and projecting perceived Finnish identities; or manoeuvring as in marriage and cohabitation with a native Finn.

### **Alternative belonging: Economic citizenship and valid workers**

This final thematic discussion illustrates internal bordering as experienced by the informant group in the Finnish labour market. Administrative bordering is particularly rampant in the Finnish labour market, which is a dual segmented market with clear division of primary and secondary sectors as well as division of labour between market stakeholders. Accompanying the sectoral distinction is a criterion for worker distribution based on differential embodied characteristics such as nationality, race, ethnicity or gender (Piore, 1979). Thus, migrants face ad-hoc sorting, differentiating, regulating, and discriminating acts from employers, contracting agencies, and those controlling job vacancies and recruitment processes in the Finnish labour market (Ahmad 2019).

The first, and an overarching border imposed by a bifurcated labour market is an institutionalised obstruction of mobility between the sectors (Piore 1979). All the twenty-three informants are active participants in the Finnish labour market with nineteen working in the secondary labour market. The nineteen participants express dissatisfaction with their manual, unskilled work, which they describe as demeaning, deskilling and dehumanising and thus share their ambitions for primary sector work even when they acknowledge the unlikelihood of such reality.

I am not working in my area of expertise now, simply because I am a foreigner, and in a country like this, not all institutions are so accepting of people like me especially in white-collar jobs except some few fields like IT. And even there, you have to prove yourself first, and how do you do that when you won't get a first chance? (Participant 3)

... Without a Finnish surname it's not easy to get a job in most fields in Finland, even when you speak Finnish, speaking Finnish is not everything. (Participant 10)

Second is discrimination. Valtonen (2001) explains that the Finnish labour market operates under two discriminatory premises: statistical discrimination and taste-based discrimination, which regulate and streamline migrants' access to the labour market. Recent studies concur, and identify further discrimination based on cultural and ethnic traits, which becomes a key challenge for culturally distant groups such as my participant group in the Finnish labour market (OECD 2017). Despite obtaining tertiary education in Finland, nineteen participants were unable to find jobs in their areas of expertise. Moreover, past work experience was unrecognised thus worthless in employment seeking. Participant five explains that even internationally recognised and lucrative certifications such as Project Management Professional (PMP) and Certified Information Systems Auditor (CISA) were unrecognised and thus useless in Finland. The failure to recognise foreign academic qualifications and accumulated professional experience keeps migrants in the lowest status jobs in Finland.

In Finland, ‘we’ only do these ‘shoddy shoddy jobs’. Before I came here, I was a teacher you know. I have travelled and I am well educated but now I clean and I wash dishes ... (Participant 8)

Third are the cumulative barriers in the legal and the social spaces such as the temporary residence regime, language deficiency, underdeveloped or inaccessible Finnish networks, and negative stereotypes which aggravate migrants’ bordering in the labour market by cementing their status of precariousness. After completing his master’s degree, participant seven, holding the fixed term ‘B’ permit could not access municipal employment services that should have improved his chances of getting meaningful work in Finland. At the same time, all participants have missed a job, or a promotional opportunity due to language deficiency. Moreover, a foregrounded discourse of trust in worker recruitment practices in Finland excluded participants from consideration in a number of work opportunities for which they qualified simply because they lacked the trustworthiness that comes with an endorsement from a Finn. Therefore, the residence permit, trust, and language were tools used by employers and recruiters to bar participants from accessing the Finnish labour market on an equal footing with nationals, thus human agency could not measure up to the systematic and embedded nature of these bordering tools.

Participants’ reaction to bordering in the labour market take the form of acceptance, diversion and compromise. Fundamental is participants’ inability to employ manoeuvre tactics in this space, thus contributing significantly to their emerging migrant trajectory of extended stay in Finland. In terms of acceptance, participants accept their fate in the Finnish labour market, coming to an understanding that their kind mostly does manual and unskilled work and that is just how it is; in fact, some understand Finland’s decision to exclude them, although this is limited only to exclusion in the labour market.

As a human being, I might not be okay with my fate as a job seeker here but I also understand that there are laws that prioritises the Finn and the European over me. (Participant 8)

Diversion and compromise work together to provide participants with alternative validation. Participants identify and reify other aspects of their experience with work such as wages and salaries that are higher relative to home country in addition to working conditions such as coffee rooms, which compensate for the unpleasant nature of the work itself. A key technique of diversion is alternative membership based on labour market participation. Labour market membership ‘*economic citizenship*’ (based on work validates participant’s stay in Finland with work as migrants core purpose in Finland. Membership through tax duties, which extends participants validity beyond the labour market into society through tax utility value when used for national socio-economic development.

Lastly, class membership obtained through wages, income and lifestyle validates migrants as equal beings to nationals of similar social classes. However, the most significant reaction to bordering in this sector is the decision to stay in Finland as workers, albeit in unskilled, deskilled, and dehumanising jobs. In fact, this chapter argues that the bordering role of these jobs is crucial in altering migrants’ trajectories towards a settling tendency by enforcing temporariness and precariousness, which slow down all migration processes and decisions.

### **Summary of findings: Outcomes of pervasive internal bordering**

In the analysis, I have shown the extent of bordering as it materialises in migrants' daily life experiences as encountered by a group of African migrants in Finland. The encountered borders were both administrative and personalised. The analysis also highlights the various techniques and behaviour patterns adopted by migrants in reaction to such bordering individually, and in ethnic networks. In general, migrants resolve to either adapt or manoeuvre the exclusionary activities through a personalised protracted struggle between the processes of defining the migration trajectory and overcoming the processes of exclusion in daily encounters. Thus, analysis underscores the link between the pervasive internal bordering of migrants and the prevailing migration trajectory, which in this case is a unanimous change from a trajectory of temporary stay to that of settling in the host country. Migrant stories indicate that pervasive bordering reinforced an extended stay in Finland by delaying migrants' acquisition of a status of belonging and validity through perverse exclusion from social and economic spaces in Finland. Moreover, experiences of pervasive bordering reinforced the desire to belong, which takes on additional value as an avenue for inclusion as well as a status reward for the social, and economic resources invested during stay in the host country. Analysis of interviews with migrants shows that participants adopt a migration 'culture' - strategies, knowledge and coping mechanisms – for an African migrant living in Finland.

The findings of the chapter can be summarised into three phases through which internal bordering shapes participants' migration trajectory. First, bordering through the residence regime triggers participants to pursue a permanent residence permit and citizenship status early in their immigration. Second, the attempt to advance legal status initiates a quest for social belonging, sought through marrying a national, having a Finnish child, joining an ethnic enclave, and reconstructing identity. Third, failures related to the participants' attempts to gain meaningful inclusion into the Finnish society produces precarious individuals whose experiences in the Finnish labour market are marred with discrimination and exclusion to the margins of society. The socio-economic failure experienced by these informants amount to a loss not only to the migrants, but also to the origin countries in terms of brain drain and to Finland, which fails to optimise its human resource pool.

### **Concluding remarks**

The pervasive internal bordering of African student migrants in Finland incentivise their longer and even permanent stays in their new host country. Thus, increased internal bordering reinforces a settling tendency in migration. However, as I have illustrated, the nature of migration enforced by such bordering is arduous, unsystematic and time-costly. It often results in loss for both migrants and host societies in socio economic terms. In short, internal bordering reinforces inefficient and ineffective migration processes.

Increased internal bordering is not unique to Finland. Migrants categorised as culturally distant to a host population (SIRIUS 2018) commonly experience migrant exclusion through language



barrier, statistical discrimination, mismatch between migrant labour demand and supply. Nonetheless, these challenges are critical and should be addressed as they undermine the wellbeing of migrants as well as socio-economic life in host societies. Since 2009, the Finnish government has incrementally put in place migration programmes e.g., Talent Boost, aimed at increasing and improving economic migration activities in the country with a focus on competitiveness, attraction and retention. However, though positive, programmes like Talent Boost have a narrow focus in terms of migrant groups in the country and as well as their strategic focus which is purely economic inclusion.

Based on the outcomes of this study, I draw the following recommendation for a socially inclusive integration regime. One, the focus of integration should emphasise migrant's wellbeing as much as host country's economic gains and a first step towards this could be better matching between international course programmes at the university and the labour market needs of the host country. Two, integration programmes should be targeted, acknowledging the different needs of migrant groups in the country in order to better reduce discretionary space for exclusion. Thirdly, integration programmes should be designed with an understanding that overlooks stereotypical claims and definitions that further the exclusion of African migrants in host society communities.

## References

- Ahmad, A. (2019). When the Name Matters: An Experimental Investigation of Ethnic Discrimination in the Finnish Labour Market. *Sociological Inquiry*, [online] pp. 1-29. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/soin.12276> [Accessed 3 Nov. 2019].
- Anderson, B. (2013). *Us & Them*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Anthias, F. (2008). Thinking through the lens of translocational positionality: an intersectionality frame for understanding identity and belonging. *Translocations: Migration and social change*, [online] 4(1), 5-20. Available at: [https://repository.uel.ac.uk/download/dc56b48c783cc329d81aef8b2390a4a8871b0fc19166434dc4bd98c8205bbebc/121028/Vol\\_4\\_Issue\\_1\\_Floya\\_Anthias.pdf](https://repository.uel.ac.uk/download/dc56b48c783cc329d81aef8b2390a4a8871b0fc19166434dc4bd98c8205bbebc/121028/Vol_4_Issue_1_Floya_Anthias.pdf) [Accessed 20 Oct. 2019].
- Balibar, E. (2004). *We, the people of Europe?: Reflections on transnational citizenship*. English Ed [ebook] (Vol. 18). Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press. Available at: <https://jyu.finna.fi/Record/jykdok.1430547> [Accessed on 28. 2. 2020].
- Corbin, J. and Strauss, A. (2008). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. [ebook] 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J. and Poth, C. (2016). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Denzin, N. (2011). Assumptions of the Method. In: N. Denzin, and Y. Lincoln eds., *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Jensen, P., & Pedersen, P. J. (2007). To stay or not to stay? Out-migration of immigrants from Denmark. *International Migration*, [online] Volume 45(5), pp. 87-113. Available at:



<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1468-2435.2007.00428.x> [Accessed on 4 Mar. 2020].

Könönen, J. (2018). Differential inclusion of non-citizens in a universalistic welfare state. *Citizenship Studies*, 22(1), pp. 53-69. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13621025.2017.1380602> [Accessed on 4 Mar.2020].

Laine, J. P. (2018) Conditional welcome and the ambivalent self – commentary to Gill. *Fennia* 196(2) pp. 230–235. Available at:<https://doi.org/10.11143/fennia.76101>[Accessed on 8 Apr. 2020].

Lyon, D. (2005). The border is everywhere: ID cards, surveillance and the other. In: E. Zureik and M. Salter, eds., *Global Surveillance and Policing. Borders, security and Identity, 1st ed.* Devon: Willan, pp. 78-94.

Maury, O. (2017). Student-Migrant-Workers. *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*, 7(4), pp.224-232. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1515/njmr-2017-0023> [Accessed: 08. Apr. 2020].

Marshall, T. and Bottomore, T. (1992). *Citizenship and social class*. London: Pluto.

Mezzadra, S. and Neilson, B. (2013). *Border as Method, or, the Multiplication of Labor*. Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press.

Migri. (2020). *Residence permit* [online]. Finnish Immigration Service. Available at: <https://migri.fi/en/residence-permit-application-for-studies> [Accessed on 14 Mar. 2020].

Ministry of the Interior, (2018). *Work in Finland*. Helsinki: Ministry of Interior.

OECD. (2017). Finding the Way: A Discussion of the Finnish Migrant Integration System.

Petry, R. and Sommaribas, A. (2018). *Labour Market Integration of Third-Country Nationals in EU Member States*. [Online] Luxembourg: LU EMN NCP. Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/09a\\_finland\\_labour\\_market\\_integration\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/09a_finland_labour_market_integration_en.pdf) [Accessed 8 Apr 2020].

Piore, M. (1979). *Birds of passage migrant labour and industrial societies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Riessman, C. 2008. *Narrative methods for the human sciences*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Shumilova, Y. and Cai, Y. (2015) Factors Affecting The Employability of International Graduates. *International Scientific Journal of Universities and Leadership*, 0(1), pp. 24-30. Available at: <https://ul-journal.org/index.php/journal/article/view/4> [Accessed: 5 Mar. 2020].

Simone, B., Montgomery, T. and Calo F. (2020). *Social Partners Barriers and Enablers*. [Online] SIRIUS: D5.2. Available at: <https://www.sirius-project.eu/sites/default/files/attachments/Social%20Partners%20Enablers%20and%20Barriers%20-%20D5.2.pdf> [Accessed 8 Apr 2020].

Somers, M. (2008). *Genealogies of citizenship. Markets, Statelessness, and the Rights to have Rights*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tervonen, M., Pellander, S. and Yuval-Davis, N. (2018). Everyday bordering in the Nordic countries. *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*. [online] 8(3), pp 139-142. Available at: <https://www.degruyter.com/downloadpdf/j/njmr.2018.8.issue-3/njmr-2018-0019/njmr-2018-0019.pdf> [Accessed on 29 Sep 2019].

Valtonen, K. (2001). Cracking monopoly: immigrants and employment in Finland. *Journal of ethnic and migration studies*. [online] 27(3), pp.421-438. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/136918301200266158> [Accessed on 15 Apr. 2020].

Yuval-Davis, N. 2011. *The politics of belonging: Intersectional contestations*. Thousand Oaks (Calif.): Sage.