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## Book Review

Loftsdóttir, K (2022) **We Are All Africans Here: Race, Mobilities, and West Africans in Europe**. New York: Berghahn Books, 192 pages, ISBN: 9781800733275

Reviewed by Olgu Karan<sup>1</sup>

“Did someone tell you that they found gold in Niger recently?” he asks me. “Well, not that it matters much. Some European company will take the profit and the people of Niger will not get anything. This is why I must go to Europe. Because Europe takes everything from us with only poverty remaining.” He laughs and tells me, smiling, “You see all the wealth of Niger goes to Europe and thus I just go. I followed the wealth to Europe.” He adds more seriously, “we have to go to Europe to have a future” (p.71)

The above quote is one of the illuminating interviews that probably provided reflexivity to the initial idea of research that Kristín Loftsdóttir conducted. The author did not initially focus on Niger. However, the insights provided by the migrants had several theoretical and methodological consequences that shaped the book's structure.

*We Are All Africans Here* brings Niger to the focus of research and ensures a holistic and relational view of the precarious movers from the Global South living in Italy and Belgium. The historical contextualisation of Niger highlights colonisation, militarisation, and international development not only because they have been significant in shaping the present, but also because these histories speak against the current depictions produced by media, international development organisations, and corporations. According to Loftsdóttir, these depictions assume that people from Africa migrate due to an ahistorical condition called poverty. Reducing economic migrants to faceless and ahistorical subjects excludes their histories of origin and their background. However, the research design sheds light upon the reasons why Nigeriens moved from their homeland to Italy and Belgium by providing the historical context of continued colonisation and the “ruination” of countries like Niger (p.91). This is one of the crucial contributions of the book: The research does not depict migrants as bearers of social problems and burden of duty to the host country but provides reasons for Global South mobility, namely, the ruination of migrants' homeland by Europe.

The book provides a powerful critique of modernisation and development that views social problems within Africa due to the countries' internal dynamics, such as their culture, tradition, lack of education and so on. For such depictions and categorisations of Niger, Loftsdóttir coins the concept of *developscape*, which reproduces colonial power structures. Developscape

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could be viewed as a Foucauldian *dispositive* that galvanises the development industry's machinery and maintains the power within Africa. The colonial mind is supported by stories of people in Africa who “have to be taught” how to do this and that, in many cases, fail to address how this poverty has been produced and often pay no attention to the continued exploitation of the local population and natural resources (p.75). For instance, Niger had to accept not only Structural Adjustment Programs imposed by the International Monetary Fund in the mid-1990s (p.80), but also permitted extraction of its resources to foreign companies, such as uranium. These companies disregard local health in extracting uranium, including water contamination, draining of aquifers, and hints of exposure to radioactive dust (p.87). Loftsdóttir claims that the consequences of these policies are incredibly severe, leading to a dependency on aid. International development organisations and aid programmes such as the EU Trust Fund for Africa aim to control the mobility of people coming to Europe. Accordingly, Niger becomes the “migration officer” of Europe through the EU’s border externalisation policy.

Developscape as an apparatus distinguishes who could cross borders within the space of advanced capitalist economies and which bodies should be kept out. Loftsdóttir exerts that the decision to be mobile is a function of power. Opportunity to move has become essential in defining the future of more elite Europeans. Mobile and immobile populations characterise global stratification in a world where not all can choose freely. It draws the line between migratory people, such as privileged white expats on the one side, and those marked by developscape who share a history with Europe as former colonies stuck in poverty. However, the mobility of WoDaaBe and Tuareg nomadic communities generally are welcomed as “exotic others” rather than criminals.

Moreover, Loftsdóttir discusses displays of Europe in Brussels, such as Mini-Europe in Bruparck and House of European History in the Eastman building in Leopold Park. These are part of the heterogeneous ensemble of developscape ignoring the continued ruination and colonisation of Africa, whitewashing the history of Europe and imagining its current and historical innocence regarding world inequalities. In sum, Kristín Loftsdóttir’s book *We Are All Africans Here: Race, Mobilities, and West Africans in Europe* is a significant contribution to the research field in mobility studies.

