Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies

ISSN: 1369-183X (Print) 1469-9451 (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cjms20

When Do Social Networks Fail to Explain Migration? Accounting for the Movement of Algerian Asylum-Seekers to the UK

Dr Michael Collyer

To cite this article: Dr Michael Collyer (2005) When Do Social Networks Fail to Explain Migration? Accounting for the Movement of Algerian Asylum-Seekers to the UK, Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 31:4, 699-718, DOI: 10.1080/13691830500109852

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/13691830500109852

Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies
Vol. 31, No. 4, July 2005, pp. 699–718

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

When Do Social Networks Fail to Explain Migration? Accounting for the Movement of Algerian Asylum-Seekers to the UK

Michael Collyer

This paper examines the diversity of destinations of asylum-seekers in Europe, focusing on the particular situation of asylum-seekers who claim asylum in countries with no significant co-national population, such as the growing Algerian community in the UK. This movement challenges existing social network approaches to migration. It is clear that many Algerians have family links in France and that the majority continue to travel there, so there can be no suggestion that social networks are no longer relevant, or do not apply to refugee movement. However, it is apparent that most Algerians coming to Britain also have family links to France but that strict migration controls reduce the possibility of mobilising the social capital inherent in these social networks. I conclude therefore that, as a result of migration restrictions, undocumented migrants use social networks differently, focusing on weaker ties rather than strong family networks. Political and economic factors also influence location decisions, especially in the absence of strong social imperatives towards particular locations.

Keywords: Refugees; Algeria; France; Britain; Social Capital; Migration Policy

Introduction

It is now established that migration is a social process just as much as it is an economic or a political one. Early sociological approaches to migration reflected a growing awareness that purely economic explanations were insufficient. The explanatory power of social network theory has been illustrated by studies as varied as international migration from Europe to the Americas in the nineteenth century

Michael Collyer is Nuffield New Career Development Fellow in the Department of Geography at the University of Sussex. Correspondence to: Dr Michael Collyer, Dept. of Geography, University of Sussex, Falmer, Brighton BN1 9SJ, UK. E-mail: m.collyer@sussex.ac.uk

ISSN 1369-183X print/ISSN 1469-9451 online/05/0100699-20
DOI: 10.1080/13691830500109852

(Moretti 1999) to internal migration in Mali in the late-twentieth century (de Haan *et al*. 2002). Social networks have also been shown to affect refugee movement to a significant degree (Koser 1997). Expectations generated by these sociological theories conformed to the fairly stable set of European migration systems dominated by family reunion migration in the 1970s and 1980s. However, since the late 1980s, the geography of migration to Europe has changed (King 1993). A large proportion of migrants to Europe are now 'spontaneous' asylum-seekers and while their countries of destination are broadly consistent with previous patterns and associated theoretical assumptions, a significant minority move in ways that cannot be explained by existing sociological understandings of migration (Bocker and Havinga 1998). This paper explores situations where the social network approach apparently fails to explain migration, using the case study of the movement of Algerians to the UK.

Social network theory in migration has never claimed to explain the origin of migration and this is not the test that is being applied to it here. Rather social networks explain the path-dependency of migration systems—their perpetuation once the initial factors that produced them have altered. The central question is therefore not why Algerians are coming to Britain but what is happening to French-based networks of Algerians that encourage or allow the movement of Algerians elsewhere. It is possible that those Algerians arriving in Britain simply have no access to networks in France, but this is not the case for the majority. In fact, most Algerians arriving in Britain have links to family who are well-established in France. There are two possible explanations for this: either they are using those networks in different ways from those outlined in the original theoretical work in this area, or they are rejecting them entirely for some reason.

The first section of the paper outlines recent geographical changes in patterns of migration to Europe and the second gives details of the recent movement of Algerians. Social network approaches have been refined in a number of ways to take account of changes in migration to Europe, such as the growth of refugee movement and the increasing significance of migration policy: these developments are investigated in the third section. The movement of Algerians to the UK offers a further puzzle, not accounted-for even in these more recent developments, since some Algerian migrants seem to be rejecting French-based family networks altogether. Empirical material drawn from fieldwork with recent Algerian migrants in France and the UK is presented in the fourth section. The final section examines potential consequences of these findings, examining the two possible explanations: either social networks are being used differently or they are no longer important and we must look to economic and political factors to explain this migration.

The New Geography of Migration to Europe

Between 1980 and 1990 the geography of the growth of immigrant populations in Western Europe offered few surprises. Each destination country received new immigrants from the same range of countries of origin as its existing immigrant

population (SOPEMI 1992). Migration to Europe during this decade was predominantly for family reunion. During the 1980s, the population of North Africans in Britain remained very low, whereas in France the number of North Africans increased by 197,000. In contrast, the population of Indians, Bangladeshis and Pakistanis in France increased by just 200 to a little over 8,000. In Britain the number of those maintaining a nationality from the Indian subcontinent increased by over 50,000 to 250,000. Germany, Austria and Switzerland saw very few immigrants from either North Africa or South Asia. The most significant areas of origin for migrants to these three countries were Turkey and Eastern Europe. This has been the broad pattern of immigration to Europe since significant non-European immigration began after World War Two. Each country received immigrants from its major zones of influence, and new immigrants had a very similar profile to existing ethnic-minority populations.

From 1990 onwards this pattern began to change, associated particularly with growing numbers of asylum-seekers. Examination of UNHCR data shows that asylum applications have always been more diverse than major flows of immigration, it is just that they have not been large enough to be of any significance. Between 1980 and 1985, for example, only 974 Sri Lankans requested asylum in Britain, compared to 553 in the Netherlands, 2,195 in Switzerland, 8,482 in France and 17,537 in Germany (UNHCR 2002). These numbers represent about 6 per cent of the total number of asylum-seekers in each of these countries during this period, indicating a clear geographical diversification from the former colonial power, even at this relatively early stage in the development of asylum migration to Europe. Sri Lankans now figure significantly among asylum-seekers everywhere from Norway to Cyprus. Asylum migrations of Nigerians, Ghanaians, Indians and Pakistanis all indicate a similar diversification away from Britain, well before the end of the Cold War. This diversification is not limited to former British colonies; in 1995 and 1996 more Angolans requested asylum in Finland and Bulgaria than in Portugal, and Sweden received twice as many Colombian asylum-seekers as Spain (UNHCR 2002).

Until recently the numbers of asylum-seekers remained small compared to the continual in-flows and out-flows of other foreign nationals; it was not considered likely that they would have any permanent impact on the societies where they requested asylum. However the number of asylum-seekers has now grown, and immigration through other channels, particularly labour migration, has fallen, so that it is no longer the case that asylum-seekers make up an insignificant minority. It is also important not to confuse the numbers of people requesting asylum with the smaller number of people who eventually settle permanently. Even so, it is apparent that asylum migration is enhancing the diversity of European societies, bringing in new communities with no real history of settlement in the country in which they now have a significant presence.

The Algerian community in the UK, overwhelmingly concentrated in London, is one example of this trend. The number of Algerians in the UK has increased from fewer than 3,500 at the time of the 1991 census to more than 10,500 in the 2001

census (Collyer 2004). While this is still a small community by London standards, at the local level Algerians are already contributing to the cultural landscape of the city. The following section investigates recent patterns of migration from Algeria more fully, as a precursor to analysis of this case study.

Recent Algerian Emigration

Algerian emigration from 1990 onwards provides a little-studied example of migration diversification. Although the majority of Algerians continue to migrate to France, a number of other countries where there is no significant Algerian community are emerging as important destinations for Algerians. The 1990 French census showed that 614,000 Algerian nationals were resident in France; including those who were previously Algerian and took up French nationality brings the total to well over 800,000 (Khandriche *et al*. 1999). France was then home to more than 97 per cent of the Algerian community in Europe (SOPEMI 1992). Canada was the only other country with a significant Algerian population (Safir 1996). In Europe about 10,000 Algerians lived in Belgium, another 10,000 in Germany and a few thousand in the Netherlands (Khandriche *et al*. 1999). At the time of the 1991 UK census there were 3,453 Algerian nationals registered as resident in Britain.

Available data suggest that since 1990 the profile of Algerian emigrants has changed, leading to a diversification of destinations. Seeking asylum is now the most significant means of reaching Europe. Annual figures for the total entry of Algerians into France, from the initial disturbances in Algeria in 1988 (4,900), to over three times this number in 2001 (15,100), rose and fell as follows: 6,300 (1989); 13,800 (1990); 12,900 (1991); 12,300 (1992); 13,100 (1993); 9,700 (1994); 8,400 (1995); 7,800 (1996); 12,200 (1997); 16,700 (1998); 11,400 (1999) and 12,400 (2000). Comparable statistics are not available for other countries as SOPEMI only records the most significant migrations.[1] Given that the numbers travelling elsewhere are not sufficiently large to register in SOPEMI reports, it seems safe to assume that France remained the dominant destination for migration for reasons other than seeking asylum. It is likely that illegal migration is also significant, though data from the regular amnesties held in France suggest that it may only be a few thousand a year.

Comparable data are available for asylum claims (Figure 1). The eight countries referred to in Figure 1 and Table 1 account for more than 95 per cent of Algerian asylum claims made since 1990 (UNHCR 2001, 2002, 2003). It is clear that the totals are significantly larger than the numbers of Algerians arriving in France for reasons other than asylum. Based on available information, asylum has therefore become the most significant single means of migration for Algerians to Europe.

Fluctuations in the numbers of asylum-seekers can easily be related to events in Algeria. The year 1992 marked a dramatic increase in asylum applications made by Algerians, especially in Germany where numbers were already high. This rise coincides with the cancellation of elections; the ensuing conflict was obviously the major factor provoking the departure of these asylum-seekers. Figure 1 shows that the

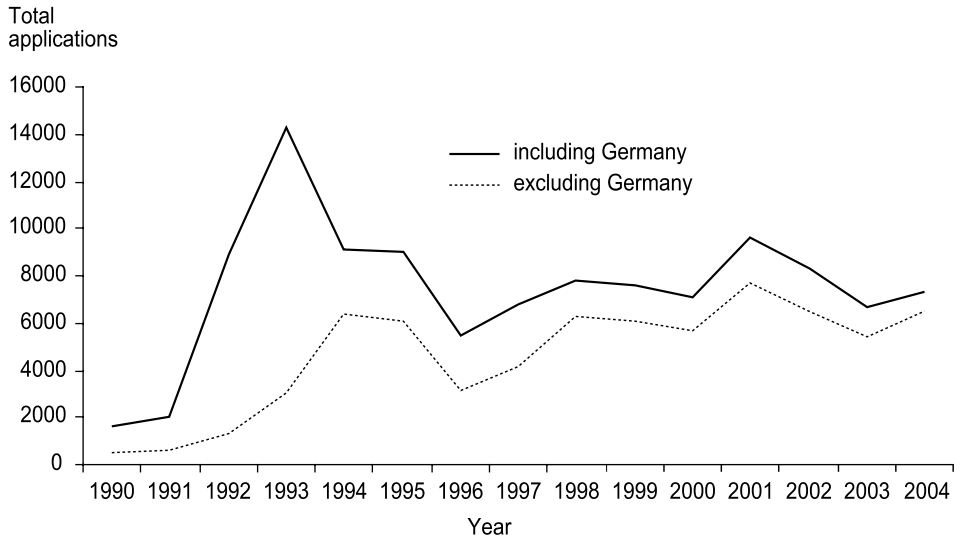

Figure 1. Total asylum applications made by Algerians in the eight selected countries 1990–2004 (for list of countries see Table 1).

majority of the first wave of refugees from the conflict went to Germany. The fall in applications in 1996 can be linked to the election of President Zeroual in 1995, which was greeted optimistically by many as the beginning of the end of the war. However, the massacres in August and September 1997 shocked the country and forced more

Table 1. Asylum applications by Algerians 1990–2004 for the eight most popular destination countries

	Total number of Algerian asylum applicants								
Year	Belgium	Canada	France	Germany	Netherlands	Spain	Switzerland	UK	Total
1990	31	187	141	1,035	103	0	73	15	1,585
1991	61	123	185	1,388	80	0	109	40	1,986
1992	59	179	677	7,669	147	0	226	0	8,957
1993	236	255	1,098	11,262	343	87	751	275	14,307
1994	402	721	2,303	2,784	1,321	301	303	995	9,130
1995	316	801	1,790	2,940	650	270	388	1,870	9,025
1996	225	609	640	2,360	440	110	396	720	5,500
1997	281	857	900	2,620	530	270	564	720	6,742
1998	337	813	920	1,572	821	1,581	529	1,260	7,833
1999	351	569	1,306	1,491	635	1,342	491	1,385	7,570
2000	807	422	1,775	1,381	279	276	492	1,635	7,067
2001	1,709	543	2,924	1,981	328	225	830	1,115	9,655
2002	936	119	2,839	1,733	202	344	1,031	1,055	8,259
2003	400	71	2,730	1,139	109	680	885	730	6,744
2004	357	66	4,008	752	67	988	480	595	7,313
Total	6,508	6,335	24,236	42,107	6,055	6,474	7,548	12,410	111,673

Source: UNHCR (2001, 2002, 2003, 2005).

people into exile. In 1999, the election of President Bouteflika was again seen as heralding real change but hopes raised by his election faded, marked by a further increase in applications in 2001. In 2002 there was a further fall, perhaps again reflecting the pattern of optimism encouraged by peaceful elections.

Although the number of Algerians who claimed asylum in France is likely to be under-represented in these statistics,[2] the diversification of the countries in which Algerians claim asylum is clear. In the early 1990s Belgium, Spain, Switzerland and the UK were receiving only a handful of claims from Algerians each year, yet all reached an annual total of more than 1,000 over the next decade. The overall fluctuation in the numbers of Algerian asylum-seekers did not reflect uniform changes in migration to all destination countries. The most significant destination countries were Germany, France and Britain. The overall pattern is one of increasing diversification from 1993 onwards. This pattern of migration is not consistent with expectations generated by work on social networks since only France had any significant community of resident Algerians. The following section considers recent developments to social network approaches that go some way towards accounting for these changes.

Recent Refinements to Social Network Approaches to Migration

Network theories in migration studies developed from work on 'chain migration' in the 1960s (e.g. Macdonald and MacDonald 1974; Tilly and Brown 1967). This work considered successive arrivals of migrants from the same point of origin to the same destination as a chain, making it more likely that further migrants would follow the same route. As an example, Singhanetra-Renard (1992) traced the development of migration from a Thai village to the Middle East from the migration of the first migrant to the establishment of contract labour flows from the village. Thus, previous migrants effectively determine the geography of subsequent migrations. The network approach offers a clear account of the social reproduction of migration and explains why migration continues even after the original impetus to migrate has vanished.

Douglas Massey and his colleagues employed Bourdieu's theoretically more sophisticated notion of social capital (Bourdieu 1986) in their own extensive research on social networks (Massey *et al*. 1987). Social capital indicates that the presence of social networks lowers the costs and risks inherent in migration and generates the expectation that individuals with family members who have migrated will be more likely to migrate themselves (Palloni *et al*. 2001). This has been widely used by other migration scholars to clarify the precise functions of social networks. Portes' famous analysis provided four different processes which reinforce the operation of social capital through social networks: assistance based simply on 'values'; reciprocity; 'bounded solidarity' through which members of a particular group supported each other; and 'enforceable trust' backed up by certain sanctions (Portes 1998). Finally, research has suggested that social capital should be sensitive to the varying intensity

of social relationships, but a systematic study of different strengths of social ties has not yet been undertaken (Espinosa and Massey 1999).

Since the early 1990s European-focused migrant networks have been faced with increasingly restrictive migration controls. Although work in the US on the effects of the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) has found little evidence to suggest this new law had any deterrent effect on undocumented Mexican immigration (eg Donato *et al*. 1992), migration controls in the EU have taken a different form. Douglas Massey and his colleagues comment that 'Nothing invalidates traditional approaches to migration as effectively as border control policies' (Massey *et al*. 1998: 14), and this remark seems particularly appropriate to the European context. Within the EU, effective migration controls have moved away from the border and are now just as concerned with the means of arrival of migrants at the border or with their access to basic services once they have entered EU territory. The growth of pre-entry and post-entry controls has created a series of barriers to the smooth operation of social networks. How, then, have new migration restrictions affected the operation of social capital, through social networks, for new migrants?

Empirical work on this issue suggests three possible responses of migrants to migration restrictions. First, restrictions have prevented social networks acting as a physical pole of attraction for new migrants as it becomes more and more difficult for new migrants to join family and friends. Secondly, post-entry restrictions have increased the dependence of new migrants on social networks. Thirdly, restrictions have arguably encouraged potential migrants to turn to smugglers to overcome such constraints. All three of these factors could well produce the diversification of established migration systems outlined in the previous section.

Migrant networks no longer operate to encourage simple geographical attraction. Kane (2001), for example, describes how French membership of the Thilogne Development Association, made up of emigrants from the town of Thilogne in Senegal, has fallen dramatically in recent years, due to restrictive immigration policies in France. However, new branches have opened in Italy and the USA, where immigration regulations have been more favourable. The social network has remained strong but it functions differently, operating more as a means of transferring information and remittances. Koser (1998) found that Iranians arriving in the Netherlands rarely migrated to the same location as their family, but had frequently been assisted by family in other ways.

A second response to migration restrictions is revealed by migrants who continue to be attracted by the support offered by networks. They may arrive clandestinely or overstay short-term visas and then remain, undocumented, with family or friends. Since the mid-1990s, theoretical work in Europe has gradually begun to catch up with the well-established long-term presence of undocumented migrants, their role in social networks and the effect they have on the operation of these networks. Godfried Engbersen and his colleagues on the Unknown City project in the Netherlands have made the most significant contributions in this area (see, for example, Engbersen 1995, 1999; Engbersen *et al*. 2000; van der Leun 2000). This project was carried out

over a number of years, based on interviews with undocumented migrants in the four main Dutch cities and access to police records of illegal migrants who had been apprehended.

Engbersen (1995) illustrates recent efforts that have been made across Europe to deny social support and even health care to undocumented migrants. European Union legislation now specifically requests that member-states carry out checks on the residence status of non-nationals claiming support. This withdrawal of support from the state forces undocumented migrants to depend on social networks more completely and for greater lengths of time than has been the case before. Staring (2000) conducted extensive research in a neighbourhood in Rotterdam with a large immigrant population. He found that networks remained important as the main insurance for undocumented migrants, but that this resulted in less willingness from established communities to sponsor the travel of new migrants. Developing this later point Engbersen (1999) argues that, in addition to the official exclusion on the part of states, undocumented migrants were faced with informal exclusion from the migrant community. 'The socio-economic and legal position of illegal immigrants makes it very difficult for them to adhere to instrumental norms of reciprocity. This can result in their exclusion from social networks' (Engbersen *et al*. 2000: 3). Van der Leun (2000) uses the concept of 'mixed embeddedness' to describe the importance of new migrants' integration into both the host society and the community of their own co-nationals. A migrant's 'embeddedness' among their compatriots has always been assumed, but according to these authors such assumptions are no longer justified.

Migration restrictions have made it more difficult for migrants to join their family and, if they have done so at the cost of remaining undocumented, restrictions have meant that they are a greater burden on family or friends and are more likely to be rejected by them. Policy has effectively devalued the social capital of new migrants by increasing the burden that they impose on social networks. This may cut ties between new migrants and communities of compatriots and force migrants to look to other destinations. The rationale that social capital lowers the cost of migration does not apply if social networks can no longer be relied upon for support. This appears to be the case for increasing numbers of undocumented migrants.

If support from family and friends is not forthcoming, migrants may look elsewhere for help, such as to paid agents. This is the third potential response of migrants that I wish to investigate. Koser (1998) considered the arrival of Iranian asylum-seekers in the Netherlands. He found that in many cases it was not the migrant's choice to come to the Netherlands, but either the advice of the migrant's family located elsewhere, or the choice of the smuggler whom they had employed. In a number of situations like this, smuggling may affect, or even determine, the geography of migration flows (Koser and Pinkerton 2002; Salt 2000). The smuggler is effectively employed to extend the reach of a migrant's social and search network. New destinations become available through the smuggler in a classic example of transforming economic capital into social capital. These destinations would have been extremely difficult to reach, or even unknown, otherwise. This also reflects

Granovetter's 'strength of weak ties' argument (1973). Granovetter argues that close contacts in a social network are all likely to have very similar information. New ideas will most frequently enter a network through a more distant connection. The smuggler will introduce new information into the migration decision which may account for the diversification of migration beyond traditional destinations.

It appears, then, that the adaptations to migrant networks in response to increasing restrictions may well help to explain some of the changes in migration to Europe over the last decade. The following section considers how well these apply to the situation of recent Algerian migrants.

The Situation of Algerians

Information in this section is based on 65 long, multiple, unstructured interviews with Algerians who had emigrated after 1990 and a further 38 interviews with key informants. These were carried out in Marseilles, Paris and London in 2000 and 2001 (Collyer 2003). Of the 65 interviews with Algerian migrants, 35 were conducted in France and 30 in the UK. Although the samples were not random, some effort was made to ensure that the profile of individuals interviewed, in terms of age, gender and ethnic background, reflected that of the overall population, using information gathered from key informants (Bloch 1999).

A total of 57 of the Algerian respondents, all but eight, had family in France, whereas only three reported having any family in the UK before they arrived. In two cases the family member had arrived in the UK less than two years prior to the respondent's arrival and the third had arrived seven years before. The majority of Algerians interviewed in the UK had therefore not come to the UK because of family ties. In addition to this they had come *despite* the presence of family members in France. This is as would be expected from the broad statistical picture of the relative size of the Algerian communities in France and the UK, outlined in the first section, and provides further evidence that these Algerian migrants are not using social networks in ways that would be expected, or not using them at all.

The first modification to the social network approach considered in the previous section suggests that social networks no longer provide a physical attraction because policy restrictions prevent migrants from reaching family members. This was not the case for Algerians interviewed in the UK. Twenty-six of the UK respondents reported that they had arrived in the UK having been in France and 24 of them had family members resident in France. None of these individuals possessed a visa for entry to the UK so undocumented entry was their only option; this was not possible from Algeria due to strict checks reinforced with carrier sanctions legislation. Key informants reported that the pattern of Algerians arriving in the UK having already been in France is fairly common, suggesting that the 30 respondents reflected a more general migration pattern. The third possible development to social networks, the use of agents, was not relevant to this sample either, since none of the individuals interviewed reported any contact with agents. A number of respondents had

purchased false or fraudulent documentation but this could only have influenced destinations if documents for certain destinations were priced differently from others, which did not seem to be the case.

Of the three modifications to social networks outlined earlier in this paper it is the second which appears the most appropriate to this particular case study since respondents almost always reported a degree of contact with family and friends in France but this did not generally proceed as might be predicted. A number of respondents in the UK and France had contact with social networks in France and received considerable support, but left while their legal status was still uncertain. It is worth using two migration histories to illustrate this in more detail. The first is Mustafa, a 24-year-old single man of Berber origin from Algiers, interviewed in London in July 2000; the second, Zaim, in his mid-40s, married with three children, was interviewed in Marseilles in May 2001.[3]

Mustafa was originally from Kabylia and could rely on the powerful solidarity common within extended Berber families. He obtained a tourist visa and left Algeria in 1999 on the boat to Marseilles, then stopped with his uncle and aunt in Paris, as he explains:

> When I arrived I stayed with them, I went straight to Paris from Marseilles. I was with them 20 days in total and they wanted me to stay longer... but you have to be somebody to be able to stay and work in France.

'Somebody', to Mustafa, meant wealthy or in a position of political influence. Mustafa left for Italy shortly before his short-term visa ran out. He worked for eight months in the informal labour market in Italy, in various jobs, and met a friend who was also from Kabylia. His friend was keen to head to Britain as he had heard that it was easier to find work. Mustafa bought a false Italian identity card before leaving Italy, but his friend had no form of identity at all.

> I was happy to stay, but he really wanted to go.... I didn't want to travel through France again so from Italy we travelled through Austria, Germany, Belgium and Holland and we took a boat from Rotterdam to Norwich.[4]

Neither of them knew anyone in London. They had travelled across Europe, with one false Italian identity card between them, on the strength of a second-hand rumour about the ease of finding work in Britain. On their arrival in London they knew to go to Finsbury Park, an area of London with a growing Algerian community, where they ended up staying in the mosque. Mustafa stayed there for two months before he was able to get a place of his own. Spending a period of time in the mosque was not unusual. Six respondents in London reported spending some time in the mosque, though two months was the longest time that anyone reported.[5]

Mustafa has now applied for asylum, though he only found out that he could do so once he came into the offices of the Algerian Refugee Council. Once Mustafa's tourist visa ran out in France he was undocumented wherever he went. He had no ties and

no responsibilities except earning enough money to buy food. He was occasionally in contact with his family in Kabylia but he had not been able to send them any money, and they did not need it, as they owned a small shop where he had worked after he had finished his studies. Only someone without any contacts or responsibilities could have followed this kind of migration route, based on the level of certainty of information that he had.

Zaim was in a very different situation. He arrived in Marseilles with his wife and three young children and, in common with most other respondents with families, they had chosen to stay in France rather than risk the uncertainty of travelling elsewhere. They requested territorial asylum when they arrived in Marseilles in December 2000. To start with they were able to live with a cousin:

> We couldn't stay with him indefinitely. His place is small. It was very difficult. After a month we decided to move out to a hotel, but it's expensive. I don't know how much longer we can afford to stay.

During the period I was conducting interviews in Marseilles the waiting time for territorial asylum requests had reached 13 months.[6] Applicants receive no state support and are not allowed to work during this time. Neither Zaim nor his wife had been able to find work in the informal labour market and their finances were limited. They knew that they would have to leave the hotel soon but the DDASS (*Direction Départementale des Affaires Sanitaires et Sociales*—the Social Services) told them that if they did not find somewhere else to live their children would be put in care. They were both, obviously, distraught, but they could see no way out of the problem. The withdrawal of state support for territorial asylum applications has forced applicants to rely on family and friends for extended periods of time, or to fend for themselves. Zaim's lack of resources has strained relations with the members of his family resident in France and within his own nuclear family. It may even split the nuclear family apart if no solution to their housing problem can be found.

The position of Mustafa and of Zaim's family supports the second modification to the network approach. Koser (1997) suggested that social networks are still important but are being used differently. This is clear in the case of Mustafa, who was able to stay a short period of time with his uncle and aunt, using the support he received there as a resource to consider his future strategy. Engbersen and his colleagues describe the burden placed on social networks by migrants who have no resources of their own. The desperate situation of Zaim's family illustrates this point. They were able to stay with family for a short period of time but the resources of the family members were also limited. In the past a month would have been sufficient for the family to find their feet and secure a job of some kind. With the current legislative framework this is no longer possible, and the period of time for which they must rely on social networks is extended. Supporting new migrants is now an increasingly onerous task and may last indefinitely. In social capital terms the price of supporting a new migrant is now too great for many social networks to bear.

As Staring (2000) highlighted, this results in family being less willing to sponsor or encourage family members to migrate at all. This was certainly the experience of Abdul-Azziz, a 22-year-old man from the Mitidja region of Algeria, also living in Marseilles. His aunt has lived in Lyon for many years but he said that he had taken her out of his address book:

> She's not [I don't consider her] my family any more. My brother contacted her for a letter of support and she refused. He's in the Netherlands now. I didn't even bother asking. But when she comes to Algeria she treats our house like a hotel, she comes and goes, never pays for anything.

Abdul-Azziz's disillusionment at his aunt's failure to sponsor his brother's recent trip to France is understandable. From his point of view her actions could be interpreted as violating all four key forms of social capital identified by Portes (1998). Cutting ties with her was the only sanction he was able to apply and he had no intention of visiting her when he went to France in December 2000. However, it is possible that the aunt was discouraged by the tremendous obligations that flow from sponsoring a new migrant's trip to France. Since there is no possibility for work for those who do not enter with a work visa, and no benefits available for territorial asylum applicants, the sponsor must provide everything. Even though the aunt was welcomed in the family home during her visits to Algeria, she may well have felt that this did not entitle her family to call on her for such a high level of support, and for an indefinite period.

There is ample evidence that these isolated incidents reflect a more general separation between Algeria and the Algerian community in France. Even in the early 1970s Abdelmalek Sayad could write of the existence of an Algerian 'colony' in France, which had become detached from Algeria (Sayad 1977). Michèle Tribalat has provided statistical evidence that members of the Algerian community in France are increasingly likely to form marriages with other Franco-Algerians or with French people. Certainly for men, marriage with an Algerian-born partner is now the exception, though it is slightly more common for women (Tribalat 1995).[7]

Abdul-Azziz reported continued tensions between the resident Algerian community and new arrivals from Algeria:

> Here the Algerians say '*clando*';[8] that's what they call us. [and I say] 'Well your father, he was *clando* too.'. . . I hate France. The class of Algerians who came here is the most pathetic class of Algeria. They're the ones who couldn't get a job in Algeria, even during the real boom years. They're just not good enough.

This degree of hostility was emphasised by a number of other respondents. It suggests that not only were networks of immediate family stretched to the limit but that the 'bounded solidarity' that Portes (1998) has advanced as one of the components of social capital active within a wider group was more or less absent between newly arrived Algerians and the resident Algerian community. Again, this finding agrees

with work by Engbersen and his colleagues on undocumented migration in the Netherlands (Engbersen 1995).

A further development that Engbersen's work does not note is the reaction of migrants to this process. Some respondents were clearly aware of the burden they would place on family or friends if they stayed with them and reported this as the reason why they did not go and see them, even though they were in the same country. Throughout the conflict in Algeria the perception of the risk posed by Algerian nationals has grown. This has seriously affected the situation of new immigrants from Algeria, particularly those whose status is doubtful: asylum-seekers and undocumented immigrants. Ahmed, a 28-year-old man interviewed in Marseilles, has noticed this change; he has two uncles and several cousins who live in Paris. When asked why he did not go to stay with them he replied:

> I didn't want to bother them. They've been here [in France] a long time. My cousins, they're like my brothers, but I don't want my problems to be linked to them. Before, when I've come, I stayed with them. When they come to Algeria, they stay with us. They don't even know that I'm in France. I had to say to my family in Algeria 'Don't tell them that I'm in France.' I'm here secretly! Before there was no problem in France if a foreigner stayed in your house. Now people look at you. All the problems are at the level of security and the police see them differently and that can create problems for the people you stay with. Even the French will try and find out 'Who's that one there?' and they can report you.

The treatment of Algerian immigrants as first and foremost a security issue has begun to affect the public consciousness. In turn this has affected the relations between new migrants and their families and with other French citizens. At a time when resources have been withdrawn for anyone seeking temporary protection, condemning them to a life on insecure wages from illegal employment, this further retreat of social support has produced extremely difficult conditions.

This represents a dramatic development from the social network as originally conceptualised in 'chain migration' theory. New migrants have been progressively excluded from social networks through a number of stages. Initially they may be prevented from reaching their families by new migration restrictions and so they use networks as a resource for information and financing, rather than physical attraction. This was not a factor in this research since most respondents were able to reach France, and hence the members of their family who lived there. Some migrants who are able to reach their families or friends found the burden they placed on them so great that they had to move out and find alternative arrangements. This was the case for Zaim and his family. This may eventually result in family members refusing to sponsor trips to France, as Abdul-Azziz found with his aunt. The final stage is that new migrants purposefully avoid social networks as they are conscious of the burden they will place on them, even when they are not physically prevented from visiting them. From being a pole of attraction, social networks have almost become a repellent force for certain kinds of migrant who know that their survival depends on

their own unreliable informal labour, and on their ability to avoid detection by security forces.

It is important not to over-emphasise the significance of this development. France is, undoubtedly, still the country of choice for the majority of Algerian refugees. The development outlined here affects a relatively small number of individuals. Even so, it provides a possible explanation for the observed diversification of established migration patterns and introduces a useful way of incorporating restrictive migration controls into theoretical work on migration. Social networks have traditionally been conceived as motors for the reproduction of migration systems, once the initial factors of migration have been withdrawn. The operation of social capital reduces the cost of migration and increases the likelihood that certain individuals will migrate. When social capital loses its value, networks no longer fulfil this role and new migrants can choose to go anywhere they wish, as genuine pioneer migrants. This leads to the importance of other attractions. The final section of this paper considers the consequences of this finding.

Explaining Developments in the Use of Social Networks

As outlined in the introduction, there are two possible explanations for this development in the operation of social networks to take account of more restrictive migration controls. Either social factors continue to be important in the migration process but act in different ways, or political and economic factors are the dominant influence on this type of migration. In fact both of these explanations contribute to reaching an understanding of the empirical situation discussed in this paper.

Developing Sociological Explanations for Migration

Algerians arriving in Britain may be moving further from immediate family connections but they are not alone. The Algerian community is small and not sufficiently well-established to provide support for new arrivals. In any case, the community still appears to be split by political suspicions, so the 'bounded solidarity' that Portes identifies is unlikely to play a factor across the community as a whole while it is still so divided. Respondents reported support from a variety of other networks and groups, both religious and ethnic. As mentioned in the previous section, Mustafa and his friend stayed in the Finsbury Park mosque while they became established in London and found a job. Six other respondents also reported spending some time in the mosque, benefiting from the solidarity within the religious community. Eight respondents received assistance in finding work from other Arab groups such as the well-established Egyptian and Lebanese communities around Edgware Road. Two Kabyle respondents reported that, while they would have more tendency to avoid Algerian Arabs, they had met other Berber-speakers, Algerian and Moroccan, and felt an immediate bond of mutual trust, which grew to support and friendship.

These non-family ties are clearly important. Without them migration to a strange new city with a language that was unfamiliar to almost all respondents when they arrived would be extremely difficult. Espinosa and Massey (1999) criticise the overwhelming emphasis of theory on family ties, to the exclusion of other forms of social capital. They recognise that other links such as friendships or even weaker associations may be equally important, but they have difficulty measuring these weaker ties. I offer no way of measuring them here, certainly not in the strictly quantitative way favoured by Massey and his colleagues, but these findings provide an illustration of the central role played by weaker ties, as Granovetter (1973) has suggested.

Lin makes a distinction between strong ties, which are useful for maintaining resources ('expressive action'), and weak ties, which are more important for gaining resources ('instrumental action') (Lin 2001: 76). Algerians arriving in London are clearly in need of gaining resources so the weak ties provided by solidarity within ethnic or religious groups are actually more important than stronger family ties. Since new migrants have effectively been 'priced out' of the social capital market in France by strict post-entry migration restrictions, the strong ties of their family are of less value to them and the weaker ties become even more important.

Political and Economic Factors Encouraging Movement

Although these weaker social ties go some way towards providing an account of the movement of Algerians to the UK, these ties alone do not offer a fully satisfactory explanation. A number of respondents mentioned the well-established communities of a variety of ethnic groups as one of the things that attracted them to London but this was not amongst the most significant factors that they discussed. Statistics presented in the first section of this paper highlighted how Algerian emigration is now primarily an emigration of asylum-seekers. For many emigrants the events provoking their departure are fundamentally political, even if they do not always fit the strict criteria of individual persecution laid out in the Geneva Convention.

While it is clear that political factors may well dominate the decision to leave the country of origin, it is less clear how they affect the final destination. Recent work on refugee migration has underlined the difficulty of drawing a clear distinction between forced and voluntary migration, especially in terms of the needs of migrants once they arrive at their destination (Richmond 1988; Van Hear 1998). Koser (1997) provided some empirical support for the idea that refugees use social networks in very similar ways to other migrants. The simple fact that they are in danger, or at least in need, may also increase their capacity to utilise social capital in the short term, as family and friends express sympathy for their situation. From a refugee's point of view, it also seems logical that being with family members is preferable.

However, in certain situations the political circumstances of a refugee's flight may well affect their perceptions of their safety in the destination country. It was common for Algerians interviewed in the UK and in France to express their concern for the

apparent readiness of the French government to deport people to Algeria. There was also a widespread feeling that the French government cooperated freely with the Algerian secret services and that opposition politicians were not necessarily secure in France. Although there is a limited amount of evidence for both of these concerns, it is perhaps less important that they have some basis in fact than that they inform behaviour. More than half the respondents interviewed in the UK mentioned that the fact that Britain has almost no official connections to Algeria is a real attraction. Political concerns are certainly not unique to refugee migration; no migrants knowingly move to places where they feel they are in danger. However, in the case of Algerians these political concerns may differentiate between new migrants and the established community and so provide a further incentive to do without the support of social networks.

Work on social networks was originally intended to highlight a lack of concern with the social element of the migration process in theories which prioritised economic accounts of migration. The economic aspects obviously remain important and where the social aspects of migration alter or are diminished, economic considerations may prove to be a significant driving force behind new movement. This is a sensitive issue when considering refugee migration. However, just as more voluntary forms of movement have a political component, so forced migrations frequently involve clear economic considerations. Indeed the ability to secure a reasonable livelihood is an essential element of protection which refugees seek. In France the lack of official permission to work for territorial asylum applicants has resulted in a glut of labour on the informal markets and wages in this sector are extremely low. Respondents in Marseilles reported earnings of as little as 10 Euros a day, whereas in London it was common to earn five or six times this amount. Such higher wages[9] reflect the need for labour in London and support recent arguments that the market is the most significant force driving migration to Europe (Favell and Hansen 2002).

Conclusion

For some time it has been recognised that increasing migration restrictions to Europe mean that many migrants who wish to claim asylum have no choice but to arrive illegally (Morisson and Crosland 2001). Research in the Netherlands has identified that undocumented migrants find it difficult to fulfil norms of reciprocity within social networks and that family members are increasingly hesitant to offer support for new migrants. In the case of Algerians these links have been slowly fading, anyway, as the Algerian community in France has been gradually disconnected from Algeria. Solidarity is generally now much weaker than was the case in the 1960s and 1970s. New measures of post-entry control have increased the level of support required by new migrants and prolonged the length of time for which that support may be required.

Policy has therefore altered the social capital equation such that support is now much less forthcoming. The significance of restrictive migration policy is a common

theme in work on migration to Europe but policy-related work has frequently lacked a theoretical basis and the specific role of policy has therefore not been theorised effectively. The consideration of the effects of policy as integral to calculations of social capital allows the impact of restrictions to be incorporated into social network theory. The four forms of social capital, highlighted by Portes (1998), are all affected by alterations in the social capital calculation. Portes emphasises that the ability to mobilise these resources must not be confused with the resources themselves and it is clear that while the resources of support and solidarity are still available within the Algerian community, as is clear from the experiences of individuals who have benefited from them, the ability of individuals to access these resources has been affected by the increased requirement for support caused by policy developments. Thus, social networks have not disappeared but must simply be managed in different ways in order not to exhaust the resources available.

This suggests that the anomalous situation of asylum-seekers moving away from well-established communities of co-nationals can be explained chiefly by developments in the way in which social networks are used. Weaker ties become more important as stronger ties become less attainable. As may be expected for refugee movement, political factors play a choice in the selection of destination as well as the decision to leave. There is also some evidence that the economic position is more favourable for Algerians in London than in Marseilles, suggesting that economics is also significant. However, political and economic factors play a not-inconsiderable role because, for these largely undocumented migrants, social networks are changing. These migrants no longer have the incentive inherent in the idea of social capital of reduced costs and therefore follow other influences and weaker social ties.

Acknowledgements

I am extremely grateful to all the participants in this research for giving their time so generously, in particular staff of the Algerian Refugee Council in London. The research on which this paper is based was supported by an ESRC Postgraduate training award (no. R00429834348) and further investigation has been possible thanks to a Nuffield Foundation New Career Development Fellowship. Many thanks to Russell King, the 'senior partner' for my Nuffield Fellowship, for comments on an earlier draft, and to a *JEMS* referee for alerting me to some key points.

Notes

[1] The OECD's *Système d'Observation Permanente des Migrations Internationales* (SOPEMI) produces comparable data for all migration but they are only broken down for the most significant countries of origin. Since the Algerian population is overwhelmingly concentrated in France, Algerians are not sufficiently numerous in any other European country to be included separately in these tables, so comparison of these data is not possible.

[2] The statistics do not include applications from dependents, thought to be more significant in France (Safir 1996), nor applications for subsidiary protection (*asile territorial*), thought to be as many as 11,000. A*sile territorial* (territorial asylum) was first introduced in 1994,

though not given any official status until 1998. Statistics are kept by *Préfectures* and are not public. No information has yet been published on this data at the national scale, though various NGOs have made predictions of the numbers of applications made. ECRE (1999) estimates that between 1994 and 1998 2,955 Algerians were granted *asile territorial* under provisions that were neither official nor publicised. Delouvin (2000) estimates that between the official introduction of *asile territorial* in 1998 and 2000 almost 4,000 more Algerians applied, but only a fraction of these requests were granted. In a personal communication in 2003 an official responsible for *asile territorial* in the French Ministry of the Interior estimated there had been a total of 12,000 applications from 1998 to 2003, more than 95 per cent of them from Algerians. *Asile territorial* was withdrawn at the end of 2003 under provisions introduced in the Sarkozy law.

[3] All names have been altered.

[4] Mustafa undoubtedly meant Hook of Holland to Harwich, a common passenger crossing, though he only knew the names of the nearby cities, Rotterdam and Norwich.

[5] Thirteen interviews in London were conducted in the offices of the Algerian Refugee Council in Finsbury Park, a few hundred yards from the mosque, and all six respondents who had stayed in the mosque were interviewed there, so there was clearly a link. I did not find this link with the mosque with respondents interviewed elsewhere, such as Waltham Forest, the other major concentration of Algerians in London.

[6] Territorial asylum requests must be registered with the local Prefecture, which is then responsible for processing them. Waiting times varied widely between *départements*.

[7] This is in stark contrast to many South Asian communities in the UK, for example where transnational marriage is extremely common, though even here some commentators have suggested that this will decline as the community gradually moves 'off-shore', excluding the community in the country of origin from marriage formation.

[8] 'Clando' is a derogatory shortening of 'clandestine', meaning an undocumented migrant.

[9] It needs stressing, however, that even these higher wages represent low-wage labour (typically well below the minimum wage) in the British context.

References

Bloch, A. (1999) 'Carrying out a survey of refugees: some methodological considerations and guidelines', *Journal of Refugee Studies, 12*(4): 367–83.

Bocker, A. and Havinga, T. (1998) 'Asylum applications in the European Union: patterns and trends and the effects of policy measures', *Journal of Refugee Studies, 11*(3): 245–66.

Bourdieu, P. (1986) 'The forms of capital', in Richardson, J.G. (ed.) *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*. New York: Greenwood Press, 241–58.

Collyer, M. (2003) *Explaining Change in Established Migration Systems: The Movement of Algerians to France and the UK*. Brighton: University of Sussex, Migration Working Paper 16.

Collyer, M. (2004) *The Algerian Community in Britain*. London: Kings College, ICAR Country Guide, online at http://www.icar.org

De Haan, A., Brock, K. and Coulibaly, N. (2002) 'Migration, livelihoods and institutions: contrasting patterns of migration in Mali', *Journal of Development Studies, 38*(1): 37–58.

Delouvin, P. (2000) 'The evolution of asylum in France', *Journal of Refugee Studies, 13*(1): 61–73.

Donato, K.M., Durand, J. and Massey, D.S. (1992) 'Stemming the tide? Assessing the deterrent effects of the Immigration Reform and Control Act', *Demography, 29*(2): 139–57.

ECRE 1999 (1999) *Country Report; France*. London: European Commission for Racial Equality.

Engbersen, G. (1995) 'The unknown city', *Berkeley Journal of Sociology, 40*(1): 87–111.

Engbersen, G. (1999) 'Sans-papiers: les stratégies de séjour des immigrés clandestins', *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales, 129*: 26–38.

Engbersen, G., van der Leun, J. and Staring, R. (2000) 'How illegal immigrants settle and survive: the social embeddedness of illegal immigrants in ethnic communities'. Rotterdam: unpublished paper.

Espinosa, K. and Massey, D. (1999) 'Undocumented migration and the quantity and quality of social capital', in Pries, L. (ed.) *Migration and Transnational Social Spaces*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 106–38.

Favell, A. and Hansen, R. (2002) 'Markets against politics: migrants, EU enlargement and the idea of Europe', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 28*(4): 581–601.

Granovetter, M. (1973) 'The strength of weak ties', *American Journal of Sociology, 78*(6): 1360–80.

Kane, A. (2001) 'Diaspora villageoise et développement local en Afrique: le cas de Thilogne Association développement', *Hommes et Migrations, 1229*: 96–107.

Khandriche, M., Benneceur, A. and Kouidri, M. (1999) *Le Nouvel Espace Migratoire Franco-Algérien: des données et des hommes*. Aix-en-Provence: Edisud.

King, R. (ed.) (1993) *The New Geography of European Migration*. London: Belhaven.

Koser, K. (1997) 'Social networks and the asylum cycle: the case of Iranians in the Netherlands', *International Migration Review, 31*(3): 591–611.

Koser, K. (1998) 'Out of the frying pan and into the fire: a case study of illegality among asylum seekers', in Koser, K. and Lutz, H. (eds) *The New Migration in Europe: Social Construction and Social Realities*. London: Macmillan, 185–98.

Koser, K. and Pinkerton, C. (2002) *The Social Networks of Asylum Seekers and the Dissemination of Information about Countries of Asylum*. London: Home Office, online at http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs2/socialnetwork.pdf

Lin, N. (2001) *Social Capital: A Theory of Social Structure and Action*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

MacDonald, J.S. and MacDonald, L.D. (1974) 'Chain migration, ethnic neighbourhood formation and social networks', in Tilly, C. (ed.) *An Urban World*. Boston: Little and Brown, 226–36.

Massey, D., Alarcon, R., Durand, J. and Gonzalez, H. (1987) *Return to Aztlan: The Social Process of International Migration in Western Mexico*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Massey, D.S., Arango, J., Hugo, G., Kouaouci, A., Pellegrino, A. and Taylor, J.E. (1998) *Worlds in Motion*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Moretti, E. (1999) 'Social networks and migration: Italy 1876–1913', *International Migration Review, 33*(3): 640–57.

Morisson, J. and Crosland, B. (2001) *The Trafficking and Smuggling of Refugees: The End Game of European Asylum Policy?* UNHCR Working Paper 39 online at http://www.jha.ac/articles/u039.pdf

Palloni, A., Massey, D.S., Ceballos, M., Espinosa, K. and Spittel, M. (2001) 'Social capital and international migration: a test using information on family networks', *American Journal of Sociology, 106*(5): 1262–98.

Portes, A. (1998) 'Social capital: its origins and applications in modern sociology', *Annual Review of Sociology, 24*: 1–24.

Richmond, A.H. (1988) 'Sociological theories of international migration: the case of refugees', *Current Sociology, 36*(2): 7–25.

Safir, N. (1996) 'La problématique migratoire internationale algérienne dans les années 90: vers de nouvelles perspectives?', in CERED (eds) *Migration Internationale*. Rabat: CERED, 60–85.

Salt, J. (2000) 'Trafficking and human smuggling: a European perspective', *International Migration, 38*(3): 31–56.

Sayad, A. (1977) 'Les trois "âges" de l'émigration algérienne en France', *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales, 13*: 59–79.

Singhanetra-Renard, A. (1992) 'The mobilisation of labour migrants in Thailand: personal links and facilitating networks', in Kritz, M.M., Lim, L. and Zlotnik, H. (eds) *International Migration Systems: A Global Approach*. Oxford: Clarendon, 190–204.

SOPEMI (various years) *Trends in International Migration*. Paris: OECD.

Tilly, C. and Brown, C.H. (1967) 'On uprooting, kinship and the auspices of migration', *International Journal of Comparative Sociology, 8*(2): 139–64.

Tribalat, M. (1995) *Faire France*. Paris: Editions la Découverte.

UNHCR (2001) *Asylum Applications in Industrialised Countries: 1980–1999*. Online at http://www.unhcr.ch

UNHCR (2002) *Asylum Trends in Europe, North America, Australia, and New Zealand: 1999–2001*. Online at http://www.unhcr.ch

UNHCR (2003) *Asylum Applications Lodged in Industrialized Countries: Levels and Trends 2000–2002*. Online at http://www.unhcr.ch

UNHCR (2005) *Asylum Levels and Trends in Industrialized Countries, 2004*. Online at http://www.unhcr.ch

Van der Leun, J. (2000) 'Embeddedness and exclusion: undocumented immigrants in the Netherlands', *Bulletin of the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies, 2*(1): 71–95.

Van Hear, N. (1998) *New Diasporas: The Mass Exodus, Dispersal and Regrouping of Migrant Communities*. London: UCL Press.