

**National Meetings of Migrant Leaders: Spaces of Emergence
and Consolidation of African Leadership in Argentina**
**Encuentros Nacionales de Líderes Migrantes: espacios de gestación
y consolidación de liderazgos africanos en Argentina**

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the construction of leadership of three African migrants, one of Congolese origin and two Senegalese, in the National Meetings of Migrant Leaders (ENLM, for its acronym in Spanish) held in Argentina from 2014 to 2020. For this purpose, participant observations and interviews with different degrees of depth have been used. The research results indicate that the three migrant leaders have had very heterogeneous roles within the meetings. Their leadership trajectories show unique ways of building legitimacy and visibility and are supported by a differential accumulation of social and political capital. Some contributions of this article are: (a) reconstruct the complexity and diversity of their trajectories, (b) make visible the role of African migrant leaders as human rights promoters, and (c) construct a non-criminalizing view of their political forms of organization.

Keywords: 1. leadership, 2. trajectories, 3. African migrants, 4. Africa, 5. Argentina.

RESUMEN

En este artículo se analiza la construcción de liderazgo de tres migrantes africanos, uno de origen congoleño y dos senegaleses, en los Encuentros Nacionales de Líderes Migrantes (ENLM) realizados en Argentina de 2014 a 2020. Para ello se ha recurrido a observaciones participantes y entrevistas con distintos grados de profundidad. Los resultados de la investigación señalan que los tres líderes migrantes han tenido roles muy heterogéneos dentro de los Encuentros; sus trayectorias de liderazgo muestran formas singulares de construir legitimidad y visibilidad, y están sustentadas en una acumulación diferencial de capitales sociales y políticos. Algunas de las contribuciones de este artículo consisten en (a) reconstruir la complejidad y diversidad de sus trayectorias; (b) visibilizar el rol de los líderes migrantes africanos como promotores de derechos humanos, y (c) construir una mirada que no criminalice sus formas políticas de organización.

Palabras clave: 1. liderazgos, 2. trayectorias, 3. migrantes africanos, 4. África, 5. Argentina.

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INTRODUCTION

Leadership has been a subject frequently studied in fields such as psychology, sociology, politics, or business management (Reyes Espejo & Perinat Maceres, 2011), but also in disciplines such as history, anthropology, educational sciences, among others. Despite the fact that the bibliography on the subject is extensive and there are various attempts to systematize and classify research and paradigms revolving around leadership, the lack of an unequivocal definition of this term persists. According to Delgado (2005), the term is polysemic, somewhat diffuse, and even kaleidoscopic at times. Machado Martínez (2012) points out that some of the dimensions studied pertain the development of the leader's skills, the factors that promote leadership, and leadership styles in scenarios of various scales that give rise to studies on political, business, ethnic, and community leadership, among other types. In turn, Molina Luque, Samper Rasero, and Mayoral Arque refer to this problem as a "multifaceted social phenomenon" wherein "the psychological and the social come together, as well as personal subjectivity and the objectivity of the organizational and structural context, the idiosyncratic features of the social agents, but also the specific historical circumstances of each era" (2013, pp. 143-144).

In this study, which is part of two broader projects on the subject,³ leadership is understood as a dynamic and relational phenomenon, positioned socially, culturally, and historically, and subject to power relations operating in the social framework. Within such framework, we will analyze certain aspects of the complex process of preparation, transit, and consolidation of the leadership of three sub-Saharan African immigrants: Nengumbi Sukama, Ndathie Moustafá Sene and Cheikh Gueye. This is emphasized in the context of the successive National Meetings of Migrant Leaders (ENLM), events held in Argentina and organized and coordinated by the National Network of Migrant Leaders (Red de Líderes Migrantes).

The ENLMs emerged in 2014 at the initiative of a group of migrants of various national origins who lived in various provinces of Argentina. One of the reasons that convened the collective at that time was the disconformity of their relationship with the Argentine State, an aspect that will be developed later. In November 2014, in the city of Centenario, province of Neuquén, the first ENLM took place, and there this group was established as the National Network of Migrant Leaders in Argentina. Since then, the ENLMs have been held in Argentina annually in different cities of the country; the venues have generally been universities (Comahue, Córdoba, Mendoza, Lanús, and La Plata), to which some other spaces have been added. The ENLMs have been attended by immigrants of various origins, especially Latin Americans (Bolivians, Peruvians, Chileans, Paraguayans, Ecuadorians, Brazilians, Colombians, Uruguayans), Central Americans

³ The projects are entitled *Leadership building processes in associations of African migrants and Afro descendants in the CABA and the Province of Buenos Aires* and are under the direction of Marta Maffia, PhD. One of them consists of a Multi-year Research Project (PIP 2017-0259), accredited, and financed by the National Scientific and Technical Research Council (CONICET, acronym in Spanish for Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas). The second is a Scientific and Technological Research Project (PICT 2017-1543) accredited by the National Agency for the Promotion of Research, Technological Development, and Innovation (AGENCIA). Some of the results of these investigations can be consulted in Maffia and Zubrzycki (2017), as well as in the articles published by each of the project members.

and Caribbeans (Haitians, Cubans, Dominicans), and Africans, living in different Argentine provinces.

The issue of leadership in African migrants in Argentina is a recent and developing line of research. The results of the first studies refer to Senegalese migrants, showing that their leaders play important roles in the migratory context, standing out as the main spokespersons and mediators when it comes to dialogue with State or diplomatic authorities, NGOs, migrant organizations, the media, among other actors. They are activists committed to the rights of migrants and leading actors in the fight against racism in Argentina; hence the central role they acquire when thinking on public policies that account for migrants, and on the need to generate knowledge about and together with them.

In relation to migrant struggles, these are conceptualized in different ways. From the theory of the autonomy of migration, they are understood as “moderately organized struggles in which migrants challenge, defeat, evade or hinder the dominant mobility policies (including border control, detention and deportation) or the work regime, or the space of citizenship” (Rodrigo, 2021, as cited in Casa-Cortes et al., 2015, p. 80). This approach prioritizes those manifestations that question the existence of the nationality-citizenship regime (Rodrigo, 2021).

A second conceptualization states that migrant struggles are not necessarily directed against the nationality-citizenship regime, and that “instead of opposing immigration regulations that establish national limits to the exercise of citizenship, they make use of them to dispute the place of migrants in the community” (Rodrigo, 2021, p. 4). In the case of Argentina, the configuration of struggles from this more relational understanding that is not opposed to the national citizenship regime is partially explained by the implementation of a new migration paradigm from *Law 25.871 of 2004*, and the subsequent development of certain regularization programs for migrants (Rodrigo, 2021), which acknowledge migration as a human right.

We agree with Rodrigo (2021) when he points out that Senegalese migrants in Argentina—among other groups of migrants from Mercosur—have voiced protests in recent years similar to the struggles analyzed by the autonomy of migration theories, such as the resistances linked to the defense of street work as a labor avenue for this group. It is nonetheless necessary to deepen the analysis of these struggles, since the ENLM opens a space for debate that cannot be understood solely from this perspective. In this sense, this article starts from the following question (among others): Can the strategies of resistance and the struggles of African migrant leaders be explained by the autonomy of migration theories or are they more linked to the conceptualization of the struggles for citizenship and an institutionalization of conflicts?

In relation to the previous question, we investigate the type of demands of each of the referents within the ENLM. While the perspective of the autonomy of migration in Europe has focused on the experience of the “undocumented” and the struggles related to the migratory and legal status of these individuals, in Argentina investigations on migrants have been conducted addressing other struggles, not limited to the legal arena. Rodrigo (2021), for example, investigated the role of Bolivian migrants in the struggle for access to the city and land; Perissinotti (2019) analyzed the struggles of migrant women for access to the city; and Magliano, Perissinotti, and Zenklusen

(2017) studied the struggle of migrant women in labor contexts, specifically pertaining the unionization of migrant domestic workers. Magliano et al. (2017) pointed out that these resistances not only question the citizenship regime, demanding the possibility of staying in the country of destination, but also organize themselves with the aim of improving the conditions of their stay. In this way, these authors privilege the term “migration struggles” to the detriment of “migrant struggles,” considering that “the experience of migration defines the forms, temporalities, and actions that the struggle takes, even though it is conditioned by the legal status of migration” (p. 312). In this sense, it is important to understand the case of African migrants, specifically Senegalese, who do not have guaranteed access to a National Identity Document (DNI, acronym in Spanish for Documento Nacional de Identidad) in Argentina, and face other difficulties related to the sphere of labor and institutional violence. What profile do their struggles and their demands take on? Is there a difference between the demands and the repertoires of action displayed by each of the African leaders?

METHODOLOGY

The qualitative methodology with an ethnographic approach we used made it possible to identify the senses, meanings, motivations, and perceptions of the individuals as members of different groups in multiple contexts, in which we have also participated to jointly reflect on and interpret the problems related to their immigration status.⁴

Open and semi-structured interviews (Marradi et al., 2007) were carried out, as well as observations with different degrees of participation. In some of the Meetings, there was intense collaboration at the request of the organizing committee, facilitating workshops and preparing the reports, always taking care not to assume leading roles in keeping with the spirit of the Meetings, meant to be “of and for migrants.” As complementary techniques, brief questionnaires were carried out by e-mail and by telephone. Information about the ENLMs was also collected on social networks such as Facebook and in WhatsApp groups of the ENLMs, in the media, and in some of the ENLM reports.

To this must be added that from 2016 to the present, we have participated in different political activities of Senegalese street vendors in the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires (CABA, acronym in Spanish for Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires) and in La Plata. Particularly in the latter, in street protests, assemblies and in multisectoral spaces, with the purpose of supporting and reflecting with them, and aiding them in their attempt to avoid the repression to which they are subjected by the city's municipal authorities and the provincial police.

The space of the ENLMs has been chosen in particular because of the visibility and reach they have in Argentina. At the same time—as Penchaszadeh and Courtis (2016) have pointed out—, these Meetings function as places of political subjectivation, since the Network encourages

⁴ We thank Nengumbi Sukama, Moustafá Sene and Cheikh Gueye (migrant leaders in Argentina), Hypolitte Basi-Ngabo (Counselor of the Embassy of the Democratic Republic of the Congo) and Marta Guerreño (ENLM Representative), for their willingness and generosity in answering our questions and collaborating with this research.

migrant participants to problematize the exclusion processes to which they are subjected, to take full notice of their violated rights and of the structural limitations of the law, and, fundamentally, to acknowledge their own ability to act politically. When talking about political subjectivation, we agree with Bonvillani (2017) that subjectivity is socially produced from contingencies, struggle processes, and social yearnings and pressures; that is, it does not consist of fixed ways of being that determine the subject. It is a complex structural framework in which cognitions, emotions and actions are articulated (Martínez & Cubides, 2012).

As already anticipated, this article reconstructs in some detail the participation of the selected leaders in the ENLMs carried out in the years 2015 (2nd), 2018 (5th) and 2020 (7th), taking these years' Meetings in particular account given that in them emerged elements that allow us to better characterize and understand the different trajectories and the construction, consolidation, and legitimization of their leaderships. The term "trajectory" is understood as "an articulation of subjective and objective elements in a given time"; subjective elements are a set of dispositions and capacities, while objective elements are structures of opportunities (Muñiz Terra, 2018, p. 13). In this sense, it is expected to identify which leadership trajectories each of the leaders developed within the ENLM, and to what factors the diversity of leadership trajectories within this space responds.

Other perfectible and open concepts that were useful for exploring and reconstructing trajectories are the notions of cultural and social capital as proposed by Pierre Bourdieu (2011). On the one hand cultural capital, which takes three forms, "in an embodied state, that is, as durable dispositions of the organism," for example, being competent in this or that field of knowledge, having a good command of language, of rhetoric, etc. The second possible way is in an objectified state, "as cultural goods, paintings, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines." Finally, "in an institutionalized state, a form of objectification that must be considered separately," such as school degrees (Bourdieu, 2011, p. 214).

As for the second concept, that of social capital, it is defined as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition; or in other words, to membership in a group, as a set of agents that are not only endowed with common properties (susceptible to be perceived by the observer, by others or by themselves), but are also united by permanent and useful links" (Bourdieu, 2011, p. 221).

According to Offerlé (2011), the concept of "political capital" is useful to refer to those factors that contribute to the efficiency of an agent or a group in a given context. Among these factors, we can mention: early participation in politics; lasting militancy in environments such as parties, professional and student unions, associations or NGOs; successes and failures in the political career; type and duration of mandates throughout the political career; support levels achieved among followers; party affiliations; professionalization career; position in the media, economy, politics, culture, and in everyday life. Likewise, political capital is understood to be strengthened when migrants assume leading positions that allow them to increase their capacity for public

speaking, for critical thinking, for establishing strategic alliances with other participants, and for making their own leadership trajectory publicly visible.

Based on these analytical tools, it is important to understand what cultural, social, and political capitals the migrant leaders deployed at the meetings to help develop the leadership of others, and vice versa, what political, social and cultural capitals the ENLM contributed to each of the African migrant leaders in their leadership trajectories.

The criteria for selecting the three aforementioned leaders were based, on the one hand, on their degree of participation in the ENLM, in terms of attendance and the nature of their interventions; on the other hand, their activism beyond the ENLM was taken into account, in instances of conversations with or making demands to officials; for organizing and/or attending marches or mobilizations for the rights of migrants and Afro-descendants; and for their appearances in the media. In addition, their participation in the steering committees of the different civil associations that address the problems of migrants and that promote practices against racism was considered. Thus, Nengumbi and Moustafá were chosen, due to the roles they assumed within the ENLM and in civil associations (IARPIDI and ARSA, respectively). As for Cheikh, although participating in the Meetings to a lesser extent, he was selected as the third case for being the leader of the Senegalese Association of La Plata (Asociación Senegalesa de La Plata) and for having a prominent role as mediator between the Senegalese population in La Plata and the Municipality. We could say that he was and is the “authorized spokesman” (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 165) to speak and act on behalf of the group, representing them in different instances of struggle for the rights of the Senegalese street workers in that city.

Introducing the Three African Leaders

Nengumbi Sukama was born in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. He is founder and executive director of the Argentine Institute for Equality, Diversity, and Integration (IARPIDI, acronym in Spanish for Instituto Argentino para la Igualdad, Diversidad e Integración) and president of the Association of Congolese of Argentina (Asociación de Congoleños de Argentina).

IARPIDI is a civil association founded in October 2007 in response to the systematic and permanent violation of the human rights of African and Afro-descendant asylum seekers, refugees, and immigrants in the Argentine Republic (IARPIDI, n.d.). Nengumbi has attended all the ENLMs, and in the 2014-2019 period was member of the Political Monitoring Commission of the Network of Migrant Leaders (Comisión Política de Seguimiento de la Red de Líderes Migrantes), in charge of planning and executing the Meetings. He is 63 years old and migrated to Argentina for political reasons in 1995, entering the country as a refugee. He studied Business Administration and Business Financial Management at the Higher Institute of Applied Sciences (Institut Supérieur des Sciences Appliquées) of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In Argentina, he found it difficult to enter the labor market of his professional training, and so he has taken numerous training programs (accounting, computer equipment repair, electrical installations) to be able to work.

Ndathie Moustafá Sene is from Senegal and has participated in most of the ENLMs, occupying a complex role as leader of the Association of Senegalese Residents in Argentina (ARSA, acronym

in Spanish for Asociación de Residentes Senegaleses en Argentina)⁵ and, at the same time, as an employee of the National Directorate for Migration (Dirección Nacional de Migraciones), a position he managed to access because of the social capital built throughout his stay in Argentina. He is a crucial actor located at the “potentially conflictive” intersection between migrant organizations and the State. Moustafá is 32 years old and has lived in Argentina for 9 years. He briefly studied sociology at the University of Buenos Aires (Universidad de Buenos Aires) and later began a law degree at the same university, where he is still a student.

Cheikh Gueye is a recognized leading personality for the Senegalese community in the city of La Plata, capital of the province of Buenos Aires, and has had a very fleeting approach to the ENLM space. Unlike the previous leaders, he does not have a university education and is a street vendor. He is 41 years old and entered Argentina in 2014. He is a member of the Senegalese Association of La Plata. His migration project plays a central role in his life, as he plans to raise money through street vending as quickly as possible to send remittances to his family in Senegal (to finish building his home and open his own bakery), and in a not-too-distant future to return to his country of origin.

Brief Description of Senegalese and Congolese Migration to Argentina

Since the mid-1990s, but mainly since the year 2000, the presence of migrants of sub-Saharan origin in Argentina has increased, standing out their presence in the CABA and in the province of Buenos Aires (Zubrzycki, 2018). Senegalese migrants make up the largest group of African immigrants: ARSA estimates that they number between 3 000 and 5 000 (Zubrzycki, 2018). Among the reasons for the African population to choose South America as a migratory destination are the tightening of migratory policies in Europe and North America; labor and movement opportunities in the region; and the establishment of migratory networks. Zubrzycki (2018) highlights that Senegalese migration is characterized by strong mobility between the place of origin and the migratory destination, with little intention of settling in Argentina permanently. Many of these migrants’ alternate periods of work in Argentina with visits to their relatives in Senegal and lead this lifestyle until they manage to raise enough money to invest in a business in their country of origin that allows them to support the family. The anthropologist points out that these migrants in Argentina are mostly men between 20 and 40 years of age, many of them belonging to the Wolof ethnic group (Zubrzycki, 2018). Regarding their labor insertion in Argentina, street vending is the predominant occupation. In a study carried out in the city of La Plata in 2020, it was noted that 91.5% of the migrants surveyed were engaged in this activity⁶ (Defensoría Provincia de Buenos Aires, 2020).

⁵ He was president of ARSA in the 2014-2016 period and is currently a member of its board of directors.

⁶ Survey conducted by a team made up of the Office of the Public Defender of the Buenos Aires Province, the Undersecretariat of Human Rights of the Buenos Aires Province Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, the Provincial Directorate of Access to Justice of the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, the Social Council of the La Plata National University, and the Center for Governance Studies of the city of La Plata.

Between January and July 2013, a migratory regularization plan was launched in Argentina for which 1,697 Senegalese managed to register. Migrants who arrived after 2013—as well as those who were not in Argentina during those months—despite their strong interest in obtaining an Argentine DNI, could not access this right due to the lack of diplomatic relations between the two countries,⁷ and only received a temporary residence permit that they must renew regularly until their refugee application is accepted or denied (Zubrzycki, 2018). In this regard, the researcher points out that:

The Senegalese case shows the limitations of migration law, beyond advancement of rights for migrants. Immigration continues to be conceived as a problem of irregularity, migrants can only be accepted when something warrants their presence or when they show that their lives are “lawful and useful.” And while migration is a right, it is exercised in a discretionary way towards certain groups, for example, through the requirement of visas (Zubrzycki, 2018, p. 367).

Regarding the reception of these migrants by Argentine society, scholars on the subject point out that from the situation of structural racism that prevails in the country, the presence of African migrants in the country has been hypervisibilized and oversized (Morales, 2010). The mass media deepen structural racism by portraying the Senegalese population at times under criminalizing gazes, and under victimization ones at others (Espiro, 2016). This group is frequently the object of institutionalized repression and violence by the Argentine State, exercised by means of municipal officials from various locations and/or by police officers (Espiro, Voscoboinik, & Zubrzycki, 2016; Pita & Pacecca, 2017; Voscoboinik & Zubrzycki, 2019).

In relation to Congolese migration in Argentina, so far, no research has been found on this group. When interviewed, some migrants of that origin related that this migration began in the 1970s, a time when five Congolese diplomats immigrated to Argentina with their families.

From 2013 to the present there are 100 migrants registered at the Congolese embassy in Argentina; however, not all of them are in the country, since some have migrated to the United States, Mexico, Chile, among other destinations, and have not reported their entry nor their departure from Argentina, which explains the lack of an exact statistical record of this population.

Unlike most Senegalese migrants, the Congolese come as students to the universities of the city of La Plata or the CABA or, to a lesser extent, to work as diplomats, religious authorities, or unto other types of job placements,⁸ but they do not migrate to engage in street commerce or sales like the Senegalese often do. The Congolese families that arrive in Argentina are large, with several children. As for associations, they have the Association of Congolese People in Argentina (ACDA, acronym in Spanish for Asociación de Congoleños de Argentina), which, although lacking legal status, does have the support of their embassy. Also, this group has shown interest in forming an association only for the Congolese studying in Argentina. In relation to the link between Argentina

⁷ In 2021, the Embassy of Argentina in Dakar, Senegal, was reopened with María Laura Levaggi as ambassador. At the moment, Senegal has not yet established an embassy in Argentina.

⁸ Data from an exploratory investigation. Further investigations are still necessary to expand on and deepen what was initially collected.

and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the existence of an Argentine-Congolese Chamber of Commerce (CARDCO, acronym in Spanish for Cámara de Comercio Argentino-RD Congoleña) evidences an interest on the part of business sectors in Argentina to trade with this country, beyond the political and diplomatic relations that they may have. There is also the aforementioned association directed by Nengumbi Sukama, the IARPIDI.

About the National Meetings of Migrant Leaders in Argentina

The National Network of Migrant Leaders in Argentina is undoubtedly part of the new configurations assumed by migrant struggles in Argentina, with “new forms of organization, mobilization and participation” (Rho, 2020, p. 128).

“The Network was born by chance and out of discontent,” as stated by a representative of Chilean migrants in the province of Neuquén, based on two situations analyzed by Penchaszadeh and Courtis (2016, pp. 168-169). The first took place in 2012 during the debate on a bill to extend political rights to young people aged 16 and 17, and to foreigners; at that time migrants were not summoned to join the discussion, and their voices were not heard. The second scenario was in December 2013, at which time the National Directorate for Migration (DNM) together with other public agencies, international organizations, and civil society organizations (CSOs), organized a large event on the occasion of the 10 years of *Law 25.871 of 2004*; once again, migrants were completely absent. Based on these exclusions, according to the aforementioned authors, the migrants decided to organize their own meeting in Neuquén, with the aim of making their voice directly and leaving behind the paternalistic logic of the State and CSOs for migrants.

According to the members of the Network, in their Press Gazette no. 2, the decision to participate in it:

Is personal to each leader and not necessarily of the organization to which they belong, that is, we are interested in personal commitment and not in their degree of representativeness of the organization in which they participate.

All migrant leaders may participate in the Meetings, as well as the children and grandchildren of first-generation migrants; the requirement is to be active members of a community organization, be it a political party, union, cooperative, church, neighborhood council, immigrant community, farmers’ association, artistic group (Red Nacional de Líderes Migrantes en Argentina, 2016).

One of the main concerns in the ENLMs has been the defense of the full validity of *Law 25.871 of 2004*, sanctioned on December 17, 2003 and enacted in January 2004 during the government of Néstor Kirchner,⁹ later modified by the Necessity and Urgency Decree (DNU, acronym in Spanish for Decreto de Necesidad y Urgencia) 70/2017 of former President Mauricio Macri, who restricted entry and facilitated expulsions,¹⁰ which led to deep critical discussions.

⁹ Regulated only in 2010 through Decree 616.

¹⁰ This decree was repealed in March 2021.

Although in the ENLMs the voices of migrants occupy a central place in conferences, panels and workshops as a way of affirming their progressive autonomy, the Network also agrees that their problems need to be thought of in the plural with State agencies (at the national, provincial and municipal levels), as well as with international, human rights and religious institutions linked to migration, and renowned figures able to provide visibility, legitimacy and strength to its claims; hence, generally some of these actors also participate in the Meetings.¹¹

The ENLMs generally begin with a panel with presentations and later move on to the workshops, where the various organizations of the migrant groups address the problems of migrants in Argentina and make proposals to correct them. At the end of each day, the conclusions of each of the working groups are collectively presented.

The general topics that are debated annually in the workshops and panels are: the political, economic, social and cultural rights of migrants in Argentina; participation in political parties, unions, and in municipal, provincial and national governments; Argentina's migration policy; the implementation of *Law 25.871 of 2004*; access to settlement for those outside Mercosur, access to education, and the accreditation of studies completed in the countries of origin; access to health and social security; rejection at the border; the solution of the "false tourist" problem, expulsions, institutional violence, migratory fees, refuge and asylum; the right to vote and the right to protest; multicultural practices and resistances; good intercultural practices; financial inclusion. There is also talk of the Remote Filing for Foreigners (RADEX, acronym in Spanish for Radicación a Distancia de Extranjeros), dual citizenship, identity and interculturality.

As of the VI ENLM (2019), a specific space was incorporated into these events to address gender issues. The First Meeting of Migrant Women Leaders was held in Alta Gracia (Córdoba), and the second was held virtually (2020) as part of the 7th ENLM. The issues of gender violence, parental responsibility, family law and the obligations of States within the framework of international law were addressed, as well as those of work precariousness, inequality, and discrimination. In these spaces, migrant women have played the central role. In the first Meeting, while women were gathered in the workshops, men participated in the elaboration of a mural in Alta Gracia with a migrant theme. This separation repeated for the second Meeting: women had their workshops on one side and men on the other. It is important to point out that Nengumbi participated in the first and second women leader meetings, and Moustafá in the second.

From the context of the pandemic, we should add the virtual scenario to the face-to-face scenarios. Although both scenarios, according to Winocur (2013), hold hermeneutic capacity,

¹¹ The ENLMs have had as guests, among others, the Nobel Peace Prize winner Adolfo Pérez Esquivel and Nora Cortiñas from the Founding Line of Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo (Madres de Plaza de Mayo Línea Fundadora). Presidents and deans of the universities involved have also spoken at the Meetings, as well as officials from the National Directorate for Migration, the International Organization for Migration (IOM, acronym in Spanish for Organización Internacional para las Migraciones), the National Institute Against Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism (INADI, acronym in Spanish for Instituto Nacional contra la Discriminación, la Xenofobia y el Racismo), human rights ministries and secretariats, the Pastoral of Migration (Pastoral de Migraciones) based in the provinces, legislators, consular representatives, and academics.

virtual realities have their own symbolic density that one must learn to decipher in all its complexity. It is not only about generating data from the virtual world but also about reflecting on it (Guber & López, 2021). Although such reflection is not the objective of this work, some inquiries were made regarding the meaning that some actors give to virtuality, in relation to the 7th Meeting. In this case, we collected the voices of Dr. Marta Guerreño, one of the founders and organizers of the Network, and of Moustafá Sene of ARSA, who pointed out the positive side of this new form of presence based on virtuality. On the one hand, it gave the opportunity to participate to people who for financial reasons could not travel to the city where the Meeting was held, and to those who for various reasons were unable to attend the three days of the event. For example, virtuality allowed Cheikh to participate in the ENLM for the first time by connecting via Zoom through his cell phone, without neglecting his work as a street vendor. On the other hand, it made it possible for important authorities that would otherwise hardly have been able to attend, to be present.

Marta Guerreño highlights the effort to sustain the continuity of the Meetings: “because if you stop doing it one year, it will be difficult to resume later (...) I highlight that we were able to do the 7th Meeting and did not lose track, and also that many people participated” (personal communication, March 26, 2021).

Most of the migrants consulted agree on the disadvantages of virtual presence. For example, Guerreño points out:

Obviously, this thing of not meeting face to face makes people not focus in the same way, not being able to spend the time together that we usually have in lunches and walks or whatever, seeing each other weights differently, more so for us, as we have people from so many different provinces (personal communication, March 26, 2021).

Based on the reading made of the advantages and disadvantages of both experiences, Guerreño told us that for 2021 a mixed approach will be made; that is, that a small group will travel to the province where the 8th Meeting is held and the rest may attend via Zoom.

The Participation of Africans in Some of the ENLM

The presence of African migrants is relatively minor compared to other migratory groups. Among the participants are the aforementioned Nengumbi Sukama, Moustafá Sene, and Cheikh Gueye. Other migrants of Senegalese origin who also attended were Arfang Diedhiou, current president of ARSA; Bamba Seck, leader in Córdoba; Fallou Hanne and Aliou Ndiaye, representatives of the Senegalese in La Plata and members of the Senegalese Association of La Plata. Immigrants from Ghana and Nigeria have also participated in some of these events.

The second ENLM was held in the city of Córdoba in May 2015. As in the first, African migrants (from Senegal and the Democratic Republic of the Congo), Afro-Caribbean (Haitians) and Afro-Latin Americans (Ecuadorians and Brazilians) were in attendance. Although all intervened by taking the floor on various occasions, Moustafá and Nengumbi were the ones who stood out the most. The latter coordinated the workshop “Migration, human rights and the International Decade for People of African Descent,” assuming the self-representation of Afro-descendants. This workshop focused on aspects of identity visibility and racism, with a greater

anchorage in the International Decade for People of African Descent (2015-2024) (*Resolution 68/237* of 2014). Nengumbi spoke about the lack of historical recognition of the presence of Afro-descendants and Africans in Argentina and the consequent invisibility as evidenced in the denial of citizen rights. Racism and the violation of human rights were other topics he focused on, as well as the obligations established by the Decade towards state governments. He pointed out that all these claims and struggles concern anyone of African roots, including “the Africans who are arriving” (M. Espiro, personal communication, May 22, 2015). Subsequently, he opened debate on the lack of knowledge about Afro-descendant issues on the part of migrants in general, and despite this situation, it was possible to make a list of the problems and proposals to be presented in plenary.

Moustafá did not participate in the workshop coordinated by Nengumbi, but he did participate in other workshops representing Senegalese migrants in Argentina, focusing his intervention on the problems that concern migrants in general (with a greater anchorage in *Law 25.871 of 2004* and Senegalese who share positions and problems similar to Haitian migrants. He played an active role in all the workshops he attended, showing his expertise in legal issues (laws, articles, international agreements) and providing numerous examples of the problems that the Senegalese community in Argentina is going through, as a result of his work experience in the scope of the National Directorate for Migration and of his university studies. The cultural and social capital shown, his excellent communication skills, and the management of interpersonal dynamics made it so that the other participants in the group took him as a reference from which they could increase their knowledge in crucial aspects, so as to navigate more safely the complex space of the migrant-State relationship. For this reason, and as a display of appreciation and acknowledgement, they asked him to represent them in the statement of conclusions in plenary.

Here we can see, following Dinh et al. (2014), that leadership implies the contribution of multiple actors in a two-way interaction (top-down and bottom-up). It is a complex phenomenon that operates through multiple levels of analysis, involves multiple mediating and moderating factors, and develops over long periods of time.

The 5th ENLM was held in the city of La Plata in October 2018.¹² Pertaining African migrants, the topic was the Special Regularization Plan for Senegalese, in charge of Nengumbi Sukama. Present at this workshop were members of the Network of Migrant Leaders, two members of the board of directors of the Senegalese Association of La Plata (Fallou Hanne and Aliou Ndiaye), migrants of various nationalities, academic specialists in migration, and lawyers with experience in immigration matters.

Nengumbi opened the workshop by explaining why he, despite not being a Senegalese migrant, is equally involved in the problems that affect them: “the commitment to human rights for me is like a lifestyle from the Congo. It doesn't matter if one is Senegalese, from Ghana, Argentine; where there is a violation of human rights, I get involved” (Nengumbi Sukama, face-to-face

¹² It was organized by the Network together with the Migrant Coordinator and Counseling for Migrants (Coordinadora Migrante/Consejería), an organization belonging to the Faculty of Social Work of the La Plata National University.

intervention at the 5th National Meeting of Migrant Leaders, October 6, 2018). Again, we can see the breadth of the issues that interest Nengumbi, breadth that may be partly linked to the fact that when Nengumbi founded IARPIDI there were few Congolese migrants in the country, and therefore from its inception the association that he presides over is oriented to the anti-racist struggle in general. On the other hand, and although there are currently more Congolese in Argentina, the number is still small¹³ and these people, due to their social class and their type of insertion in Argentina—the majority are university exchange students or diplomats and their families—are not as exposed to institutional repression and violence, nor do they face difficulties in obtaining a visa (as is the case for many Senegalese migrants).

Subsequently, in this workshop, Nengumbi made a sort of balance regarding his link with the Senegalese community and the actions of leaders of that origin in the fight to defend migrant rights. In relation to demands, he requested greater collaboration on their part in those problems that concern them, specifically that they work together with human rights activists from other communities: “help us strengthen this fight because it is for the community, but if they leave us on our own it takes away weight from the fight. So, work on this from within” (Nengumbi Sukama, face-to-face intervention at the 5th National Meeting of Migrant Leaders, October 6, 2018).

The above makes it possible for us to understand the way in which Nengumbi asks for support to establish alliances with Senegalese migrants and thus deepen some of the struggles that he sustains against racism. At this point, a very frequent problem in studies on ethnic leaders becomes evident: the difference between representativeness and legitimacy (both internal and external) and the issue of visibility of migrant leaders (Núñez Seixas, 2006). Nengumbi is requested on a recurring basis by different state, international and civil organizations for his work as a speaker on issues related to racism in Argentina, which has given him visibility; however, that does not make him a representative of migrants of African origin in general, or of Senegalese in particular.

In this workshop, Nengumbi also recalled a critical situation in 2019 in which street vendors from CABA demonstrated against the institutional violence executed by the police, revealing in his story that he actively supports measures of struggle that involve demonstrations and street blockades.

After Nengumbi’s participation, one of the Senegalese attendees took the floor and commented on the absence of ARSA members at the Meeting, due to the difficulties of Senegalese migrants to participate in political activities because this implies neglecting their livelihood:

Most of us here live day-to-day from our work in the streets (...) [If I neglect street vending to attend these meetings] my family’s economy will be greatly affected. I am working at night, that is why I was able to be here today, but if I was working during the day, I would have not been able to come (Aliou Ndiaye, face-to-face intervention at the 5th National Meeting of Migrant Leaders, October 6, 2018).

¹³ As noted earlier, there were only 100 people registered at the embassy.

Some of the testimonies collected account for the difficulties that limit the establishment of a sustained rapport in the Network with the Senegalese leaders of the various cities of Argentina, particularly with local leaders.

During the workshop, the main topics were, on the one hand, developing strategies for Senegalese migrants to obtain the DNI and, on the other, to convene and get feedback from more and more new migrants of this nationality. The conclusions highlighted the need for local leaders to be the ones to assume a leading role in any type of initiative, and that the Network should have as one of its tasks to encourage and enable this appropriation of political spaces by this group.

As mentioned above, due to the pandemic, the 7th ENLM and the 2nd Meeting of Migrant Women Leaders were held in 2020 through the Zoom platform. One of the sessions was entitled *Institutional violence, discrimination, and work*, and Nengumbi, Mustafa and Cheikh participated in it. This was Cheikh's first approach to the space of the Meetings. He and a lawyer from La Ciega - Collective of Lawyers for the People (La Ciega - Colectivo de Abogadxs Populares)¹⁴ were speakers at the opening panel of the conference against the institutional violence that affects migrants in Argentina. However, due to technical difficulties, the lawyer was only able to partially presence the meeting; Cheikh regretted that the communication was cut off because this lawyer could have addressed more accurately, by means of tools from the legal field, various issues related to the violation of the rights of the Senegalese population in La Plata. This highlights the differences between the leadership exercised by Cheikh and the leaderships of Moustafá and Nengumbi, who, due to their accrued cultural capital, hold this technical-professional knowledge.

Cheikh's dissertation was of a testimonial nature, since he exposed in first person the forms of institutional violence that affect him and his colleagues from the city of La Plata. He also took the opportunity to justify why the Senegalese engage in street vending despite being aware that this occupation constitutes an infraction, and why they must defend themselves against seizures, appealing to the need to send family remittances. He also denounced the political persecution that the Municipality is carrying out towards some Senegalese migrants and their human rights defenders, a topic that will be addressed again in the next section. Finally, he highlighted the racist comments made by some passers-by before Senegalese migrants. In this sense, one can see the ability of this leader to "politicize" his emotions, seeking to raise empathy among the audience by telling small stories of discrimination in his daily life.

As for Moustafá, his role in this Meeting was leading since he was in charge of coordinating a workshop and the closing plenary. Moustafá listed the various types of institutional violence against the Senegalese community in Argentina (mainly in the city of La Plata and in CABA). Unlike Cheikh's dissertation, Moustafá did not limit himself to the Senegalese, but also mentioned the case of other Africans who migrate to Europe and that of Latin American migrants who are generally discriminated against in the health system, at schools, and in terms of access to various public policies. Likewise, he referred to the discrimination that affects sexual dissidents, whether migrant or not. In other words, unlike the first Meetings in which his discourse was limited to voicing the problems of migrants, during his speech in the last one he addressed the human rights

¹⁴ Argentine group that defends the rights of Senegalese migrants in La Plata.

of various groups. When he turned to the case of his compatriots, he once again offered a broad mapping of the issue; he presented a variety of examples beyond this population, and technical details in legal vocabulary, highlighting his role in filing complaints and assisting in cases of arbitrary arrests and searches. Moustafá also mentioned his participation in the development of agreements with various organizations,¹⁵ from which Senegalese migrants could access training in trades or languages. This dissertation gave him the opportunity to display the variety of tasks that have allowed him to make visible his political role and his commitment to the Senegalese community, legitimizing the place he occupies within the group.

In relation to the institutional violence that affects Senegalese migrants, he stated: “Although many believe that we do nothing, we do also have our strategy to fight, and we have very specific cases that we follow with great sincerity and serenity” (Moustafá Sene, virtual intervention at the 7th National Meeting of Migrant Leaders, November 28, 2020).

Moustafá closed his speech by mentioning a set of proposals related to the training of migrant communities, as well as that of institutions and their authorities, and related to the reporting and monitoring of cases of institutional violence involving migrants. Proposing is a “constituent” action of his leadership.

Finally, he mentioned the National Directorate for Migration, asking from the audience to:

Be patient with the director of the Directorate for Migration, because there they have very good intentions to do something about it, and to improve the situation of migrants; hopefully it will happen soon because it is something pressing for all of us (Moustafá Sene, virtual intervention of the 7th National Meeting of Migrant Leaders, November 28, 2020).

Based on the foregoing, we can see how Nengumbi and Cheikh point out at a strategy of struggle that combines, depending on the situation, the existing legal tools with protests in public spaces, while Mustafa, on the contrary, exercises his leadership in adherence to the institutional and less disruptive logic of the social order. As a response to institutional violence, Mustafá proposes training migrants in trades, training state officials in an anti-racist standpoint, and that human rights defenders make use of existing legal tools to report cases of discrimination against migrants.

Cheikh's Leadership in the City of La Plata

Based on our participant observations in the ENLMs, the contrast between the leading role that certain African migrant leaders such as Nengumbi and Moustafá have managed to build there, and the lesser participation of others in these spaces is striking. For this reason, we have decided to include a specific section aimed at developing this topic.

While the role of Cheikh in the ENLMs has been very limited, as has been pointed out, his contribution as a representative for the city of La Plata has been very active in promoting different initiatives aimed at fighting the racism and repression that the Municipality of the city and the police (both municipal and provincial) exercise against street vendors. Currently, Cheikh is the

¹⁵ Such as the Office of the Public Defender of the Buenos Aires Province and the OIM.

Senegalese migrant with the highest degree of political participation in the city of La Plata: he speaks in protests, in the media, and participates in round tables with the Municipality and other social actors. Also, he supports his compatriots by translating important messages from Spanish into Wolof, helps them carry out various procedures, among other unpaid community tasks. When a human rights activist, journalist, or academic approaches a Senegalese migrant in the city, in most cases they are referred to this leader. In this regard, a young Senegalese migrant who was interviewed in the city of La Plata said: “He is always there when we need him” (personal communication, March 24, 2021).

As noted above, Cheikh has been the target of political persecution by the Municipality. The roles of this leader are mainly aimed at solving problems related to repression and institutional violence suffered by him and his compatriots. This persecution is understood as one of the strategies to dismantle the collective resistance action that Senegalese migrants have managed to build in the city. We agree with the Center for Legal and Social Studies (CELS, acronym in Spanish for Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales) when they state that:

The criminal prosecution of social representatives has serious consequences that transcend the individual problems of the person who is subjected to a judicial process: it weighs on the organization to which they belong and sends an intimidating message towards the social and political field (2017, p. 64).

Migrant Leadership Trajectories

In accordance with the concept of ethnic leadership proposed in the research project within which this article is framed, the hypothesis was presented that the level of representativeness that a group acknowledges in a leader depends on two factors: on the one hand, the degree in which their personal qualities and their trajectory correspond or match with what that group considers proper to their cultural identity; and, on the other, of the capacity of said leader to propose a project of which the majority of the members of the group can feel part of, and that includes the most heartfelt and legitimate aspirations of the majority. However, in relation to the cases studied here, we deem it more appropriate to use the term “migrant leadership” over “ethnic leadership,” given that these people are focused on addressing issues related to foreign nationality and racism in general in Argentina.

As an identity strategy, the leaders studied here speak out in public instances from their nationality of origin and do not explicitly relate to ethnic issues. Added to the above, Moustafá and Cheikh are members of civil associations of Senegalese migrants who seek to be representative of migrants from that country regardless of ethnic ascriptions, that is, their criterion is national and not religious or ethnic, among other possible criteria. As for the diverse participations of African migrants in the ENLMs, these are understood from their particular leadership trajectories: each one with different ways of building visibility and legitimacy, the latter understood as acknowledgment and approval by the followers, from their accrued capital, their actions and their ability to achieve consensus (Maffia, 2017, p. 125).

As previously pointed out, Nengumbi has been involved in various issues: on the one hand, in “the struggle for visibility, recognition, justice and the guarantee of rights for black communities historically neglected in Argentina, which places him close to the demands of Afro-descendants” (Maffia et al., 2018, p. 23); and, on the other, he has supported the demands of other African immigrants, for example, the Senegalese, as well as the fight against the institutional violence that this group (among others) has suffered throughout the years. However, according to what Nengumbi explained in some of the workshops in which he participated, his concern for the problem of regularization and access to the national identity document (DNI) is not limited to Senegalese migrants, but also extends to other lesser-known groups of struggling African immigrants, such as Liberians and Ghanaians. He has also been involved in the fight for the rights of refugees.

Nengumbi has attended all the ENLMs, thus managing to occupy a position in the space of power constituted by the first organizers of these Meetings as a member of the Political Commission, in addition to coordinating different plenary sessions and directing specific workshops. However, this visibility of Nengumbi within the ENLM does not translate into him becoming a representative figure with particular focus on the struggles of Senegalese migrants, as he rather requests greater support from the Senegalese community to non-Senegalese defenders of human rights.

Nengumbi’s leadership is of a migrant nature due to his visibility, his proactive personality, his oratory, his commitment to the struggle of migrants in Argentina, and due to the acknowledgement he receives from other migrant leaders of different national origins, as well as from different national and international institutions; however, he does not lead a particular migrant community exclusively. His interest and field of action is the anti-racist struggle in Argentina, particularly the defense of the human rights of migrants, refugees, and Afro descendants; for these reasons his leadership is considered to be focused on the fight for human rights.

The participation of Senegalese leaders has been discontinuous, Moustafá standing out, who has attended many ENLMs and has held a prominent role in the workshops and in some plenary sessions. Among the Senegalese, certain national leaderships such as that of Moustafá Sene and Arfang Diedhiou stand out, since they participate in a federal association (ARSA), in contrast to other rather local leaders, such as Cheikh Gueye, Fallou Hanne and Aliou Ndiaye, from the city of La Plata, or Bamba Seck, from the city of Córdoba. The latter are members of municipal associations whose interest is to take action in the problems of the Senegalese migrant community before the Municipality.

Moustafá has focused on issues related to his community and the regularization process, the advances that the new immigration law brought about in terms of rights, access to education, the diversification of job opportunities, among others. Even though his career path is different from that of most of his colleagues, a part of the Senegalese community in Argentina perceives him as a national leader. However, the fact that he does not approve of some of the strategies of struggle implemented by Senegalese migrants engaged in street vending has led these migrants to begin to question his way of exercising leadership. On the other hand, his role within the State, his contacts

with African embassies, and his position within ARSA (which performs the roles that a Senegalese embassy should carry out), are factors that allow us to understand his trajectory as that of a migrant leader who aims to carry out informal functions of relationship and harmonization of interests inside and outside his community, and who seeks conciliation by adjusting to regulations.

Both in the case of Nengumbi and Moustafá, we find that, at the same time, they contribute to the ENLMs by collaborating in panels, workshops and even in the board of directors (in the case of Nengumbi), thereby increasing their own social and political capital, strengthening ties with other migrant leaders and with officials, and give visibility to the activities they have developed in their capacity as leaders; that is, in these cases, leadership trajectories and the ENLMs co-develop. At this point a certain parallelism can be found with the experiences of struggle of migrant women for the urbanization of a villa in CABA, which was analyzed by Perissinotti: “in a simultaneous and interdependent movement, the neighborhood and its representatives were mutually establishing themselves” (2019, p. 63).

Some local leaders, such as Cheikh, maintain that due to the scope of the issues raised in the ENLMs—often aimed at questioning laws or Necessity and Urgency Decrees (DNU)—¹⁶ they concern national leaders. They consider that such discussions will probably not bring about a more or less direct and short-term change in their situation as street vendors, and so they are not particularly interested in participating in these spaces. This would partly explain the reasons why these local leaders get involved in the assemblies or meetings held in La Plata with the aim of limiting the violence particularly exerted on Senegalese street vendors of that city by the Municipality and by the police. As noted above, Cheikh’s living conditions are quite similar to those of his compatriots; he shares workspace with them, continues to do street vending, and suffers from the repression exerted by the Municipality. On the other hand, due to his degree of commitment, legitimacy, visibility, and participation, he plays the role of a community-oriented migrant leader. Community leaders are able to listen to the ideas of their communities (Montero, 2004), but are also proactive, and influence the positions of their communities. In this sense, Montero (2006) and Reyes Espejo and Perinat Maceres (2011) understand community leaders as responsible people committed to social change, while Rojas Andrade (2013) adds to it that their actions stand out mainly in moments critical to the community.

In the case of Cheikh, it seems that his predominant migration project gets in the way of his trajectory as a community leader: saving money and returning to Senegal. That is why for some Senegalese leaders it is difficult to invest time in activities related to the promotion of human rights,¹⁷ since this implies neglecting their work; some of them are street vendors and the hours spent in non-work activities translate into an income decrease. Added to this are the returns of Senegalese migrants who travel back to visit relatives in Senegal, to live there again (as in the case of Bamba Seck), or to migrate to other countries. This situation hinders a sustained commitment with the ENLMs over the years.

¹⁶ As in the case of the immigration DNU (*Decree 70/2017*).

¹⁷ The ENLMs usually last three full days and are generally held in different cities in Argentina.

Added to this are language difficulties. Senegalese migrants are fluent in Spanish to different extents: some, like Moustafá, have an excellent command of Spanish, while others, like Fallou, have quite limited grasp of the language; others, like Cheikh and Aliou, for example, have a very good level of Spanish, but lack knowledge of certain technical terms belonging to legal or academic vocabulary. And so, the technical and complex vocabulary employed in some tables dedicated to debating the problems of the Senegalese prevented some people from participating in the debates to their full extent.

In the three cases analyzed, we can see that the struggle of these migrants, inside and outside the ENLM, is not limited to migrant struggles, but rather corresponds, in terms of Magliano, Perissinotti, and Zenklusen (2017, p. 312), to “migration struggles” since, in addition to the demand for access to the DNI, they include various aspects such as having a life free of racism, and the right to training and work.

As for the struggles exerted by African leaders, these cannot be understood in all their complexity solely from the theory of the autonomy of migration, since the great efforts of these leaders to be included within the citizenship regime account for this. In this sense, within the framework of the ENLMs, Moustafá and Nengumbi have contributed to the design of strategies to demand migratory regularization policies from the Argentine State. As has been developed throughout this article, the ENLM space, due to the subject matter of its tables and panels, as well as to its links with different officials, encourages this type of struggles and demands to the State in terms of expanding citizenship.

The analysis of the participation of African leaders in the ENLMs reinforces the idea that there is no sharp and rigid link between the Argentine State and migrants (Rodrigo, 2021), but that rather, conversely, migrant resistances cannot be completely set apart from control mechanisms since resistances “are constituted both from and in opposition to the categories and positions assigned to individuals as defined by the dominant classification systems” (Rodrigo, 2021, p. 7).

CLOSING REMARKS

This article has analyzed the participation of three African migrant leaders in the ENLMs. The results of our research show that the role of the three migrant leaders within these Meetings has been rather heterogeneous, ranging from sustained and leading participation to minimal involvement in these spaces by other leaders. This situation is explained from the trajectory of each of the leaders. We have identified: 1) in the case of Cheikh, migrant leadership practices with a community profile whose local development is focused on resolving the repression and institutional violence that he and his compatriots experience in the city of La Plata for dedicating themselves to street vending; 2) in the case of Nengumbi, a leadership path oriented towards the fight for human rights, specifically focused on the fight against racism; and 3) in the case of Moustafá, a leadership oriented towards representative functions, by means of membership in a federal association of Senegalese migrants whose practice includes tasks and roles that an embassy should perform. Each of these trajectories has heterogeneous political projects of resistance and sustains unique ways of building legitimacy and visibility. The differential accruing of cultural

and political capital, and the unequal labor paths among leaders allow us to understand the different trajectories that their leaderships take.

The ENLMs allow increasing the political capital and the processes of political subjectivation, or establishing them, since they promote public speaking, intervention, and critical thinking. However, there are cases such as that of the Senegalese leaders of La Plata whose participation at the Meetings is more limited due to language issues, lack of information regarding the characteristics and objectives of these events, to difficulties in reconciling activism and work, added to the orientation of their leadership towards the local community. This was it becomes clear that the challenge of gathering local community leaders of Senegalese origin to actively partake of the Meetings is still ongoing.

The contributions of this article lie in the effort to make visible the social contributions of African migrant leaders, reconstruct their complexity and heterogeneity, and build a non-criminalizing perspective on them and their ways of politically organizing to resist State repression.

Finally, it should be pointed out that these different trajectories are understood as part of a relational and dynamic process, and not as stagnant categories or ideal types. The future of the leaderships of the three cases studied here can undergo important modifications in response to emerging turning points, that is, to new structures of political opportunities, changes in family or work life, among other areas, giving rise to a possible overlap of these orientations in one single individual in the face of certain situations, or to a change in course.

Translation: Fernando Llanas.

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