

Abstract

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Return migration is a complex phenomenon shaped by power relations, institutional practices, and individual agency. This thesis, comprising three peer-reviewed articles, examines the dynamics of return migration governance in Europe and Nigeria, focusing on regulatory frameworks and the interactions among diverse actors. It highlights a critical gap in understanding how spatial and discursive power dynamics influence return policies, particularly for migrants and rejected asylum seekers navigating this landscape. The study situates migration governance within a network of local, transnational, and international actors, emphasising the roles of government institutions, international organisations, civil society, and returnee associations. It examines the impact of the European Union's externalisation policies and how corruption and resource management affect reintegration outcomes. The research investigates the roles of state and non-state actors in mediating return processes, often perpetuating structural violence. Using Nigeria as a case study, it reveals the complexities of return governance, including regional differences and historical legacies. The analysis incorporates political-economy perspectives to illustrate the systemic harms of migration control while emphasising migrants' lived experiences, affective ties, and everyday resistance. Ultimately, the study calls for a re-evaluation of return migration policies to recognise the interplay of power dynamics and institutional influences, advocating for more equitable treatment of migrants within international return systems.