

# **Hustling your way forward**

**A study on the trajectories and social networks of West African migrants  
moving towards and within the European Union**

Master Thesis Human Geography  
Globalisation, Migration and Development

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***Hustling your way forward...***

*'Hustling' is a term I often heard during my interviews with English-speaking respondents. Initially I had a negative association with the word, however, later I learned that its meaning is not necessarily negative among West African migrants. On the contrary, many of my respondents seemed to be proud of their 'hustling spirit'. Hustling was often included in their mobility strategies. Chima, a thirty-five year old Nigerian man, explained the term during one of our conversations:*

*"Basically, it means you're putting every bit of effort to accomplish something. You'll try so hard and you'll even have sleepless nights. You're working so hard trying to make ends meet. You're trying to move forward not in one specific way, but you can do it in any way. You're embracing every opportunity that you come across."*

## Abstract

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Building on the mobility turn in social science, which emphasised the study of the movements of people, objects and ideas, this study aims to explore the journeys of West African migrants en route towards and within the European Union. As migrants' networks are seen as one of the main explanatory factors for their movements, this research investigates the influence of social contacts on migrants' trajectories in particular. This thesis draws on the personal migration stories collected among fifty-four migrants in Catalonia, Spain, during four months of ethnographic fieldwork in 2015. The analysis of the empirical data provides two overarching insights. First, it becomes clear that the changeability of migrants' migration aspirations and destinations needs to be stressed. Their trajectories do not have an endpoint, instead their journeys should be seen as an open-ended, evolving process, in which periods of mobility and immobility alternate. Second, we learn that the possession of a social network, in itself, should not be viewed as the determining factor for migrants' movements. As is the case for migrants' trajectories, their networks are continuously in motion as well. Furthermore, network efforts are required in order to accumulate the social capital that may help them get ahead. As such, I plea for a focus on migrants' personal network dynamics in order to better understand the relation between their individual trajectories and their social connections.

**Keywords:** European Union, West African migration, trajectories, social networks, network dynamics

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## Preface

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Nowadays we live in the ‘age of migration’. Migration flows are widespread around the world and their impact on societies has never been more central to (international) politics than today (Castles, De Haas & Miller, 2014). Globalisation and its time-space compression have made it possible to travel larger distances in a shorter period of time. As a result, it has become easier to move to another country, at least *for some of us*. When travelling to Barcelona for fieldwork last year, I could simply take a flight and arrive two hours later. However, ‘for some of us’ needs to be stressed, because travelling should not be taken for granted. For nearly all of my West African respondents, moving towards or within ‘Fortress Europe’ has not been so self-evident as my journey from the Netherlands to Spain. West Africans are likely to face more restrictions while travelling than I did and their journeys and preparations usually take more time. This brings me to the topic of this thesis, which is the dynamics of migrants’ journeys. This study will provide in-depth insights into the movements of West Africans towards and within the EU, and in particular the influence of their social networks on their trajectories will be addressed.

In order to gain a profound understanding of these migrants’ journeys, I have spent four months in Barcelona doing research. It was a great experience to live and do fieldwork in this big city. I enjoyed the contact with my respondents and it was interesting to learn about their travels and personal lives. Overall, doing fieldwork and writing this thesis has been a period of intense learning for me. The writing process has not always been easy, but after various moments of frustration and despair, I am happy that this thesis now lies in front of you. As the completion of this project would not have been possible without the participation, inspiration and support of so many people, I would like to dedicate the section below to everyone who has helped me during this process.

First of all, I wish to express my gratitude and appreciation to my supervisor, dr. J. Schapendonk. I feel honoured that I could participate in your VENI-research project ‘Fortress Europe as a Mobile Space? Intra-EU Mobility of African Migrants’. Joris, thank you for your continuous support, enthusiasm, motivation and, not to forget, your contribution to my trips to Lerida and Stockholm. Although you said it is ‘just your job’, I am very thankful for your help in bringing this thesis and my study to a good end.

Secondly, I would like to thank everyone who has assisted me in Spain. I cannot emphasise enough how grateful I am to all my West African respondents. Thank you for your hospitality, trust and your personal stories. As you are often facing a difficult situation, I appreciate your efforts even more. It has been a pleasure getting to know you and I feel lucky for not only having shared information, but also several plates of *yassa*, *mafé* or *egusi soup* with you. Lamine, Mamadou, Ibrahima and Sirima, you became more than respondents alone. I appreciate the friendships we have developed. Because of you, my international housemates, Michelle and Jim, my stay in Barcelona has

been an unforgettable experience. Michelle, a special thanks to you for your cooperation. It was nice and beneficial to work together with you.

Last but not least, many thanks to everyone who has helped me during the writing process of this thesis in the Netherlands. Lobke, Godfrey, Tosca and Hilde, our study sessions in the (home) library were productive, but also provided the necessary hours of relaxation during the breaks. Bart, thanks for proofreading this thesis. The corrections you made improved the readability of this work. Finally, thanks also to all my other friends and family members for your support. Sometimes I was stressed and busy, but spending time with you was comforting and encouraged me to carry through.

Nijmegen, June 2016

## Chapter 1 – Introduction

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### 1.1 West Africans reach Europe; but what's next?



Figure 1.1: African migrants on a rescue ship in the Spanish port of Tarifa (Nazca, 2014, August 12).

*It is around midnight when Omar and twenty-five others walk to the forest in Tangier, Morocco. The group had heard that many people succeeded in crossing the Mediterranean Sea the day before and now they want to try their chances as well. They contacted a smuggler, who has arranged four inflatable boats for them. At four o'clock in the morning the first six persons sneak to the beach and get on a rubber dinghy. Omar waits until everyone has left and then steps on the last boat, which leaves at about ten o'clock in the morning. The waters are calm and they are at sea for two hours when they are noticed and picked up by the Spanish marine, who brings them to Tarifa. As Red Cross shelters are packed beyond capacity, they are sent to a sports centre, which is fenced with high walls and guarded by policemen. The staff tells everyone that it will take a few days before their fingerprints could be taken, due to the unusually high number of irregular arrivals these two days.*

*Omar gets scared, because his fingerprint scan will reveal that he has been expelled from Europe before. He made a successful sea-crossing in 2007, after which he has lived in Italy for a while. However, the French police found out he had crossed the Italian-French border without papers and, consequently, he was sent back to his country of origin in 2010. Thus, in order to avoid the*

*fingerprint checks, Omar is desperate to escape the sports centre. For three days, he has been waiting for a small, unguarded moment to enter. Then, suddenly, he does not see any police and he calls Malick and Pape, two Senegalese men he has met in Morocco. They quickly shove a dustbin against the wall, jump on it and climb over the fence. Thrilled, as they cannot yet believe they made it, they start running until they arrive at the beach. There, they slow down and continue their way to the city centre. After walking for a while, they start thinking about where to sleep. Then Omar sees two little black boys knocking on a door and approaches them. He asks for their father, who immediately comes. It is a Nigerian man and the three men tell him their story. The father of the two boys says that many years ago they had also travelled to Spain by boat and that he would like to help them. As it is already late, he offers them to stay in their house for a night.*

*The next morning Omar, Malick and Pape want to continue their journeys. Malick has two brothers in Spain, living in Barcelona and Cadiz. His plan is to travel to one of these cities. Pape buys a bus ticket to Bilbao from where he hopes to reach France. But what about Omar? What are his plans? Where will he go next?*

Although internal border controls of the European Union (EU) have practically disappeared since the 1990s, its external border controls have been reinforced due to persistent irregular migration (Lutterbeck, 2006; Van Houtum, 2010). This means that many migrants who try to enter the EU find themselves obstructed by the borders of ‘Fortress Europe’. The death toll of people trying to reach the EU is high, but numerous migrants still succeed in crossing the borders. Among them is Omar<sup>1</sup>, a thirty-four year old man from Dakar, Senegal, who crossed the Strait of Gibraltar on 12 August 2014. On 11 and 12 August 2014 more than 1,200 people arrived on Spain’s southern shores, which was one of the highest numbers of irregular migrants to enter Spain in such a short period of time (Frayer, 2014, August 14). The event made headlines around the world and immediately measures were taken to bring this ‘invasion’ to a halt.

As stated by Van Houtum and Boedeltje (2009), the media pay a lot of attention to the arrival of irregular migrants (see also figure 1.1). On television and in newspapers “is a citing of *floods, streams, masses* and even *tsunamis* against which *embankments* have to be erected in order to prevent *flooding*” (Van Houtum & Boedeltje, 2009, p. 227). However, it is striking that little is known about the migratory processes of West Africans after they have reached Europe (Toma & Castagnone, 2015). Although the European refugee crisis did lead to a focus on refugees’ journeys within Europe, the (im)mobility patterns of West Africans have remained understudied. Are migrants like Omar staying in their place of arrival, or are they travelling onwards to other cities or villages, possibly abroad? What are their reasons to stay or move? Do they get help from family, friends or other people they meet en route? These are among the questions this thesis will address. This research will provide in-

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<sup>1</sup> For reasons of confidentiality, the migrants’ names in this thesis are pseudonyms.

depth insights into the (im)mobility experiences of West African migrants within the EU, with a specific focus on the influence of migrants' social networks.

## **1.2 Research objective and research questions**

This study is framed within the VENI-research 'Fortress Europe as a Mobile Space? Intra-EU Mobility of African Migrants' of dr. J. Schapendonk. For this research project my colleague Michelle Brugman and I have conducted fieldwork in Catalonia, Spain, from March until July 2015. Three other research assistants have gathered data in Randstad (the Netherlands), Lombardy (Italy) and Bavaria (Germany)<sup>2</sup>. These are all regions where West Africans are concentrated. While we shared the main focus on the (im)mobility experiences of West African migrants within Europe, each student also investigated an individual theme. Migrants' social networks were my personal point of focus. Contacts like family members, friends and strangers may help migrants to move ahead. On the other hand, (a lack of) contacts may also function as a 'keep-factor', which means that migrants stay in a particular place. The objective of this research is:

*“Gaining insights into the relation between migrants’ social networks and the outcomes of their (im)mobility processes.”*

The gathering of in-depth insights about the trajectories of West African migrants could provide policy makers at EU level knowledge vis-à-vis African migration towards and within Europe. This could challenge their policy approach and may help them understand how to better deal with mobility and migration-related phenomena. The main research question that derives from the research objective is as follows:

*“What role do social networks play in the (im)mobility processes of West African migrants en route to Europe and after reaching European territory?”*

Migrants' (im)mobility experiences en route to Europe influence their further movements after arrival. Therefore, in order to understand the dynamics of migrants' journeys within Europe, this thesis will address the trajectories they have taken to reach Europe as well. In order to answer the main research question, the following three sub-questions have been formulated:

- 1) Which routes did migrants take to reach Europe and how did their journeys proceed after entry?

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<sup>2</sup> Jessica van Dijk has conducted her research in Randstad, Lisa Kuijpers in Lombardy and Laura Günther in Lombardy and Bavaria. Data, experiences and results were shared within this VENI-research team. The VENI-research project will continue up to 2018, and each year different master students will be selected as research assistants.

By solely focusing on the place of origin and the place of destination, mobility as a process has been overlooked (Schapendonk & Steel, 2014; Nail, 2015; Toma & Castagnone, 2015). Whereas the media's attention goes to the spectacular border crossings of migrants who are arriving in Europe, this thesis will provide a deeper insight by examining their journeys as a whole. The sedentarist focus, which perceives migration as a static phenomenon, will therefore be disregarded. Migration will not be viewed as a movement from place A to B; instead, this thesis will specifically address everything that happens along the way. Trajectories will be perceived as a dynamic process, since moments of movement and standstill are changeable and unpredictable. Within personal migration stories, various periods of mobility and immobility may be involved. Consequently, this research question will investigate how the journeys of West African migrants gradually develop.

## 2) How can we conceptualise migrants' network dynamics?

After having obtained an insight into migrants' (im)mobility experiences en route towards and within Europe, the second question will zoom in on the concept of the social network. To investigate why and when certain (dis)connections lead to particular (im)mobility processes, the 'networking approach' will be taken as a starting point. As stated by Schapendonk (2015), it is often assumed that networks automatically generate social capital from which its members benefit. However, the 'networking approach' moves away from this static notion of the social network and focuses on its dynamics instead. Migrants may make new contacts, but they may also lose existing ties. Moreover, they may need to invest in their connections, since their possibilities for help depend on it and could otherwise decline. By conceptualising migrants' networking dynamics, we will afterwards be able to provide better insights into why migrants' (im)mobility processes have certain outcomes.

## 3) How do migrants' network (dis)connections facilitate or impede their movements?

Many actors play a role in the direction and speed of one's journey. Therefore, using the 'networking approach' this question will examine how migrants' trajectories are affected by their (lack of) contacts. Not only the role of 'strong ties' such as family members or 'weak ties' like via-via contacts will be taken into account, but the influence of new contacts migrants make en route, which will be called 'new ties', will be included as well. In addition, as migrants may not only make new contacts but also lose existing ties, their disconnections will also be addressed. Furthermore, this question will examine whether their connections are (dis)advantageous for their movements, and when this is the case. The investigation of these questions will provide insights into migrants' decision-making processes, which gives us a better understanding of the evolution of their journeys in a certain direction.

### 1.3 Societal relevance

Within popular discourse, West African migrants are often portrayed in a negative way. On the one hand they are perceived as intruders, who consciously travel to Europe through illegal routes to improve their living standards. On the other hand, they are seen as helpless and vulnerable migrants, who are the victims of smugglers or even traffickers. Both of these images are strengthened by media reports, which usually only focus on the entries of irregular migrants into European territory. This contributes to the rise of an invasion discourse, which depicts ‘the’ West African migrant as an unwanted migrant who threatens the EU (Van Houtum & Boedeltje, 2009).

Moreover, not only migrants’ arrivals are a controversial topic. Their further mobility within the EU is also problematized. Although the EU promotes the cross-border movements of EU citizens, it wishes to restrict the mobility of West Africans (Schapendonk, 2014a). The asylum policy of the EU is aimed at keeping irregular migrants in their country of first entry. This is enshrined in the Dublin Convention, which makes the country of first entry responsible for their asylum applications. Furthermore, migrants do not only need to apply for asylum in their first country of entry, but they are also required to integrate in a specific nation-state (European Council, 2010). Nevertheless, their journeys are difficult to control, because once arrived in the EU they may have the possibility to travel within Europe’s borderless Schengen area<sup>3</sup>.

The sedentarist policy approach of the EU does not do justice to migrants, as their life worlds may go beyond borders (Schapendonk, 2014a). This has been demonstrated by Van Liempt (2011), who examined the relocations of ‘Dutch Somalis’ to the UK. After living in relatively mixed neighbourhoods in the Netherlands for many years, they obtained citizenship, with which they were allowed to move to the UK. Many Somalis decided to do so in order to live in a Somali community. This shows that deeper insights into migrants’ mobility choices are needed, as these may help policy makers at the EU level to better handle migration and integration issues.

Therefore, the starting point of this thesis is to provide a bottom-up perspective by showing the viewpoints of the migrants themselves. They will be given a voice, which will create insights about the life worlds of EU inhabitants who are often unheard within the political and societal debate. Instead of viewing them as invaders or helpless victims, their ‘agency’ will be addressed, and in particular the transgressive power of social networking. This is not to deny that they are affected by larger social structures, such as discourses and policies. Their actions may certainly be constrained by, for example, the migration regulations of the EU, which determine who is able to enter Europe with or without a visa. Everyone is influenced by certain power dynamics and social structures, but at the same time actors may still “resist, reclaim, and rearrange” (Merry, 2013, p. 4), i.e., make their own choices to a certain extent. In order to be able to provide a good insight into the (im)mobility and

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<sup>3</sup> Currently, however, the European refugee crisis has put the Schengen agreement under pressure. Different countries have introduced temporary border controls to stem the influx of irregular migrants (Heck, 2016, January 7).

networking dynamics of the migrants, the way West Africans find room to manoeuvre around the discourses and policies that affect their lives will be investigated.

Various scholars have demonstrated the importance of the social network in cross-border mobility. De Haas (2007, p. 31), for instance, states that: “The facilitating role of such ‘family and friends networks’ makes migration notoriously difficult for governments to control”. Therefore, it is interesting to investigate these networks, as it helps to better understand migrants’ mobility choices. A focus on the relation between migrants’ network (dis)connections and (im)mobility processes may help to reveal the pitfalls of the sedentarist policy of the EU. Moreover, it may provide insights that politicians could use to formulate policies that do more justice to the migrants themselves. This has particular relevance to policy makers who are involved in formulating regulations in the post-Stockholm phase. As the Stockholm Programme came to an end in 2014, a new agenda was presented, called “An open and secure Europe: making it happen”. This agenda outlines the EU’s guidelines for justice, freedom and security, including migration, integration, and asylum issues (European Commission, 2014). In this context, this thesis may help in drafting policies that do not only hinder migrants, but could benefit them instead.

#### **1.4 Scientific relevance**

Researchers have paid attention to the migration from Africa to Europe (e.g. De Haas, 2007; Schapendonk, 2011), to the European border control (e.g. Spijkerboer, 2007; Van Houtum, 2010) and to the mobility of EU citizens within the EU (e.g. Recchi & Favell, 2009). However, much less is known about the movements of West African migrants after they have reached ‘Fortress Europe’. Their (im)mobility experiences within the EU are understudied (Toma & Castagnone, 2015). This research contributes to filling this knowledge gap by creating new insights regarding the migrants’ (im)mobility within the EU. In order to provide an understanding of their movements, the ‘mobilities approach’ and the ‘networking approach’ will be central to this thesis.

##### *The mobilities approach to migration*

Throughout the past few decades, much research has been conducted in the field of migration. It is striking that migration studies have largely focused on two places: the place of origin and the place of destination (Nail, 2015; Toma & Castagnone, 2015). At the place of origin, researchers have mainly concentrated on the reasons leading to mobility, in terms of push and pull factors, and on the impact of migration on the home country, like brain drain (e.g. Anyangwe & Mtonga, 2007) and remittances (e.g. Levitt & Lamba-Nieves, 2011). At the place of destination, most studies have focused on the influence of immigrant groups on their host countries. Issues such as integration, multiculturalism and citizenship have been intensively addressed in these studies (e.g. Scheffer, 2007). However, by solely focusing on the places of origin and/or destination, mobility as a process has been overlooked. Nail

(2015) argues that if we really want to understand migration, we need to study its feature, which are migrants' movements in itself.

Consequently, in order to provide a good understanding of migrants' journeys towards and within the EU, the 'mobilities approach' will form the starting point of this thesis. Using this approach, migrants' mobility choices and the routes they follow will be investigated, which will reveal the dynamics of their trajectories. We may encounter unexpected movements and various periods of (im)mobility, which influence the outcomes of their mobility process. By not solely looking at fixed locations, but instead focusing on the journeys as a whole, this research will be able to explain *why* migrants' journeys evolve in a certain direction.

### *The networking approach to migration*

Nowadays, migration scholars agree that migration is not only an economic process, but also a political and social one (Collyer, 2005). The social network has become an important concept in the field of migration studies. Many scholars have demonstrated how migration is mediated by social networks (e.g. Boyd, 1989; Massey et al., 1994). Some studies however, also highlight the undesirable consequences of social interactions (e.g. Portes, 1998). Other studies claim that the social network fails to explain migration (e.g. Collyer, 2005; Krissman, 2005).

More recently, however, it has been argued that scholars have used a too static concept of the social network. Köşer Akçapar (2010) and Pathirage and Collyer (2011) criticise the assumption that social ties automatically result in the creation of social capital. Moreover, Somerville (2011) claims that migration theories explain how migrant networks are sustained, but not how they are created. Therefore, in order to prevent 'network determinism', in this thesis the 'networking approach' will be used. This approach focuses on the dynamics of the social network, i.e. it acknowledges the changeability of one's network connections (Schapendonk, 2015). Migrants may for example lose some contacts, but also find new connections. Moreover, in order to benefit from the social capital networks might generate, migrants may need to invest in their contacts. By looking at the way social capital is (consciously) used, greater insights will be gained into how migrants' networks 'work' (Pathirage & Collyer, 2011). This will contribute to the academic debate on social network theories.

Within this research, I see an important task to link the mobilities approach with the networking approach. While examining the trajectories of West African migrants, the main focus will be on the influence of their (lack of) connections. This will provide more insights in their mobility choices, which contributes to a better understanding of their journeys as a whole.

## **1.5 Structure of the thesis**

After this introduction, this thesis is composed of five chapters. In chapter two, the theoretical framework will be set out, which will discuss theories about (im)mobility and the concept of the social network. Afterwards, in chapter three, the methodological framework of this study will be presented.

This section will address the research methods I have used and will elaborate on the ethical and practical challenges I got confronted with in the fieldwork setting. Furthermore, the research population will be described and my respondents will be introduced. Their empirical stories will be central to the chapters four and five. Chapter four will focus on the movements of the respondents. Whereas the first part of the chapter will examine the trajectories they have taken to reach Europe, the second part will investigate their journeys after entry. Both periods of mobility and immobility will be discussed. Chapter five will specifically look at the influence of migrants' (dis)connections on their trajectories. It will examine migrants' network dynamics in detail. Finally, in chapter six, the main research findings and answers to the research questions will be presented and reflected upon. Moreover, recommendations will be given to policy makers to draft policies that do more justice to the migration aspirations of the West African migrants.

## Chapter 2 – From fixity to mobility: exploring migration and network theories

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### 2.1 Introduction

Central to this research is the relation between migrants' social networks and the outcomes of their (im)mobility processes. In order to gain a deeper insight into the concepts of (im)mobility and the social network, several theories will be discussed in this chapter. The chapter will open with the debate on migration research. In several studies, it has been investigated why people migrate and what the effects of migration are in the countries of origin and destination. With the mobility turn in social science, however, migrants' journeys also became a topic of research. The importance of a focus on migrants' movements will be explained. Afterwards, the main theories within social network studies will be addressed. As is the case for migration research, there has also been a shift from a static view on networks towards a more dynamic view. It is my aim to make clear why the dynamic 'networking approach' is useful for this thesis.

### 2.2 Approaches in migration studies: towards a focus on migrants' journeys

Throughout the past decades, scholars have conducted a lot of research in the field of migration. Several approaches have sought to explain why people move to another place. Neoclassical migration theory (e.g. Lee, 1966) viewed migration as the result of certain push and pull factors. Whereas push factors drive individuals away from their place of origin, pull factors pull them towards a new location. It was argued that migration would automatically lead to an equilibrium between the supply and demand for labour. The New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM) (e.g. Stark, 1982) arose as a critical response to this rational theory. According to them, not individuals, but families, households or even communities decide whether someone should migrate or not. Moreover, they claimed that the decision-making process is not only determined by a cost-benefit analysis, but also by other factors, such as the reduction of income risks. Neoclassical migration theory was also criticized by historical-structuralists (e.g. Cohen, 1987), who stated that migrants do not have a free choice in the decision whether to migrate or not. They pointed to the uneven distribution of power and wealth in this world, whereby rich countries exploit immigrants of poorer countries by using them as a source of cheap labour. Finally, migration systems theory (e.g. Kritz et al., 1992), looked at migration in a broader perspective. They argued that a combination of individual and structural factors explain why people depart. Furthermore, several scholars (e.g. Massey, 1990) stated that migration causes structural changes in both migrants' countries of origin and destination, which is likely to trigger further migration.

Whereas these approaches mainly focused on migrants' decision-making processes in their countries of origin, there are also studies that have investigated the impact of migration in receiving

countries. Hereby scholars usually looked at the influence of immigrant groups on their host societies. As stated by Castles, De Haas and Miller (2014), perceptions about migration in these societies are often ambiguous. On the one hand, migrants may fill labour shortages, but on the other hand, their cultural differences may be perceived as a threat. Consequently, in this context, issues like multiculturalism, integration and citizenship have been intensively addressed (e.g. Scheffer, 2007).

To connect sending countries with receiving countries, the concept of transnationalism has been introduced to migration research. The term gained prominence in the 1990s, when the anthropologists Glick Schiller, Basch and Blanc Szanton (1992) addressed the interaction of migrants with people in their countries of origin. Since then many scholars have written about the economic, socio-cultural, political and familial ties migrants maintain, despite the existence of borders and the large distance (e.g. Faist, Fauser & Reisenauer, 2013). It was argued that through these cross-border networks, migrants could be involved in two places at the same time.

However, several scholars have argued that all of the approaches described above have merely looked at two locations: the place of origin and the place of destination (e.g. Schapendonk & Steel, 2014; Nail, 2015; Toma & Castagnone, 2015). This is problematic, because it leads to a static conceptualisation of the migrant, as is also stated by Nail (2015):

The “emigrant” is the name given to the migrant as the former member or citizen, and the “immigrant” as the would-be member or citizen. In both cases, a static place and membership are theorized first, and the migrant is the one who lacks both (...) If we want to develop a political theory of the migrant itself and not the migrant *as a failed citizen*, we need to reinterpret the migrant first and foremost according to its own defining feature: its movement.  
(p. 3)

Nails plea to focus on migrants’ movements corresponds to the new mobilities paradigm. With the emergence of the mobility turn, the static focus within a lot of research has been criticised (Sheller & Urry, 2006). Urry (2000), one of the pioneers of this theoretical debate, argues that within social science the actual movements of people, objects and ideas should occupy a more prominent place. However, this does not mean that fixities are ignored. Mobilities and fixities are related and, therefore, it is important to pay attention to their interconnectedness (Sheller & Urry, 2006).

The mobilities paradigm is essential for migration research, because a focus on migrants’ journeys will provide a better understanding of migrants’ mobility patterns and lives. By investigating migrants’ movements, one will encounter different periods of (im)mobility which influence the outcomes of their migratory processes. As argued by Toma and Castagnone (2015), migrants do not always move to their destination in a straight line. Migrants may travel through various countries and live there for a while. Moreover, it is possible that the direction of their journeys changes en route.

Consequently, migrants' trajectories can be seen as an evolving process (Grillo, 2007; Gladkova & Mazzucato, 2015).

Another reason for the mobilities paradigm to be of value, is that it draws attention to other types of mobility than long-distance migration alone (Rogaly, 2015). Mobilities scholars investigate short-time visits, daily commutes, et cetera, as well (e.g. Binnie, Edensor, Holloway, Millington & Young, 2007). According to Rogaly (2015), it is best not to focus all research on long-distance migration, because "there is no necessary hierarchy in people's experience of spatial mobility" (p. 541). Short-time visits and short-distance moves may be as significant to my respondents' lives as long (international) moves. Therefore, when discussing migrants' (im)mobility experiences after reaching Europe, both migrants' residential relocations and their short-time visits will be addressed (see chapter 4).

A critical addition to the mobilities paradigm comes from McMorran (2015). He agrees that it is important to investigate both migrants' movements and fixities, but he warns us not to consider these as opposites. With his study about workers in Japanese inns, he demonstrates that people may simultaneously experience mobility at one scale and immobility at another. This notion is interesting for this thesis, because movement and stasis may be interwoven in my respondents' lives. While (irregular) migrants may be mobile within Spain, they may face restrictions in crossing its borders. A lack of papers, money or connections abroad may lead them to stay put on the international scale.

In order to investigate migrants' journeys, the 'mobilities approach' is relevant. This approach analyses: "(1) the ways im/mobilities are produced in transnational processes, (2) the ways mobilities come with power differences in terms of access and speed, and (3) how these power differences are reflected in mobility experiences and mobility relations" (Schapendonk & Steel, 2014, p. 262). By focusing on these aspects, the authors argue, researchers become aware of (im)mobility relations and power dynamics, which leads to a better understanding of migrants' movements. Therefore, within this study, migrants' trajectories will be investigated using the 'mobilities approach'. Migrants' (im)mobility experiences in the past, their present lives in Catalonia, and their aspirations to move in the future form part of their trajectories.

For this thesis, especially the first dimension of the 'mobilities approach' is valuable. This dimension requires examination of the different factors that lead to (im)mobility and an investigation of the role of network (dis)connections in particular. However, this research will pay attention to the second and the third dimension of the 'mobilities approach' as well. These dimensions focus on the power dynamics of (im)mobility, which is of importance, because "mobility is a resource to which not everyone has an equal relationship" (Skeggs, 2004, p. 49). As stated by Massey (1991) and Skeggs (2004), there is a power asymmetry, which enables some people to be more mobile than others. For documented migrants it may be easier to travel than for irregular migrants. This research, consequently, will provide insights into the influence of one's (lack of) papers on one's trajectory.

### **2.3 From networks to networking: towards a focus on migrants' network dynamics**

Migration scholars nowadays agree that migration cannot be explained by economic factors alone: "It is now established that migration is a social process just as much as it is an economic or a political one" (Collyer, 2005, p. 699). In the field of migration studies the social network has become an important concept, because migrants' mobility choices may be highly influenced by their (lack of) contacts. These contacts are not necessarily personal contacts like family members or friends. Connections like employment agencies, smugglers and people migrants meet in the streets could also affect the direction of their journeys.

The idea that social networks play an important role in the mobility of migrants is not new to migration theories. According to Massey et al. (1990) and Palloni et al. (2001), already in the 1920s and 1930s scholars pointed to the role of migrant networks in international migration (e.g. Gamio, 1930). Research showed that there is a connection between people in particular places of origin and destination. This was also demonstrated in theories about 'chain migration' in the 1960s and 1970s (e.g. MacDonald & MacDonald, 1964; Ritchey, 1976). These theories assumed that future migrants will migrate to destinations where migrants have settled in the past.

Moreover, a highly influential theory to social network studies in the 1970s was Granovetter's (1973; 1983) 'strength of weak ties'. Granovetter defines a tie and its strength as "a (probably linear) combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding), and the reciprocal services which characterize the tie" (Granovetter, 1973, p. 1361). His paper puts forward the idea of a 'forbidden triad', which means that when friend A has a strong connection with friend B, and friend A also has a strong connection with friend C, B and C will also be connected. The triad in which B is not connected to C does not occur. According to Granovetter, ties can form a 'bridge' between different persons of unconnected groups. However, strong ties cannot form bridges, because when A has a strong connection with both B and C, B and C also have a strong connection with each other, and therefore whatever is to be spread out remains confined within the small group of contacts. Consequently, Granovetter argues that for diffusion across larger social distances, weak ties are more valuable than strong ties. Through weak ties more people can be reached, as these weak ties function as bridges between otherwise unconnected groups.

Another important theory for migration studies has been the work of Bourdieu (1986) on social capital. In his work, social capital 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 and recognition" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248). Bourdieu points to the benefits of individuals by participating in a group. The amount of social capital that someone possesses, is dependent on the number of connections he or she can use and on the amount of capital that each of these connections possesses. Only through social interactions, social capital can be created. Social networks are not a natural given, but must be constructed. According to Bourdieu (1986) "the network of relationships is the product of investment strategies, individual or collective,

consciously or unconsciously aimed at establishing or reproducing social relationships that are directly usable in the short or long term” (p. 249). This means that it takes effort to reproduce social capital; it takes time and energy, which (in)directly is economic capital, to maintain social networks. The different types of capital (cultural, social and economic) can be converted into each other, but economic capital is at the root of the other forms of capital. Social and cultural capital are indirectly also economic capital. For example, while economic capital gives access to some goods or services, other issues can only be obtained through the use of social capital. So the expenditure of time and energy in care and concern about one’s connections is economically not a wastage, but can be seen as an investment.

Bourdieu’s work (1986) led many scholars to recognize the importance of social capital in migration studies. It has since then been argued that migration creates social capital among migrants’ connections in their countries of origin (Palloni et al., 2001; Schapendonk, 2015). This social capital is said to facilitate the migration of others by for example decreasing the costs and lowering the risks. As a consequence, it is more likely that persons with a connection to migrants will migrate themselves. Many scholars have demonstrated how migration is mediated by social networks (e.g. Boyd, 1989; Massey et al., 1994). Moreover, several studies have shown that social capital is especially of importance for irregular migrants (e.g. Chavez, 1998; Engbersen, Van San & Leerkes, 2006).

However, there are also studies that criticize these findings. Faist (2000) argues that social connections do not necessarily lead to more cross-border movements. According to him, social ties could be the reason why people stay in a particular place. In other words, the social network could also function as a ‘keep factor’ (Van der Velde & Van Naerssen, 2011). Another critical view comes from Portes (1998), who has written about the undesirable consequences of social interactions. He states that membership of a social network may demand a lot from its members. This argument has also been put forward by Collyer (2005). According to him, migration restrictions lead irregular migrants to use social networks differently. His research about Algerian asylum seekers in France and the UK reflects Granovetter’s (1973; 1983) ‘strength of the weak ties’ argument. Despite the fact that almost all of Collyer’s respondents had family members in France, they decided to move to the UK. Family members were hesitant to help the new migrants in France, because the socio-economic and legal position of irregular migrants makes it difficult for them to fulfil the norms of reciprocity within their networks. The Algerian asylum seekers were therefore focusing more on weaker ties rather than on strong family networks in their decision-making processes about destination countries. Moreover, political and economic factors were also playing a bigger role than before.

Another critique on social network thinking is that scholars have put too much emphasis on the supply side of migration and have ignored other important actors by doing so. Krissman (2005) for example, claimed that research has only focused on hometown connections and ignored other important actors like employers and recruitment agents. According to him, the role of non-hometown actors cannot be denied in international movements. Personally, I think he makes a good point and,

therefore, this research looks at all the different kinds of connections that may influence migrants' (im)mobility processes.

A more recent critique on social networks is that scholars have used a too static concept of the network in two different ways. First, according to Somerville (2011), research has demonstrated how migrant networks are sustained, but it has not explained how new migrant networks are established. This implies that whereas migrants are using their networks to move to particular locations, they are not creating new networks and do not move to new destinations. Secondly, Köşer Akçapar (2010) and Pathirage and Collyer (2011) have argued that scholars have wrongly assumed that connections automatically result in the creation of social capital, of which the members of a network could benefit. According to them, scholars have overlooked the fact that it takes effort to reproduce social capital. Schapendonk (2015) claims that for these reasons some scholars are in favour of a practice approach to social networks. In his article about 'dynamic social networking', he revisits the works of Granovetter (1973; 1983) and Bourdieu (1986) and brings together different practice approaches to show how a dynamic approach to social networks may elucidate why individual migration processes have certain outcomes. This brings him to four elements that form the basis of the 'networking approach':

- the changeability of network connections in a morphological sense (new ties and lost ties);
- the changeability of network connections in terms of their character (changing power relations and new forms of exchange);
- the effort that is needed to create and maintain social networks and accumulate social capital (networking practices, networking capital, and network work); and
- the relational aspect of networks (the interdependency of social relationships). (Schapendonk, 2015, p. 813)

As stated by Pathirage and Collyer (2011) and Schapendonk (2015), migrants' networks are not static, instead, their connections are subject to change. While migrants' networks may expand over time, migrants may also (want to) lose several contacts. Consequently, the first element of the 'networking approach' addresses the influence of new contacts migrants make en route, as well as the role of existing connections migrants (purposely) lose. The second element analyses the changing character of network connections. Migrants' networks do not only change when they meet new persons or when they get rid of certain contacts. Existing relationships may also be altered, for example when via-via contacts become friends, or in the case of marriage or divorce. The third element investigates *when* migrants may benefit from the social capital of their connections. In order to benefit from the social capital of their networks, migrants may have to (re-)invest in their relations. For this reason, as argued by Pathirage and Collyer (2011), it is important to investigate migrants' 'social network work', which

is “the conscious efforts that actors make to foster social relations for their own future benefit” (p. 315). Finally, the fourth element of the ‘networking approach’ is the relational dimension of networks. The extent to which individuals may benefit from their connections, is not only dependent on their own networking skills, but also on the capacity and goodwill of others (Larsen & Urry, 2010).

The investigation of these four elements will enable this research to move away from ‘network determinism’, which assumes that networks automatically create social capital. Using the ‘networking approach’, this study will provide a better understanding of how social networks ‘function’ and, therefore, it will provide a better insight into how migrants’ (dis)connections may influence their trajectories. Therefore, it forms a useful starting point for this research.

## **2.4 Concluding remarks**

In this chapter, several theories on (im)mobility and the concept of the social network have been discussed. It is notable that both migration and social network studies have moved away from a static focus towards a more dynamic approach. Whereas migration scholars previously solely looked at the places of origin and destination, the mobility turn in social science led the journey in itself to become a research object. The ‘mobilities approach’, which focuses on migrants’ movements, is thus valuable in order to investigate migrants’ mobility choices.

As was the case for migrants’ journeys, migrants’ networks used to be taken for granted as well. Whereas migration scholars thought that migrants’ movements would inevitably lead to a predetermined destination, network scholars assumed that connections would automatically result in the creation of social capital the members of a network could benefit from. Scholars like Köşer Akçapar (2010) and Pathirage and Collyer (2011) have criticised this assumption, since according to them it takes effort to reproduce social capital. For this reason they argued that it is better to focus on migrants’ network dynamics.

We may thus conclude that the ‘mobilities approach’ and the ‘networking approach’ form a useful point of departure for this research. By focusing on migrants’ journeys and their network dynamics, useful insights may be obtained about their (im)mobility processes towards and within Europe.

## Chapter 3 – Methodology

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“Rather than *studying people*, ethnography means *learning from people*.”

*J. P. Spradley (1980, p.3)*

### 3.1 Introduction

The migration trajectories of the migrants and the concept of the social network have been investigated by conducting an ethnography. As stated by Marcus: “Ethnography is predicated upon attention to the everyday, an intimate knowledge of face-to-face communities and groups” (1995, p. 99). To arrive at an in-depth understanding of my respondents’ experiences, the creation of an open and trustworthy setting has proved to be essential.

Openness is not only important while doing research. Methodological transparency makes it possible for researchers to learn from each other (Bilger & Van Liempt, 2009). Therefore, in this chapter my research strategies will be discussed. First will be explained how I got in contact with my respondents. This will be followed by an elaboration on the research methods I have used. The methods consisted of in-depth interviews and ethnographic engagements. Afterwards the research population will be described. The last part of this chapter will be a reflection on my position as a researcher and on the ethical and practical challenges I got confronted with in the fieldwork setting.

While reading the following sections, one will notice that a lot of fieldwork has been conducted together with a fellow member of the VENI research group, Michelle Brugman. Accordingly, the reasons for our cooperation will be addressed in the final part of this chapter.

### 3.2 Gaining access in an evolving field

Many West African migrants in Spain live in the margins of society. They often face discrimination and police harassment, especially the ones who are working in the informal economy. The majority of my respondents are irregular migrants who are performing illegal activities in order to survive. They want to stay off the police’s radar. Various researchers have written about the difficulties they got confronted with when trying to get in touch with (irregular) migrants. For example, according to Heckathorn (1997) “there exist strong privacy concerns, because membership involves stigmatized or illegal behavior, leading individuals to refuse to cooperate, or give unreliable answers to protect their privacy” (p.174). Apart from this, a clear sampling frame of the research population does not exist. For these reasons I expected that getting in touch with respondents would be challenging.

As stated by Bilger and Van Liempt (2009), there is only a small number of publications about finding and accessing respondents within migration research. Consequently, to contribute to the body of literature I will elaborate on the two specific strategies I have used to gain access to respondents. In the following sections I will explain how I used the snowball method and the site approach to establish

contact with migrants. It is important to note that I viewed the research population as an evolving field. By using the snowball method and the site approach I gradually got more access to the different West African communities. Whereas this research started with contact with a few Senegalese people, it ended with a broad (self-)selection of persons from many different nationalities. By moving along with the field I did not encounter many difficulties in getting access to (irregular) migrants. While others have written about ‘hard-to-reach’ populations (e.g. Bilger & Van Liempt, 2009), I experienced the research population as easy to reach, open and hospitable. Therefore, I will also elaborate on the ease with which I gained access to the respondents (see section 3.2.4).

### *3.2.1 Networking with migrants*

The first strategy I have used to get in touch with West African migrants is the snowball method. This is a “technique used by researchers whereby one contact, or participant, is used to help recruit another, who in turn puts the researcher in touch with another” (Clifford, French & Valentine, 2012, p. 535). An example of a ‘rolling snowball’ was my contact with Sainey, a thirty-eight year old Gambian man I met in Morocco, as is illustrated in box 3.1.

#### **Box 3.1: From Sainey to Omar and from Omar to many others**

In the summer of 2014 I was in Morocco, where I met several irregular migrants. I had kept contact with Sainey and when I knew that I was going to Barcelona, I asked him whether he knew anyone there. He gave me the contact details of Omar, a thirty-four year old Senegalese man who used to live in his neighbourhood. I had several Skype conversations with him and when I arrived in Spain we met each other. Through Omar I got to know many other migrants. He has acquainted me to the Senegalese community by introducing me to his friends, classmates and other people he knew from the streets. With three migrants he has introduced me to, I have also conducted interviews.

Box 3.1 shows how I successfully reached other migrants through the use of existing contacts. Sainey’s snowball has been of great value to this project, as Omar eventually became my most important respondent. However, ‘snowballing’ also has some shortcomings. According to Dahinden and Efonayi-Mäder (2009), social networks are often characterized by ‘similar’ persons, as people tend to gravitate towards others with the same characteristics. My fieldwork experiences showed this as well. Omar, for example, could only provide access to young Senegalese men like himself. This would lead to a sampling bias (Van Meeteren, Engbersen & Van San, 2009).

Moreover, the snowball method did not work for all of our respondents. Only the persons with whom we had built up a friendly relationship were willing to help us in finding new connections. Michelle and I got the impression that some men did not want to ‘share’ us. For example, after our interview with Saliou, a twenty-seven year old man from Dakar, Senegal, we came across some of his friends in the streets. He told them proudly that he had been interviewed by us. However, he did not

want to introduce us to his friends, when we asked him if we could also talk to them. Probably gender<sup>4</sup> has had a big influence on this issue. I think that several respondents saw it as a privilege that we, two young female students, had chosen them to talk about their experiences. Mamadou, a twenty-six year old man from Thiadiaye, Senegal, seemed to confirm this. When I had returned to the Netherlands after the fieldwork period he said: “Me, sometimes, when I call my friends in Senegal, I tell them listen, I have a friend in the Netherlands, which is very nice, who is a good person. You know, it is also, for me it is a story that I can tell my friends, that I have a friend in the Netherlands, imagine this, she is Dutch. For me it is a story and I am happy that you are my friend”.

Since before the start of this research I knew that ‘snowballing’ could have some shortcomings, I had planned to find respondents using another strategy as well. Finally, during my fieldwork period, the majority of my respondents have been found using the site approach.

### 3.2.2 Contacting people in migrant places

The second strategy I have used to gain access to the research population is the site approach. This strategy “can be used if the targeted population can be found at an accurately defined site (...) Researchers can go directly to these sites to contact potential interview partners” (Dahinden & Efonayi-Mäder, 2009, p.106-107). Michelle and I spent the first weeks strolling through the city to identify the places where African vendors sell their goods, as they are the most visible group of migrants in the streets.

The *top manta*<sup>5</sup> is an illegal activity and when the police approaches the *manteros*<sup>6</sup>, they quickly collect their stuff and flee away. At first sight it seemed impossible to define the locations where the street vending takes place, because the vendors are highly mobile. They might be selling somewhere for five minutes only, after which they are chased away by the police and move on to another place again<sup>7</sup> (see figure 3.1).



Figure 3.1: Street vendors with their goods (NOS, 2015, October 28).

Nevertheless, the migrants stay close to touristic sights, because tourists form the majority of their customers. The touristic areas of Barcelona consist thus of two types of travellers, which reminds me of Bauman (1998), who stated that “in the society of travellers, in the travelling society, tourism

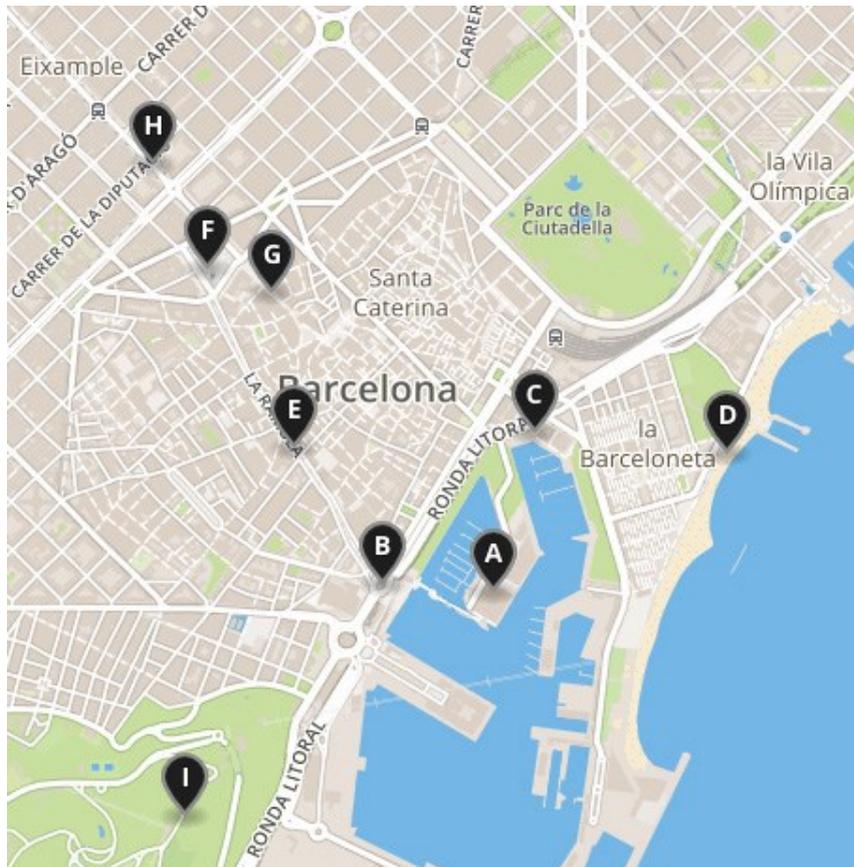
<sup>4</sup> More about gender issues under the paragraph of challenges and ethical issues (see section 3.5, p. 36).

<sup>5</sup> The Spanish expression for people selling goods on blankets.

<sup>6</sup> *Manteros* and *lateros* (usually Pakistani men who are selling drinks on the streets) are also called *vendedores ambulantes*, which means ‘mobile vendors’.

<sup>7</sup> There are indications that the *manteros* and *lateros* do not have to be mobile anymore during their daily work in the future. According to Figueredo & Justicia (2015, October 17) and Van Spengen (2015, October 28), Ada Colau, Barcelona’s new mayor, wants to stop the ‘hunt’ on street vendors. Currently she is designing a plan, which permits the vendors to sell legally at certain places.

and vagrancy are two faces of the same coin” (p. 96). Both tourists and ‘vagabonds’, a term Bauman uses for irregular migrants, are on the move in this globalized world. Figure 3.2 shows the sites where street vendors can be found within Barcelona<sup>8</sup>. Most of the street vendors move around the same spot every day. When we approached the *manteros* in these places, they stated that they did not have a lot of time and that we could get their telephone numbers to continue our conversation another day.



- A. Around the Maremagnum shopping mall
- B. Next to the Columbus statue
- C. Moll del Dipòsit
- D. Around and on Barceloneta beach
- E. La Rambla
- F. In and around the Plaça de Catalunya metro station
- G. Avenida del Portal de l'Angel
- H. Passeig de Gràcia
- I. Mirador de l'Alcalde, Montjuïc

Figure 3.2: The locations where street vendors sell their goods (author's own creation).

While searching for contact with street vendors, we noticed that several migrants were walking through Barcelona with a shopping cart. They were looking for *chatarra*<sup>9</sup>, which are recyclable materials, especially metals, which they can sell later on. We approached some of them with an informal talk, and they also quickly agreed to meet us for an interview.

After a while we got to know that all the African *manteros* come from Senegal. The migrants we approached while they were searching for *chatarra* were mostly Senegalese as well. Within two months our access to the Senegalese community had become extensive, which was interesting. However, we wanted to expand the selection of respondents by finding people from other origins. For

<sup>8</sup> First I doubted whether it is ethically responsible to display the locations of the *manteros*. Finally I decided to show this map, because the locations are already known by the Spanish police.

<sup>9</sup> The Spanish word for scrap.

this reason, we deliberately applied a diversifying strategy in our site approach. We used the collective knowledge of our existing contacts as a resource to get to know where migrants from other nationalities were located. Our respondents pointed to three particular neighbourhoods. Many Nigerians and Ghanaians (and Senegalese) live in Santa Coloma de Gramenet, a municipality in the north of Barcelona, at the metro stations Santa Coloma and Fondo. A lot of Gambians (and Senegalese) live in La Mina, an area of the Sant Martí district in Barcelona, at the Besòs Mar metro station. Finally, a multicultural neighbourhood is to be found in L'Hospitalet de Llobregat, a municipality to the immediate southwest of Barcelona, at the metro stations Torrassa and Florida. Here we got in contact with several migrants from Mali and Nigeria. In May and June, Michelle and I visited these neighbourhoods frequently (see figure 3.3).

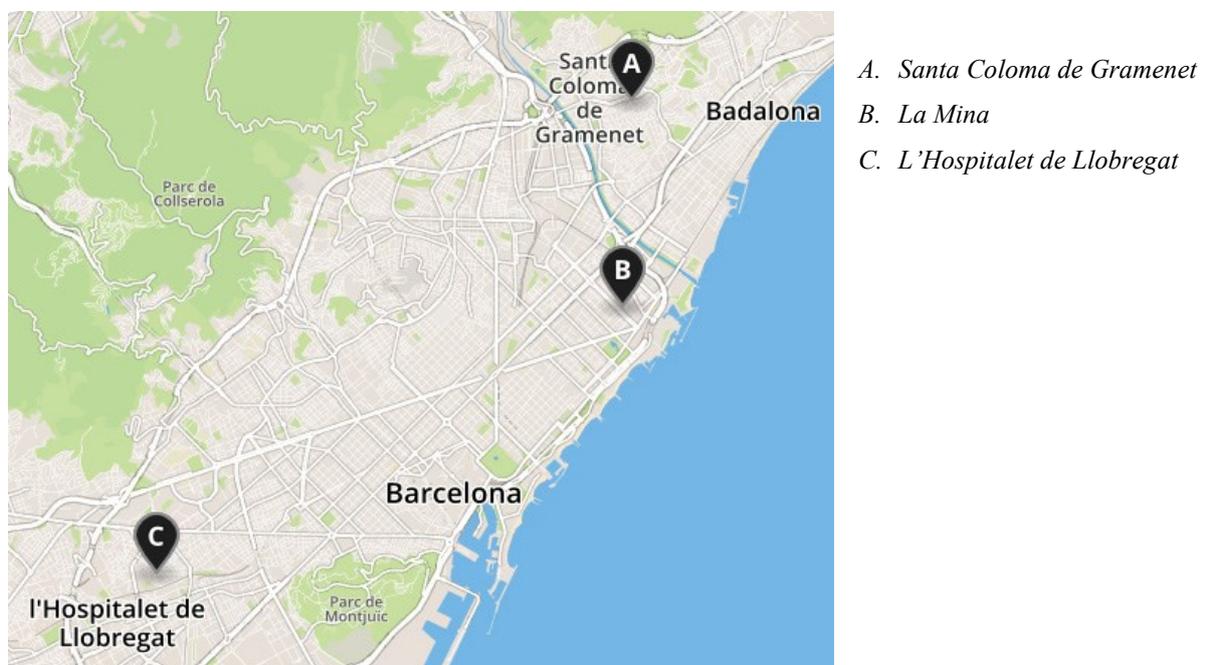


Figure 3.3: Migrant neighbourhoods (author's own creation).

Meanwhile we also contacted people on La Rambla, the pedestrian boulevard in the city centre, which attracts many different people every day. Here we met a Cameroonian man, who was taking a walk with his friend, a Sierra Leonean man who was working as a nightclub promoter, and a Gambian man, who was trying to sell marihuana. For this research project the site approach turned out to be a good method to come into contact with respondents. In some occasions, however, our tactic aroused interest among bystanders (see box 3.2).

**Box 3.2: Searching for men?**

In May and June Michelle and I often went to Santa Coloma de Gramenet to find respondents. One afternoon we got into contact with several West African men. Meanwhile, some Latino men were

sitting on a bench and observing us. Suddenly one of them said: “You are looking for men, do you want my telephone number as well?” We thanked him, but rejected his offer. We explained him that we were doing a project about West African migrants and that he does not belong to the research population.

### *3.2.3 Case study: seasonal employment in Lleida*

During the last weekend of June, Michelle and I went to Lleida<sup>10</sup> to investigate the seasonal employment of West African migrants. Lleida is a city in the west of Catalonia, at a short two-hour drive from Barcelona. Many people come here to work temporarily on the countryside. As the snowball method and the site approach turned out to be good strategies to come into contact with respondents in Barcelona, we decided to apply the same tactics here. By ‘snowballing’ with Aly, a thirty-six year old Senegalese street vendor, we got direct access to three Senegalese men. The rest of our contacts have been found by approaching people on the streets.

Although we contacted the migrants in a similar way as we had done in Barcelona, it took us more effort here to find people willing to participate in our research project. This was partly because of our short stay, which led to more hesitation among possible respondents. Our continuous presence in the field led the migrants in Barcelona to recognize us after a while. In Lleida we did not have enough time to build up a trust-relationship with the African communities. Moreover, other reasons for refusal in Lleida were the high temperatures and the Ramadan. Combined with long working days in the sun, it was understandable that several men did not want to be interviewed. A couple of migrants we approached during daytime, however, temporarily did not have job. In contrast to Barcelona, where Michelle and I had to interfere in people’s daily activities, these men were sitting on benches under the shade of a tree. We could directly interview them, as they stated they did not have anything else to do. This was convenient for us, because we were not able to plan for meetings later that week due to our short stay. In total, we have been able to interview seven migrants we contacted in the streets.

### *3.2.4 The ease of engagement: critique on the notion of a ‘hard-to-reach’ population*

As stated earlier, in current literature (irregular) migrants are known as ‘hard-to-reach’ populations. However, during our fieldwork Michelle and I found it rather easy to get access to respondents. Several factors have contributed to our successful engagement. First of all, Michelle and I had a social approach. We contacted the migrants in an informal way by starting a small conversation. Afterwards, we told them that we were students from the Netherlands, who have come to Barcelona to get to know more about the lives of African migrants. Most people told us that they found our project interesting and that they liked to talk about their experiences with us. As a marginalised group, they saw it as an

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<sup>10</sup> Lleida is the Catalan name for Lerida.

opportunity to tell their personal stories, which are often unheard within the political and societal debate.

Moreover, Michelle and I kept visiting migrant places and, consequently, the migrants began to recognize us (see also section 3.4.2). If the conditions permitted us to do so, we had a little chat with them. Thanks to our presence in the field and our informal talks, the trust of our respondents had grown. This shows that “the art of making small talk, in daily life a basic social skill, is an important if not central ingredient of working in the field” (Driessen & Jansen, 2013).

Finally, contrary to the widespread belief in ‘insiderness’ to gain access to the research population (Markova, 2009), our experiences show that ‘strangeness’ benefitted the establishment of contact. For example, when I asked Mamadou, a twenty-six year old Senegalese street vendor without residence papers, why he was so quickly willing to cooperate, he answered me that he has never been scared of us. I had approached him in French, which led him to believe that we could not be from the Spanish police. Mustafa, a twenty-three year old Senegalese street vendor with a residence permit, had also directly noticed that we were foreigners. He even directly offered to show us the shops where he was buying his goods. Similar explanations were provided by other respondents about why they participated so rapidly. A remark must be made, however, that both the migrants and the two of us were outsiders in Spain. Like Schapendonk in his research about African migrants in Morocco and Turkey, “we had both crossed cultural and linguistic borders, and this helped the formation of ‘research alliances’” (Schapendonk, 2011, p. 64-65).

### 3.3 The selection of respondents

To get an image of the different people I have interviewed, let me give some numbers: fifty-three respondents are male, only one is female. Their ages range from twenty-two to fifty-five, but the average respondent was about thirty-five years old. Twenty-one respondents have children, twenty-two are married, but only five of them are living in a family context. Two respondents are divorced. The majority of the respondents come from Senegal and Nigeria, but I have also interviewed migrants from other origins (see table 3.1). A more extensive overview of my respondents can be found in appendix I.

Country of birth	No. of respondents
Senegal	21
Nigeria	15
Mali	6
Ghana	3
Ivory Coast	3
Gambia	2
Burkina Faso	1

Cameroon	1
Guinea (Conakry)	1
Sierra Leone	1

Table 3.1: The origins of my respondents.

The selection of the respondents was not based on their legal status. Currently, fifteen respondents do not have papers, while thirty-nine respondents have a (temporary) residence permit. I chose to include both irregular and legal migrants in this project, because migrants who have papers now, might have been confronted with irregularity in the past. Moreover, legal migrants might lose their status, whereas irregular migrants might get their documents. Therefore it is not insightful to make a distinction on the basis of these categories.

As one may have noticed, there is a gender bias in my research. Only one of my fifty-four respondents was a woman. Consequently, ‘the’ West African migrant in this thesis has come to mean a male West African migrant. Several factors might explain this imbalance. First of all, more West African men than women are migrating to Spain, as the numbers of the Instituto Nacional de Estadística show (see table 3.2 for the data of 2013 and 3.3 for the data of 2014<sup>11</sup>).

Country of birth	Men	Women
Gambia	1.005	153
Ghana	694	375
Guinea (Conakry)	413	196
Mali	989	172
Mauritania	344	161
Nigeria	926	570
Senegal	2.226	836
Other countries	2.890	2.195

Table 3.2: West African immigration to Spain in 2013 structured by sex and country of birth. Source: Instituto Nacional de Estadística ([www.ine.es](http://www.ine.es)) and personal modification.

Country of birth	Men	Women
Gambia	937	185
Ghana	611	296
Guinea (Conakry)	382	198
Mali	1.050	196
Mauritania	387	159
Nigeria	777	519
Senegal	2.191	792
Other countries	2.989	2.349

Table 3.3: West African immigration to Spain in 2014 structured by sex and country of birth. (The numbers from 2014 are provisional.) Source: Instituto Nacional de Estadística ([www.ine.es](http://www.ine.es)) and personal modification.

Ms. Moya, coordinator of the Immigrants and Refugees sector of the Red Cross in Barcelona, confirmed that West African migrant populations are male dominated. According to her, the majority of this group fits the profile of a young man that comes to Europe alone (Ms. Moya, personal communication, 19 May 2015). Amina, a twenty-five year old Senegalese street vendor, was the only woman we have interviewed. She told us that men are more likely to migrate than women, because

<sup>11</sup> The numbers from previous years show a similar male to female ratio. Note: the category ‘other countries’ includes all sub-Saharan African migrants, not only West African migrants.

they are seen as the main breadwinners, who think that they will find a better job in Europe. She also said that women often find it too risky to undertake the journey. When she crossed the Mediterranean Sea, she was with fifty-one people in a *patera*<sup>12</sup>, among whom there were only four women including herself.

Furthermore, West African women are less visible on the streets than men. Some respondents told us that many women only work inside their houses, which made it difficult for us to meet them using the site approach. An exception are the Nigerian women, who come to La Rambla or other nightlife areas during the night. However, they are earning their money as sex workers and Michelle and I felt uncomfortable to approach them. The majority of the women we did approach (no sex workers), stated that they did not want to be interviewed, because they were too busy. They were working all day, and during the night they also had to take care of their families. It took us a lot of effort to finally talk with Amina. When we met her the first day, she gave us her telephone number. When we called her, she said that she was working every day and every night. She could only talk with us when it was raining. As it rarely rains in Barcelona, we decided to keep visiting the place where she sells her jewellery. One day, the police was not on site and there were almost no tourists. We were glad that Amina wanted to talk about her experiences that moment.

Finally, Michelle and I also tried to contact migrant organisations for women in order to find more female respondents. Unfortunately, however, we did not succeed in establishing contact.

### **3.4 Ethnographic fieldwork**

The goal of this research project was to collect detailed migration histories. In order to get an image of the respondents' trajectories and their multiple motivations for being on the move, I have used several ethnographic methods. In-depth interviews have been my main research method, but I have also used ethnographic engagements, like (participant) observation and informal encounters as a source of information. In the next section will be explained how I proceeded to conduct the interviews after having gained access to the respondents. The question of how to create a trustworthy setting will also be discussed. Afterwards, I will elaborate on the ethnographic engagements I have encountered in the field.

#### *3.4.1 Collecting personal migration stories*

The next step after establishing contact was to call the migrants and plan meetings. Although some persons did not pick up their phone or did not show up, the majority came to our appointments. Before conducting the interviews, we had to find a suitable place where both the migrants and we would feel comfortable to talk with each other. As Michelle and I did not know Barcelona well in the beginning, we decided to arrange meetings on a central place in Barcelona, namely Plaça de Catalunya. From

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<sup>12</sup> The Spanish word for a small wooden boat, which can transport up to twenty persons.

there on we searched for cafés where we could speak about their trajectories. Later we got to know that Plaça de Catalunya is actually quite far from the neighbourhoods where most migrants live. Although we felt honoured that they took the time and trouble to come, we thought that it would be better to let the interview take place closer to their homes. Therefore, when we were searching for contacts in Santa Coloma de Gramenet and l'Hospitalet de Llobregat, we proposed them to meet each other at a metro station there. Once arrived we usually went to the nearest café. In Lleida, we approached the migrants while they were sitting outside. Since they did not have anything to do, they told us that they could immediately talk about their experiences with us. Therefore, the majority of our interviews in Lleida took place in the open air.

Migrants' agreement to participate in the research project would not automatically lead to a frank discussion. The creation of a trustworthy atmosphere and an open and informal interview format provides the respondents the opportunity to talk about the topics that are important to them. They are taken seriously, which in turn fosters a trustful conversation (Achermann, 2009). I had expected that it would be difficult for (especially irregular) migrants to talk about their experiences, as many authors have written about the difficulties of raising delicate topics. Migrants may have arrived illegally in the country, they might earn their money in the informal economy and it is possible that their networks involve criminal structures, like smugglers (Dahinden & Efiionayi-Mäder, 2009; Düvell, Triandafyllidou & Vollmer, 2009).

Although this research project deals with these sensitive issues, the majority of our respondents have been open about their experiences. Michelle and I tried to build up a trustworthy setting, in which the migrants would feel at ease. We showed an understanding attitude and we let our respondents know that we were well informed about the possible illegal parts of their journeys or their daily life. To reassure the migrants, we told them that everything that was going to be said, would be treated confidentially. We also made clear that they were not obliged to answer every question. Besides this, we told them that they could speak about anything they wanted. Questions from their side were welcome as well.

Our meetings had the character of an informal conversation. This has been beneficial for our research, because we often noticed that respondents gradually felt freer to talk with us. Some migrants wanted to skip a part of their trajectory first and returned to it later. A downside of our informal approach, is that it is relatively easy to lose focus. For this reason, we tried to structure the interviews on the basis of a chronological order. Usually we began by asking some questions about their life in their home country. We would then continue asking questions about their experiences before departure and during their journeys. Towards the end of the interviews we looked at future aspirations. However, we did not bring any interview guide with us. The informal character of the interviews also gave our respondents the opportunity to elaborate on issues that were important to them.

It is worth mentioning that we deliberately did not record our interviews. We felt that recording devices would detract from the confidential environment. It takes time to build up a trust-

relationship. Often we had only spoken for five minutes with the migrants before the start of an interview. Therefore, we thought that recording would not be a good idea. Personally, I have only recorded the interviews with Omar, the Senegalese contact whom I got to know before moving to Barcelona. Because I have recorded his story, the data of my conversations with him offers more depth than the unrecorded interviews. This is a reason why his contribution plays an important role throughout this thesis.

Over a period of four months I have interviewed seven migrants alone and forty-seven together with Michelle. With Omar I have conducted a total of five interviews. Some conversations took place with two persons simultaneously. Michelle and I have also interviewed three organisations; the Red Cross, SAIER<sup>13</sup> and Mescladís<sup>14</sup>. The interviews varied in length from approximately thirty minutes to hundred minutes, with the average of an hour. They were conducted in different languages, namely French, English and Spanish or a combination of these languages. The quality of the conversations has not been affected by the use of a certain language, as Michelle is fluent in Spanish, while I have a good command of French. During my stay in Barcelona I have attained a certain level of Spanish, which made it possible to interview individually in this language as well.

#### *3.4.2 Being there: an active presence in the field*

For this project in-depth interviews have been my main source of information. However, ethnographic engagements, like (participant) observation and informal encounters, have also contributed to a more in-depth understanding of my respondents' daily lives. According to Sluka (2012), being able to build up meaningful relationships with respondents has a big influence on the success of ethnographic fieldwork. With this in mind, Michelle and I chose to spend a lot of time in the field. We often went to the places where West African migrants gathered. For example, we have observed and talked with the street vendors while they were working or fleeing for the police. We had a lot of informal conversations with them, as well as with other migrants we have met in Santa Coloma de Gramenet and l'Hospitalet de Llobregat. The migrants recognized us and began to feel comfortable with our presence, which has contributed to our trust-relationship. It allowed us to stay in closer touch with several people, as our presence in the field has led to numerous invitations for dinners and other gatherings. It is worth mentioning that Lycamobile, a mobile network operator, has also been a contributing factor to our extensive contacts. Calls from one Lycamobile user to the other are free, and therefore almost every respondent uses this provider. When we bought these SIM cards as well,

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<sup>13</sup> Servicio de Atención a los Inmigrantes, Extranjeros y Refugiados. This organisation is the first point where (both irregular and legal) immigrants have to go to after having arrived in Barcelona. See also: [http://www.educacio.novaciudadania.bcn.cat/es/servicio-de-atención-a-losinmigrantes-extranjeros-y-refugiados\\_4786](http://www.educacio.novaciudadania.bcn.cat/es/servicio-de-atención-a-losinmigrantes-extranjeros-y-refugiados_4786)

<sup>14</sup> Mescladís is an organisation that tries to help immigrants on various levels, but mainly by providing them courses to become a cook or waiter / waitress. See also: <http://www.mescladis.org/es/>

“connected presence” (Larsen & Urry, 2010, p. 97) was ensured, which increased the number of informal conversations.

After our fieldwork period, Michelle and I continued to maintain contact with several respondents via telephone and Facebook. As will be explained later in this thesis, this resulted in a short trip to Sweden at the end of November. Via Facebook I learned that Chima, one of our Nigerian respondents, had moved to Jakobsberg, which is a city close to Stockholm. I have visited him four days in order to do a follow-up interview about his trajectory and to get to know more about his personal life.

This shows that the relationships I developed in the field have not only benefitted the research project, but have also enriched my personal life. In her classic study *Stranger and Friend* (1966), Powdermaker stated that: “Friendships with a few people develop, and they help him to find a niche in the community. It is these friends who often become his best informants” (p. 420). My fieldwork experiences can only confirm this. The informal meetings have provided additional insights in the respondents’ trajectories, as they enabled the migrants to tell us more details about their stories. Besides this, the informal encounters have given us a lot of information about their social environments, daily activities, moments of happiness and/or distress, etcetera. This shows how friendly contact can lead to relevant information (see also box 3.3).

**Box 3.3: Trust goes through the stomach**

Michelle and I met Sekou and Amadou, two Malian men, on the streets in L’Hospitalet de Llobregat. When I planned an interview with them, I thought it would only take one or two hours, as was the case with the rest of our respondents. When we arrived at the agreed location, Sekou brought us to his house, where he was living together with his uncle Dramane. Meanwhile Amadou was doing some groceries and later he came to Sekou’s house as well. When Amadou began to cook a Malian meal, Sekou served us several cups of Ataya, strong green tea with a lot of sugar, which is a tradition in his home country. It took a long time before the meal was ready, which gave all of us the opportunity to get to know each other better. The actual interviews only took place after our lunch.

After the interviews, Michelle and I had to leave in order to meet another respondent. We stayed in touch with both Sekou and Amadou via telephone, and since then I have visited them a couple of times more. During my last two weeks in Barcelona I needed another accommodation and, since Sekou had a free room in his house, he offered me to move in with him and his uncle. At first I was a bit hesitant to live together with two Malian men I did not know that well, nevertheless, I also realized that this was an excellent chance to learn more about their way of living. Therefore I accepted his offer and, consequently, my ten-day immersion in a migrant house began. As the following will show, this experience provided me with more insights in his daily life than any

interview could have done.

When I moved into my new room, the month of Ramadan had begun and Dramane was fasting during daytime. Sekou and many of his friends, however, did not fast. Every day, people walked in and out of the house at any given time. The house had a very welcoming and relaxed atmosphere, even though the small living room was sometimes quite crowded with the presence of many Malian, Guinean and Senegalese men. We drank countless cups of Ataya and had a lot of shared meals, through which I got to know many new people. This was also the case during the nights, when Dramane invited his friends for an Iftar meal<sup>15</sup>. Due to a lack of chairs we were all standing around the table and eating from one plate.

During the afternoons I had my own agenda, but the rest of the time I usually spent with Sekou, Amadou and other friends. In the morning I helped them with grocery shopping and cooking and during the evenings I joined them to squares where more African migrants were gathering. It was notable that Sekou, like many other respondents, had numerous phone calls each day. Often he was speaking with family members and friends within Spain and abroad. Sometimes his contacts within Spain asked him whether he could work a couple of hours for their businesses. More often, however, Sekou was just socializing, especially with his cousin in France and his mother in Mali. It is very important for him to stay in touch with them, Sekou said. The significance of this transnational practice has also been described by Faist, Fauser & Reisenauer (2013). These authors state that responsibilities and obligations towards each other continue across borders, which helps to hold transnational families together.

### **3.5 Ethics, challenges and reasons for cooperation with Michelle**

Several respondents have an undocumented status and many of our contacts are working in the informal economy. It is important not to betray their trust or to bring them into dangerous situations. For example, if some research findings would become known to the authorities, this could have serious consequences. Our research data could include addresses, employers and strategies, which could endanger the migrants (Düvell, Triandafyllidou & Vollmer, 2009). According to Norman (2009), “the issue of confidentiality can make or break researchers’ trust relationship” (p. 81). As shown in previous sections, we therefore ensured both the privacy and the anonymity of the respondents. Moreover, we made sure that we had their informed consent. We were clear about the research objectives and asked for permission to use their stories. This applied to the interviews, but also to the information they provided us during informal talks. Since we had many informal encounters, we could not always remind the respondents that we were doing research. Nevertheless, the migrants did not seem to forget our roles as researchers. Many informal meetings took place, because the respondents wanted to help us. For example, they wanted to show us where and how they

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<sup>15</sup> Iftar is the meal that breaks the daily fast of Muslims during Ramadan.

live, so we could get a better insight in their lives. They also found it important that their stories are being heard. They often said that there is a lack of knowledge about their lives. By telling us their stories, they hoped that we could raise awareness of the difficulties they are going through.

When someone did not want to come to an interview anymore, or when someone did not want to talk about a specific issue, we respected one's choices. When we called our contacts to plan a meeting, some of them did not pick up their telephone or they said that they did not have time. This happened for example during the Ramadan, when a couple of Islamic respondents said that they were tired and that an interview would ask too much of them. When respondents did not want to share particular facts, we did not push them. Instead, we told them that we could move on to another topic. In most cases, however, the respondents spontaneously came back to it later. Only Brian, a Nigerian man, did not want to tell about the irregular parts of his journey. For this reason, his personal migration story ended fairly soon and we talked about general issues regarding migration more.

I had expected that several respondents would ask for money, services or goods in return for an interview, as many migrants are facing a complex situation. Yet, this only happened twice. Both men asked us if we could pay them when Michelle and I approached them for the first time. One of them still wanted to be interviewed when we explained him that we could not offer him anything, because we are students that do not have a lot of money ourselves. We decided not to interview the other man, as a respondent's demand for money could influence the reliability of his / her story (Schapendonk, 2011). Although we did not offer any (economic) services, we wanted to be hospitable and pay the drinks in the cafés where the interviews took place. In quite a few cases, however, the migrants did not allow us to pay. They said that they found it important talking to us and that it was a pleasure for them to look after the bills.

Following on the previous paragraph, it should be noted that gender has influenced the relationship between the researcher and the respondents. During the interviews several men have asked us if we were married or had a boyfriend. At the beginning of our research, we experienced this as uncomfortable and it formed one of the reasons for Michelle and me to conduct our first interviews together. Later, we got accustomed to personal questions and we used them as an opportunity to ask the respondents about their marital status as well. Nevertheless, Michelle and I decided to continue to work together, because our cooperation was beneficial to both of us. Besides the advantage of feeling more comfortable together, it had some other benefits. First, we could take advantage of each other's language skills, as certain respondents wanted to be interviewed in French, while others preferred to speak Spanish. Secondly, as stated above, we did not record our interviews. In order to minimize the risk of losing important facts, usually one of us spoke with the migrant, while the other wrote everything down. Furthermore, in case one of us forgot to ask an important question, we could also complement each other. Finally, working together helped us to while the time away. The site approach obliged us to walk large distances to find migrants in the streets. Moreover, many respondents had a

somewhat casual attitude concerning arriving on time. Twenty minutes late was the rule rather than the exception. For me personally, it was better to wait together than alone.

### **3.6 Concluding remarks**

This chapter has illustrated the methodology of my research project and demonstrated the choices I have made in the field in order to gain insight into the (im)mobility and network(ing) dynamics of African migrants en route towards and within Europe.

It is worth mentioning that a clearly delineated ‘field site’, a location where the research population ‘lies waiting to be studied’, did not exist. As stated by Gupta and Ferguson (1997), it is important for fieldworkers to *construct* a good field. In line with these authors, I viewed the research population as an evolving field. I used the snowball method and the site approach to gradually gain access to the respondents. Whereas this study started with contact with a few Senegalese people, moving along with the field and an active presence in migrant places, has led to a broad (self) selection of persons from many different nationalities.

In the following two chapters, the focus will shift from theory and methodology towards the empirical stories of my respondents. First, the trajectories and (im)mobility experiences of my respondents will be discussed. Hereafter, closer attention will be paid to migrants’ social networks and their influence on their processes of (im)mobility and adaptation in a new place.

## Chapter 4 – En route: a focus on migrants' trajectories

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“Migration is like a kid that’s locked up in a room. They will always try to open the door to see what’s behind it.”

*Brian, a respondent from Owerri, Nigeria*

### 4.1 Introduction

Spain has attracted many migrants over the years. Among my respondents, cities such as Barcelona and Lleida are known for their migrant communities and prospects for employment, especially in the informal sector and in agriculture. Nevertheless, the global financial crisis has seriously affected the Spanish economy. Various respondents stated that their financial situation has worsened ever since. However, in general Spain continues to be perceived as an alluring country. This led me to ask the question why Spain is so popular. Why are African migrants staying in, or moving to, this country?

Yet, speaking about Spain as a fixed destination overlooks the fact that for many migrants a long and dynamic trajectory preceded their arrival. Moreover, as we will learn later, migrants may move within and beyond Spain after having reached the country. Migration should not be seen as a single event (of crossing a border), but as a life-long process, that influences all aspects of a migrant’s life, as well as the lives of his/her communities in countries of origin and destination (Castles, 2000). In order to do justice to the dynamics of the journeys and the personal stories of the migrants, in this chapter the movement in itself will be considered as an important part of migration. To describe the mobility patterns of the respondents, the first focus will be on the different trajectories towards the EU. Afterwards, the (im)mobility processes of the migrants after they have reached Europe will be addressed.

### 4.2 Destination Europe

In the following sections, the various routes my respondents have taken to reach Europe will be described. A distinction is made between entries with a visa and irregular entries. As irregular migration is a complex concept, a definition of the term is required:

Irregular migration includes people who enter a country without the proper authority (for example through clandestine entry and entry with fraudulent documents); people who remain in a country in contravention of their authority (for example by staying after the expiry of a visa or work permit, through sham marriages or fake adoptions, as bogus students or fraudulently self-employed); people moved by migrant smugglers or human trafficking, and those who deliberately abuse the asylum system. (Koser, 2005, p. 6)

As stated by Collyer, Düvell and De Haas (2012), only a small amount of all irregular migrants in the EU have arrived in a clandestine way. Most irregular migrants have entered the EU with a valid visa, which they overstayed. Therefore, it is essential to make a distinction between irregular immigration and irregular stay. Twenty-five of my fifty-four respondents stated they had entered Europe with a visa, while twenty-nine had arrived in an irregular way. Consequently, my research sample does not correspond to the notion that most irregular migrants enter Europe on a regular basis. Nevertheless, as will be shown later, various respondents who entered Europe legally lost their legal status afterwards. Many irregular migrants, on the other hand, have been able to obtain their (temporary) residence documents.

#### *4.2.1 Entries with a visa*

To outline the variety of pathways the migrants have taken to enter Europe, we first start with Ousmane's story (see box 4.1). Ousmane is a twenty-two year old man from Dakar, Senegal. Michelle and I met him in March 2015 at Maremagnum, which is one of the places where street vendors sell their goods. When we approached him, he was trying to sell sunglasses and initially he thought that we wanted to buy something as well. However, after introducing the research project to him, he was immediately willing to talk with us. We exchanged telephone numbers and met up with him two weeks later in a café next to the Sagrada Familia, which is near his house. Although Ousmane had been in Spain for only one and a half years, he spoke Spanish very well. He is an active and open young man and we had a nice conversation.

#### **Box 4.1: “The djembe festival formed a unique chance”**

Ousmane used to earn a living by playing djembe in Dakar. He and his family are all musicians, and they could therefore get a temporary (tourist) visa for a festival in Italy. He had planned to leave in December 2013, however, beforehand he found out that his girlfriend was pregnant. So this made his decision to leave Senegal a difficult one. He decided to leave anyway, because his visa formed a unique chance to enter the EU. His main motivation to leave Senegal was that his father was already living in Barcelona together with his (second) Catalan wife and Ousmane's half-siblings. Besides this, he wanted to see more of the world and be able to provide better for himself and his son.

So Ousmane took a flight to Italy and did the concert, after which he went to Barcelona by bus. He did not face any difficulties while crossing the borders, because his visa was still valid. Afterwards his visa expired and, consequently, Omar got restricted from travelling. He and his father are currently working on the obtainment of his papers through the family reunion system. In Barcelona Ousmane started to give classes in African music and dance. Although his father did not want him to sell on the streets, as he can provide for himself with the classes he gives, Ousmane likes to do this a few hours per day to gain a little more money to live well. This last point is

interesting, because it nuances the image that street vendors are completely dependent on the informal economy to survive (see also Kothari, 2008).

As was the case for Ousmane, most non-European citizens require a visa in order to enter Europe. The EU has made a ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ Schengen list, with which, according to Van Houtum (2010), it distinguishes between wanted and unwanted migrants. The citizens of sixty countries are allowed to enter the EU without a visa. The inhabitants of hundred-thirty-five countries, however, do require a visa to visit or transit in a Schengen country. While the positive list mainly consists of rich and Western countries, many Muslim and developing countries are on the negative list. Apart from the Seychelles and Mauritius, islands in the Indian Ocean, citizens of every African country need a visa in order to enter Europe legally (Schengen Visa Info, 2015). According to Van Houtum (2010), it is hard to obtain a visa when one is living in a country on the negative list, so in that sense Ousmane has been lucky. As we will see later (in section 4.2.2), for many respondents it was difficult and sometimes even impossible to travel to Europe in a legal way. This often resulted in long and dangerous journeys.

According to Schengen Visa Info (2015), a Schengen visa is needed for a stay of up to ninety days per six-month period in a Schengen country. When the duration of the stay is exceeding ninety days, or when the EU country is not a Schengen member state, a so-called national visa is needed. In this case the Schengen short stay visa is followed by a (temporary) residence permit. For example, students are allowed to enter the EU with a Student Schengen Visa, but they also have to apply for a residence permit if they need to stay in a country for more than ninety days. There are five Schengen visa types: tourist, business, student, working, and transit Schengen visa. Table 4.1 provides an overview of the visa types my respondents have used.

<b>Visa type</b>	<b>No. of respondents</b>
Tourist Schengen visa	14
Business Schengen visa	2
Student Schengen visa	4
Working Schengen visa	2
National (Spanish) visa for family reunification	3

*Table 4.1: Visa types that my respondents have used to enter the EU.*

It is interesting to note that two respondents travelled to Mali to obtain the Malian passport. One of them was Lamine, a fifty year old man from Serekunda, the Gambia, who got his Malian passport in 1999. He said that with a Malian passport it was easier to obtain a tourist visa for France than with a Gambian one, probably because of colonial connections. Consequently, he took a flight from Bamako

to Paris, after which he travelled to Girona as he thought Spain would be a better country for undocumented migrants than France.

Like Lamine, thirteen other migrants who entered Europe with a visa did not arrive in Spain directly. Section 4.3, which is about migrants' (im)mobility experiences after reaching Europe, will examine their stories in more detail. For now, it will suffice to say that these people arrived in France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands or the United Kingdom. Six of them had planned to stay in these countries but moved to Spain later on, usually because it is relatively easy to get one's residence papers there (see box 4.2, p. 43). Eight migrants deliberately used the country they entered as a place of transit (see also Ousmane, box 4.1, p. 40). They often travelled to Spain within the validity period of their Schengen visa. This was mainly motivated by the wish to join their family members and/or friends, but also because of the relative ease to get one's residence documents.

Eleven respondents from my selection had a direct flight to Spain. Five of them entered the country with a tourist visa, which they overstayed. This meant that they lost their legal status (at least temporarily). Among them was Seydou, a thirty-three year old man from Daloa, Ivory Coast. Michelle and I met him in June 2015, when we were walking around in L'Hospitalet de Llobregat. Initially we did not want to approach Seydou, because we were afraid to disturb him as he was drinking a coffee on a terrace. However, when we made contact with him, he turned out to be a very kind and open man. We got his telephone number and met a couple of days later again. He came to the appointment together with his Ivorian friend Souleymane. Although the Ramadan had just begun, it was not a problem for them to go to a bar to talk about their experiences. Seydou told us that he left his country in 2007 because of the war, which was very painful for him: "Let's not talk about these things, it's difficult for me." He travelled to Bamako, Mali, where he could live together with acquaintances he knew from Ivory Coast. After a year, he succeeded in getting a tourist visa<sup>16</sup> with which he could take a flight to Barcelona. After arrival, he took a bus to Madrid as he thought that the capital city would offer more chances to him. However, this turned out not to be the case and he decided to go back to Barcelona soon. As he did not know anyone in Spain, he went to the police and asked for asylum. Seydou was our only respondent who chose to apply for asylum in Spain. The rest of our respondents decided to try obtaining their residence documents via the regular procedure.

Two migrants travelled to Spain on a working permit, which they had arranged in their countries of origin. A Senegalese man had signed a contract for Nissan, while a Nigerian man got a job in a cleaning company. After a while they could change their employment visa into a temporary residence permit. Isaac, a thirty-six year old man from Kumasi, Ghana, came to Barcelona in 2013 on a student visa. He was our only respondent who intends to stay in Europe for only a short period of

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<sup>16</sup> Obtaining a tourist visa for Spain was very difficult, Seydou stated. It remained unclear, however, *how* he eventually succeeded. This is a shady area, which is typical for this research. Michelle and I have not been able to fully understand the informal circuit around the obtainment of visas. This example does not mean, however, that all of the respondents used the informal circuit to get their travel papers. We think the majority has obtained them via the formal procedure, but some respondents remained rather vague about this topic.

time. During our conversation he said: “I wanted to expand my view, broaden my horizon, I wanted to see how things are there [in Europe]”. When he finished his first master in Banking and Finance he started a second master in Business and Management. After graduating, his plan is to leave Barcelona to do a third master in the United States, for which he has already been granted a visa. However, he sees his future in Ghana, where he eventually plans to return to search for a job.

Migrants who went to Spain in order to be reunited with their families, spoke about an administration process in their countries of origin that took them between a few months and one and a half years. After their arrival, however, they quickly got their residence permit. Two of them were minors at that time and had the right to stay with their parents. Ablaye, a thirty-seven year old Senegalese man, got his residence papers due to his marriage with a Spanish woman, whom he had met in Dakar. Michelle and I met Ablaye while he was working in a flower stall on la Rambla. He appeared to be a relaxed man, who tries to see things from a positive point of view. Nevertheless, he said he knows that many migrants face bigger restrictions with regard to travelling than he did. Love did not seem to be his only reason to go to Europe. He stated: “Every young Senegalese dreams about going to Europe and I was lucky that I could come like this.” Currently, Ablaye is happy to be in Spain, because he and his wife live a stable and good life. He realizes, however, that his Europe is quite different from the experiences of other Senegalese migrants he met in Barcelona.

**Box 4.2: The obtainment of residence documents in Spain**

In order to get to know about the laws that Spain maintains in relation to the obtainment of residence documents, on 19 March 2015 Michelle and I had a conversation with Ms. Tomás, coordinator of SAIER (Servicio de Atención a los Inmigrantes, Extranjeros y Refugiados). This municipal service is the first point in Barcelona where immigrants have to go to upon arrival in the city. These are the migration laws Ms. Tomás has described to us:

- An undocumented migrant can obtain a temporary residence paper, which lasts one year, when (1) he/she has been registered on a legal address for the municipality for three years. In addition, (2) he/she will have to show a pre-contract, which indicates that he/she will be hired for a minimum period of one year after having been given his/her residence and work permit. After one year, the residence document can be renewed for another year. Afterwards it will be turned into a residence permit for five years.
- It is also possible to receive residence papers through marriage. When one is (1) married according to the Spanish law, the undocumented partner will receive his/her papers after being able to show (2) he/she has lived together with his/her partner for a minimum period of one year in Spain. Moreover, (3) when one marries a Spanish or non-European citizen, the partner has to show he/she can provide for him or herself and the person that will be

living with him/her after marriage. When an undocumented migrant marries a European citizen, there is no need to live up to a certain standard of income.

- Children up until the age of eighteen obtain residence documents when one of their parents has a residence permit.

Ms. Tomás did, however, mention that the migration laws are rapidly and constantly changing. She stated that she knew Spain is still one of the ‘easiest’ countries according to migration laws to obtain residence papers, but she believed this will change over the upcoming years as well, especially with the European Union’s pressure and control. As Ms. Tomás did not speak about the asylum procedure in Spain, I will complete this list by adding the process of regularisation through asylum:

- One has to apply for asylum within one month after entering the Spanish territory. Then the examination procedure and decision-making process takes place, which normally lasts six months, but can mount up to two or three years. Urgent cases may be resolved in three months. If the asylum application is granted, one will get the refugee status and, consequently, one will be given all the rights enshrined in the Refugee Convention. The person will be given a residence permit, which is valid for five years. After five years, he/she can apply for the Spanish nationality (or two years in case of national origin of Latin American Countries, Andorra, the Philippines, Equatorial Guinea, Portugal or Sephardic). If the application is rejected, one has two months to appeal against the resolution. In this case, the final ruling takes one or two years (Comisión Española de Ayuda al Refugiado, 2013; Dublin Transnational Project, n.d.).

#### *4.2.2 Irregular entries*

Twenty-nine (out of fifty-four) of my respondents entered Europe without a valid visa. An illustrative story of an irregular entry comes from Guy, a thirty-one year old man from Bandjoun, Cameroon. Michelle and I met him in April 2015, when he was taking a walk on la Rambla with his Cameroonian friend Justin. When we approached the two men, they remained fairly reserved, but they were interested in talking to us. We planned a conversation with both of them two weeks later, but Justin cancelled our appointment last minute, so we only met up with Guy. He wanted to go to a Gambian restaurant in El Raval, a migrant neighbourhood that borders la Rambla. We sat down and had an interesting conversation, after which Guy bought us a Gambian meal and some drinks. Guy is a calm and modest man, who seems discontent with the way he lives at the moment. Nevertheless, he shared a lot of details about his journey and life up until now (see box 4.3).

**Box 4.3: “I had an objective in mind, which was Europe. I struggled myself inside”**

In 2003, Guy started his journey towards Europe. From Cameroon he went to Nigeria by car, which took him about two weeks travelling. He stayed in Nigeria for only one night, after which he moved onwards to Niger. This took him approximately one month, after which he went on to Libya, which took another month of travelling. They did not face security checks that brought him in danger, so he said. Guy stayed in Libya for eight months. There, he first worked as a mechanic to channel light, later he assembled elevators for 6 months. He told us he liked living and working in Libya, as he felt at home there and he was able to provide a stable living for himself in terms of labor and income. However, he did not want to stay in Libya, because the aim of his journey was going to Europe. For this reason, after eight months, he continued his trajectory towards Algeria and Morocco by a truck, which carried over fifty persons. They did not face major security checks, but the conditions were hard with that many people on board and for such a long time on the road.

Upon arrival in Morocco, Guy’s stay of eight to nine months in the woods at the border with Melilla began, which was a very harsh period for him. They lived with many different people in the forest, but everyone stayed in their own group of people from the same country. Whenever there was a possibility, they would try to jump over the fences of Melilla, which was dangerous and hard. The police caught him countless times. They hit him and he was wounded often. When he got caught, he was taken to the police station and imprisoned for one to two weeks, depending on how long it took the police to fill up a big truck that would take the migrants to Oujda. When in Oujda, he would walk back to the woods at the border, which took him three to four days each time.

Finally, Guy was able to cross the border to Melilla through a bay in the sea, where he climbed through a hole in the fence. As soon as he crossed the border, he was arrested and taken into a CETI for three weeks. CETI are *Centros de Estancia Temporal de Inmigrantes* (Centres for Temporary Stay of Immigrants). In these places, shelter and basic services are provided until the migrants are transferred to the mainland of Spain or (unlawfully) deported to Morocco<sup>17</sup>.

After waiting for three weeks in Melilla, Guy was put on a boat to Málaga, from where he took a train to Barcelona. Having arrived in Spain, he thought his life would change for the better, however, he found out that Europe is no paradise at all. He did not know anyone in Barcelona and, therefore, asked for help at the Red Cross, who provided him a room for three months. After this period, he had to leave the shelter and, consequently, lived on the streets for a year. Organisations like SOS Racismo and Caritas have helped him to get back on his feet, Guy said. They gave him medical support and helped him arranging his papers and possibilities to find work. From this moment on he has had several jobs, enabling him to afford a room for himself.

In 2008, however, the global financial crisis broke out, which had a devastating impact on

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<sup>17</sup> For more information about the situation of migrants in Morocco and the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, see: Ferrer-Gallardo & Albet-Mas (2013); Human Rights Watch (2014) and Médecins Sans Frontières (2013).

Spain. There was a severe increase in unemployment, and also Guy lost his job. Since then he has not been able to find steady employment. He has worked within the construction business and in factories every now and then, when companies wanted to hire migrants for a day or two. Nevertheless, he does not want to take jobs anymore that do not provide him with a contract for a period of at least one year. In order to survive, he is currently living in an abandoned house for which he does not have to pay. However, there is no running water and he washes himself in fountains in the streets. Most of the time there is no light either.

Since Guy knew that he would not be granted a visa, he has never tried to do any applications. Instead, he decided to go on a journey to try crossing Europe's borders in an irregular way. Although sometimes it was hard to keep faith, he never gave up and arrived in the EU about one and a half years after the start of his trajectory. Guy's story shows that EU regulations do not prevent migrants from coming, instead, as stated by Van Houtum (2010), it only makes their journeys more dangerous.

Crossing the borders of Ceuta and Melilla in the north of Morocco is only one possible way to enter European territory irregularly. Table 4.2 provides an overview of the irregular routes my respondents have taken to reach the EU. These routes will be further elaborated below.

<b>Route</b>	<b>No. of respondents</b>
Morocco – Ceuta / Melilla	7
Mauritania – the Canary Islands	1
Senegal – the Canary Islands	5
Western Sahara – the Canary Islands	3
Morocco – mainland Spain	7
Turkey – Greece	2
Leaving one's job on a ship	3
Escaping the airport with a transit visa	1

*Table 4.2: The routes my respondents have taken to enter the EU in an irregular way.*

As stated by Schapendonk (2011), it is essential to stress that the amount of irregular migration by boat to the EU differs every year. The number of migrants arriving in one region can be high during a certain period, after which it decreases significantly, but increases again a few years later. With regard to the respondents that travelled to the Canary Islands, it is notable that the majority of them arrived in

or around the year 2006<sup>18</sup>. Six Senegalese respondents took a boat in Senegal (from Dakar, M'bour or Ziguinchor) or Mauritania to begin a journey that would last eight or nine days. The stories of these migrants were horrifying, as the experiences of Mamadou, a twenty-six year old man from Thiadiaye, Senegal, show. Michelle and I met Mamadou in March 2015, when he was selling sunglasses in Passeig de Gràcia. He seemed to be shy and during our interview he was very closed in the beginning. However, later he opened up and told us in great detail about his journey. He had paid a smuggler 500 euro for a place in a boat that left from M'bour. Mamadou had never been at sea before, and he quickly got seasick, causing him to vomit for three days. After seven days there was neither water nor food left, and even worse, they did not know where they were and how long it would take them to reach the shore again. Fortunately, they were noticed by a helicopter two days later and rescued by the Red Cross<sup>19</sup>.

From the Western Sahara the crossing to the Canary Islands was a lot faster. One Nigerian and two Malian respondents took a boat in Laayoune, which is the largest city in the country occupied and administered by Morocco. Michelle and I met Toumani, a fifty-two year old man from Koulikoro, Mali, in Lleida, where he works on the countryside from time to time. He told us that he embarked on a boat in 2001 and arrived exactly twenty-four hours later in Fuerteventura. The price, however, was four times as high as Mamadou had to pay; his smuggler had asked for 2000 euro.

Respondents that crossed the Mediterranean Sea from Morocco to Spain paid amounts varying from 100 to 800 euro. I also heard stories of migrants who did not have to pay, because they took the role of captain on them. Although this irregular route was especially popular around the year 2000 (De Haas, 2008), the majority of my respondents made this crossing more recently. Sadio, a twenty-seven year old man from Dakar, Senegal, crossed the Strait of Gibraltar in 2014, which was his third attempt to reach the EU. The first time he had paid 100 euro, the second and third time, however, he could travel for free. Because he knew how to swim and to steer the dinghy, his smuggler had made him the person in charge. Omar, Sadio's friend and my main respondent, has been working as an intermediary for a Nigerian smuggler in Tangier. Afterwards he also started to organise his own 'convoys'. He sought for customers and bought zodiacs, motors, lifejackets, et cetera. He also had to pay for the mafia cars that drove the migrants to the beach. Omar told me that the price they asked to cross the Mediterranean Sea varied from 900 to 2000 euro, which included a second attempt in case of failure the first time.

From Morocco, the boats left from different cities; my respondents mentioned Tangier, Asilah and Nador. The duration of the journey varied from forty-five minutes to sixteen hours. Although this is much less than the boat trip from Senegal to the Canary Islands, this form of travelling is still very risky. Another man I met through Omar is his friend Yakhya, a twenty-five year old man from Dakar.

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<sup>18</sup> The year 2006 made headlines around the world for its substantial number of sub-Saharan migrants who irregularly arrived on the Canary Islands. Many had left from Senegal and about half of the 33,000 migrants were from Senegalese origin (Willems, 2007).

<sup>19</sup> For more information on this particular route, see: Willems (2007); Nyamnjoh (2010) and Adjama (2012).

He told me that he had paid a smuggler a lot of money for a place on the boat. The evening before departure, however, the Moroccan police put him in prison for a night, because he had been working without papers. Consequently, Yakhya could not leave Morocco yet, which made him angry and sad. Completely devastated he felt, however, when he heard that the boat with twenty-two people on board, most of whom were his friends, capsized and, consequently, everyone died<sup>20</sup>.

Currently in the news is the perilous sea crossing Syrian refugees are making to travel from Turkey to Greece. Omar, my main respondent, has made this journey as well. He has irregularly travelled to Europe three times. In 2007 he took a flight from Dakar to Istanbul, where he paid a smuggler 450 euro. After spending a month in Turkey, he went to Izmir, where he and fifteen others embarked on a boat. Two and a half hours later, almost arriving on a small island, the Greek navy noticed them and came to pick them up. Omar was expelled to Senegal in 2010, but in 2011 and 2015 he succeeded in entering the EU again by crossing the Mediterranean Sea between Morocco and Spain. Another Senegalese migrant who travelled from Turkey to Greece is Bassirou, a twenty-seven year old man from Dakar. Michelle and I met him in March 2015 when he was walking through Barcelona, trying to sell African necklaces, bracelets and djembes. He told us that he did not make the journey by boat. He took a bus and a car to the Turkish border, where he walked in a group of eight people for over two days to cross the border with Greece. They arrived in Alexandroupolis, where they were received by the police and the Red Cross<sup>21</sup>.

The trajectories above are rather common journeys among migrants who enter the EU in an irregular way<sup>22</sup>. We also came across more surprising routes towards Europe. Box 4.4 describes the stories of four men who irregularly reached the EU by ‘leaving one’s job on a ship’ and ‘escaping the airport with a transit visa’.

**Box 4.4: Off the beaten path: distinct routes towards Europe**

Two respondents deliberately started to work at sea in order to go to Europe. One of them is Henry, a thirty-seven year old man from Lagos, Nigeria. Michelle and I met him in May 2015 in Santa Coloma de Gramenet, where he was taking a walk with a friend. He is a modest and friendly man. He said that he paid to be hired on a container ship in 2003. He did not know where the ship would go, only that its destination was Europe. After working on board for three months, the ship arrived in Norway, where Henry was dropped in Arendal. He reported himself to the police and could live

<sup>20</sup> For more information on the route from Morocco to the mainland of Spain, see: Barros, Lahlou, Escoffier, Pumares & Ruspini (2002) and De Haas (2007); (2008).

<sup>21</sup> For more information on the route from Turkey to Greece, see: Brewer & Yükseser (2006) and Maroukis (2008).

<sup>22</sup> Since the last decade, the crossing from Libya, or sometimes Tunisia, to the island of Lampedusa has also become one of the main routes for irregular migrants to reach the EU. None of my respondents have used this trajectory to arrive in Europe. However, probably this can be explained by the fact that most of these migrants stayed in Italy or moved to other countries than Spain. For more information on this central Mediterranean route, see: Friese (2010), Cuttitta (2014) and Dines, Montagna & Ruggiero (2014).

in a shelter, where he applied for asylum.

Barry, a forty-three year old man from Freetown, Sierra Leone, fled his country in 1991 because of the war. After working for several years in the Gambia and Guinea-Bissau, in 2004 he was hired on a Spanish fishing vessel. However, after sailing from Guinea-Bissau to Latin-America, the ship suddenly stopped somewhere in the middle of the sea. It was supplied by two small boats from Colombia; the first one with more than three-thousand kilos of cocaine and the second one with food to cover the drugs. He and four other African men that were recruited became angry, because they did not know about the illegal drug trade. Nevertheless, they did not have a choice but to stay on board. When the ship was sailing next to the Canary Islands, the police entered and arrested everyone. Barry was imprisoned until the end of 2013.

Karim, a fifty-five year old man from Dakar, Senegal, did not start his job for a Spanish boat company with the intention of going to Europe. He had been working for them for fifteen years, but in 2002 he was in for something new. As he thought he could earn more money in Europe, he quit his job when the boat arrived in Almería, a city in southern Spain. Since then, Karim has had different jobs in the agricultural sector, through which he received his residence papers at the end of 2005. He regrets, however, his decision to stay on the mainland, as he said: “It’s bad luck I quit my job on the ship to come to Europe, because it was much better than here.”

Finally, Destiny, a thirty-four year old man from Benin City, Nigeria, did not arrive in Europe by boat. I met him while he was begging for money next to the supermarket, where I went grocery shopping every week. He is a polite and intelligent man, who has done a bachelor in International Relations and Diplomacy in Nigeria. In 2011 he took a flight from Lagos to Istanbul with a transit in Paris. In France he managed to escape the airport, after which he continued his journey to Barcelona in an irregular way. How Destiny was able to leave the transit zone, is something I could not quite put my finger on when I talked with him for the first time. Initially he did not want to elaborate on it, because not enough trust had been built up yet to talk about the irregular aspects of his journey. I thought that he had passed the passport control with fake papers, however, several months later he told me that he had sneaked into France by using service doors to dodge the customs authorities. (See also Telemadrid’s broadcast (2008) on the discovery of this particular route in Spain.)

#### *4.2.3 Temporary immobility en route to Europe*

The sections above have described the various routes migrants have taken to reach Europe. Their movements and mobility strategies have been the main focus so far. Although moments of immobility have been briefly mentioned (e.g. Guy, box 4.3, p. 45), we need to learn more about migrants’ moorings in order to get a better understanding of their journeys. It has been argued by various scholars that if one wants to understand mobility, moorings or fixities need to be taken into account as well (e.g. McMorran, 2015). In order to complete the picture of routes towards the EU, this section

will therefore discuss the periods of immobility between migrants' departure in their country of origin and their arrival in Europe.

Migrants' (im)mobility begins in their countries of origin. As stated by Van der Velde and Van Naerssen (2011), potential migrants have to overcome three thresholds before they become mobile. First they need to cross the threshold of indifference, which implies that they have to become aware of the possibility to move. Then a decision-making process takes place, in which they need to surpass the locational and the trajectory threshold. When the destination and the route are determined, their journeys could take off. This is not to say, however, that destinations are definite. According to Van der Velde & Van Naerssen, it is likely that many irregular migrants will never reach the initial destination they had in mind. Moreover, as stated by Schapendonk (2011), places of destination may be altered en route and destinations may become places of departure again.

Various respondents described the effort it took them before they could finally begin their journeys. Some people explained that visa applications were difficult and time-consuming. Aziz' story illustrates this. He is a fifty-two year old man from Ouahigouya, Burkina Faso. In 1986 he wanted to leave his country and therefore he visited the embassies of the Netherlands, Belgium, India and the United Kingdom. For the last one he even went to Tunisia, because there was no British embassy in Burkino Faso at that time. He explained us that there were many problems at all embassies in obtaining a visa, which made him decide to seek 'another way' to leave Africa. Finally, he reached the EU by crossing the borders of Ceuta. Some other respondents spoke about waiting periods in their home countries, because it took them a lot of time to raise enough money to afford their trip. Mamadou, the twenty-six year old man that sailed from Senegal to the Canary Islands, had worked for more than a year to save the 500 euro he had to pay his smuggler. These examples insinuate that there may be more people with the aspiration to move, who will never be able to travel due to visa restrictions, a lack of money or other circumstances<sup>23</sup>.

Furthermore, a significant part of the respondents has also lived and worked in other African countries for considerable periods of time before continuing their journeys towards Europe. Migrants (in)voluntarily stayed put not only in countries bordering the EU, like Morocco or Greece, but also in places further away. For example, Sirima, a thirty-three year old man from Bamako, Mali, left his country in 2002. He travelled to Libya to search for a job. After working in a Coca Cola factory for two years, he had earned enough money to continue his trip. He went to Algeria and consequently Morocco, where he succeeded in crossing the sea from Laayoune to the Canary Islands in 2005. Especially in countries just outside of the EU, irregular travellers often found themselves stranded for some time, ranging from a few months to even ten years. Many respondents stated they had to work in order to save enough money to afford the crossing to the EU. Moreover, various migrants told us they

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<sup>23</sup> In the context of involuntary immobility, it is interesting to consider Jónsson's (2008) article about the experience of immobility in a Soninke village in Mali. Soninke communities are typically characterized by a 'culture of migration'. Jónsson investigated how young men with the aspiration to migrate (re-)constructed their identities when they were unable to move.

had to try their passage to European territory multiple times. This was especially the case with people attempting to cross the sea between Morocco and the mainland of Spain. A somewhat extreme case is the story of Maseck, a thirty-six year old devout Muslim from Senegal. In 2013, he tried to cross the Mediterranean Sea eleven times within one month and twenty-four days. He was lucky, he told us, because “thanks to God I succeeded in arriving in Europe.” Maseck did not have to pay eleven times. Being a Lebou<sup>24</sup> and having several years of experience at sea, his nickname among the Senegalese community in Tangier was Capi, the shortened form for the French word of *capitaine*. He told us that he knew the sea well, and that he was glad to take the role of captain on him, because his nine fellow travellers knew nothing about the ocean. The group went by a rowing boat and it took them eight hours to reach Tarifa, a city in southern Spain.

There may also be migrants who initially wanted to go to Europe, but changed their minds and decided to stay in a country they came across<sup>25</sup>. Moreover, probably there will be cases of people returning home or going to another place (see also Schapendonk, 2011). The majority of my respondents stated that their lives remained completely focused on making the passage to the EU, while living in an ‘in-between phase’ in Morocco<sup>26</sup>. People staying for long periods in this country, however, mentioned they adapted their aspirations temporarily, as their ‘regular lives’ also had to go on (see also Collyer, 2007). One migrant who temporarily changed his aspirations is Omar, my main respondent. He got expelled from Europe twice, after which he decided to go on a journey for another time. In the summer of 2012, he tried to cross the Mediterranean Sea twice, but both times his zodiac got stopped by the Moroccan navy. Then, in June 2013, he had planned another attempt, but he got caught by the military in the forest. He decided to return to Senegal with lots of Moroccan products to start a small business there. He was tired of his life in Morocco and wanted to stay with his family for a while. In 2014 he went back to Tangier and because of a strike of the Moroccan police his crossing succeeded this time.

Following on the last paragraph, as a final point it is worth mentioning that Omar was not the only respondent that travelled to Europe multiple times. Two men who had entered Europe with a visa, were sent back to their countries of origin as well. All three of the respondents saw their expulsion as a personal failure and, consequently, they felt they did not have a choice but to try to return again. Nevertheless, they all experienced involuntary immobility. Boubacar’s story illustrates this well. Boubacar is a thirty year old Guinean man, who had arrived in France by visa in 2004. After several months, he was caught while he was working without documents. He was taken into a detention centre, where he had to stay for eleven months. In 2006 he was sent back to Guinea, but he was

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<sup>24</sup> The Lebou are a small ethnic group of Senegal. Traditionally they were a fishing community.

<sup>25</sup> In this context Cherti and Grant (2013) note that ‘transit country’ Morocco has become a destination in its own right.

<sup>26</sup> This can, of course, be explained by the fact that my research only covers the people who have reached the EU.

determined to return to Europe. Being immobile for several months, later that year he succeeded in obtaining a visa for Spain, with which he was able to take a flight to Barcelona.

### **4.3 The (im)mobility of migrants after reaching European territory**

After reaching Europe, migrants' trajectories do not end. Whereas migrants may move within and beyond Spain, they may also experience periods of (involuntary) immobility. In the following sections their (im)mobility experiences will be discussed. A distinction is made between two types of mobility: (1) residential relocations, which is making a living somewhere else, and (2) short-time visits without any intention to make a living in another place. First, the migrants' residential relocations and short-time visits will be highlighted, and afterwards their periods of immobility will be addressed.

#### *4.3.1 Residential relocations within Spain*

Thirty-one<sup>27</sup> (out of fifty-four) respondents have (temporarily) moved to another place within Spain to make a living there<sup>28</sup>. Most migrants travelled by public transport and usually by bus. There are many operators offering bus routes in Spain, among which ALSA is the biggest and most widely used one. Irregular migrants told us they do not fear travelling around within Spain, as there are no passport controls in buses or trains<sup>29</sup>.

Residential relocations within Spain were usually motivated by the wish to find employment somewhere else. As one will also notice in the next chapter, migrants' social connections sometimes influence their migration processes as well. An illustrative story of how both economic and social factors have influenced one's residential relocations within Spain comes from Lamine, a fifty-year old Gambian man (see box 4.5). He had entered Europe in 1999 by visa through France. Within the validity period of his tourist visa, he travelled to Girona, Spain. Michelle and I met Lamine in June 2015, when he was searching for *chatarra* in L'Hospitalet de Llobregat. He is a small and thin man and he had a sad appearance. Nevertheless, he was very friendly and we were impressed by his story.

#### **Box 4.5: "Finding a job is what matters most to me"**

During a period of four months Lamine has lived in Girona together with his brother. However, he was not able to find a job in this city and, therefore, he decided to search for employment in other places. When he found a job in Calella, he decided to relocate to this city. During four years he has

<sup>27</sup> The twenty-three respondents that have not moved to another place within Spain, did not all stay in the same city or village since their arrival in the EU. Ten of these twenty-three men have made a living in another country than Spain. This means that only thirteen respondents have been living in the same place since their arrival in Europe.

<sup>28</sup> I do not consider the move from *CIE* or *CETI* (centres where migrants have to wait until they are granted or denied the right of access to the EU) to another place within Spain to be a residential relocation, because in these centres migrants are involuntary immobile. They cannot make a living there.

<sup>29</sup> An exception to this is the high-speed AVE (*Alta Velocidad Española*) train, where document checks occur before boarding.

had several jobs there, but then he got unemployed and could not find work anymore in this place. He started looking for jobs in other cities and finally he found work in Barcelona. He had travelled back and forth for some time until a new friend offered him a place to sleep in his house. Since then, he did not have to commute anymore during workdays.

Finally, Lamine decided to settle more permanently in Barcelona when he brought his Gambian wife and kids to Spain in 2009. He had a stable job at that time and could rent an apartment for his family. Unfortunately, he lost his job in 2013. As he was not able to find other employment, he decided to search for iron in the streets in order to earn some money. He said: “I don’t like to search for trash, but I have to do it. Every day the children need things. It is very hard, walking a lot. In the night my body hurts”. Lamine stated that he would like to move to any place where he could find a job. Nevertheless, his search for *chatarra* six days a week complicates his search for work...

Lamine stayed in the autonomous community of Catalonia, when he decided to make a living somewhere else. The majority of the ‘movers’ (twenty-four out of thirty-one), however, migrated to places all over Spain. Tony, for example, moved to Málaga, Murcia, Gran Canaria and Barcelona (and abroad).

Tony is about forty years old and comes from Agbor, Nigeria. In 2000 he had entered Spain through Ceuta by boat. He met his Nigerian girlfriend there and lived together with her for some years. When their daughter was born he decided to go to the mainland alone to search for a job. From Ceuta he went to Málaga, however, unable to find employment he moved onwards to Murcia after a while. He found a job on a farm and he has lived there for two to three years. Afterwards, he found a job through an employment agency, for which he relocated to Gran Canaria. As he felt he gained too little money for the hard work he did, he quit this job after two or three years. He then went to Austria to seek for jobs, but unable to find employment he went on holidays to Nigeria after a month. When he returned to Spain, he went to Barcelona, because his Nigerian girlfriend and daughter were living there in the meantime.

As was the case for Tony in Murcia, nearly all of the respondents that moved to cities in the south of Spain, but also to Lleida, found jobs in the agricultural sector. Many of these migrants had quite a mobile life, as work on the countryside is dependent on the season and the harvest period<sup>30</sup>. Moussa, for instance, a thirty-one year old man from Dakar, continuously travels between Barcelona, Lleida, Huelva and Jaén, depending on the possibility for employment. In Lleida, Huelva and Jaén he does seasonal work in the agricultural sector. He works on the countryside and in agricultural factories. Moreover, sometimes he finds a job at a camping site. Moussa’s mobility pattern is complex. Whenever he has a job he stays in a particular place and otherwise he moves on in search for

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<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, a few migrants lived in agricultural cities like Lleida more permanently. This does not mean, however, that they always stayed in the same place. They made short-time visits within and beyond Spain, which will be discussed in section 4.3.3.

employment. When he cannot find work he returns to Barcelona to sell on the streets. He has been doing this since 2006, without having residence documents. For Moussa, migration has become a central part of his life. In that sense, we may say that he lives in a rather permanent state of ‘migrancy’ (Chambers, in King, 2002). It is rather sad, however, that the man who is continuously on the move, still feels highly restricted in his mobility. Because of his lack of papers, he has not been able to travel to other countries or return to Senegal. This is the most difficult for him, as he said seeing his family is his biggest desire after so many years<sup>31</sup>.

Besides seasonal work on the countryside, we also came across a type of mobility that is dependent on the tourist season. Like Moussa, many migrants go to Barcelona during the summer months to earn their money as a street vendor. Another popular place to sell on the streets is Rosas, a small touristic city close to the border with France. Saliou, for example, a twenty-seven year old man from Dakar, usually lives in Barcelona, where he is earning a living by searching for *chatarra*. In the summer, however, he resides in Rosas because selling on the streets pays extremely well there, in his own terms. Respondents who decided to make a living in another place usually stayed there as long as they had work or could survive in another way, for example by depending on friends. Otherwise they moved on to a different place or returned to the city/village where they had lived before. Figure 4.1 shows the places where my respondents have resided.

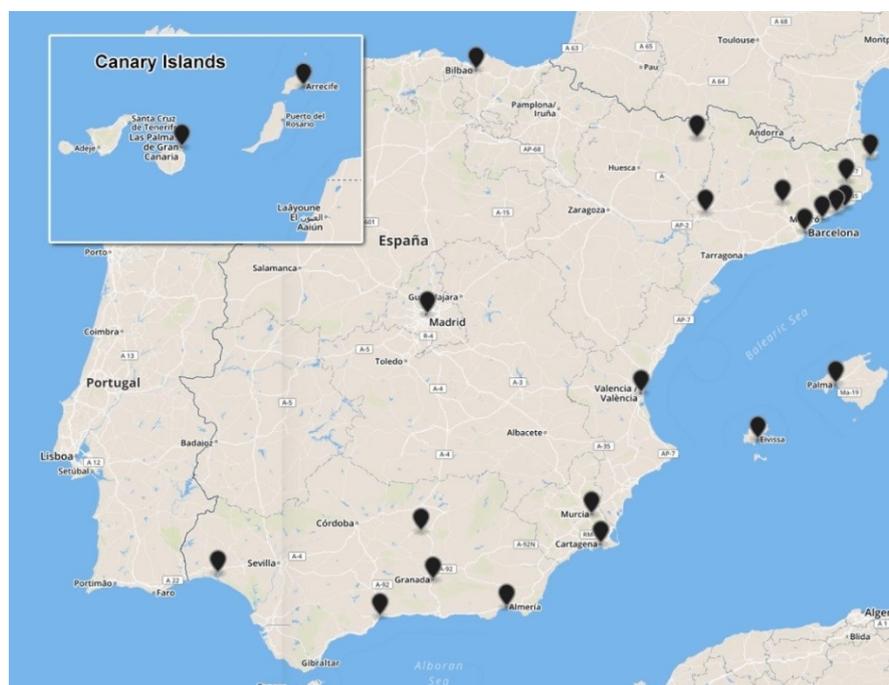


Figure 4.1: The places in Spain where my respondents have lived (author's own creation).

<sup>31</sup> For more information about African migrants in Spanish agriculture, see: Escobar Villegas, Galera Pozo & Bermúdez Torres (2012); Torres Solé, Allepuz Capdevila & Gordo Márquez (2013) and the thesis of my colleague Brugman (2016).

#### 4.3.2 Residential relocations beyond Spain

Seventeen (of the fifty-four) respondents have lived in other countries than Spain after their arrival in Europe. Figure 4.2 gives an overview of the places within Europe where the migrants have lived.

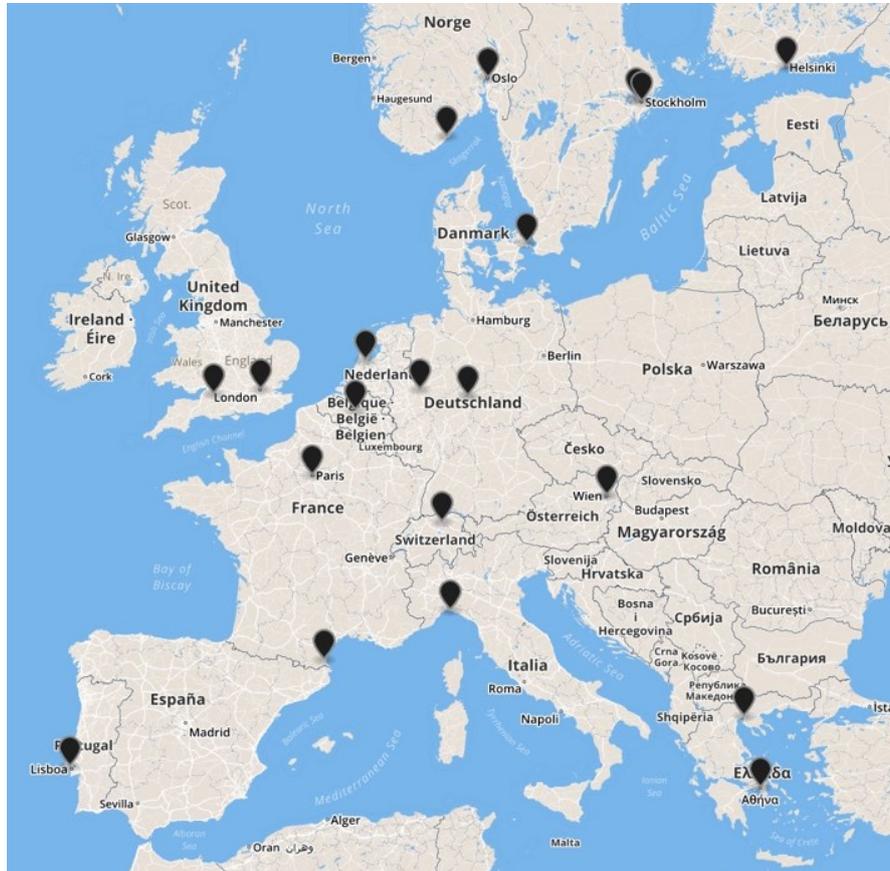


Figure 4.2: The places in Europe where my respondents have lived (author's own creation).

Concerning mobility within Europe, Matthias has an interesting story to tell (see box 4.6). Matthias is a thirty-five year old man from Port Harcourt, Nigeria. Michelle and I met him in May 2015, when we were walking around in Santa Coloma de Gramenet. He and his friend Chima were on their way to see a soccer match in a bar. We got the telephone numbers of both men and we met up with them about a week later. Matthias is an intelligent and friendly man, who likes to talk a lot. We had a long and pleasant conversation.

#### **Box 4.6: “Barcelona is very accommodating, but I need a job”**

Matthias entered the EU in 2009 by taking a flight from Nigeria to Germany. He stayed in his friend's house in Dortmund for a week, after which he moved to Spain. He said: “I decided to relocate, because I was scared that Germany would say that I had to go after my visa expired”. In Barcelona, Matthias could stay with a Nigerian man, whom he got to know through his friend in

Germany. He has lived together with him for two years before he got a residence permit. Matthias stated: “When I got my documents I started looking for a better job”. He took a flight from Barcelona to Oslo, because he “had heard from others that there are opportunities to work”. When he arrived in Oslo he begged people on the street to let him stay in their house. A black person arranged something for one night. Afterwards, Matthias found a room for himself and, later, he got a job in a cleaning firm. He has been working for this company for more than a year.

One day he got arrested on the streets and he was detained for a short period. He does not understand why, because he believes he has not done anything wrong as he had papers. He said: “They just wanted you to get out of the country, there can’t be any other reason”. After his release, Matthias had twenty-four hours to leave Norway. He went back to Spain, because “I can’t go to a country where I don’t know anybody”. Since 2013, he travels back and forth between Germany and Barcelona. Every time he works for a couple of months in Germany, after which he returns to Barcelona until he can start his job at the same company again. This we can identify as a multi-local livelihood. As is the case for Moussa (section 4.3.1), Matthias does not reside in just one place, but in multiple places.

Matthias used Germany deliberately as a transit country to continue his journey to Barcelona. He was mainly attracted by Spain’s laws regarding the obtainment of residence papers. Most residential relocations within Europe I encountered in my research were to Spain for the same reason. These migrants had entered the EU via another European state and had planned to build up their lives there. However, after staying in these countries for several months they knew they would not be able to get their residence documents. For this reason, they relocated to Spain. In quite a few cases, the direction of migrants’ journeys thus changed along the way. For some migrants Spain became a new destination where they wished to stay. Others initially saw Spain as a transit country for the obtainment of their residence papers, but eventually settled down more permanently. Some respondents stated they still wished to move on, but they did not have their documents yet. Chima, however, succeeded in getting his papers and, after spending nine months in ‘transit country’ Spain, he moved on.

Chima is a thirty-five year old man from Enugu, Nigeria. Having a good and stable job in a microfinance bank in Lagos, he was able to prove he had enough money for a two-week holiday in Europe. He had to pay a roundtrip ticket and a hotel in advance. He entered France in 2012 with a tourist visa, which was valid for three months. Chima stayed in Paris for two weeks, after which he took a bus to Oslo, Norway. He had Nigerian friends there, who had told him it is a nice country. When Chima arrived in Oslo he went to the police to apply for asylum. They sent him to an asylum shelter in the north of Norway, far away from Oslo. After spending several weeks in this shelter, Chima did not want to wait for his asylum process anymore, because he learned it would take a long time. Moreover, he did not like to live in the small village he was sent to. He was bored and wanted to do something. He said: “only lazy people stay in these shelters”. Consequently, one day he took a bus

and went back to Oslo. He called his Nigerian contacts there and he could stay in their house for a short time. They helped him find another place to sleep, which was in a house with other Nigerian people. Chima found a job in the informal sector and later he started to ship diapers and stockfish to his country of origin. He earned a lot of money and his life was quite good, Chima said.

However, because Chima was lacking papers, he could not find a legal job and travel back to Nigeria to see his family. Some of his Nigerian friends in Norway travelled to Spain in order to obtain their residence documents. They had connections who bring irregular migrants in contact with Spanish women for sham marriages. Chima wanted to do this as well and therefore, in the end of 2014, after taking a bus from Oslo to Stockholm, he took a plane to Barcelona. He had borrowed someone's documents and could fly to Spain without any problems. Chima obtained his Spanish residence documents during the summer of 2015, after which he was able to travel legally. Before going to Barcelona, Chima thought he would return to Norway again after obtaining his papers. However, during his stay in Spain he met a Nigerian man from Sweden, who persuaded him to come to this country as well. Consequently, in September 2015, Chima took a flight to Sweden, where he is now planning to build up his life. In November, I have visited him in Stockholm and he told me that he had started a business in car components and that his life was going well.

Within this research, only one respondent moved to Spain for another reason than to obtain his residence documents. This migrant is Henry, the man that was dropped from a container ship in Norway. He has lived in this country for nine years, but his doctor advised him to relocate to a warmer place, because he was often sick. His Nigerian friends in Norway brought him in contact with Nigerian people in Barcelona with whom he could live together until he found a room for himself.

Migrants that left Spain in order to make a living in another European country mainly did so in order to find employment. They went to Sweden, Austria, Portugal, Belgium, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. Moreover, John, a forty year old Ghanaian man, went to different Scandinavian countries. He had been living in Barcelona for twelve years before he got unemployed. He decided to go to Scandinavia to search for income. During a period of three years he has been travelling through Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Finland. However, he did not succeed in finding a steady job and therefore he came back to Barcelona in 2012. Almost every respondent stated the obtainment of residence papers was a condition in order to leave. Matthias (box 4.6), for example, said that without papers you can only find jobs in the informal sector, which is as bad in other countries as it is in Spain. Only one of my respondents has left Spain without papers to relocate to another country. This is Assane, a thirty-nine year old man from Ziguinchor, Senegal. He went to Portugal, because he had two uncles in Casal de Cambra, who told him that they could help him in finding a job. Finally, Assane has lived together with them for three years. Afterwards he got unemployed and went back to Barcelona, because he knew that he would be able to work as a street vendor there.

Whereas finding employment was the main reason to leave Spain for fifteen respondents, two migrants stated their move abroad was especially motivated by social factors. Victor, a twenty-five

year old man from Benin City, Nigeria, relocated from Barcelona to London in the beginning of 2016, because he wanted to be reunited with his family. Victor's father had been living and working in Barcelona since 1997. He had tried to get his family to Spain in 2008, but only Victor and his three siblings were granted a visa. Victor's mother's visa was denied, because the couple had married in a traditional way and they did not have a marriage certificate. In 2013, Victor's father and siblings moved to London, because it was easier to get a visa for his mother there. Victor himself decided to stay in Spain, because he had just started a study. Nevertheless, not graduated yet, in 2016 he moved to the United Kingdom as well. Secondly, Aly, a thirty-six year old man from Dakar, Senegal, worked as a street vendor on the Montjuïc. One day he met a Belgian girl, who was temporarily studying in Barcelona. They fell in love and when she returned to Belgium, he decided to move in with her. However, he did not like to be there as he felt lonely and the weather was bad. Therefore, he chose to come back to Barcelona.

Like Matthias (box 4.6), Aly is currently living a multi-local life. Every year after the summer he buys a car to take goods from Spain to sell in Senegal. Moreover, he stays a couple of months in his home country to buy hay on the countryside to sell in the cities. Afterwards he sells his car and, in March, he returns to Barcelona to work there for a few months as a street vendor again. Within this research, more street vendors expressed their wish to have a multi-local life in Spain and Senegal. Mamadou, a twenty-six year old man from Thiadiaye, told me that the sales are low after the summer, when there are less tourists. According to him, then it is better to go back to one's country of origin to work and to see one's family and friends until the tourist season in Spain begins again. However, most street vendors do not possess residence documents and therefore cannot travel legally.

#### *4.3.3 Short-time visits within and beyond Spain*

Within Spain, almost every respondent has visited other places. Short-time visits were usually motivated by the wish to see one's family members and/or friends. Amongst others, respondents named places like Girona, Alicante, Lleida, Valencia and Vitoria-Gasteiz. Moreover, nearly all the migrants with a residence permit stated they had visited Madrid. In order to get their papers, they had to visit their embassies there. Temporary visits solely characterized by touristic motivations, almost did not take place. Touristic visits were usually combined with a visit to one's contacts. This was the case in Spain, but also in other European countries. Moreover, respondents with a residence permit found it important to travel to their countries of origin to keep in touch with their families. Some migrants went back once in a few years, while others returned every year, depending on how much money and time they had. The most visited countries within Europe were France and Italy, and at the second place Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands. These were also the countries where most social contacts were living. Figure 4.3 gives an overview of the places my respondents have visited within Europe. The migrants went to these places for social, touristic and/or economic purposes.

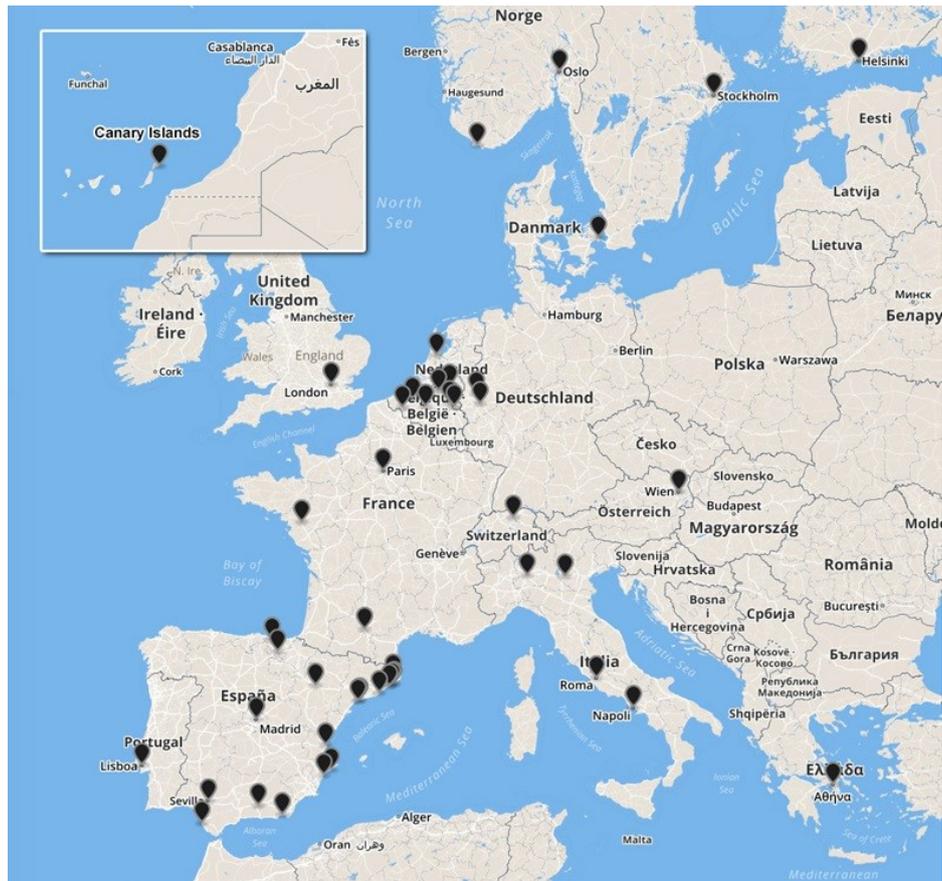


Figure 4.3: The places my respondents have visited within Spain and Europe (author's own creation).

Whether or not migrants have crossed borders for short-time visits was highly dependent on their legal status. For almost all respondents without papers, the chance of being caught at the border refrained them from moving. Only two undocumented respondents irregularly travelled to other countries for their holidays. Yakhya, a twenty-five year old man from Dakar, Senegal, went on holidays to France with his Spanish girlfriend. They went by car and were not checked by the police. Omar, Yakhya's friend, has lived in Italy without documents from 2007 to 2010. He travelled to France several times, which eventually led to his expulsion back to Africa. One day, a Senegalese friend living in Paris invited him to come to a concert of Youssou N'Dour. However, when he crossed the border in 2010, he was arrested by the French police. They checked his papers and saw that he had been stopped at the French-Italian border once before. Consequently, Omar was taken to the Lyon-Saint-Exupéry detention centre and, two months later, he was sent back to Senegal.

Next to socially motivated visits, the most common motivation for short-time visits was an economic one. Sekou's story illustrates this well. He is a thirty-four year old man from Kéniéba, Mali, and he has travelled a lot for various odd jobs. He has some friends who often call him to ask whether he would like to work for a day or two. For example, one friend has a painting company and needed extra help to paint a house in Tarragona. Sekou worked there for two days, making some money for

himself. Barcelona – Tarragona is a short distance, but in order to help a friend with a moving company, he also travelled to places further away, like Alicante in the south-east of Spain. Sekou's friend Amadou, a thirty-two year old man from Bamako, Mali, has also worked abroad. The construction company he was working for had sent him to Belgium, Portugal, Morocco and Algeria for some orders. In each country he worked for a couple of days, after which he returned to Spain again.

Furthermore, various respondents did not only earn money with (informal) jobs, but also with trade. Migrants' businesses formed an important driving force for mobility as well. Nearly all the migrants with residence documents told us that they liked to sell second hand cars and goods when returning to their countries of origin. They bought cars (or vans) in Spain or other European countries and filled them with more second hand products, like clothes, refrigerators, televisions or other electrical devices. After selling these products in their home countries, they took a flight back to Spain again. For most respondents, this trade provided only an additional income, which they earned every year or even every couple of years. Nevertheless, we met one respondent who was able to make a living out of his trading business. This migrant is Demba, a forty-seven year old man from Bamako, Mali. In 2009 he lost his job and since then he has not been able yet to find other employment. Currently he is earning money by buying second hand goods in Spain, which he sends to his country of origin by truck. In Mali someone else takes care of the sales. Moreover, in order to see his family and friends and to sell the products, once a year he drives back to Mali himself. After spending two months in Bamako, he returns to Barcelona by plane. Finally, whereas most respondents bought their products within Spain or other European countries, it is interesting to note that one migrant even went to China to buy goods. Boubacar, a thirty year old man from Conakry, Guinea, spent several weeks in this country in 2010. He filled two containers with engine parts and shipped them to his father in Africa to be sold there.

#### *4.3.4 Immobility after reaching Europe*

The sections above have described the residential relocations and short-time visits of the respondents after reaching European territory. As is the case for their journeys towards Europe, their trajectories after entry may also consist of different periods of immobility. This section will therefore discuss why migrants (involuntary) stayed put in a particular place.

Whether (irregular) migrants have relocated to other places within Spain, is to a large extent dependent on their (lack of) jobs. When respondents got unemployed they first searched for work within the same place, but if they could not find any they moved on. When respondents had a job, they preferred to stay in a certain city or village. Mame Cheikh's story illustrates this well. He is a thirty-five year old man from Dakar, Senegal, and he has solely been living in Lleida since his arrival in Europe in 2004. He found a job in a gardener's company, which helped him to get his residence papers. When he eventually lost this job he found employment in the construction, in a plastic

company and in the loading and unloading of trucks, all within Lleida. Since 2011 he has been working on the countryside for the same boss. Although it is a legal job, Mame Cheikh's income is not stable. He never knows in advance whether there is work available and sometimes he does not work for a couple of days or even weeks. Moreover, from February until May there is no work and then he survives with the money he has earned before. When I asked him whether he would like to move to another city, he told me that he prefers to stay in Lleida. Although he does not like his job, he is happy to have employment, because he does not believe he is able to find a better job in another place within Spain. Moreover, he has built up his life in Lleida and most of his friends live there. Nevertheless, in 2016 he is likely to get his Spanish passport, which might let him decide to move to another European country. Currently he is allowed to travel within Europe, but not to work. A Spanish passport will give him the opportunity to find legal jobs in other countries, such as France, Italy or Belgium, where his friends and brothers live. When there is no work in Lleida in spring 2017, his plan is to go somewhere to see where he could be hired.

Like Mame Cheikh, several respondents in the possession of residence documents are awaiting their passports before moving to another European country. With a Spanish residence permit it is possible to find legal jobs in other countries, but this has to be preceded by a lot of paperwork in order to change one's visa. This is a long process and various respondents expected not to be hired abroad if their bosses would need to arrange their documents. What we see is thus a state of 'mobility on hold'. Although most migrants with a steady job did not want to move abroad to settle there, many unemployed migrants or migrants dissatisfied with their jobs, did wish to relocate to other countries. Of course, as stated by King (2002), outcomes can be quite different from intentions. Respondents who told me they wished to move abroad may adapt their aspirations. Nevertheless, research by Ahrens (2013) shows that the majority of naturalised Spanish Nigerians do relocate to other countries, and English-speaking countries like the UK or Canada in particular (like Victor, see section 4.3.2).

As is the case for various documented migrants waiting for their Spanish passports, several irregular migrants are also in a state of 'mobility on hold'. Within this research we encountered irregular border crossings within Europe, but these were mainly from migrants who had entered the EU via another country and went to Spain in order to obtain their residence documents. Most undocumented migrants in Spain expressed their wish to move on, but their lack of papers kept them stuck<sup>32</sup>. Leaving Spain behind without documents was not regarded as useful, as nearly all the interviewees stated that Spain is one of the 'easiest' countries regarding the obtainment of residence papers. However, contrary to the documented migrants, I think the probability of moving abroad in the near future is smaller for undocumented migrants. The obtainment of residence documents could still take a lot of time. Michelle and I even came across several migrants who have been living in Spain for

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<sup>32</sup> As we only conducted this research within Spain, we do not know how many undocumented migrants have left this country. Michelle and I could only speak with the ones who stayed or returned, so more research in other countries is needed as well.

more than ten years without papers (e.g. Moussa, section 4.3.1). Moreover, even when they will have their residence permits, it will be difficult for them to find legal jobs abroad due to the necessary changes in their documents. It remains to be seen then, whether besides the ‘myth of return’ (Anwar, 1979), there is also a ‘myth of onward migration’. Although many irregular migrants said that they desired to move abroad, I believe it is more likely that they will stay in Spain, at least during the next few years.

With regard to short-time visits, it became clear that (irregular) migrants were quite mobile within Spain. They often travelled to visit their family members and/or friends. Whether they have visited other European countries, however, was dependent on their legal status, time, money, social networks and their focus on their home countries. When respondents did not have contacts in other European countries, they did not want to go there for holidays. Several migrants stated they only had a few weeks of holidays each year, which they preferred to spend in their countries of origin. Moreover, several respondents did not want to visit other countries, because they did not want to spend money on travelling. Karim, a fifty-five year old man from Dakar, expressed this well. He said that he has only been focused on work and earning money since his arrival in Europe in 2002. He is not interested in travelling to other countries than Senegal, because he wants to invest in his house there and send money to his wife and children. Like many other respondents, he told us that his only goal is to return to his home country.

Concerning this, however, it needs to be questioned whether all these migrants will eventually go back permanently. Amadou, a thirty-two year old Malian man, is one of the few migrants who said that his plans had changed. He stated that he had only planned to stay in Europe for several years. Later, though, he had changed his mind and he told us that he will not resettle in Mali anymore. Where exactly he will be living in the future, however, is something he does not know: “No one knows tomorrow, but for now I’m here”. In line with Sinatti (2011), who has studied the migration patterns of the Senegalese, I think that many West Africans keep deferring their permanent return. She stated that: “Continually delayed, permanent return acquires the status of a myth” (Sinatti, 2011, p. 153).

#### **4.4 Concluding remarks**

This chapter opened with the question why many West African migrants choose to move to Spain or to stay in this country. By having followed their routes towards Europe and the trajectories after their entries, we are now able to identify three key reasons. The first reason why many irregular migrants arrive in Spain is the country’s geographical location. Despite intensive border controls, migrants cannot completely be obstructed from finding their way to the Canary Islands, the Spanish southern shores and the enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla. Secondly, we also came across respondents who moved to Spain from other European countries due to its relatively soft laws regarding the obtainment of residence papers. For many migrants, these migration laws formed an important motive to stay in Spain as well. Thirdly, for a long time Spain has been known for its prospects for employment. This

was especially the case before the global financial crisis began. Although the crisis has seriously affected the Spanish economy, nowadays migrants are still attracted by Spain's opportunities for employment, especially in the informal sector and in agriculture. This is mainly the case for undocumented people.

With regard to migrants' (lack of) documents, we have seen that one's legal status is dynamic and changeable. Whereas migrants who enter a country legally may lose their legal status afterwards, irregular migrants may obtain their residence documents. It is important to note that the mobility patterns of the respondents were to a large extent dependent on their legal status. Various undocumented persons we spoke to, would like to move onwards to places with a better economic situation, but their lack of documents keeps their mobility 'on hold'. The same is true for a number of respondents with a residence permit. Their papers do not allow them to work abroad and, therefore, most of them are staying in Spain until they receive their Spanish passports. Nevertheless, some documented respondents have tried to make a living in another European country. They found informal jobs abroad and returned to Spain when there was no work anymore. Finally, there were also migrants that did not (want to) move, because they had a job, were living together with their families or they did not know how they could relocate, for example when they did not have any connections elsewhere.

In relation to the dynamics of migrants' journeys, we have learned that the direction and the destination of one's movements may change en route. Moreover, we have seen that some people are continuously on the move (e.g. Moussa, section 4.3.1) or are living a multi-local life (e.g. Matthias and Aly, section 4.3.2). These migrants do not reside in just one place, but in multiple places. These forms of mobility challenge the static notion of migration (of looking at two fixed locations) and the dichotomy between temporary versus permanent migration. Residential relocation does not necessarily mean to emigrate for good. Making a living somewhere else can also be temporarily, for example in the case of seasonal employment on the countryside. Moreover, residential relocation should not be seen as the opposite of a short-time visit, as a short stay could also be turned into more permanent settlement. Mobility could thus be a resource for better or for worse.

## Chapter 5 – Strong and weak ties, lost and new ties

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### 5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, we gained an insight into the trajectories of West African migrants who are moving towards and within Europe. Currently, one might still be wondering *why* their journeys evolved in a certain direction. As migrants' networks are seen as one important explaining factor in terms of the direction of their movements, it is interesting to investigate the explanatory power of migrants' social ties. This study acknowledges that so-called strong and weak ties may have an important impact on migrants' trajectories. At the same time, however, I argue that it is essential to understand migrants' network dynamics. Therefore, the 'networking approach' will be used in this thesis to investigate the influence of migrants' connections on their movements. As outlined in the theoretical chapter, this approach focuses on four elements:

- the changeability of network connections in a morphological sense (new ties and lost ties);
- the changeability of network connections in terms of their character (changing power relations and new forms of exchange);
- the effort that is needed to create and maintain social networks and accumulate social capital (networking practices, networking capital, and network work); and
- the relational aspect of networks (the interdependency of social relationships). (Schapendonk, 2015, p. 813)

The first three elements form the structure of this chapter. When investigating these points, one automatically notices that networks are relational efforts. This is because at least two agents are required for a connection to exist. As argued by Larsen and Urry (2010), the extent to which individuals may benefit from their social connections does not only depend on their own networking skills, but also on the capacity and goodwill of others. Consequently, as relational efforts cannot be viewed separately from the first three elements, the fourth element of the 'networking approach' will not be discussed in a separate section.

### 5.2 Changing network morphology

#### 5.2.1 *The strength of weak and strong ties; what about new and lost ties?*

Before leaving their countries of origin, thirty-six out of fifty-four respondents had personal contacts living in Europe. The majority of these contacts were strong ties like family members or friends, but in

two cases via-via contacts. The journeys of thirty migrants towards Europe were in some way facilitated by these connections. This was especially the case when migrants travelled in a regular way. Twenty-one of the twenty-five regular travellers (i.e. those with the right documents to move) were assisted in the process by so-called strong ties (family members and close friends). Their contacts helped arranging visas or provided housing. In this regard, we have seen that Ousmane took a flight to Italy, after which he travelled to Spain by bus. His father was living in Barcelona and accommodated him (see box 4.1, p. 40). Ousmane's story corresponds to the arguments of migration network theorists, such as Boyd (1989) and Massey et al. (1994). These authors claimed that migrants maintain connections with people in their countries of origin, which facilitates their migration to the same place later on.

Although I acknowledge the importance of these strong and weak ties, for migrants' movements towards and within Europe, the explanatory power of *existing* social networks also has limitations. First of all, it is important to stress that strong and weak ties are not just 'out there'. Social connectivity relies on processes of investment, social negotiation, strengthening and losing trust. The three last elements of the networking approach point to these efforts. Within conventional network approaches, however, migrants' 'social network work' is often overlooked (Pathirage & Collyer, 2011). In order to overcome this shortcoming, I will elaborate on migrants' investment strategies in section 5.4. That section will focus on the energy migrants put in their relationships in order to obtain social capital, and how this may lead to (im)mobility.

Another limitation is that not all my respondents' trajectories can be explained by existing social networks. Eighteen respondents did not know anyone in Europe at the time they decided to migrate. For them, their lack of connections was no reason not to leave. Besides this, six migrants with connections decided not to use them. Their journeys towards Europe were not influenced by existing contacts, as they moved to other countries than the home countries of their connections. Furthermore, seven out of the thirty migrants that received help from network connections, only used these contacts to enter Europe. After arrival, they soon moved onwards to another country (see also Matthias, box 4.6, p. 55). Moreover, from the thirty-one migrants that relocated within Spain, only the movements of seven persons were facilitated by existing contacts. The rest of the respondents moved around on their own, or received help from new contacts they came across. Residential relocations within Spain were mainly motivated by the search for a job. Consequently, networks are even less 'the explanatory factor' for mobility here. For residential relocations within the EU, however, existing social networks played a more important role. Twenty-four respondents moved to another country within Europe and the journeys of fifteen persons among them were facilitated by existing ties. Nevertheless, as there

were also nine persons that relocated within Europe without the help of any personal contacts, the explanatory power of networks should not be overestimated here<sup>33</sup>.

This analysis shows that social network theories cannot do justice to the migration stories of all of my respondents. Without underestimating the value of existing ties for some migrants, this indicates that a focus on other actors is important as well. To understand the limitations of conventional network approaches, it is interesting to focus on deviant cases, which has also been argued by Collyer (2005). Therefore, in the next section the role of migrants' new connections will be investigated. Subsequently, as migrants may not only make new contacts but also lose existing ties, their disconnections will also be addressed.

### 5.2.2 *Seeking en route connection*

All of my respondents' trajectories were at some point influenced by new encounters. Although most new encounters are single interactions without any impact on one's trajectory, sometimes short-term connections may significantly alter the speed and direction of one's journey (Gladkova & Mazzucato, 2015). Moreover, new encounters leading to a more durable connection are also possible. In this case, new ties eventually become weak or strong ties. However, citing Schapendonk (2011): "the point is that new encounters cannot, at the time of the encounter, be viewed as automatically part of a social network" (p. 137). Mamadou's story demonstrates this well.

Mamadou had travelled from Senegal to the Canary Islands, after which he was put in a detention centre for forty days (see section 4.2.2, p. 47). As has been stated in the previous chapter, migrants in these centres were asked if they knew anyone within Spain. If they had any connections, they would be given a bus or train ticket to travel to the place where these contacts lived. Although the majority of the respondents used this opportunity to travel to another place, only a minority had existing ties within Spain. Most migrants travelled to places where contacts of co-travellers stayed, which was also the case for Mamadou. When he got on board of the boat, he only knew that they would try to reach the Canary Islands. An exact destination, however, he did not have in mind. Nevertheless, when he was asked whether he had any contacts in Spain, he was happy to say he could go to Barcelona. On the boat he had met a man, whose uncle was living there, and he had told Mamadou that he could travel together with him. In Barcelona, Mamadou lived in his uncle's house for several weeks, until he found another place to live. Yet, in the meantime, he and his co-traveller had become friends and now they are still seeing each other regularly. In hindsight, Mamadou's co-traveller can be seen as a strong tie. However, this man was not an *existing* connection, but a *new contact* Mamadou made en route. A static conceptualization of networks overlooks the fact that

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<sup>33</sup> Short-time visits, however, were often motivated by the wish to see one's family members or friends. This was the case for short-time visits within Spain, but also for holidays to other European countries and migrants' countries of origin (see chapter 4).

Mamadou was actively ‘networking’ in order to find new contacts that could help him ahead. On the boat he spoke to many people, which eventually ensured him of a travel possibility within Spain.

Whereas Mamadou could rely on his co-traveller and his uncle when he arrived in Barcelona, there were also migrants who arrived in new places on their own. Most of these respondents told me they received help from new contacts they made upon arrival. The important role of new ties when migrants arrive in new places has been described by various authors (e.g. Collyer, 2007; Schapendonk; 2011; Suter, 2012; Gladkova & Mazzucato, 2015). In this respect, Moses, a thirty-six year old man from Port Harcourt, Nigeria, has an exceptional story to tell. In 2000, he travelled from the Western Sahara to the Canary Islands, after which he was locked up in a detainment centre for two weeks. When he was released, he did not have money nor a place to sleep. He said: “I was living, sleeping under the wood. I didn’t have a house, I washed myself on the beach in the sea”. Fortunately, after a while he received help: “a woman, the owner of a restaurant, felt so much compassion for me. She and her husband took me as a son”. The “white people” paid one night in a hotel for him and afterwards they rented an apartment. Eventually, Moses has lived there for three years. In the beginning he could stay there for free, but as soon as he found a job he paid for the apartment by himself.

Compared to the experiences of other migrants, Moses’ story is a rare case in two respects. First, Moses was not actively looking for help, instead, the Spanish woman approached him. Second, it is striking that he received help by “white people”, instead of African or black persons. Contrary to Moses, nearly all of the respondents that reached a new destination without knowing anyone there, told me they had actively searched for African or black people for help. With regard to this, we have seen in the previous chapter how Matthias was helped by a black man (see box 4.6, p. 55). Matthias had moved from Barcelona to Oslo in order to find better employment. On the day of his arrival, he begged people on the streets to let him stay in their house for a night. Matthias felt more comfortable to ask black people for help, as they may also be immigrants. He thought that people with similar experiences would be more likely to help him. Finding help, however, was not easy. He had to ask many persons and gain their trust. Eventually, he spoke to an African man who had a lot of contacts in Barcelona. This man called these contacts to inform about Matthias. When he learned that Matthias was a trustworthy person, he allowed him to sleep in his house for a night. Afterwards he helped him finding a room for himself.

It is not surprising that African migrants in a new environment often try to make contact with other people of colour. According to Gladkova and Mazzucato (2015), it is likely that persons with the same characteristics and situation gravitate towards each other. Suter (2012) argues that especially ethnicity and nationality play an important role when migrants arrive in a new place without existing contacts. In her study on the experiences of Nigerian migrants in Istanbul, she saw that ties based on ethnicity and/or nationality functioned as a way to become part of a social network. She stated that “even migrants with no previous contacts in a new location are seldom ‘blank sheets’, but can often tap social capital from an ethnic group” (Suter, 2012, p. 201). According to her, ties based on ethnicity

and/or nationality “were thus an asset in the process of accumulating social capital” (p. 201). The information I have gained through the interviews with my respondents shows this as well. As has also been observed by Suter, my respondents said they approached African persons, because they expected them to know other African people. If the first person could not help them, then he or she could bring the newcomer in contact with other migrants, preferably of the newcomer’s nationality. Moses, who received help from a Spanish couple on the Canary Islands, moved to Barcelona on his own after three years. He was not afraid to move to a place where he did not have any contacts, as he said:

“I don’t need to know anyone, I need to hustle. I meet people in African bars, I watch people and socialize. When we come to a place like this, we’re united. We keep ourselves going together. We’re like guinea fowls, when he is flying he takes his brother on his back. We help each other. We feel that we are brothers, all Nigerians, but also all other Africans.”

Moses’ and Matthias’ ‘hustling’ experiences show that networking is never solely a matter of coincidence. Migrants often have a proactive attitude and they intentionally search for African or black persons in the streets or in African bars, restaurants or hotels. Typically, places like these facilitate the networking practices of migrants. Newcomers meet Africans of the same country or ethnicity there, who may have had similar experiences in the past. My respondents told me they could benefit from the social capital of the ethnic group, as they were helped with accommodation, food and information. Whereas Matthias was only helped with accommodation for one night, we have also met migrants who were provided support by these so-called new ties for several weeks or even months. This was the case in countries like Mali, Morocco and Turkey, but also in Norway, France and Spain. About the solidarity among African migrants, Moussa, a thirty-one year old man from Dakar, Senegal, stated: “We’re family, we have to be family, we help each other, Africans even more.” This shows that ties based on ethnicity and/or nationality result in the creation of a social capital reserve. However, this does not mean that migrants automatically benefit from the social capital of their (new) connections. The processes behind the acquiring of social capital will be further explained in section 5.4.

By now we have seen how new contacts could give a direction to migrants’ journeys (in Mamadou’s case) and how new contacts could help to adapt in a new place (in Moses’ and Matthias’ case). It is worth mentioning that new ties sometimes also altered the direction of my respondents’ journeys. We have seen this in the previous chapter with Chima’s story (see section 4.3.2, p. 56). This Nigerian man had moved from Norway to Spain in order to get his residence documents. He had planned to return to Norway after obtaining his papers, however, a Nigerian man he met in Barcelona persuaded him to come to Sweden. This man was living in Stockholm and he told Chima he could help him with accommodation and a job. As he was in for a new experience, Chima decided to follow this man, instead of going back to Oslo. Whereas for Chima this new tie led to an unexpected move, we also met migrants for whom new contacts led to (temporary) immobility. This occurred especially

when the respondents met someone offering them a job, or when they fell in love and married. Section 5.3, which is about migrants' changing network character, will elaborate on these cases in more detail. As a last point here, it is important to state that the trajectories of irregular migrants were also influenced by a specific type of connection; for many of my respondents, 'connecting' to a smuggling network was a crucial factor in getting further north (see box 5.1).

**Box 5.1: Seeking en route connection: 'connecting' to a smuggling network**

During my research, various migrants told me they needed to use a smuggling network for their overland journeys within Africa to Morocco and for their passage to Europe. West Africans from Guinea (Conakry), Ivory Coast, Mali, Niger and Senegal do not need a visa to enter Morocco (Moroccan Consulate, n.d.), which makes these journeys relatively 'easy'. These migrants have a long trip, during which they have to pay for various buses, taxis or trucks, but they can enter Morocco by simply showing their passports. Migrants from other West African countries, however, have to cross Morocco's borders in an irregular way. Citizens from the Economic Community of West African States<sup>34</sup> (ECOWAS) can travel by conventional transport to Mali or Niger, from where they have to search for a smuggler to get ahead.

Finding a smuggler is a risky process, because smugglers may only be after migrants' money without caring about their lives. Consequently, migrants find themselves in a vulnerable situation, because they could easily be exploited and misled. Smugglers may demand high prices in advance and en route and, as stated by Van der Velde and Van Naerssen (2011), transporters and guides could "unscrupulously drop their clients somewhere" (p. 221). Moreover, during their clandestine journeys migrants may be threatened, robbed or even kidnapped (Triandafyllidou & Maroukis, 2012).

Arriving in typical migration hubs, then, it is important for migrants to watch out for this. 'Networking' with the wrong person may have terrible consequences, which John's experiences show. This Ghanaian man had put his life in the hands of a malicious smuggler, almost causing his death. It was difficult for him to talk about it and, consequently, Michelle and I were not able to exactly get to know what had happened. John told us that in 1999 he decided to go to Europe, after which he travelled through Togo, Burkina Faso, Niger and Algeria, to eventually reach Morocco. When he crossed the Sahara Desert, he told us he was in a group of ninety persons, from which only he and one other man survived. The journey took him two years, of which he spent six months walking through the desert<sup>35</sup>.

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<sup>34</sup> The ECOWAS consists of fifteen member states: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Ivory Coast, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea (Conakry), Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo (ECOWAS, 2015).

<sup>35</sup> For more information on the clandestine passage towards Morocco, see: Broere (2010). For more information on human smuggling towards Europe, see: Triandafyllidou & Maroukis, (2012).

### 5.2.3 *Disconnecting from existing ties*

The previous section has illustrated how new connections could play an important role in migrants' processes of (im)mobility and adaptation. Yet, whereas migrants may make new contacts, they may also lose existing ones. Persons may want to deliberately get rid of certain connections, for example when they impede their mobility. Tony's story demonstrates this well. In Nigeria he had a German girlfriend who worked for a German company that constructs bridges and roads. However, she did not want to leave Nigeria soon because of her job. Eventually, Tony did not want to wait anymore to get a visa through her. He saw their relationship as a hindrance for mobility, which made him decide to break up. Disconnecting from her, enabled him to start his journey in an irregular way. After a long journey, during which he did not have contact with his ex-girlfriend, he finally entered Spain through Ceuta by boat.

While Tony's story is an example of a permanent break, disconnecting may also mean that one distances oneself from a certain connection. In the previous chapter I have explained that most residential relocations within Europe were to Spain in order to obtain residence documents. These migrants had entered the EU via another European country, usually by visa with the help of family members or friends. However, after staying in these countries for a certain period of time they learned that they would not be able to get their papers. This made them decide to relocate to Spain. In this regard, we have seen that Matthias already left his friend in Germany after a week (see box 4.6, p. 55). However, there were also migrants that moved onwards after a couple of months. In some cases, disconnecting from certain connections occurred at the same time as reconnecting with other, existing contacts. Amadou has an interesting story in this respect. This Malian man travelled by visa to France in 2001. His uncle was living in Paris and Amadou could stay together with him. However, once arrived, he learned that the obtainment of residence papers would be a long and difficult process. Together with his uncle he decided that it would be better to go to Spain. Another uncle was living in L'Hospitalet de Llobregat and, after calling him, this man was prepared to offer him accommodation. Three months after his arrival in France, Amadou took a flight to Spain, where he got his residence documents two years later. He has maintained contact with his family in France ever since and he has visited them several times during his holidays.

The above stories concern disconnections that happened in a voluntary way, but separations could also occur against someone's will, for example when someone's partner wants to divorce or when a contact moves away. Maseck's experience illustrates this. This Senegalese migrant had crossed the Mediterranean Sea in 2013, after which he was taken care of in a detention centre. About a month later he travelled to Barcelona, where he could stay with his brother. A few months afterwards, however, his brother returned to Senegal to live together with his wife. Earning his money by searching for *chatarra* in the streets, Maseck was not able to afford his brother's house on his own. Consequently, a difficult period began, during which he had to live in a shelter for homeless people. This shows that the existence of strong ties can never be taken for granted. Maseck's brother had

helped him to move to Barcelona, however, Maseck's further life in Spain was more dependent on new contacts he made. Eventually, he was able to get his life back on track when he made new connections with several Senegalese men, who offered him to rent a cheap room in their house.

Furthermore, in previous sections we have seen that definitive involuntary disconnections occurred in the case of death. Yakhya, a young Senegalese man, lost many of his contacts when the boat he had paid a smuggler for capsized and all twenty-two people on board died (see section 4.2.2, p. 47). John, a Ghanaian migrant, moreover, lost nearly all of his co-travellers when they tried to cross the Sahara Desert (see box 5.1, p. 69). Both respondents told me the death of their fellow migrants had a big impact on their social network. It also affected their further trajectories, because the loss of connections goes hand in hand with a reduction in migration possibilities, as migrants often follow their co-travellers.

Finally, within this research I have met various people who (temporarily) disconnected from family members and/or friends in their countries of origin. Some respondents started their journeys without telling anyone about it. While some re-established contact again when they had arrived safely in Europe, others preferred to stay disconnected until their lives had stabilised. This could take a long time, as Aziz' story shows. This Burkinabe man left his country in 1986 and has been living in Tunisia, Libya and Spain for a total of thirteen or fourteen years before he finally got his residence documents. Then he returned to Burkina Faso for the first time since his departure, where his family received him screaming: "Aaah, you're not dead!" In this case, it was Aziz himself who decided to break contact, but some respondents told me that relatives at home decided to disconnect. Victor, a Nigerian man, said that he is not able to meet the expectations of his cousin and some friends in his home country. He cannot send them money, because he has his own expenses to make. His contacts, however, believed that "money would be on the floor" in Europe and that Victor wanted to keep everything for himself. Consequently, they do not want to talk to him anymore. Currently, Victor would like to go to Nigeria for holidays, however, this keeps him from doing so. As "the male is expected to give money", he first needs to save a lot. This case accurately demonstrates the relationality of networks and how this may affect one's trajectory; due to the expectations of his contacts in Nigeria, Victor feels obligated to stay in Europe.

### **5.3 Changing network character**

In the previous section we have seen how networks change in the morphological sense, with the making and breaking of ties. However, migrants' networks do not only change when they meet new persons or when they lose certain contacts. The nature of a relationship may also change. Within this research, this was most obvious when migrants told me that via-via connections or new contacts became friends. The development of a friendship often led to a new form of exchange. Many respondents said that friends help each other in terms of money, food, et cetera, whenever this is

needed. Without friendship, the migrants would probably not feel the same degree of responsibility towards each other.

Moreover, in line with Wilson (1998), who has described the importance of marriage in the establishment of strong ties, I have met various migrants for whom this 'rite de passage' had a significant impact on their trajectories and their lives. Ablaye's story illustrates this. This Senegalese man was working on the beach in Dakar and he was actively looking for European women. Eventually his networking efforts 'worked out', as one day he met a Spanish woman with whom he got into a relationship. After three years, they married and one and a half years later his visa for family reunification was ready. He could take a flight to Barcelona to be reunited with his wife. As was the case for Ablaye, marriage was a way to obtain documents for several other respondents as well. Various irregular migrants regularised their status by marrying a Spanish woman, which enabled them to find legal employment and to travel abroad. Without the development of a love relationship, the opportunity to get papers because of marriage would probably not occur<sup>36</sup>.

Whereas marriage could lead to mobility, it may also lead one to stay in a particular place. Alex, a forty-eight year old Nigerian man, has an interesting story in this respect. In 1991 he was granted a student visa, with which he could travel to the United Kingdom, where his uncle was living as well. Two years later Alex got his Master's degree and he learned that he would not be able to renew his visa. This made him decide to travel to Spain within the validity period of his visa. People who entered Spain legally and had a one-year pre-contract would receive a temporary residence permit. With help of the Red Cross he was able to find employment. He found a place to live in a small village next to Madrid and his life stabilised. He fell in love with a woman and got into a relationship. When he eventually got his residence documents, Alex wanted to go back to the United Kingdom, because of the Nigerian community, his family and the English language. His girlfriend, however, refused, because she did not want to leave Spain. Alex chose to stay with her and the couple eventually married. Currently, they have been living together for many years, and Alex lives a relatively 'settled' life.

Besides friendship and marriage, another possible change in the character of network connections is the development of an employer/employee relationship. Osas' experiences in Morocco show how this may influence one's trajectory. This Nigerian man lived in Morocco from 2002 to 2012. At the end of 2004, he went to Nigeria for three months, after which he returned to Morocco together with his girlfriend. They did not have a job nor a place to live and therefore Osas asked his contacts for help. He had a Ghanaian friend just outside of Rabat, who cleaned and fixed shoes. He and his girlfriend could stay together with him for some months, but in exchange Osas had to work for him. This friend learned him how to clean and repair shoes, which enabled him to be a shoemaker in 2006. Consequently, besides being a friend, Osas became an employee, which changed the power

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<sup>36</sup> Except in the case of sham marriages, where no love is involved.

relations between him and his friend. In return for a salary in the form of free accommodation and food, Osas had to give a part of the money he earned to his new boss. The development of an employer/employee relationship with this friend has helped Osas and his girlfriend to survive. Moreover, it enabled them to afford their clandestine passage to Europe later on.

The changes in one's network characteristics described above were all perceived positively. However, there were also changes with a negative impact, which becomes most clear in the case of a fight between friends, a break up or a divorce. Tony, a Nigerian man, explained us how his break up affects his life. Currently, he is married to a Spanish woman, through whom he received his temporary residence papers. However, when his Nigerian ex-girlfriend and daughter arrived in Spain, he returned to them. Later on, his girlfriend and daughter moved to Paris, but Tony is not able to go there for holidays. He is officially still married to his Spanish wife, because he does not have enough money to arrange the paperwork for a divorce. As this woman does not want to help him with the renewal of his documents, Tony is unable to leave Spain, which he finds very hard.

What we learn from these cases, is that relationships between persons should not be taken for granted. Conventional network studies have often overlooked the fact that the nature of a network connection may change. The stories above have demonstrated that social ties are no static or fixed assets. This is important to be aware of, because a change in one's connection may have (im)mobility as a result.

#### **5.4 Networking efforts**

As has already become clear in previous sections, migrants have to make efforts in order to profit from the social capital their social ties may generate. Either they actively have to put existing connections to use, or they have to make new contacts and invest in these relations, so they could help them ahead. In both cases, interaction is needed first for a connection to be able to generate social capital. This might seem logical, but many social network studies seem to have neglected the efforts migrants make when they need their (existing or new) connections to help them to migrate or to adapt in a new place. Let us go back to Ablaye's story to illustrate this.

This Senegalese man told us his brother was living in Paris and he hoped to get an entry into Europe through him. However, his brother was not able to arrange him a visa. This made Ablaye decide to seek new network connections that could help him ahead. Eventually, he could travel to Spain in a legal way because of his marriage with a Spanish woman. Before he got into a relationship with her, however, he had already tried his chances with several other European women he met on the beach in Dakar. Trying to find a European girlfriend was not his only effort; it also cost him (and his wife) a lot of energy to maintain their relationship. Ablaye told me how they needed to keep communicating to keep their relationship alive. He spent many hours in internet cafes in order to talk to her. Because of this, the trust between both partners grew, which made her decide to travel back to Senegal several times. Their long-distance relationship was difficult, but both Ablaye and his wife put

a lot of energy into it. Only because of this, the couple eventually married, which led to a migration possibility for Ablaye.

This case shows well Ablaye's 'social network work' (Pathirage & Collyer, 2011). He had a proactive attitude and deliberately searched for a European connection that could help him to migrate. Moreover, this story illustrates the efforts of both partners to maintain their connection, which also demonstrates the relationality of networks. Without the efforts of his wife, Ablaye would need to find another opportunity to get ahead.

Like Ablaye, various migrants actively had to search for new contacts that could provide them an entry into Europe. In this respect, some migrants were able to travel to Europe with a Business or Working Schengen visa they obtained via new connections. Various other migrants already had strong connections in their intended places of destination, such as family members or good friends. However, before they were able to move to the places where their contacts lived, they needed to activate these migration opportunities first, beginning by asking them if they were willing to help. While for some respondents one conversation sufficed, others had to talk or write to their connections numerous times in order to build up enough trust. Family members or friends were often involved in these conversations as well. Moreover, it should not be forgotten that one's contacts are not always willing to help. In those cases, other solutions need to be found. All in all, finding connections willing to help may thus take some time.

Furthermore, once someone receives help, he or she should continue to invest in his or her connection in order to remain able to profit from the social capital. As Larsen, Urry and Axhausen (2006) argue, social networks should be seen as a process. Networks may be sustained only by performing certain networking practices. To illustrate this; in section 5.2.2 (about en route connections), I have argued that ties based on ethnicity and/or nationality result in the creation of a social capital reserve. When one meets the right person and builds up enough trust, he or she may get access to this. However, it needs to be stressed that once a migrant benefits from his or her social capital, he or she is expected to put effort in the maintenance of the network as well. As also stated by Suter (2012), these new ties based on ethnicity and/or nationality are utility-based, so everyone everyone must do their part. The stories of my respondents show that migrants may profit from the social capital of the group only for a limited period of time without providing a reciprocal response. Various migrants told me their new contacts gave them free accommodation and food for several weeks or sometimes even months, but as soon as they found a job, either they searched for another place to live, or started to contribute to the group's expenses as well. Many Senegalese, for instance, found a place to sleep in a house with Senegalese street vendors after their arrival in Barcelona. Consequently, most of them decided to start selling on the streets too in order to be able to make a contribution.

Finally, also migrants that received help from strong ties such as family members, had to continue investing in their relations. This meant that they had to contribute to the costs of housing and

food. When they were not able to fulfil the norms of reciprocity, most of them decided to search for new contacts that could help them. In line with Collyer (2005), I learned that these migrants preferred to depend on new ties instead of their family members, as dependence put their family relations under pressure. My interview with Salif, a fifty-two year old Malian man, showed this well. He has been in Spain since 2005 and every time he is unemployed, he temporarily depends on the aid of his friends. He has five brothers in Spain, but does not want to ask them for help, as “they will think that you’re only coming to eat”. This demonstrates once more that the function of strong ties may not be taken for granted. To accumulate social capital, mutual commitment is required.

### **5.5 Concluding remarks**

In the field of migration research, social networks are seen as an important explaining factor for migrants’ movements. However, it is striking that many network studies actually take the explanatory power of networks for granted. Within these studies it is assumed that networks automatically generate social capital that leads to the mobility of prospective migrants. These migrants are said to move to places where so-called strong or weak ties have settled in the past.

In hindsight, social contacts indeed seem to play an important role in migrants’ trajectories. However, by critically investigating migrants’ networks using the ‘networking approach’, this chapter has demonstrated that the possession of a network should not be seen as ‘the’ explaining factor for migrants’ movements. Such a perspective overlooks migrants’ networking efforts, as well as the making and breaking of ties that are all part of their migratory processes. Consequently, without underestimating the role of strong and weak ties for some migrants, this chapter has demonstrated that a dynamic view on networks is needed in order to understand the role of migrants’ connections on their individual trajectories.

## Chapter 6 – Conclusion

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### 6.1 Research findings

Building on the mobility turn in social science, which emphasised the study of the movements of people, objects and ideas (Urry, 2000), this study has aimed to explore the journeys of West African migrants en route towards and within the EU. As social contacts are seen as an important explanatory factor for their movements, this research has tried to explore the influence of their social networks on their trajectories in particular. Therefore, the following question has been central to this research:

*“What role do social networks play in the (im)mobility processes of West African migrants en route to Europe and after reaching European territory?”*

In order to answer this question, I have described the journeys of the migrants in chapter 4. In-depth investigation of their trajectories using the ‘mobilities approach’ has yielded several insights. By following the routes they have taken, we have learned that their movements should be seen as an open-ended, evolving process. The changeability of their migration aspirations and destinations needs to be stressed. Many of my respondents changed the direction and the destination of their journeys when they could not reach a certain place or when they thought another city or village would offer them better perspectives. In this respect, many of my respondents moved on to another place when they were unable to find a job. Consequently, what we have seen is that places of destination often became places of departure again.

Moreover, intended places of departure also turned into places of settlement for a longer period of time. Frequently mentioned reasons why respondents voluntarily stayed in the same place, were finding employment, marriage and starting a family. Involuntary immobility occurred when irregular migrants did not have enough money to pay a smuggler for their clandestine passage. Furthermore, also within Europe a lack of the right documents put the migration plans of many migrants ‘on hold’. These people preferred to remain in Spain, until they had a residence permit with which they could move abroad.

Nevertheless, there is a big difference between not travelling due to a lack of papers or due to employment or marriage. The degree of voluntariness differs, as well as the level of settlement. Migrants who voluntarily stay may (temporarily) be more settled in their place of residence than migrants who are more or less forced to stay. Yet, as also stated by McMorran (2015), it is crucial not to consider movement and stasis as complete opposites. Migrants may simultaneously experience mobility at one scale and immobility at another. Respondents without the proper documents may be unable to move abroad, but experience a high degree of mobility within the same country. Furthermore, people who are more settled in a certain place, may still make short-time visits to other

cities or villages, possibly abroad. Consequently, in line with Rogaly (2015), I recommend researchers not only to investigate residential relocations, but also short-time trips. Of course, hereby it is important to keep in mind that short stays could be turned into more permanent settlement as well.

Finally, concerning the trajectories of the respondents, it became clear that many types of mobility exist. We have seen that migration and settlement are not necessarily opposites, as some migrants continuously travel between certain places. Other respondents, moreover, are never ‘at home’, but always on the move to new destinations. Consequently, as has also been stated by King (2002), it needs to be stressed that movements are not so easily categorized. Mobility could be a resource for better or for worse.

After having gained insights into the (im)mobility experiences of the migrants, in chapter 5 the attention has shifted to the influence of their social connections on their trajectories. The fact that social ties in another place may lead to one’s migration to the same destination, is often taken for granted. However, this study has criticised this static understanding of the social network. In line with various scholars (e.g. Köşer Akçapar, 2010; Pathirage & Collyer, 2011), I have argued that it is important to focus on migrants’ network dynamics instead.

Following the ‘networking approach’, four elements of network dynamics have been conceptualised (Schapendonk, 2015). We have looked at the role of new contacts migrants make en route, as well as the role of contacts migrants (intentionally) lose. Besides this, changes in the nature of a relationship have been investigated. We have seen how changes in the type of a connection may lead to (temporary) immobility, as may the case in the development of an employer/employee relationship or marriage. We have also learned how these changes in the type of a connection may lead to mobility. The salary employers pay their employees, may enable them to afford their further mobility. Furthermore, marriage may be a way for migrants to obtain their residence documents, with which they could move abroad. What is thus important to stress, is that relationships between persons should not be taken for granted. By putting energy in a connection, the type of connection in itself may change and lead to (im)mobility. This brings us to the third element of the ‘networking approach’, which are the conscious acts migrants undertake in order to benefit from the social capital of a connection. In order to receive help in one’s processes of movement and/or adaptation in a certain place, migrants’ may have to (re-)invest in their relations. Finally, we have become aware of the relationality of networks. My respondents’ stories have shown that the social capital a network may generate, is always dependent on the investments of at least two persons.

The investigation of these network dynamics has provided a better understanding of how social networks ‘function’. We have seen that the role of strong or weak ties may not be underestimated, as these social ties have indeed facilitated the journeys of some migrants. Nevertheless, the findings from chapter 5 support the starting point of the ‘networking approach’, which is the need to move away from network determinism. Several reasons can be identified for this.

First of all, migrants who used strong or weak ties to travel to certain places, could not automatically use these connections in order to move. Although it may seem that these existing social ties are of great importance, it should be stressed that these ties do not come ‘out of nowhere’. As has also been stated by various authors (e.g. Larsen, Urry & Axhausen, 2006; Köşer Akçapar, 2010; Pathirage & Collyer, 2011; Schapendonk, 2015), only by the performance of networking practices connections and social capital can be created and sustained.

Moreover, we have seen that there were also many migrants who moved to places where they did not know anyone. Within Africa this was especially the case for irregular travellers, because they often cover large distances in a fairly long period of time. This makes their destinations unclear and unsecure (Van der Velde & Van Naerssen, 2011), and it is difficult, then, to let the location of their contacts determine their destination. Moreover, from the stories of my respondents it became clear that their movements within Europe are especially driven by their (lack of) papers and their search for employment. Existing social connections seem to be less ‘the explanatory factor’ for mobility here.

Finally, the focus on migrants’ disconnections has demonstrated that social contacts may not only facilitate, but also hinder their journeys. In this case, migrants have to get rid of these contacts in order to move forward.

The possession of a social network, in itself, should thus not be seen as the determining factor for migrants’ movements. However, the question what the influence of migrants’ networks on their trajectories is, is difficult to give a general answer to. The analysis of the personal stories of my respondents brings me to the conclusion that, whether and how their trajectories are facilitated by their social connections, is, first and foremost, context- and person-dependent. As also stated by Pathirage and Collyer (2011), “Given the diversity of situations to which social relationships must adapt if they are to retain any kind of social function, it is impossible to consider social capital as a static phenomenon” (p. 331). Consequently, if one wants to understand the influence of a migrant’s connections on his or her trajectory, a focus on his or her personal network dynamics is needed. The following points have to be stressed:

First, we have not only seen how social connections affect migrants’ processes of movement, but also how these processes of movement influence the formations and quality of migrants’ networks. Thus, whereas migration studies have focused mostly on how social networks influence migration, we could also raise the reverse question. The influence of migrants’ movements on their networks has to be investigated as well.

Second, while examining migrants’ movements, it is important to look at the impact of unexpected circumstances and chance encounters, as this contributes to the unpredictability and changeability of their trajectories. The way a person deals with chance also influences this. Gladkova and Mazzucato (2015) identify two categories of migrants related to their reaction to chance: ‘hustlers’ and ‘pawns’. According to the authors: “The former deliberately include chance into their survival and mobility strategies and try to capitalise on the unpredictable nature of life; the latter exercise little or

no control over chance effects” (Gladkova & Mazzucato, 2015, p. 8). With regard to these categories can be stated that the majority of my respondents would fit into the ‘hustler’ category. Many migrants had an opportunistic attitude and perceived chance as an opportunity, rather than a risk. Furthermore, they do not wait for chance to happen, but deliberately look for it, such as when they try to find new contacts that could help them ahead. We have seen that new encounters have influenced all of my respondents’ trajectories at some point in their lives. New contacts may give a direction to migrants journeys, as well as help them in their processes of adaptation when they arrive in a new place. As has also been stated by Suter (2012) and Gladkova and Mazzucato (2015), the analysis of my empirical data shows that in particular new ties based on ethnicity and/or nationality result in the creation of a social capital reserve. By meeting the right person, building up trust and putting enough energy in the relation, migrants may be able to benefit of this social capital.

This brings me to the third point, which is the fact that networking is never solely a matter of coincidence. There are certain elements in a city that facilitate the networking practices of migrants; these are African bars, restaurants and hotels. Furthermore, various respondents said they were helped by people they met in churches, mosques and in particular streets. Although sometimes my respondents approached random (African or black) people they came across in these places, more often they intentionally searched for their compatriots.

In the fourth place, it needs to be emphasised that the extent to which networking helps migrants ahead, is dependent on their personal networking skills. Some people are better in building and maintaining relationships than others, which influences the outcomes of their (im)mobility processes. The stories of my respondents show that they successfully used their (existing or new) contacts for their movements and processes of adaptation in a new place. Nevertheless, some respondents could do this faster than others. This means that it is important to look at the networking abilities of individual migrants, as this is a factor to differentiate the speed of their migratory processes upon.

Fifth, not only the migrants had to use their networking skills and strategies in order to move ahead. Michelle and I used the site approach and the snowball method in order to get access to our research population (see chapter 3). We experienced ourselves that our relations were not only dependent on the respondents’ efforts to provide information about their trajectories and their personal lives. We had to invest in our connections in order to maintain the contacts. Eventually, our continuous network investments led us to become part of the migrants’ networks as well. When investigating migrants’ social connections, researchers have thus to be aware of their own influence on these networks. In the first place Michelle and I made contacts solely for the collection of data, however, by keeping investing in our relations, in various cases our researcher-respondent relationship turned into contact on a friendly basis. We met several migrants’ not only for the benefit of our research, but also to spend a good time together.

As a final point, it is essential to note that social network theories solely look at the functional side of networks (see chapter 2). Whereas migrants' connections may indeed facilitate their trajectories, chapter four has shown that social contacts may be the explicit reason to travel as well. Respondents moved to certain places not only because their contacts could help them, but also because they wanted to live close to their family members or friends. Furthermore, short-time visits were often motivated by the wish to see one's contacts as well. Consequently, it is fair to say that there is a blurred boundary between the function of networks and networks as a reason for mobility.

## **6.2 Policy recommendations**

Based on my research findings, in this section four recommendations will be set out. These recommendations are directed to policymakers at EU, national and local level:

- 1) On maps about migration to Europe, migrants' movements are often portrayed as a straight arrow, which strengthens the image of the West African migrant as an 'invader'. The same applies to the terms that are used to describe their entries. Words such as 'invasion', 'flooding' and 'crisis' contribute to a discourse of fear (Van Houtum & Boedeltje, 2009). In this thesis I have demonstrated that this image of 'Africans flooding Europe' is misleading. The straight arrows on maps do not show migrants' long journeys towards Europe and their further movements after entry. Furthermore, it gives the impression that most irregular West Africans migrants arrive by boat, while the majority come by visa, which they overstay (Collyer, Düvell & De Haas, 2012). For these reasons, it is recommended to alter the homogenising and fear-creating way they are represented and spoken about.
- 2) Migration is a phenomenon that will always exist. EU-regulations will not prevent migrants from coming to Europe, instead, the stories of my respondents show that they only make their journeys more dangerous. Furthermore, given the large amount of money they pay smugglers for their irregular entries, migrants usually do not want to return to their countries of origin as long as they do not have papers. This is because it harms their reputation and it is expensive and risky to go on an irregular journey to Europe again. Consequently, as also stated by Van Houtum (2010) and Ferrer-Gallardo and Van Houtum (2014), the current EU-regulations also lead to migrants' (temporary) illegality within Europe. In order to prevent the violation of human rights and the tragic deaths of people trying to reach Europe and the illegalisation of many people within the EU, I plea for a revision of the European border policy. The EU needs to accept that migration is part of human society. More possibilities to enter Europe in a legal way have to be created, for example by making it easier for labour migrants and refugees to obtain a Schengen visa in their countries of origin.

- 3) When it is easier to enter Europe (and to travel between Africa and Europe), I believe that less migrants will settle down in the EU permanently. Various respondents stated they wished to have a multi-local life in Europe and their country of origin. During a part of the year they would like to live in Europe, while they would like to spend the rest of the year in Africa. Furthermore, the life worlds of many respondents also go beyond the borders of one specific European nation-state. These insights bring me to the conclusion that the sedentarist policy approach of the EU, which requires newcomers to apply for asylum in their first country of entry and to integrate in one nation-state (European Council, 2010), needs to be revised. It is recommended to draft policies that do more justice to the migration aspirations of the West African migrants.
- 4) Many irregular migrants move to Spain from other European countries due to its relatively soft laws regarding the obtainment of residence papers. Until they have documents allowing them to travel and work abroad, the mobility plans of many of these migrants in Spain are ‘on hold’. In order to meet the migration wishes of these migrants, I plea for policy options that make it easier to legalize the status of irregular migrants in other European countries. As stated by Engbersen, Van San and Leerkes (2006), regularisation programmes may also help to combat the problems related to illegality in these countries, such as subsistence crime and problems related to informal housing and the informal labour market.

### **6.3 Limitations of this research**

In this section I will briefly reflect on some limitations of this study and point to recommendations for further research. First, using the site approach and the snowball method, Michelle and I have gained access to a diverse selection of migrants. However, only one of our fifty-four respondents was a woman. Consequently, ‘the’ West African migrant in this thesis has come to mean a male West African migrant. This means that more research about female migrants is needed in order to solve this gender bias.

Second, I have argued that the mobility of many migrants in Spain is ‘on hold’ until they obtain their residence documents or passports. However, as we only conducted this research within Spain, we do not know how many undocumented migrants have left this country. Only migrants who have stayed or returned have been interviewed, so in order to get a better picture of migrants’ (im)mobility within the EU, more research in other countries is needed as well.

Third, Michelle and I have only conducted this research during a period of four months. A longitudinal study would be better, as this would enable us to follow the trajectories of our respondents during a longer period of time. To illustrate the value of a long-term research; after our fieldwork period Michelle and I continued to maintain contact with several respondents. Via Facebook I learned that Chima, a Nigerian man, had moved to Stockholm. I have visited him four days in order

to do a follow-up interview about his trajectory and to learn more about his personal life. Before he moved to Barcelona, Chima lived in Oslo and he told me his original plan was to return there when he would get his residence documents. However, in Barcelona he met a Nigerian man who persuaded him to come to Sweden instead of going back to Norway. This shows once more that the changeability of migrants' migration aspirations and destinations needs to be emphasised. To conclude, a longitudinal research would thus provide better insights into the course of migrants' trajectories.

#### **6.4 What about Omar? Where will he go next?**

*We met Omar at the very beginning of this thesis. He is in Tarifa with his co-travellers Malick and Pape, and doubts about where to go next. Omar would like to follow Pape, who will try to reach France. From there on, he could continue his journey towards Italy, where he has lived before. However, the chance to get caught at the borders keeps him from doing so. As he does not know anyone in Spain, Malick says he should come with him to his brother in Cadiz. Omar does not have any other ideas and decides to follow him.*

*Once in Cadiz, however, the situation of Malick's brother is not what Malick and Omar had hoped for. He is an irregular migrant as well and does not have enough money to support the two of them. Therefore, Malick and Omar move on to Barcelona, where they can stay with Malick's other brother. Omar lives in their house for some months, until he finds a small job as a promoter for a bar. He does not want to depend on Malick and his brother anymore and searches a place to live for himself. He talks to many people on the streets and in bars and, eventually, he finds a Guinean man in whose house he can rent a mattress for 50 euro per month.*

*One week later, in the end of February 2015, I travel to Barcelona and our paths cross. During our interviews and informal meetings Omar tells me about his trajectory and his life. The fact that our trajectories have met, have affected our social network. A year after my fieldwork period, I find myself in Barcelona again and, of course, I bring him a visit (see figure 6.1).*



Figure 6.1: Omar on La Rambla (author's own photo).

## Appendix I: overview of the respondents

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### Interviews conducted alone:

Pseudonym	Age	Country of birth	Simplified trajectory <sup>37</sup>
Omar	34	Senegal	Senegal – Morocco – Senegal – Turkey – Greece – Italy – France – Italy – France – Senegal – Mauritania – Morocco – Spain – Mali – Senegal – Mauritania – Morocco – Mauritania – Senegal – Mauritania – Morocco – Spain
Sadio	27	Senegal	Senegal – Mauritania – Morocco – Spain
Destiny	34	Nigeria	Nigeria – France – Spain
Maodo	27	Senegal	Senegal – Spain (and multi-local life between France and Spain)
Yakhya	25	Senegal	Senegal – Mauritania – Morocco – Spain (and holidays to France)
Barry	43	Sierra Leone	Sierra Leone – Guinea – Senegal – The Gambia – Senegal – Guinea – Sierra Leone – Guinea – Senegal – The Gambia – Senegal – Guinea-Bissau – Spain
Sirima	33	Mali	Mali – Niger – Libya – Algeria – Morocco – Spain

### Interviews conducted together with Michelle:

Pseudonym	Age	Country of birth	Simplified trajectory
Saliou	27	Senegal	Senegal – Mauritania – Spain – Senegal – Spain
Mamadou	26	Senegal	Senegal – Spain
Ablaye	37	Senegal	Senegal – Spain (and holidays to France and The Netherlands)
Maseck	36	Senegal	Senegal – Mauritania – Guinea-Bissau – Senegal – The Gambia – Senegal –

<sup>37</sup> Including residential relocations and short-time visits to other countries.

			Mauritania – Morocco - Spain
Mustafa	23	Senegal	Senegal – France – Spain
Ibrahima	36	Senegal	Senegal – Spain (and trade between France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Morocco, Spain and Senegal)
Aliou	27	Senegal	Senegal – Italy – Spain
Amina	25	Senegal	Senegal – Mauritania – Morocco – Spain
Aly	36	Senegal	Senegal – Western Sahara – Senegal – Spain – Belgium – Spain (and holidays to France and currently a multi-local life between Spain and Senegal)
Bassirou	27	Senegal	Senegal – Guinea-Bissau – Senegal – Mauritania – Mali – Senegal – Turkey – Greece – Balkan route towards Italy – France – Spain
Abdoulaye	28	Senegal	Senegal – Spain – Senegal – Spain
Ousmane	22	Senegal	Senegal – Italy – France – Spain
Assane	39	Senegal	Senegal – Spain – Portugal – Spain
Birama	36	The Gambia	The Gambia – Italy – France – Spain
Alex	48	Nigeria	Nigeria – The United Kingdom – Spain (and holidays to The Netherlands and Italy and yearly visits to Nigeria)
Guy	31	Cameroon	Cameroon – Nigeria – Niger – Libya – Algeria – Morocco – Spain – Cameroon – Spain.
Tony	40	Nigeria	Nigeria – Niger – Mali – Algeria – Morocco – Spain – Austria – Spain – Nigeria – Spain (and holidays to Nigeria, Belgium and The Netherlands)
Matthias	35	Nigeria	Nigeria – Germany – France – Spain – Norway – Spain (and holidays to Nigeria and currently a multi-local life between Germany and Spain)
Osas	36	Nigeria	Nigeria – Niger – Libya – Egypt – Libya – Algeria – Morocco – Nigeria – Morocco – Spain

Moses	36	Nigeria	Nigeria – Niger – Mali – Senegal – Cape Verde – Senegal – Cape Verde – Senegal – Mali – Algeria – Morocco – Western Sahara – Spain (and multiple visits to Italy, France, Germany and Nigeria)
David	43	Ghana	Ghana – Germany – France – Spain (and holidays to Italy and multiple visits to Ghana and the Netherlands)
Isaac	36	Ghana	Ghana – Nigeria – Ghana – Spain (and holidays to Belgium and The United Kingdom)
Chima	35	Nigeria	Nigeria – France – Germany – Denmark – Sweden – Norway – Sweden – Spain – Sweden
Henry	37	Nigeria	Nigeria – Norway – Spain
Emmanuel	45	Nigeria	Nigeria – Niger – Algeria – Morocco – Spain (and holidays to Nigeria and has visited almost any European country for his job)
Chris	49	Nigeria	Nigeria – Spain (and holidays to The United Kingdom and yearly visits to Nigeria)
Andrew	50	Nigeria	Nigeria – Benin – Togo – Burkina Faso – Morocco – Spain (and multiple visits to Belgium, Italy and Nigeria)
John	40	Ghana	Ghana – 15 African countries for work – Ghana – Togo – Burkina Faso – Niger – Algeria – Morocco – Spain – Sweden – Denmark – Norway – Finland – Spain (and multiple visits to Ghana)
Uche	38	Nigeria	Nigeria – Niger – Algeria – Morocco – Spain
Boubacar	30	Guinea	Guinea – various West African countries – France – Guinea – Spain (and multiple visits to Belgium, France, Germany, Switzerland and Guinea)

Amadou	32	Mali	Mali – France – Spain – France – Spain (and Belgium, Morocco, Algeria and Portugal for work; holidays to France, Germany and Italy and multiple visits to Mali)
Sekou	34	Mali	Mali – France – Spain (and holidays to Denmark, The Netherlands, France and Austria and multiple visits to Mali)
Lamine	50	The Gambia	The Gambia – Senegal – Mali – France – Spain (and multiple visits to The Gambia)
Brian	40-45	Nigeria	Nigeria – Germany – Spain (and holidays to Nigeria)
Victor	25	Nigeria	Nigeria – Spain – The United Kingdom
Chuks	35-40	Nigeria	Nigeria – Spain (and has visited various countries for his job as a professional soccer player, when he was still living in Nigeria)
Seydou	33	Ivory Coast	Ivory Coast – Mali – Spain (and multiple visits to Ivory Coast)
Souleymane	28	Ivory Coast	Ivory Coast – Spain (and multiple visits to Ivory Coast)
Demba	47	Mali	Mali – many African countries – Gabon – Morocco – Spain (and holidays to France, Italy and Germany and trade between Spain and Mali)
Mame Cheikh	35	Senegal	Senegal – Spain (and holidays to Italy, Belgium and France; a visit to Greece and multiple visits to Senegal)
Aziz	52	Burkina Faso	Burkina Faso – Tunisia – Libya – Tunisia – Algeria – Morocco – Spain (and holidays to Burkina Faso)
Moussa	31	Senegal	Senegal – Spain
Idrissa	35-40	Senegal	Senegal – Spain (and multiple visits to Senegal)
Toumani	52	Mali	Mali – Algeria – Morocco – Spain (and holidays to France, Italy and Germany and

			multiple visits to Mali)
Habib	49	Ivory Coast	Ivory Coast – Mali – Germany – Mali – Algeria – Morocco – Spain – The Netherlands – Belgium – France – Spain (and trade between Spain and Mali)
Karim	55	Senegal	Senegal – The Gambia – Senegal – many African countries for his job in a Spanish boat company – Spain (and multiple visits to Senegal)
Salif	52	Mali	Mali – many African countries – Mali – France – Spain (and Belgium, France, Germany, The Netherlands and Mali for trade and multiple visits to France and Mali for holidays)

## Appendix II: overview of the interviews with organisations

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<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Vanessa Tomás	SAIER
Martin Habiague	Mescladís
Manoli Moya	The Red Cross

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