"We are their donkey"

Transnational Affective Circuits in a Gambian-Dutch context

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Summary

Migration is one of the most emotive subjects in contemporary societies, both in political sphere as well as in research. Traditionally, political salience and research have been focussed mostly on both ending sides of migration. They pay scant attentions to the connections between both localities, with little interest in migrants' intimate relations and family life.

This research provides more insights in intimate dimensions of Gambian migrants in the Netherlands, by considering these transnational networks as affective circuits. Affective circuits are the social networks that emerge from the exchange of goods, ideas, people, and emotions. This research follows three different flows of exchange –of monetary investments, social connectivity, and people's mobility- that circulate intercontinentally within the circuit. The goal of this research is to examine how different members experience, shape, and practice the moral and affective dimensions of their transnational network.

This ethnographic research is based on multi-sited fieldwork conducted both in the Netherlands as well as in the Gambia, following one affective circuit of a Gambian migrant couple living in the Netherlands. It follows different flows within the network crossing different localities, or people, before reaching their destination. By following this circuit, I came across three different roles for members within their family – being immobile, internal migrant, or transnational migrant-, each ensued with different moral obligations from the family. By alternating semi-structured interviews with participatory observations, and small talk, different emotive aspects experienced by different members –such as jealousy, pride, stress, feelings of belonging, changes in social status, or moral obligations- are brought to the attention.

This study concludes that transnational networks are not as clear-cut as the literature makes believe, since affective circuits Gambian migrants maintain with their family members can be seen as one big dynamic interplay of aspects, emotions, relations, flows, actions, reactions, and attempts, where positioning the self and making the circuit work in your favour is a challenging and complex task. In some cases, members are making decisions that can reinforce existing shared norms and values of the network, which can result in increasing moral obligations in the future for the self and others, whereas at other times these members can try to transform the network hoping to cause a decrease in their moral obligations in the future. However this latter can also result in frictions or even breaks within the affective circuit.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

On a winter day in the Netherlands I was invited in the house of Bouba and Fatou, where I had my second interview with them. It was always chaotic in the house when I was interviewing Bouba; the kids were running and crawling around, we were interrupted by friends and family calls from Gambia or other places, the television was playing in the background while nobody was watching it, and there was the noise from Fatou cooking in the kitchen. Although it was hard to focus sometimes, we managed to have a conversation. After a while I asked Bouba 'how does your family in the Gambia see you?', while Bouba was formulating an answer to this question I heard Fatou say something in the kitchen. When I asked her what she said she replied: "We are their donkey". I asked Fatou what she meant with this statement, she said: "We are their donkey because we work and give the money to them. Especially Bouba, he works and gives it to them. At the same time there is no life for me here like before; there I had lots of friends, family around, new clothes, new hair, and ceremonies everywhere. Now it is different, every day is the same. I see the same people, I go to the same places: to the city and home, to the city and home. I miss the Gambia a lot". Bouba replied: "Lamin, one friend of us from Germany is now about to be deported back to the Gambia. He lived for five years in Germany waiting for a residence permit, which he did not get. In that time he was working and giving everything to his family in the Gambia. The problem is that he will probably go back to the Gambia with small money or nothing and the family will then turn their back on him. You see that a lot. Gambian boys who go to Europe and are making money for the family, then they get deported and have no money left, because they didn't have the chance to save. The family had high hopes for this boy, so the moment he comes home with nothing the family will see this as failure, this resulting in the family betraying him; they will speak bad words on him".

This conversation with Bouba and Fatou -a Gambian couple living in the Netherlands- shows the social struggles migrants encounter on a daily basis, it also shows the complexity of transnational relationships between family members. During my conversations with Bouba and Fatou, I experienced the many emotions that are evoked in their relationships with their family. The metaphorical sentence '*We are their donkey'* points out the moral obligations that are present within the network, as well as the effort migrants have to put in their relationships abroad in order to support their family members. The two different worlds and the differences between these two worlds -vivid in the answer of Fatou- sheds light on the complexity

migrants find themselves in, in relationship to their families. Building up a life in the new environment combined with the ties towards the old environment is a major challenge that migrants come across. Furthermore, the story of Lamin shows that certain actions and practices in the network can have big social consequences, which is well covered in this thesis. It demonstrates that there is need for constant negotiation and positioning of the self within their transnational network.

The emotions, (mis-) understandings, moral obligations, social consequences, and social negotiations run like a thread through this thesis as it sheds light on the moral and affective aspects within a transnational relationship.

1.1 Introducing the field of research

Although international migration rates have remained relatively stable in history people have always been moving -in search for new and better opportunities, to escape poverty or instability in the country of residence-, the political salience of international migration has strongly increased over the past years (Castles, de Haas & Miller, 2013). As people become mobile, many of them foster social and economic relationships in two or more societies at once. Not only do migrants maintain close ties to their home country, migrating decisions are often not a choice made by an isolated individual (Stark & Lucas, 1988). This decision is rather based on risk-sharing behaviour within a family, as people organize their livelihoods within wider social contexts (McDowell & de Haan, 1997). Instead of an individual project of income maximization in response to emergencies, migration is often considered as a family livelihood strategy or social protection mechanism to diversify income sources, face socioeconomic constraints, and guarantee the wellbeing of the different family members, now and in the future (Lucas & Stark, 1985; McDowell & Haan, 1997; Stark & Levhari, 1982).

In the specific case of migration from Africa towards Europe family relationships play an even a bigger role since the demand for low-skilled labour in Europe is decreasing in most countries (Cole & Groes, 2016). Despite this development there is still a lot of migration from Africa towards Europe. This migration is made possible due to family ties, as they do not just motivate migration towards Europe, they are also crucial for gaining entry (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2010). Family reunification or marriage offer migrants one of the few remaining legal paths to migrations and the potential upward mobility it provides (Beck-Gernsheim, 2007; Charsley et. al., 2012). This regulatory shift draws particular attention to the nexus of migration, kinship, and intimate relationships.

Cole and Groes (2016) developed a new way of looking at these transnational networks, namely by seeing transnational networks as affective circuits. Affective circuits are the social networks that emerge from the exchange of goods, ideas, people, and emotions (Cole & Groes, 2016). In this research the term *flows* (Appadurai, 1996) is used to describe the circular movements of these goods, ideas, people and emotions between people within an affective circuit. Migration research mostly focuses on the flows of remittances – the money and goods that migrants abroad send to their family back home-, while other forms of flows, like phone calls, sending pictures, or travelling to visit are just as important within a transnational network (Cole & Groes, 2016). Looking at these transnational exchanges from an affective angle opens up new ways of thinking about migration: where marriage and kin can sometimes replace the search for work and sending money or pictures can fulfil moral obligations (Cole & Groes, 2016).

The novelty of looking through this angle lies in the fact that affective circuits are on-going processes, whereby there is room for different kinds of exchange and members constantly strive to regenerate their intimate relationship. Affective circuits show that African migration is not as clear-cut as some literature make believe -it does not begin in one country and definitely end in another- as it is an continuing fluid process which draws attention to the interstices between countries, continents, and kin groups (Cole & Groes, 2016). This on-going process goes beyond social frictions and beyond social notions of soul exchange because it involves all the different exchanges and the interplay between these exchanges within the network that 'affect' the social ties. Reasoning from a broader perspective -and a philosophical point of view- this can be linked to Deleuze and Guattari (1987) who argue that social ties sometimes generate flows of energy and objects that exceed boundaries of the individual bodies and attach them to each other, while at other times they are leaving the bodies isolated and alone.

This research follows the affective circuits of Cole and Groes (2016) to look at transnational family networks from Gambian migrants in the Netherlands; where goods, information, financial support, contact, and people are travelling like flows back and forth through different localities. It gives room to the moral and affective dimensions within these relationships as it describes the practices, experiences, and challenges on both ends of the network.

1.2 Aims and research question

This thesis sheds light on the transnational relationship between migrants in Europe and their kin in the Gambia. The aim for this research is to gain in-depth insights on these relationships as it elaborates on how they are established, maintained, and constructed within a transnational setting. In order to get a complete view on the moral and affective aspects that play a role in the transnational relationships migrants maintain with their family in the home country, the following main research question is formulated:

How are moral and affective dimensions in the networks of migrants practiced, experienced, and shaped in a transnational setting?

The main research question in this thesis is based on affective circuits from Cole and Groes (2016), where the moral and affective dimensions are based on their interpretations of affective circuits, that play an important role in the relationship between a migrant and the family members. In this question I decided to analyse three different activities that members use within an affective circuit, namely: practicing, experiencing, and shaping. These three activities are chosen in order to shed light on how different members influence their network and how the network influences them. In this thesis I define *practicing* as performing an activity; which might influence their affective circuit. Furthermore, I define *experiencing* as feeling an emotion or sensation and this shows how the affective circuit influences their members. And finally, I define *shaping* as the forming of an affective circuit: by shaping the network, members influence and change the future form of their network.

The answer to this research question is based on both theory and practical research findings gained in both the Netherlands and the Gambia. This research follows the affective circuit in order to explore the transnational relationship. This affective circuit is broken down in three different flows that play important roles in the relationship. This thesis follows the three different flows of monetary investments, social connectivity, and people's mobility across the borders of nation states and through different localities, where it explores different aspects of the circuit. These three different angles of incidence give room for economical, sociological, and geographical aspects and help to explore the main research questions in different ways. To do so, this broader question is broken down into the following sub-questions:

1. *What is moral and affective dimension of monetary investments and how is it practiced, experienced, and shaped within transnational networks?*

2. *What is moral and affective dimension of social connectivity and how is it practiced, experienced, and shaped within transnational networks?*

3. *What is moral and affective dimension of people's mobility and how is it practiced, experienced, and shaped within transnational networks?*

1.3 Scientific relevance

Studies on migration often focus either on the integration of migrants in receiving countries or on development of sending countries (Mazzucato, 2008). Since the lives of migrants are mostly connected with more than one locality, as they transcend international borders, it is important to use a transnational lens when looking at migration. Transnational scholars shift the focus onto the institutions and identities that migrants create by being simultaneously engaged in two or more countries (Amersfoort, 2001). In order to get a better understanding of the situation and relationships migrants have, it is valuable to focus on both localities and -even more important- on the connections between those localities. Because migration can no longer be seen as a one-way phenomenon where migrants simply go from place A to place B. Rather we should see migration as an interconnectedness, where migrants often maintain close ties with their families despite their absence, as they move back and forth between different localities, invest in the mobility of others, or even eventually decide to move back 'home' (Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton, 1992; Katz, 2001). This shows that migrants can be engaged in both the country of origin as well as the country they have migrated to (Smith, 2007). Transnationalism gives room for seeing migration as a much more continuous flow of money, goods, people, and ideas that transcend borders of a nation-state (Smith, 2007). This research explores the lives and relationships migrants maintain through a transnational lens and therefore can help to bridge this divide, which leads to a more complete understanding of the livelihoods of migrants (Mazzucato, 2008).

Moreover, this research contains multi-sited fieldwork conducted in both the receiving and the sending country of Gambian migrants. Focussing on both the *here* and the *there* in the fieldwork performed as well as in this thesis, gives room to the experiences, practices, and shaping of affective circuits on both end of the network, thereby giving a more complete view on how these transnational networks work (Serra Mingot, 2018). It takes the case of Gambian

migrants based in the Netherlands and their networks -their family back home- to illustrate this point. In addition to this, since multi-sited research is still in its infancy -despite the added value on the migration research realm-, another aim in this research is to contribute to the range of multi-sited studies. Since it brings added value and expands our knowledge on this type of research, answering questions like: how it can be conducted, and how it can be embedded in this field of research.

Furthermore this thesis relates to the work of Cole and Groes (2016) on affective circuits in order to get a better understanding on the affective and moral aspects in a transnational relationship. Cole and Groes (2016) argue that the affective approach opens up new ways of thinking about migration, as discussed in section 1.1 of this thesis. First this is desirable since there is a gap in knowledge when it comes to transnational networks; there is a certain tendency in transnational literature to see transnational networks as stable notions, which will automatically benefit all the people involved in the network (Schapendonk, 2019). However, Schapendonk (2019) showed that transnational networks are not different from other social ties, they are constantly made, remade, and unmade, and therefore are not as static as most transnational studies assume. Just like other social ties transnational networks need network-work, which means an active attitude in order to make them work in your favour (Pathirage & Collyer, 2011). This means that transnational networks are not inherently beneficial for all the people involved and social effort and frictions are also playing roles within these networks. Looking at transnational networks as affective circuits gives room for these frictions and social efforts that migrants- as well as other family members- put in the relationship in order to make it work. Second, the notion of affective circuits shifts the attention to moral and affective aspects within the network (Schapendonk, 2019). Nowadays flows within a transnational network are mostly researched from an economic angle, while the emotions are often left out in these studies. By using the affective approach, this research gives room to the emotional aspects within a transnational network, which are often underexposed.

The last point of the scientific relevance of this research is the shift towards transnational family. Family is playing a more important role in migration nowadays- as discussed in section 1.1- because it facilitates and motivates migration (Cole & Groes, 2016). Currently transnational scholars are mostly studying transnational networks and are thereby leaving transnational families underexposed. Family-studies still often see geographical proximity often as a perquisite for a family relationship, while in the current globalized world it is not possible anymore to ignore the transnational aspect that some families have (Serra

Mingot, 2018). Because family is playing a more important role (than before) in the lives of migrants and since this field of research is often neglected in transnational studies, this research attempts to fill this gap and gain more insight on family relationships in a transnational setting, as it visualizes the transnational relationship between Gambian migrants in the Netherlands and their extended family in the Gambia.

1.4 Societal relevance

After being one-and-a-halve month in the Gambia Karlijn and I were at the beach in Senegambia when man came to us. We had a funny chat and made some jokes. After a while he asked what we were doing in the Gambia, we replied that we were here for research. He wanted to know what we found out about his country, so we started to give him a short summary about our findings up until then. I felt a bit uncomfortable telling a Gambian insights about his own country and I was not sure how he would feel about it. When we finished our short story he replied really enthusiastic: "Wow you really understand a lot about this country in such a short time, I am impressed!" His attitude towards us changed since he did not see us as just regular tourists anymore, but more importantly he found the subject very interesting: "There should be more awareness about this topic, also in the Gambia! You should make a documentary about this shit!"

Policies and policymakers discuss migration a lot, but they are mostly focussed on solely two aspects; either on integration issues in the receiving country or on development issues concerning remittances (Mazzucato, 2008). Policy makers see remittances as a tool to contribute for development purposes in the Global South. Policies often describe remittances send by migrants to the country of origin as a way to help the country of origin to develop, sometimes even replacing development aid (Castles, de Haas & Miller, 2013). This gives remittances a major role in development strategies and it is important to gain more knowledge around this concept. However, influences of remittances other than looking from an economic-development angle are underexposed. There is more to remittances than solely this angle; remittances within a transnational network lead to all kinds of social and moral outcomes, because they are a part of a social system (Cole & Groes, 2016). Therefore it is crucial to place the exchanges between migrants and their families within the context of larger cultural frameworks and social dynamics (Åkesson, 2011; Parry & Bloch, 1989). The approach of affective circuits helps to explore the moral aspects around transnational flows within a transnational network.

Although remittances are the key symbol for the societal relevance of this research, other flows within these transnational networks –like social connectivity and mobility- are also crucial to get more insights on the affective and moral dimensions within the network and therefore crucial to gain more information on the moral side of remittances. Remittances are only a small part of a bigger structure of social dynamics, which circle around in transnational networks. The flow of monetary investments is not an isolated notion, since it is part of a larger circuit, and might be influenced, fuelled, decreased, and controlled by other affective and moral elements within the network. Therefore it is important to research multiple flows within the network in order to gain more information and get a more complete picture on the role of remittances in a transnational context.

Furthermore the role of non-migrants as remittance senders to migrants is often undermined (Serra Mingot, 2018). Migrants are not the only ones in a transnational network who send remittances, non-migrants 'back home' can also provide for migrants –also in the form of flows of goods-, especially when migrants do not have access to formal social protection (Mazzucato & Schans, 2011). Therefore we should move away from solely seeing remittances as economic aspects going from the migrants to the home country and gain more knowledge on the flows of information, people, goods, or contact flowing both ways to get new insights on the moral aspects around remittances.

This multi-sited research delves into the affective and moral dimensions concerning flows within a transnational network and gives room to the experiences on both side of the transnational network. The focus in this thesis is on the moral and affective aspects concerning the flows within transnational networks –like pride, social status, jealousy, obligation and pressure- experienced by both the migrant and the family in the Gambia. The research leaves the discussion about 'if remittances contribute to development' as it is and focuses more on the moral aspects around these monetary flows. This research therefore broadens our knowledge on the affective and moral dimensions within transnational networks in order to put in perspective the one-sided and overoptimistic viewpoints of remittances as the key to successful development. And although I am currently not planning on making a documentary about my findings (who knows what the future holds) –as suggested by the Gambian man who approached us on the beach- I still hope to raise more awareness on the moral and affective aspects migrants as well as their family members experience in their relationship with one another.

1.5 Structure

This introduction gave insights on the research aim and both the scientific as well as the societal relevance of this research. The following chapter –chapter two- elaborates on existing theories on transnational networks and the moral and affective dimensions of these networks. Chapter three explains the methodology of this research, as it delves into how this research is conducted and gives room to methodological reflections. Subsequently the empirical findings of this research are ordered in three different chapters, each focussing on one of the sub-questions in this research; monetary investments, social connectivity, and people's mobility. In order to grasp the complexity of the relationship, the three different flows are discussed separately. However, all of these flows are interwoven in an affective circuit, and are (insurmountable) described in relationship to one another as they are not stand- alone issues, rather they can be seen as part of the comprehensive circuit. The interconnectedness between the flows comes together in the conclusion of chapter 7, where the main research question is answered by looking into how the affective circuit is practiced, shaped, and experienced by their members. This thesis concludes with reflections, recommendations for further research, and a list of references described.

Chapter 2 - Theorizing affect and transnational migration

In this age of migration (Castles & Miller, 1993) transnational networks have become of major importance for migration scholars. For migrants social networks are not only crucial for circulating goods and services, they also offer (psychological) support and social and economic information (Vertovec, 2002). According to Portes (1995; 10) migration can be conceptualized as 'a process of network building, which depends on and, in turn, reinforces social relationships across space'. Migration does not only depend on social (transnational) networks, but it also creates them (Vertovec, 2002). In this globalized world 'transnational communities' are gaining more importance as they not only motivate, but also facilitate transnational migration (Cole & Groes, 2016). Transnational networks are 'dense networks across political borders created by immigrants in their quest for economic advancement and social recognition. Through these networks, an increasing number of people are able to live dual lives. Participants are often bilingual, move easily between different cultures, frequently maintain homes in two countries, and pursue economic, political and cultural interests that require their presence in both' (Portes, 1997; 812).

Although transnational networks are playing a crucial role in the lives of migrants, it does not mean that these networks are fixed entities; rather they need work in order to be maintained and the decisions from members transform and influence the future direction of their network, by the social consequences that emerge from these actions (Pathirage & Collyer, 2011). According to Smith (2007) we should see these transnational networks as 'dynamic social processes' instead of 'static notions of ties and positions'. The flows that are travelling through the network create emotions and affect members in different localities. This chapter theorizes the existing literature on transnational family networks and shows the existing theory on the affective side of these circuits.

2.1 Transnational migration

For a long time migration scholars used to split the migrants lives in the *here* and the *there*, as they use methodological nationalism (Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2002) -the tendency to analyse migration from the perspective of bounded nation-states -as the base for research. This approach overshadows the interconnected processes beyond the boundaries of a nation-state.

As a solution for this underexposed connectivity within the lives of migrants the *Transnational Approach* came up. Transnationalism is defined as 'the process by which

immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement' (Basch, Glick Schiller & Szanton-Blanc, 1994). Transnational researchers argue that it is crucial to consider transnational linkages and interactions between people and institutions that migrants keep and sustain across the borders of the nation-state, in order to understand migrants' lives (Smith, 2007; Mazzucato, 2008). These linkages and interactions create flows of people, money, and ideas that shape both the sending and the receiving context (Levitt, 2005). The transnational approach therefore sees the individual migrant as a member of a larger whole that extends beyond geographical boundaries (Smith, 2007; Mazzucato, 2009). A transnational lens on migration gives room for both migrants as well as their families back home, including multiple levels of engagement across sending or receiving countries (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007). Instead of splitting the lives of migrants into two disconnected areas, a transnational approach considers a comprehensive understanding of migrants' lives, both here and there (Grillo & Mazzucato, 2008).

The conceptualization of migration as a transnational issue received some criticism over the years. A first critique lays in the fact that some scholars argued that transnationalism is nothing new and that the linkages are intrinsic in all migration processes (Kivisto, 2001). Although the linkages that are maintained by migrants across different localities are factually not new, nowadays – since the new development in new technology – the intensity and frequency of flows that cross borders, however ask for a new transnational lens in research on this topic (Mazzucato, 2004). Second, transnationalism is often criticized for the concept being too broad. As a solution to this criticism, some suggested limiting it to merely describing economic or political activities, while others discussed the different types of transnational activities -including political, economic and socio-cultural-, as well as varying degrees of institutionalization and frequency of such activities (Portes, Guarnizo & Landolt, 1999; Itzigsohn et al, 1999; Levitt, 2001). Both acknowledge the heterogeneity of transnational practices migrants maintain and the way migrants develop linkages across national borders. The last critique has been the fact that transnational scholars question the importance of the nation-state and they argue that migration should only be studied at the level of the nation-state (Waldinger & Fitzgerald, 2004). However, transnationalism does not neglect the influences of the nation-state on migration, rather they include transnational activities that transcend national borders (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004; Mazzucato, 2004).

In this thesis on the affective circuits within transnational family networks a transnational lens is especially useful for two reasons. The first argument for this is that a transnational lens

enables the researcher to consider not only the lives of migrants, but also focus on non-migrants in the study. It also gives room for the relationship between localities, since it looks at multiple levels of involvement across these national borders (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007). This is especially important in mapping the particular flows within a transnational network between migrants and their (non-migrant) family back home, and the influences of these flows on the members of the network. Second, as the researcher is moving between countries, migrants also move between their life in the 'new' place and their engagements with their family, the life in their home country and the life they build up in their 'new environment'. In order to get a complete picture of what the migrants experience, it is crucial to be mobile as a researcher as well.

Therefore this thesis uses a transnational lens to look at migration in order to get better understanding on the lives of migrants in the Netherlands and the ties they maintain with their families in the Gambia. It integrates the sending and the receiving poles of transnationalism into one single frame since migration is not a one-way phenomenon and the migrants who leave their homeland often maintain close ties with their family and communities despite not being present, they move back and forth between different countries or maybe eventually move back to their country of origin (Glick Schiller, Basch, & Blanc-Szanton, 1992; Katz, 2001).

2.1.1 Migration as a family strategy

A relatively recent development in the migration from Africa to Europe is a growing intense desire to migrate to Western societies, vivid across social classes in African societies (Graw & Schielke, 2012). There is growing migratory aspiration visible in Africa and the importance of having kin who live in Europe is increasing. James Ferguson (1999) argues that rather than a good job, or the amount of money or wives someone has, a son or daughter who successfully emigrated to the West is the new measure of wealth in African societies. This is the result of Europe problematizing immigration, leading to treating migration as social issues that they can control and intervene in (Foucault, 1997). Moreover, this emerged from the increasing visibility of 'life in Europe'; stories and images of Western wealth –which are more visible due to the rapid expand of new technologies- inspire migrants to travel in order to find a successful future for themselves and their families and lowers the threshold since contact with family members while being abroad is easier than before (Cole & Groes, 2016).

The new economics of labour migration (NELM) argue that rather than an individual project of income maximization, migration is often considered a family or household livelihood strategy to diversify income sources, face socioeconomic constraints, and guarantee the wellbeing and social protection of the different family members, now and in the future (Lucas & Stark, 1985; McDowell & Haan, 1997; Stark & Levhari, 1982). According to Stark (1991) the main actor in the decision-making process of migration is not the individual, but the household he or she belongs to. Migration is often a choice to improve the living standards of families. Families organise their livelihoods in situation of uncertainty in wider social context instead of individually, as they send their kin abroad to gain income for the family. Remittances can thus be seen as the outcome of a self-enforcing and mutually beneficial contract between migrants and their families, including the provision of income to one another (Stark & Lucas, 1988; Taylor, 1999). This money is used to minimize the income risk within the family and to improve living conditions and investment capacity (de Haas & Fokkema, 2010).

Despite the important contribution in explaining migration, NELM literature received some criticism. First, it primary sees migrants as rational and economic decision makers (Taylor, 1999), while economic considerations are not the only important factor in the decision-making processes. Furthermore remittances might not always be the purpose for migration at the beginning and the fact that migrants not always send remittances back home (Serra Mingot, 2018). This second critique might be overcome when we look at affective circuits. Affective circuits show us that a (transnational) family network is not as stable as conceived in the literature, it needs work, it has to deal with social frictions, and can sometimes even fail. This theory shows us that sometimes the burden of supporting for the network can cause breakages or disconnection. In this way migration can also be a solution to avoid the moral obligations by travelling away from the family, without sending remittances back home.

2.1.2 Transnational families

As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, family ties are becoming more important in transnational migration since they not only count as a motivation to migrate –as the NELM theory states-, but also become crucial for gaining entry in receiving countries (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2010; Beck-Gernsheim, 2007; Charley et. al., 2012). In the migration from Africa towards Europe there is a vivid shift from fulfilling a gap of unskilled labour in Europe, towards family reunification as the main migration strategy, deriving from a decrease in the

demand for unskilled labour in Europe. This regulatory shift draws particular attention to the relationship between migration, kinship, and intimate relationships (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2010). Many migrants have adapted their kinship practices to facilitate mobility. So apart from seeing migration as a family strategy to reduce risks and diversify income resources, (transnational) family members are also becoming the key towards successful migration in order to being become mobile and migrate.

Although the notion of family gained more importance in transnational migration (specifically from Africa to Europe) and nowadays many families are living with their members spread across national borders, still families are often conceived of as nuclear and bounded networks (Mazzucato, 2004). Ideally these bounded networks consist of a married couple and their children, close proximity of these members is seen as a prerequisite for interaction and exchange (Mazzucato & Schans, 2011). When one or more family members live somewhere else –especially across national borders-, this is often seen as a temporary phenomenon with family reunification as the preferred and ultimate outcome for everybody involved (Mazzucato & Schans, 2011).

Nevertheless since begin 2000 there has been a growing interest in transnational families. These scientists dispute the assumption that maintaining family relationships across national borders was not feasible (Mazzucato & Schans, 2011). These studies gave room for international migration as a (semi) permanent plight within a family context and highlighted the importance of theorizing mobility and absence as common aspects in family life, thereby keeping in mind the role of both: the ones migrating to other parts of the world and the ones staying behind (Baldassar, 2007; Baldassar & Merla, 2014). According to Bryceson and Vuorela transnational families are 'those that live some or most of the time separated from each other, yet hold together and create something that can be seen as a feeling of collective welfare and unity, namely family hood, even across national borders' (2002: 3). This definition of transnational families is the base for this thesis, since it gives room to the interconnectedness despite the increased geographical distance.

The research builds on the growing importance of family in transnational migration as it delves into the relationships family networks maintain across borders. The focus is on the connection between the members within these networks, where different flows play a role and family members keep in constant contact with each other as they intercontinentally exchange money, goods, ideas, or information.

Moreover, not only transnational migrants experience an obligation –by becoming mobile- to contribute to the family strategy. Each member of a transnational family plays a

certain role in a mobility-immobility realm in order to get the most favourable outcome for the family. Gaibazzi (2015) elaborates in his book on the people who are 'staying behind' in villages; he refers to them as *Sitters*. Mobility and immobility are cohesive phenomenon in a transnational family (Reeves, 2011), whereby Sitters are not passively filling up the positions that are left open by migrants: "Non-migrating does not mean being outside of the migration-realm" (Gaibazzi, 2010; 13). Sitters are of essential value and immobility can be a strategic choice to give rise to create (mobility) opportunities of others, while controlling the household and making sure that investments of migrants are meaningful (Giesbers, 2019; Gaibazzi, 2010; Reeves, 2011). Therefore, each member of a transnational family –whether mobile or immobile-, plays a certain important role in the family strategy.

2.2 Affective Circuits

Affective circuits are 'the social formations that emerge from the sending, withholding, and receiving of goods, ideas, bodies, and emotions within transnational networks' (Cole & Groes, 2016; 2). It focuses on the social processes that shape these circuits and their role in transnational networks. In line with the argumentation of Cole and Groes –and as discussed in section 2.1.1 and section 2.1.2-, this thesis draws a certain attention towards transnational family ties.

Africans draw on long-standing practices of the new circumstances created by transnational migration, they manage to adapt and transform existing practices in a transnational setting (Boehm, 2012; Dreby 2010; Freeman 2011; Hirsch 2003; Parrenas 2005). According to Cole and Groes (2016) the migration from Africa towards Europe often exceeds Europe as both a geographical space as well as a set of opportunities and ideals, since many migrants decide to travel because of moral obligations towards their kin and community or even because of a desire to break free from these attachments (Lucht, 2011; Plambech, 2014).

The notion of affective circuits draws attention to the ways migrants comply, resist, and transform their social interactions, intimate relationships, and cultural norms throughout different kinds of circuits or exchange (Cole & Groes, 2016). Moreover it gives room to other actors in this network and how they influence, intervene, and experience. Although many studies consider remittances as the central role of these circuits, this thesis also includes other ways of exchange -like photos, calling, sending foodstuff, and clothes-, which circulate within the transnational family network (Abrenches, 2014). In this thesis the affective circuits are

seen as a bidirectional movement of exchange and flows, which are moving between the migrants in Netherlands on the one hand and the family in the Gambia on the other.

The transnational lens –described in section 2.1- is necessary when looking at affective circuits as it confirms the importance of the interconnectedness between Europe and Africa. Observing the interstices between countries, continents, and kin-groups, affective circuits enable us the indispensable intercontinental focus needed in this field of research (Cole and Groes, 2016). Cole and Groes (2016) do not consider migration as a clear-cut notion but rather as an on-going process that involves many different kinds of exchange, due to the continual strive to regenerate and to rework their intimate relations.

The exchanges of affective circuits combine material and emotive elements simultaneously; love, obligation, and jealousy intermingle with the circulation of money, goods, ideas, and information, which move reciprocally or unevenly between groups of relatives and between continents (Cole & Groes, 2016). These exchanges within the network can themselves can 'affect' social ties, sometimes generating exchange that results in more attachment and at other times in isolation and loneliness for the members of the network.

"Ce qui, dans le cadeau reçu, échangé, oblige, c'est que la chose reçue n'est pas inerte. Même abandonnée par le donateur, elle est encore quelque chose de lui" – Mauss, 1925; 17

This quote from Marcel Mauss retrieved from his classic piece 'Essai sur le don', can be translated as: "What obliges in the gift received and exchanged, is that the gift received is not inert. Even abandoned by the donor, it is still a part of the giver". With this he states that every gift causes certain obligations for the receiver since it carries with it traces of the giver, whereby reciprocity is demanded. This also applies to the way exchanges in transnational networks carry traces of the relationship between the sender and the recipient with them. This can be the case for material gifts that carry a certain memory including moral obligation owed to the giver, similarly with immaterial gifts that can trigger the obligation to provide material gifts (Cole & Groes, 2016). Therefore the exchange of gifts, whether material or immaterial, asks for a certain action from the recipient.

These exchanges –frequently caused by obligations and causing new obligations- provide a certain interplay that forms the basis for the maintenance of the transnational relationship. This interplay ensures fluidity in the relationships; where the members actively make decisions that influence the future direction of their relationships. These choices result in different outcomes for the transnational network, like transforming old relationships or

creating new attachments in the process. This fluidity and changeability of the relationship migrants maintain with the family in their homeland is captured in the notion of affective circuits (Cole & Groes, 2016).

Furthermore, affective circuits give room to the possibilities of disconnection and conflict within the transnational network. The exchange of goods, ideas, bodies and emotions in a transnational setting needs regulation from both the migrants and their families (Cole & Groes, 2016). There are possibilities of slowdowns and breakages within this system, since all members within the network seek to block, manage, or encourage exchange for different reasons (Cole & Groes, 2016). Almost every decision on exchange within the network has certain consequences for the members of the transnational family network. Transnational networks do not differ from the social ties all other people maintain, they are constantly under construction and it requires *network-work* to make them work in your favour (Schapendonk 2019; Pathirage & Collyer 2011). Migrants invest in their relationships, maintain them, or sometimes decide to keep distance from them (Schapendonk, 2019), resulting in changeability in these transnational networks. Moreover, the networks are not always favourable and can also be experienced as a burden, causing negative emotions, or other negative effects on the individuals inside this network (Cole & Groes, 2016).

Because affective circuits give room to all these elements and underline the importance of affective and moral elements within the circuits of the network, it provides better insights in the relationships migrants maintain with their family in the home country. Therefore the notion of affective circuits is the base for this thesis, as using this lens on transnational networks of migrants leads to an answer on the main research question.

2.2.1 The quest for personhood and morality

Affective circuits see migration from the perspective of inclusive social groupings rather than the typical individual-state dyad used in many migration theories. This perspective focuses more on family networks, since in many African settings persons are understood as nodes in systems of relationships and are defined by mutual assistance and asymmetrical exchanges (Maranz, 2001). The notion of *Personhood* then emerges at the intersection between the individual aspirations and the obligations to the social network (Cole & Groes, 2016), which leads to a question on morality.

Charles Piot (1999) argues that in many African contexts people do not *have* social relations but they *are* their social relations. Therefore a perfect outcome for personhood is to be found in the interconnection between one's individual achievements and one's social

connections in their network. In the African setting it is therefore important to meet the obligations from the family network, which means that one has the ability to care for the family, this obligation is especially vivid in the lives of the young men (Groes-Green 2012; Hunter 2010; Thomas 2003). Many young men feel stuck because of the fact that in the current economic situation in African societies it is not possible to meet the expectations from the family. Therefore transnational migration is one of the possibilities to achieve full personhood (Fioratta, 2015). Full personhood means that one is recognized by others as someone who is capable of supporting their family, of becoming somebody. Therefore many young men decide to take this heroic journey in order to become a *big somebody*, on whom others depend (Cole & Groes, 2016). The perfect outcome would be to enjoy the modern standards of living in a Western society and help their families at the same time. In reality that perfect outcome is not always met and this can result in tensions between individual desires and collective demands, which are a part of affective circuits.

Parry and Bloch (1989) distinguish two different cycles of exchange, *short-term cycles of exchange* –which means individual gain and spending in a world of commerce and competition- and *long-term cycles of exchange* – reproduce the collective social order in a particular community- that play a role in the quest to personhood. The two cycles of exchange intertwine since investing in the long-term cycles is only possible when the resources are gained from the short-term cycle. Within families short-term cycle practices are only acceptable when they are subordinated to the investments in the broader social unit (Parry & Bloch, 1989). In the world of migrants this means that migrating and looking for a better life in Europe –which is seen as part of the individual and short-term cycle- is only acceptable in the family when it is constantly mediated by affective circuits and satisfying the long-term cycle (Groes & Cole, 2016). Finding the accepted balance between the two cycles in the affective circuits migrants maintain, has positive effects on individual and social level. However, an imbalance between the cycles can lead to social sanctions for the individual.

While striving to perfect balance between the self and others, the notion of *morality* comes up. Morality is about 'knowing what is right and what is wrong, but more importantly it is about realizing that your actions affect someone else, that there is an interplay between the self and others and one can make moral decisions by taking responsibility for both' (Lyons, 1983; 125). Therefore -in order to make moral decisions- migrants have to negotiate their actions and interaction with others to find this balance and thereby finding their personhood (Parry & Bloch, 1989).

2.2.2 Mandinka personhood and morality

In what follows –in order to narrow this theoretical framework down to the specific case of migrants from the Gambia- the findings of Pamela Kea (2010) are discussed. In her research she focuses on Mandinka's, the biggest ethnic group in the Gambia, whereby she links the quest of personhood to their specific cultural values.

Mandinka's value two different moral dimensions in kinship relationships (Watts, 1990; Wootten, 2009), namely *Badingya* (mother childness) and *Fadingya* (father childness). Badinya includes group harmony, cooperation, obligation, stability, and kinship, whereas Fadingya stands for conflict, individuality, and personal ambition (Jansen, 1996). Those who share the same mother feel a stronger sense of kinship for one another; there is a certain sense of closeness and allegiance expected from them (Kea, 2010). However, those who only share the same father show individuality, fragmentation, and selfishness; an individual must surpass the reputation and achievements of his or her father and ancestors. These two opposing forces are complementary and equally valued in Gambian domestic life. Since the Gambia has a rise in cost of living, unemployment, and the cost of domestic foodstuffs, migration has become an increasingly desirable and sought-after alternative (Kea, 2013). Migration offers on the one hand opportunities to exercise Fadingya – since it gives chances to grow and be financially independent- as well as Badingya, since it gives greater opportunities to provide for the (extended) family (Kea, 2010). These two different moral dimensions can be linked to the short- and the long-term cycle (discussed in section 2.2.1) since Badingya –just like the long-term cycle- gives similarly importance to the support of the family and giving in to moral obligations from the family, whereas Fadingya- just like the short-term cycle- gives room for personal achievement and ambition. Personhood is found in the moral balance between Fadingya and Badingya, just like between the short and the long-term cycle.

In a transnational setting- when one is migrating to another country- one can still find his or her personhood in the balance between the two dimensions. Migrants constantly strive to achieve the balance between invest in hard work (Fadinya or short-term cycle) in order to support the family back home (Badingya or long-term cycle). Therefore there is constant consideration and weighing of consequences of certain action necessary in order to achieve personhood.

2.3 Conclusion

This thesis focuses on the multifaceted exchanges within the networks of migrants, and how these exchanges are experienced, practiced, and shaped by the members of these networks. The notion of affective circuits helps to give meaning to the relationships between the material resources, cultural meanings, and personal sentiments, which play a role in these networks. Affective circuits are neither continuous nor all-inclusive – not everyone succeeds in these endeavours- and therefore affective circuits can be seen as a part of wider patterns of inclusion and exclusion, whereas some migrants find it easier to become emplaced, while others fall of the grid (Cole & Groes, 2016). This thesis shows the building and managing of these transnational networks from both sides; the migrant in Europe on the one hand and the family in the Gambia on the other. It explores the moral and affective dimension of development in a transnational setting and delves into three different flows within this transnational circuit, namely; monetary investments, social connectivity, and mobility. There is special attention for the affective aspects experienced by members of a transnational family network; from jealousy to moral obligations, from experienced pressure to feelings of proudness, and from feelings of belonging to social frictions.

Chapter 3 – Data and methodology

Three weeks before my flight to the Gambia we (me and Karlijn van Driel; my fellow student who was with me during most of the fieldwork and also supervised by Joris Schapendonk) were at Bouba and Fatou's house for our last Wolof lesson. After practicing basic sentences -like "Kanju Fetsje" meaning let's dance, or "Djaime Mburu" meaning I want to buy bread-, Fatou said: "Wait I will grab something for you", as she left the room. After a few minutes she came back with a plastic bag filled with different items. She put all the stuff on the table; there were Dutch chocolates, candy, three second-hand smart-phones, three chargers, and a closed envelope (which was filled with a big amount of cash money). When she finished unpacking, she said: "I want you to bring this stuff to my mother Mariama, I will give you the telephone number of my younger sister Adama and you can contact her when you arrive in the Gambia. She will come to pick it up at the place where you are staying".
And so we set it up, I put the plastic bag inside my luggage and took it with me to the Gambia. On our third day in the Gambia Adama came by to pick up the bag. She came together with her brother Musa -who was bringing her to Tanji with his taxi car- and after some small talk they left with Fatou's gifts. One week later we saw Musa again since he was bringing us to Jarra, the village where Fatou and Bouba's family originate from. And there was the plastic bag, in the back of the car, waiting to be handed over to Fatou's mom. When we arrived in Jarra the plastic bag and a bag of rice -we bought as a present for the family-, were handed over to Mariama. Mariama was very happy when she received the gifts and she thanked us gratefully and asked us to thank Fatou, while showing us around her house.

This research focuses on the transnational relationship Bouba and Fatou –a Gambian couple living in the Netherlands- maintain with their family members in the Gambia (there will be more elaboration on Bouba and Fatou in section 3.3). This particular story illustrates how we became a part of the flows in the transnational network of Bouba and Fatou.

Because of this plastic bag I was able to gain more insights in how an exchange within their family network was handled; which and how many members were involved in this exchange, the road that the bag travelled, how meetings were arranged with the next person who needed to take the bag further in this system, and the reactions people had on these gifts from Fatou. Becoming a link in this system was very valuable for me since it enabled me to experience the influences, experiences, practices, and shaping of an exchange within their affective circuit. Being able to experience this flow myself on both sides of the network –in

the Netherlands and in the Gambia- in this multi-sited research, was crucial for understanding more about the transnational network Bouba and Fatou maintain.

Moreover, since the bag was filled with very valuable resources (especially the envelope inside it), it also showed that Bouba and Fatou trusted us to be a link in the system. This, in all probability, helped to gain more trust from their family members in the Gambia. The specific role that we came to play in the network, by bringing the plastic bag with us, was felt on both sides of the network. And in some way, *we* were now *their* donkey.

3.1 Research methods

In order to understand how families in a transnational setting maintain, organise, and work out their social relations -as they are trying to overcome the geographical distance in these relationships-, I made use of ethnographic research methods and methodology. An *ethnographic approach* enabled me to understand the meanings that guide the behaviour of different family members in multiple environments, which is continuously constructed and reconstructed based on people's interpretations of the situations in which they find themselves (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). According to Hammersley & Atkinson the ethnographer 'participates, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives –for an extended period of time-, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions; in fact collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issue with which he or she is concerned' (1995; 2).

This research focuses on the relationships Gambian migrants in Europe have with their family in the Gambia, how both parties endeavour a feeling of closeness within their exchanges and how members of the family network integrate affective circuits in their daily lives in order to maintain their network. Ethnography opens up ways to research these fluid relationships, since it is an exercise of judgement in context; not a matter of simply following methodological rules (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). This flexible and open-ended character of ethnography was especially applicable to this research since the complex transnational relationships that these families nourish, called for a flexible methodology; including semi-structured interviews as well as participant observations and small talks. This open-ended approach I adopted was necessary to explore, interpret, and try to understand the complex realities of the migrant and their families (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Ethnographic research includes different variants of conducting research and defining the field of research. A transnational family relationship calls for innovative research methodologies beyond the borders of bounded nation-states. Migration scholars often focus either on push and pull factors leading to migration, or on integration processes in receiving

countries (Olwig, 2007). However nowadays in the globalized world -where (groups of) people increasingly become mobile and the boundaries between nation-states become blurry because of interconnectedness- there is a need for more than traditional geographically-fixed ethnographic approaches, in order to capture the transnational realities of many people. A transformation of these traditional research tools is necessary to understand the experiences and practices of transnational –emotionally intimate and geographically distant- family ties (Baldassar, 2007). Shifting the focus from the migrant *here* and the family *there* into putting them in one single singular frame, enables researchers to look at a broader and much more complex picture (Olwig, 2007). This complex picture captures more aspects of the transnational relationship these families maintain. Therefore I decided to use a *multi-sited ethnographical approach* in this research.

In multi-sited ethnography researchers look through a transnational lens, which avoids splitting migrants' lives into disconnected areas, and ensures a more complete understanding of different social situations and relationships that migrants must confront and reconcile with each other, both *here* and *there* (Marcus, 1995; Grillo & Mazzucato, 2008). According to Marcus (1995) multi-sited research aims to observe social practices produced in different geographical locations, these practices cannot be observed by staying in one single place. The research develops itself by following connections, associations, and relationships across different contexts. A multi-sited ethnography across two nation states where families live – the Netherlands and the Gambia- enabled me to understand the roles and guiding mechanisms of the relationship they maintain.

By conducting fieldwork with different family members in multiple locations, I was able to unpack the complexities of the relationship and the meaning of the exchanges within the network, which are used throughout diverse contexts. Because the base of this research lies in the cross-border exchanges of goods, services, people, information and ideas, my own mobility became indispensable and crucial for this research. Being able to become a participator in this system of transnational flows –as described in the anecdote in the beginning of this chapter- enabled me to experience the mobility of these flows myself, which would not have been possible if I was focussing on a geographically fixed locality.

However, it is precisely this mobility of the researcher that challenges a multi-sited research (Amelina, 2010). Conducting multi-sited ethnographic research in a relatively tight timeframe, challenges the researcher to find the right balance between depth and breadth within the fieldwork (Mazzucato, 2009). Although the tight timeframe combined with my mobility was a challenging aspect that made me come across different practical hurdles

(which I will elaborate on in section 3.1.1), the advantages of gaining insightful data in fields that have received little attention – i.e. notions that transcend the local, which are often overlooked by traditional localized fieldwork methods, while being increasingly important as people become more mobile and interconnected on a global scale (Olwig, 2007)- and being able to capture a more complete vision on transnational relationships within different contexts, outweigh the disadvantages. Conducting multi-sited research enabled me to look at the 'two sides of the coin', since it gave room for the experiences and practices on both sides of the network; migrants living in the Netherlands and family members living in the Gambia.

Furthermore, within this multi-sited research I mostly used a *match-sample design,* by having a main focus on one transnational network. The main units of analysis in this match-sample design are not the individual migrants, or individual family members, but most of my respondents were part of *one* transnational family network, interconnected across national borders (Mazzucato, 2008; 72). By collecting data on both sides of the network –the *here* and the *there*-, this design is particularly suitable for addressing questions about the working mechanisms of transnational exchanges (Mazzucato, 2008). In this research and fieldwork my main focus was on both sides of the transnational network of Bouba and Fatou, but I enriched my knowledge with data on this theme gained from other, single respondents, who fulfilled different roles –mobile or immobile- within their family network. A match sample design enabled me to gain deeper and more nuanced understanding of transnational relationships and their influences on different members within the network.

Moreover, like in many ethnographies, this study is based on an *iterative approach*, meaning that data collection, reading more theory, and data-analysis alternate each other during the whole period of the fieldwork (Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009). The information gained from a previous interview influenced the following interviews and the collected data were analysed throughout the process in order to determine the next steps in the research. An iterative approach can be defined as: 'A loop-like pattern of multiple rounds of revisiting the data as additional questions emerge, new connections are unearthed, and more complex formulations develop along with a deepening understanding of the material' (Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009; 77). Data analyses are used to define missing information and were often the base for the following interviews, observations, or informal chats. Moreover moving between reading theory and conducting fieldwork made it possible for me to redirect, sharpen, and elaborate on different important notions within the research.

3.1.1 Practical implications in multi-sited research

Even though multi-sited ethnographic research makes it possible to gain valuable insights on transnational aspects, this approach does have some practical hurdles attached to it. First, multi-sited fieldwork is time consuming (Serra Mingot, 2018), as it not only took me time to travel from place to place and to get familiar and settle down in the places, it also took time to get to know the participants and gain their trust. Some of my participants lived in very small and remote villages and were not familiar with strangers- let alone foreigners- visiting them. This made it sometimes hard for me to build up a trust relationship and make my respondents feel free to talk about sensitive topics. However, the focus on *one* transnational network enabled me to gain this trust with more ease. Because the family members in Jarra (the village were Bouba and Fatou are originally from) knew about my connection with Bouba and Fatou, they were more likely to trust me. Additionally –arising from the example in the anecdote in the beginning of this chapter- seeing the trust Bouba and Fatou had in us by making us part of their transnational flow, made it easier for their family members to confide us with certain information.

Furthermore this type of research can be relatively uncertain (Serra Mingot, 2018). The fluid character of multi-sited research has many advantages since it enables the researcher to freely respond to different situations. However, this also has drawbacks for the researcher since nothing is fixed (Serra Mingot, 2018). Therefore situations and people can change or change their mind, which can have major influences on the research. Also, it is only possible to prepare yourself and your fieldwork up to a certain amount, which can unsettle the researcher. It is of major importance in this kind of research to be open for different situations and be creative in order to find new solutions when things are going differently than expected. Although I was well aware of this practical hurdle in multi-sited research, I still experienced multiple difficulties because of this uncertainty (which I elaborate on later in this chapter).

3.2 Context of the field

Although this research gained more information on the family relations across localities than on the specific local sites, this does not mean that these different contexts are irrelevant (Serra Mingot, 2018). The different sites- the Netherlands and the Gambia, displayed in figure 1- in this research should rather be seen as the background for the transnational family relations where they can be maintained, broken down, remade, and nourished.

The fieldwork in this thesis is partly conducted in the Gambia, the smallest country of Africa consisting of 11,300 square meters, located on the West coast of Africa. The country is surrounded on all sides –except on the Atlantic ocean- by Senegal. The remarkable shape of the country lies in the fact that it follows the Gambian River, which divides the country into the North and the South bank (Hiattmicheal, 2005). Currently there are 2,1 million people living in the Gambia, from which the majority is living in urban areas at the West coast of the country, which is called *Kombo* area. There are approximately fifteen different tribes living in the Gambia, which results in around thirty different languages in this small country (Wright, 2018). The five major ethnic groups are: Mandinka, Fula, Wolof, Jolla, and Serahule, whereby the biggest tribe is the Mandinka tribe, which includes approximately 34% of the total population. Each ethnic group has their own cultural practices and traditions; however there is a lot of intermarriage and peaceful coexistence between ethnic groups (Hiattmicheal, 2005).

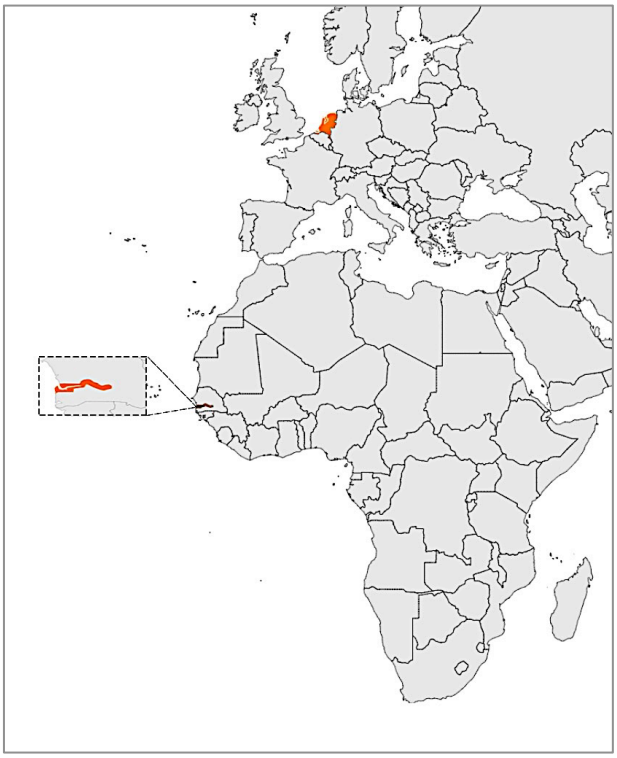

Figure 1: A visual overview of the main geographical locations of this multi-sited research.

Currently 90% of the population is Muslim, the rest is either Christian or Animist. Being a good Muslim includes bearing many children and this is why most families in Gambia consist of many children (Kea, 2013). Although English is the official language in the country, not everyone speaks English. Most of the Gambians speak multiple local languages and some speak Arabic. The majority of Gambians combine farming, the sale of horticultural produce in local markets, and livestock care with non-agrarian livelihood strategies (Kea, 2010). Furthermore Gambians often live in communities made up of wards or patrilineal kin groups. Most of the time, members of these extended, three-generation family –with men having up to four wives- reside in one compound (Kea, 2010).

3.3 Procedure of collection of respondents

The fieldwork of this multi-sited ethnographic research (a total of 4 months) is divided in three parts: the first one in the Netherlands (1 month), the second one in the Gambia (2,5

months), and the last one again in the Netherlands (2 weeks). During this fieldwork I used different techniques for sampling my respondents, which I will elaborate on in this section. Along the way unexpected occasions and developments occured, which forced me to be creative in order to find new ways to explore my research question.

During the first part of my fieldwork –conducted in the Netherlands- I met my first respondents, a Gambian migrant family: a husband Bouba, his wife Fatou and their two kids. I got to know these people through my supervisor, who has been friends with Bouba and Fatou for a long time. Karlijn and I had multiple meetings with the family before travelling to the Gambia. In the first meeting we got to know Bouba at our University and talked about the ideas we had for our research projects. He agreed that he wanted to help us with our projects as a respondent as well as giving us some first information about life in the Gambia to prepare ourselves for the second part of the fieldwork.

Furthermore, Fatou was willing to give us lessons in one of the local languages in the Gambia: Wolof. Not everybody in the Gambia speaks English and although we were not planning on doing entire interviews in local language thoroughly –since there was limited time to learn the language-, it was good to know some basic sentences and words in order to be polite and show the people our willingness to put effort in the relationship and getting to know the culture. We had four lessons in total and after that we were able to speak and understand some basic sentences and greetings. We wrote everything Fatou taught us down in notebooks, that we took with us to the Gambia. By then we had no idea that these few words and sentences would have such great influence during our fieldwork, since everybody became enthusiastic the moment they heard we could speak a few words in their local language. During our time in the Gambia we wrote more translations in our notebook to extent our knowledge on the language. Karlijn and I went a couple of times to the house of Bouba and Fatou where we had the Wolof lessons, tasted Gambian food that Fatou prepared, and had talks about cultural differences provides us a clearer picture on what to expect in the Gambia.

Moreover, I went by myself to their house to have two semi-structured interviews with Bouba. In these interviews he told me about his relationship with his family. We spoke about the struggles and tensions within this relationship as well as the pleasure and pride Bouba experiences. It was easy to talk to Bouba because he is an open and accessible person and because he understood my culture and my point of view and could therefore naturally elaborate on things that I did not know. During my semi-structured interviews with Bouba, we made a list of seventeen of the family members that were most important to him. On this list was some basic information about the people: name, age, job, their relationship with Bouba,

and their whereabouts. In this way I prepared and mapped my fieldwork in the Gambia, which I was planning to conduct in the coming two-and-a-halve months. Since the interviews with Bouba were conducted in their house, Fatou was always around and sometimes interfered in our conversation, or added information to certain answers Bouba gave me. As we got to know Bouba and Fatou better, they became our entry point in the Gambian society, where the second phase of my research took place.

In the Gambia the second phase of my fieldwork began. Karlijn and I were staying in Kairoh Garden, a guesthouse runned by a Gambian family located in Tanji. Tanji is a fishermen's-village south of Serrakunda. From there it was easy to reach different parts of the Gambia because of its central location. By local van it only took us twenty minutes to reach *Turntable*- a roundabout close to Serrakunda, which is the central meeting point in the Gambia- and from there it was easy to go anywhere you wanted because almost all the vans passed this roundabout. Apart from travelling to other places in the Gambia we also spend a lot of time in Tanji, where we build up our own social network. The owners of the guesthouse (a Dutch lady married to a Gambian man) had a lot of social connections open for us to use. Furthermore we visited several places in the village –the Arabic and the English school- where we met several teachers. These teachers invited us to their villages or families and this is how we expanded our own network.

Figure 2: A visual overview of the main geographical locations of the second phase in the fieldwork. Pointed out: Tanji (the place we stayed), Kerewan (close to Jarra, the first trip), and Kuntaur (the village of the second trip). Source: maps.google.com with own adjustments.

The openness and curiosity of Gambians towards 'strangers' made it easy for us to meet new people and to talk to them. This resulted in many visits in family compounds, dinner with family or friends of people we just met, attending different ceremonies, going to parties, being invited to play djembe on the beach and so on and so forth. This openness of the Gambians has been a big contribution to our research projects and a huge gift for us during our stay in this country. Initially the idea for my fieldwork was to research only Bouba and his family network, that turned out differently – which I will elaborate on later in this section- and therefore it was very helpful to meet new people (hopefully future respondents) so easily. During the fieldwork in the Gambia we made two multi-day trips to different sides of the country; one to Jarra near Kerewan and one to Kuntaur to visit the family of one of our friends Dembo, who was a construction man we met in Tanji.

The first trip took place after being less than two weeks in the Gambia. We were going to Jarra, where both Bouba and Fatou were born and grew up. Bouba and Fatou arranged the trip with their family; we were picked up by Fatou's younger brother Musa and stayed with Fatou's mother Mariama. We stayed from the eleventh of April until the fourteenth of April in this village, where I observed and had conversations with several family members of Bouba and Fatou. The family took good care of us during our stay in the village and they were very happy that friends of Bouba and Fatou came to visit. After our stay in the village we also travelled to Serrakunda area to interview other people (Bouba's brother, sister, and nephew and Fatou's cousin and brother) that are a part of the transnational network from Bouba and Fatou. I gained many insights on their views and experiences in the transnational relationship with Bouba and Fatou. However I also experienced certain difficulties in the contact with them.

First of all there was a language barrier between most of my respondents and me. Since only three men –brothers of Fatou- in Jarra were able to speak English -and our Wolof skills were insufficient for having a deep conversation-, it was more difficult to speak to the other family members. I decided to ask one of the brothers Ceriff to translate for me while talking to different people within the village, and in Serrakunda a nephew of Bouba translated for me. Although they tried their best to translate everything I asked and the answers the respondents gave me, I experienced that my respondents felt less comfortable in talking to me. Not only because a family member was hearing all the answers the respondent gave me, but also because it created a less informal atmosphere and it was harder for me to make the interview into a relaxed chat.

The second complication I experienced was that the family knew about my relationship to Bouba and Fatou, which resulted in the family giving me social acceptable answers like: *"Yes I know Bouba is working hard for his money and his life is not easy and that is why I do not ask him for a lot of money"*, while I had heard a totally different story before from Bouba himself. When I tried to reformulate my questions in order to make it less personal and asked about other family members in the hope they would give me more honest answers, I got similar answers from everybody I talked to: *"I know a lot of people here ask constantly money from Bouba and Fatou, but I don't do that because I know life is hard for them"*. This kind of answers raised my doubts about the reliability of the answers they gave me, because they were often accusing other people for asking too much, in order to keep oneself out. It made me realize that for them their relationship with Bouba is of major importance, because he is part of their livelihood strategy. Therefore it made sense that when talking to me they would not want to tell me things with even the smallest possibility that it would jeopardize their relationship with Bouba. Furthermore this complication is the result of me entering the affective circuit of Bouba and even becoming some part of it, as discussed in the introduction of this chapter. Being careful about what to tell other persons in this circuit and negotiating answers in such an interview is their way to make this circuit work in their favour (elaborated on in the empirical chapters). So in retrospect I can see that these socially acceptable answers are also valuable and important data in my research.

Picture 1: Walking around Jarra with Fatou's brother. Made by Karlijn on the 11th of april 2019.

Nevertheless I felt that something had to be changed in order to gain more knowledge on these (sensitive) topics. Therefore I decided to expand my research and seek for more respondents, who would hopefully would feel freer to talk about the relationships with their family because I did not have any relationship to other members of the family, let alone me being some part of their affective circuit. In order to find new respondents –where I was outside of their family system- I decided to post a request on three different Facebook-pages (Gambia as we see it, Reizen in Gambia: Wereldwijzer reisforums, and The Gambia smiling coast) that are active in Gambia:

Dear members,
At the moment I'm in the Gambia for my research (Human Geography at the Radboud University in the Netherlands). In short, my research is about the relationship between Gambian migrants in Europe and their family members in the Gambia. Therefore I am looking for contact with either:
-Families in the Gambia with a family member in Europe with a residence permit
-Migrants that are currently in the Gambia for a family visit or holiday.
Are you or do you know someone that would like to talk to me about this, I would be very grateful.
*Send me a private message or call *******.*
Thank you so much!

I decided to ask for migrants that already had a residence permit in the hope that they would be more comfortable talking to me, since their life in Europe is more secure. Instantly, I received many responses from Gambians who wanted to help me. I contacted a few of the people who met my conditions and I planned meetings with two of them. During my conversations with both of the contacts I met through Facebook, I gained information about their experiences in being a part of a transnational network. Nevertheless I still felt that these conversations were a bit unnatural and that there were still certain narratives that they were not feeling comfortable telling me. This left me with a new problem and I delved into literature to find a solution. Because of the book of Maranz (2001) *African friends and money matters* I found out that for most Africans it is important to invest in relationships before being open about sensitive topics.

Therefore I decided to take a new approach: I started to invest more in the relationships with people before talking about my research. Furthermore I decided not to

bring my notebook when it did not feel right because it often created a more static and less relaxed atmosphere. This approach paid off since I got more answers to my questions and had more in-depth conversations about my topic. I met multiple people while being on the beach, while going to a party, or while being with other Gambian friends. It was easy to find people who met my conditions for respondents, since almost everybody in the Gambia has family members living in Europe. I invested in my relationships with them and after some time I brought my research up. This resulted in wonderful conversations that gave me new insights on the topics of this research, because of a more trustful relationship. These new insights enabled me to see the differences in the answers between being connected to a family network and being outside of it. Both of these approaches (match-sample approach as well as single independent respondents) resulted in many insights on affective circuits, while being an out- or insider. Moreover, talking to people while being outside of their family network enabled me to see how me becoming a part of Bouba's and Fatou's network influenced the way that the family approached me, leading to even more insights on affective circuits. Thereby I was able to see the value of becoming part of the transnational flow of Bouba and Fatou; since I was now able to see that it enabled me to gain very meaningful insights on how affective circuits work on the inside.

Picture 2: being invited for dinner at Fatou's cousin. Picture made on the 25th of may, 2019.

Back in the Netherlands, the third phase of my fieldwork consisted of one last interview with Bouba. Furthermore I decided to have an interview with Fatou as well, because I connected to the other side of her network in the Gambia as well. The questions in these interviews were based on the insights I gained in the Gambia –after analysing all my data- combined with questions based on literature. Due to this last interview I was able to collect missing information and to clarify uncertainties in my data on their network.

This brought me to the end of my fieldwork and although I experienced practical hurdles, in the end it feels like I gained enough information on both sides of the network.

3.4 Conducting the research and research instruments

During my fieldwork I made use of three different techniques in order to gain information from my respondents, namely participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and small talks.

All the interviews in this research were open and *semi-structured*. During the semi-structured interviews I made use of interview-guides (see Appendix 1 and 2)- which consist of on forehand written, open question, based on literature and analysed data gained from former interviews-, in the first and third phase I brought a copy of these guides along to the interviews. The interviews were led by a few covering questions (see interview-guides), but besides that the information given by the interviewees themselves were guiding the interview. I used the interview guides to check if the conversation had covered all topics I listed on forehand. Hereby, the interviews were semi-structured but not fully unstructured since I did have covering questions in mind and I made sure that I covered all the topics I thought of before (Fylan, 2005). I made use of these semi-structured interviews mostly in the first and the third phase of the research, in the interviews with Bouba and Fatou. But also some of the interviews in the second phase were semi-structured and based on a short interview guide (see Appendix 2).

During our meetings with Bouba and Fatou I made use of semi-structured interviews since both Bouba and Fatou were easy to talk with and it did not feel that the formality that comes with the interview technique would jeopardize our trust relationship and their openness. Semi-structured interviews were- in a smaller amount- also used during the second phase of my research. In this phase I constantly had to consider when to use this technique rather than small talks. This depended on the respondent and my estimation of how much it would influence the trust relationship and therefore the answers to my questions. I used semi-

structured interviews in the beginning of my fieldwork -in the second phase- a lot, until I experienced that it was influencing some of the conversations I had. By then I decided for every case separately whether it was suitable to use this kind of technique, depending on the respondent and my relationship with the respondent. This also depended on the situation, environment, and resources present during the conversations.

Furthermore I conducted all the interviews in English and for some respondents -who's English was not sufficient- I made use of translators. The interviews often took place at the houses of the respondent and sometimes at a public space, for example in a café, at a shop, or a restaurant. A key tenet- especially in ethnographic research- is that the social world should be studied in its 'natural' state (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). Conducting the interviews in a natural environment enabled me to make use of *participatory observations*. In order to gain better understanding of the relations with the Gambian or Dutch context, observations were indispensable. Furthermore those observations enabled me to still gain information on different subject in situations where conducting life-story interviews were not possible (such as: constant interruptions by children, neighbours or friends, or a total lack of privacy) (Serra Mingot, 2018).

Within ethnography there are two different types of observations: non-participant observation and participant observation. Non-participant observation has advantages like not being able to influence the behaviour of the research subjects. As a researcher you observe everything but you do not participate in any happenings, nor involve yourself in any way. Participant observation allows you to be part of the environment, built a relationship with the social actors, participate in their social happenings and "their code (…) in order to understand the meaning of their actions" (Gobo & Marciniak, 2011). Hereby a deeper understanding of the observed behaviour can arise. During this research I tried to make use of participant observation as far as possible, since in the context of my research I will always be an outsider. *Moderate participation* is a better term to describe the type of participation I used. This type occurs when the ethnographer engages in only a certain of the (everyday) activities of the community (Spradley & McCurdy, 1980). One of the reasons that full participant observation was not met was the language barrier. My knowledge on local languages was not sufficient to understand and participate in the conversations that took place around me. This resulted in a huge obstacle to engage in full participant observation. The second reason was that two-and-a-halve months –in the second phase of my research- was not sufficient to get used to the new culture totally, let alone becoming a part of it.

During participatory observation *small talk* is of huge value. According to Driessen and Janssen small talk is 'the hidden core as well as the engine of ethnographic research" (2013; 249). Using small talk enables the researcher to establish rapport between the researcher and the respondent. Furthermore it is crucial to maintain and expand the network of respondents for this research. It also provides information that is difficult to get otherwise, since it creates a relaxed and trustful environment (Driessen and Jansen, 2013). I experienced the advantage of small talks as an easy and low-key way to get to know more about the norms and values in the new culture. Because of the down-to-earth nature of this technique I got more personal information from my respondents. Nevertheless, small talk can also be overwhelming since there is often a lot of information exchanged and there is not always time or space to write it all down (Giesbers, 2019). For this reason there is a chance for misinterpreting information or information getting lost. Therefore I sometimes used audio recording on my mobile phone, whereby I gave myself a small summary of the information gained in a small-talk situation. This brings me to the next section on data recording and data analysis.

3.4.1 Recording data and data analyses

During the three phases of my fieldwork I made use of different approaches in recording my data. In the first and the third phase of my research I recorded –with the permission of Bouba and Fatou- the conversation on my mobile phone. Therefore after the interview I made a transcript of this interview on my laptop. Thereafter, then I analysed the data in order to prepare for the next interview or conversation.

In the second phase of my fieldwork – the fieldwork conducted in the Gambia- I used different methods to record and analyse my data. In this phase I made use of a *notebook* that I always took with me. This notebook was also used to make *jot notes* – short notes to records what happens in the field (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2010). Every evening- or the next morning- I wrote these notes in my laptop. Furthermore the notebook was also used to make notes during some of the conversations with my respondents, but this depended on the respondent and my relationship with them. I noticed during the first weeks in the Gambia that making notes during a conversation or audio-recording my conversations created a certain formal atmosphere, which sometimes had a negative influence on the trustful relationship and therefore influenced my respondents to speak less freely. This had such a big influence on the conversations that I decided to change my strategy; I decided not to audio-record anything

during the interviews in this phase. I am aware of the huge benefits audio- recording can have, like the ability to listen carefully during the interview or the inability to record everything (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2010). Nevertheless, I decided that the safe atmosphere was more valuable in the interviews than the audio-recordings, since it enabled me to gain more valuable insights on the topics of my research.

In order to challenge the inability to record everything by only making notes throughout the interview, Karlijn and I often made during an interview and in the field both our own notes. After the interview or after a day in the field we expanded these notes together to detailed and proper *field notes,* that we wrote down in our laptop. Thereafter, we analyzed these field notes together to give meaning to the answers we received from our participants, thereby, continuously renouncing old perspectives and ideas, and posing new questions (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2010). Moreover, this technique also provides the ability to reflect on my own stance, behaviour, and actions during the interviews and in the field. Furthermore, it gave directions for following conversations and following steps within the research.

In some of my conversations with my respondents I did make use of neither the notebook nor audio-recordings, this especially in the cases where the conversation felt too sensitive. In those cases I either made notes afterwards, or I made an audio- recording after the conversation where I gave a short summary of the conversation. Thereafter, at the end of the day, I typed these summaries in my laptop and expanded them into proper field notes.

Furthermore, another technique is also being used to reflect on my own stance, behaviour, and actions in the field, namely by keeping a diary (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2010). In fact, this is incredibly important during ethnographic research, because the researcher is her/his own *research tool*. Meaning that my own stance, behaviour, perception, and action influence this research. Therefore a diary is kept where all my experiences during the fieldwork have been recorded. Just like a regular diary also personal thoughts, feelings, and frustrations were recorded.

3.5 Position in the field

In qualitative research it is of major importance to be aware of the relationship between the researcher and the respondents. Although I tried my best to ‘fit in’ with the local community – by greeting in local language, dressing appropriately, following the social rules-, as a young, female, white, non-Muslim researcher in a patriarchal Muslim society I had to overcome different problems.

First the gender of the researcher might influence the research. According to Serra Mingot (2018) the gender of the researchers influences different aspects of the research, such as: access to certain respondents, having to adopt certain habits, or being more or less taken seriously, which influence the outcomes of the study. In my research I experienced the influence of my gender in some of the conversations with my respondents. For example I experienced that respondents did not consider me a serious researcher, because they were older and male. At first this kind of behaviour towards me frustrated me, but after a while I now and then decided to play along with the role they assigned to me. As a "young naïve woman who needs help with her work" I was able to gain information because I was perceived as "less threatening" (Serra Mingot, 2018; 58).

However, in other situations I had to put a drastic end to certain patronising behaviours. During my research I met respondents that at first seemed interested in talking to me about the subject of my research, but after a while it became clear that they were more interested in finding a *toubab* (the Gambian word for white people) wife. Sometimes it was easy to overcome this problem by just explaining that I was not interested in this kind of relationship and the conversations about the research could still continue, but at other times I felt that there was no other way then to stop meeting the person because this behaviour influenced the answers given to my questions and I did not feel comfortable around him anymore. According to Kloß (2017) doing ethnographic research is a gendered process, where gender norms, the sexuality of the researcher, and multiple power relations influence not only the research, but also the researchers' wellbeing. Being together with Karlijn in this process really helped me to deal with these kinds of situations as I felt more safe being with her because we supported each other and drew a line when things went too far.

Furthermore being a white, non-muslim researcher influenced my research as well. Although Gambians are very open people in general, I found out that it was hard to talk with them about their relationship with their families in a deeper way. After a while Karlijn and I met Ali -a Gambian human rights activist, living in Serrrakunda- and we talked about the hurdles we experienced in our fieldwork. Ali told me that Gambians are not used to talking about their family relationships and the problems they experience in the relationship, because those are sensitive topics. He added that especially as a *Toubab,* it would be difficult to get answers on these issues. Although I tried to 'fit in' with the local community, I would never be one of them because of the colour of my skin, my religious beliefs, and the country I am from. Furthermore in many conversations I felt a divide between the "us" and the "them" in the things they told me about the cultural differences between the West and Africa. To

overcome this barrier I tried to look for similarities between the respondents and me; I looked for similarities in the things we liked such as hobbies, music, food, sports etcetera. In those similarities it was easier to build up some kind of understanding in the relationship, and I tried to shift the focus on the similarities rather than the differences between the respondent and me. Although this helped to create a more trustful relationship, the differences between my respondents and me still influenced the data I collected.

Chapter 4 - Negotiating monetary investments

"They want to do all those things for you and make you sit on a chair because of the hopes, because they might get something from you." – Bouba, February 2019.

Picture 3: Western Union in Serrakunda. Picture self-made on the 5th of April 2019.

Monetary investments migrants send to their family members, or so-called remittances, play an important role in the transnational relationships migrants maintain with their families in the Gambia. While being in the Gambia I noticed the presence of these remittances in the daily life of most people. From busy streets in Serrakunda to remote villages in rural areas, money-sending institutions like Western union influence the streetscape. With catchy lines- like the one of Western Union: "*Can I receive money from here? Yes!*"- these institutions make it seem easy to obtain money from abroad and are thereby normalizing remittances in the Gambian society.

On a more individual- and family level, these remittances are present in the lives of many Gambians, nationally and internationally. By following the affective circuit of Bouba and Fatou –crossing borders- the importance of monetary flows in their family relationships came to the fore. This chapter examines the role of these monetary investments in an international setting and the effects they have on different members within the affective circuit -by focussing on the experiences, emotions, and frictions evolving around this flow of remittances- starting in the village where Bouba and Fatou were born.

4.1 Jarra's monetary system

I visited Jarra, a small village on the north-bank of the Gambia with less than 45 compounds. The compounds in Jarra consist of extended family members living together, most of the time three generations; a men living with his wives and their sons, the son's wives and their (many) grandchildren.

Picture 4: Meeting by the well in Jarra. Self-made picture on the 11th of April 2019

This small settlement has no electricity, no running water during the night-time, and the stock

of cattle is walking freely around the houses. During day-time people are mostly sitting around their compounds finding shelter from the heat, while some women are making lunch, showering their children with buckets filled with water from the well, or cracking groundnut-shells. Farming is the main occupation in Jarra, besides groundnuts, cashews and Cous (a kind of grain used for both breakfast porridge, as well as for dinner) are cultivated for export. Since these crops can only be harvested once a year at the end of raining season, the people in the village are having troubles to financially make ends meet during the rest of the year. Therefore the families within the village developed strategies in order to make a living.

The families in Jarra send their children to other places within the Gambia to earn money. Most of the time the eldest sons fulfil their role by staying in Jarra taking care of the family and the village, while the rest of the sons -or sometimes daughters- often go to Banjul or Serrakunda-area to find a job and send money back to Jarra. This way everybody is fulfilling a certain role in order to survive together. As the NELM theory states (as mentioned in chapter 2.1.2) migration is not an individual project of income maximization, rather it is a family strategy to reduce income risks, diversify income resources, and increase living conditions for the family-members (de Haas & Fokkema, 2010).

Moreover some families in Jarra also maintain international family-ties, mainly with European countries. For the families in Jarra it is of major importance to send members to other parts of the country, or even to other parts of the world, in order for them to guarantee the wellbeing and social protection of the different family members, now and in the future (Lucas & Stark, 1985; McDowell & Haan, 1997; Stark & Levhari; 1982). In the conversations with people in the village I noticed the importance of international ties and kin living in Europe. Seeing (international) migration as a household strategy states the importance of maintaining affective circuits with family-members outside Jarra. As members are spreading across the country and across countries, keeping the family close -even though distances extent- is of great importance for the family living in Jarra (Lucas & Stark, 1985). By putting effort in their affective circuits the people in Jarra secure their chances on monetary investments from the outside world. As Jarra may seem like a basic place where people living a basic life locally, Jarra is certainly connected to the outside world; people are maintaining many ties to the outside world and are investing in their relationships with people all-over the Gambia and even internationally.

In the Netherlands- on the other end of the transnational network- are Bouba and Fatou living with their two kids. Bouba told me about his life and the expectations the family has from him and the role he has to fulfil in his family:

After finishing his junior school Bouba was sent by his family to Serrakunda, the biggest city in the Gambia. He had multiple jobs during that time in order to support his family in Jarra. In 2007 he met a Dutch woman Sara in Serrakunda and they got married in 2008, in that year he decided to migrate to the Netherlands. His family in the Gambia was really happy when he told them about his plans to migrate. After migrating to the Netherlands Bouba had his first son. The first years in Holland Bouba struggled to build up a life in Holland; he had troubles finding work and did not have a social network here. After a few years he and Sara got a divorce and Bouba got remarried to Fatou, a young woman from Jarra who he had known since he was a kid. Fatou came to the Netherlands in 2015 and now they are living together with their two children. Now that he has a job and his own family in the Netherlands, he experiences a more stable life here. Nevertheless he maintains close ties with his family members in the Gambia, as he calls them everyday. Furthermore his role as a breadwinner for the family in Jarra did not change since he left the Gambia: "Now that I am in the Netherlands I still fulfil the same role, as I am sending financial support to the family. The only difference is that the amounts increased since I migrated, because they think I have more money here".

In this introduction of Bouba's life the struggles of being a migrant combined with the pressure to support his family in the Gambia financially come to the fore, as he has a certain role as a breadwinner for his family. Fatou told me that she experiences less pressure from her family to send money because she is in the Netherlands for marriage and not to look for money, while Bouba's role is a breadwinner for his family and therefore their families are putting more pressure on him. Nevertheless, she supports her family a lot and invests in for example a car for her brother, a business trip to China for another brother, and we – Karlijn and I- were also becoming a part of her monetary flow since we brought a big amount of cash money to the Gambia to give to her mother (elaborated on in chapter three). However, since the flow of monetary investments –according to Bouba and Fatou- is more active on his side, and the monetary flow in her network mostly runs through Bouba, this chapter focuses on Bouba's flow of monetary investments.

Bouba maintains close ties with his family-members in the Gambia. In order to delve into the affective circuit he maintains, I followed his family network.

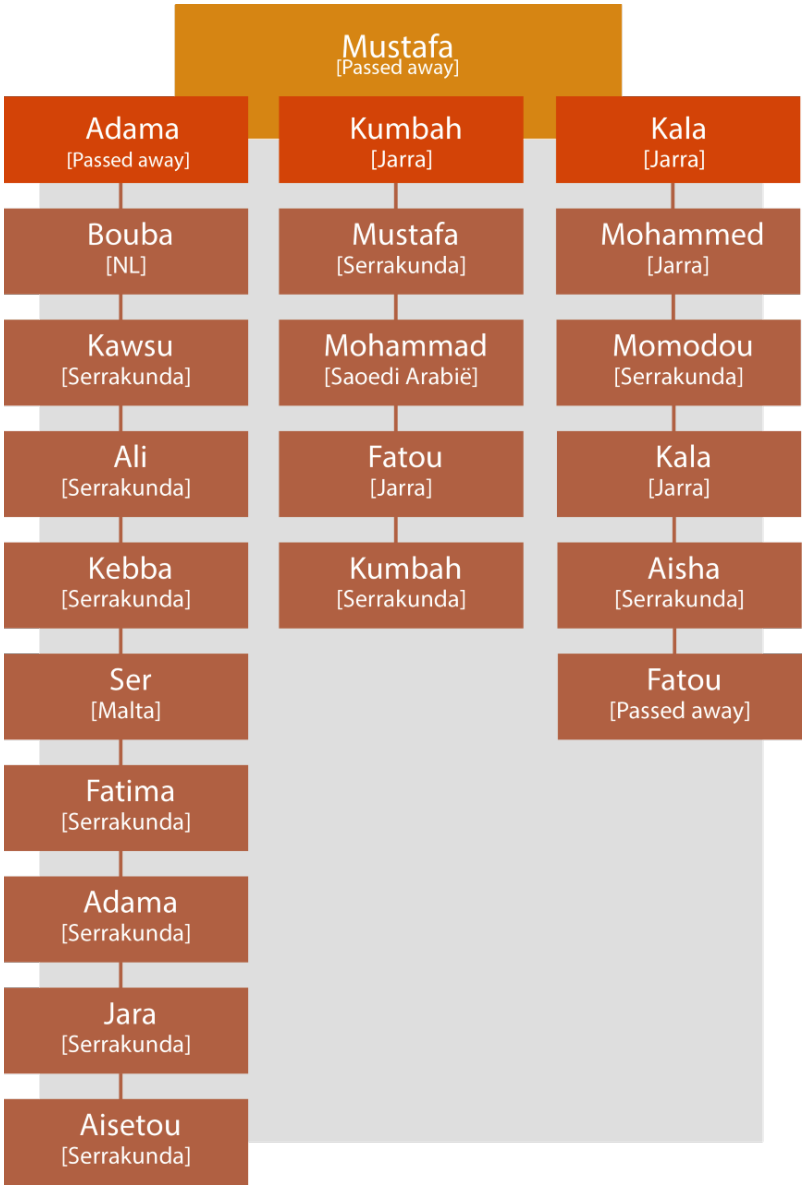

Figure 3: schematic representation of Bouba's family-tree.

Figure three shows a schematic representation of Bouba's family network. Bouba's father had three wives and the first wife Dumbeh is Bouba's mother. Furthermore Bouba has eight siblings from the same father and mother and he has nine half-brothers and sisters, most of them are also having children themselves, resulting in a big family. Striking about this network is the amount of Lain's children not living in Jarra anymore; the daughters often married to men in other places and the sons fulfilling their roles as breadwinners in cities or even abroad (like Bouba). Due to the flows of monetary investments within this network

flowing from different parts of the world to Jarra, the few people living in Jarra are able to stay in the same place. These monetary flows are part of the affective circuit this family maintains nationally and internationally.

4.2 The paradise Europe?

Bouba, as one of the elder sons within the family, always experienced expectations from the family to make money and support them in Jarra. However, according to Bouba, these expectations increased since he migrated towards Europe. Bouba told me that the cause of these increased expectations lies in the unreal picture his family members in the Gambia have about Europe:

"Most of the people living in Gambia do not understand life in Europe, they think it is paradise here and that money grows on trees. They think this because they are only seeing the positive sides of Europe because of television and media, or they see migrants coming back with lots of money and big cars. But you and I know that life in Europe is not like that. Some of them understand, like my brother Kawsu. But most of them have a fake view from Europe.
I can give you one example of how Gambians see Europe: sometimes a very rich man living in the Gambia and a poor Gambian migrant living in Europe want to marry the same girl. The father will always choose for the one in Europe, just because that man is living in Europe and has been on an airplane. While the rich man living in Africa has way more money than a guy living in Europe, who doesn't have anything. They have a lot of hopes when somebody is from Europe. So now they think that I am the man, they prefer me over a rich Gambian."

This rosy picture –the thought that making money in Europe is really easy- causes high expectations for Gambian migrants living in Europe. Family-members cherish high hopes for their kin living abroad and these hopes often result in pressure to send money to the Gambia (Plambech, 2014). Bouba told me that this pressure of the family constantly asking for money often feels like a burden on his shoulder. Therefore monetary obligations and how to deal with those obligations play a major role in the lives of migrants and the transnational relationship they maintain with their family in the Gambia. The friction between the reality of life in Europe and the image as well as the expectations the family has, causes misunderstandings within their relationship. In my conversation with Bouba I noticed

frustration on this topic. When I asked him if he was able to explain his family about the reality of life in Europe he replied:

"When I just migrated to Holland I tried to explain my situation here but it was not working. I told them that there is no money on trees here that I am working very hard, and that my life is not easy, but they did not believe me. They didn't listen to me because they thought that I was lying to them, that I wanted to keep the money for myself. After a while I decided not to talk about it anymore. Only the people who are or have been in Europe understand me, they have respect for me and with them I can share my experiences."

For Bouba disappointment over the lack of understanding from the family ensued with disbelieves the family showed about his struggles in the Netherlands, resulted in avoiding talking about this subject. This incomprehension is something I heard from other migrant respondents as well. Within a transnational family system migrants can feel dislocated in their lifestyle, environments, and everyday life because of the distance between them and their social network (Cole & Groes, 2016). Moreover, this dislocated feeling can increase when migrants feel that they are not understood by their family-members (Parry & Bloch, 1989). Bouba told me that especially when just arriving in Europe many migrants experience struggles to feel at home in this new place, this combined with the pressure from the family to support them, often reduce feelings of belonging in both –Gambian and European- societies (Cole & Groes, 2016). The economical obligations the family has towards migrants can lead to extra pressure in their already turbulent life. Trying to meet expectations and fulfilling their expected role within the family, causes negative emotions of stress and emotions of powerlessness (Fioratta, 2015). The quest for personhood for Bouba lies in finding a balance between supporting his family and focussing on himself in building up his life in the new environment (Cole & Groes, 2016).

4.3 Social consequences

Although the lives of migrants can be rough –especially during the first years of migrating-, migrants can make their own choices when it comes to giving in to this moral obligation. However, almost every decision the migrant makes on the flow of monetary investments does have social consequences on his status and image within the network (Cole & Groes, 2016). On the one hand sending money to the Gambia can result in expanding the social status of the

migrant within the network, while on the other hand not sending a sufficient amount in the eyes of the family can damage this status.

Bouba experienced changes in his social status within the family since he migrated to the Netherlands. The first time he was visiting the Gambia he noticed that his position in the cultural hierarchical system had changed:

"In Gambia elder people have a higher social status. It is normal in our culture to send your younger brother to do things for you, and your older brother can send you. If you want something from the store, you can send a younger person in the family and he or she will get it for you. When you are an elder in the family you have the highest status and everybody will do anything for you and nobody will disagree with you. But when I went to Africa on holidays for the first time after migrating, I noticed that this system was mixing up. I was visiting Jarra and I came into a room where the elders were sitting on chairs. The moment I came in they stood up so that I could sit on a chair. This is not normal for Gambia, because I am younger than them. I noticed that nobody was sending me anymore, nobody was saying: Bouba can you go pick this up for me. It feels really strange and I wanted to change this by saying: you can send me instead of me sending you, sit down and let the younger one do it. They want to do all those things for you and make you sit on a chair because of the hopes, because they might get something from you. For me it feels better to be down to earth in these situations."

The fact that Bouba migrated to the Netherlands changed his social status within his family. The money he sends to support his family in the present and the hopes for support in the future enlarge his social status within the family. In the stories Bouba told me about how the family treated him differently since he migrated -how all of his family members in the village scream his name when he visits them, how the kids run towards his car when he arrives, how everybody puts him on a pedestal- I noticed that Bouba is proud that he is able to support them and that he is pleased by his social status within his family. However, I also noticed that these gestures from the family increase the pressure to fulfil his role as a remittances-sender. The kind of respect, status, and admiration Bouba finds when he goes home can be seen as a reward for his monetary support for his family, as well as an investment from his family in future support, resulting in increased pressure to send money in the future. Furthermore maintaining this high social status is not easy, since there can likewise be negative social consequences to his actions on the monetary flow:

"There are consequences when my family feels like I am not sending enough money, or if I chose to help someone else within the family and other people get jealous. The thing is that they will not tell it to your face, because that is not in our culture. Instead they are making rumours about you, they tell other people that you are not good because you did not support them enough, or that you are selfish and want to keep the money for yourself. In Gambia a lot of people are talking and rumours are spreading easily and fast. Sometimes I hear from other people that somebody has been saying bad things about me, this is really difficult. I do not want my family to talk bad about me and this is why I am constantly considering when to give and when not to give. Those rumours have two sides, on the one hand people can talk positive things about you, this makes me feel proud. But when they are not satisfied they will talk badly about you."

Not sending a sufficient amount of money can damage the social status the migrant obtained. Also decisions on whom to give money might cause negative responses from the family because of jealousy. This shows that every decision the migrant makes on monetary investments has consequences, whether positive or negative. Therefore migrants have to constantly consider their practices on the monetary flow and the consequences these practices might have. In affective circuits migrants continually strive to regenerate and rework their intimate relationships (Cole & Groes, 2016). With the increased pressure put on migrants it becomes hard to build up their own life in a new environment and to also think about themselves. The tensions between individual desires and collective demands animate an affective circuit (Cole & Groes, 2016).

There is constant negotiation and consideration needed from the migrant on the monetary flows in the network. Sending a lot of money can cause the migrant to loose the focus on the self, while there will presumably be positive social consequences such as pride, status, and positive rumours. On the other hand when a migrant is more focussing on his or herself it can cause friction on the other end of the network, negative social consequences like negative rumours, which can cause a decrease in the social status of the migrant. As discussed in section 2.2.2 this constant consideration between putting effort in the short-term cycle or the long-term cycle, influences the affective circuit (Parry & Bloch, 1989). Finding the accepted balance between the two cycles in the affective circuit has positive effects on individual and social level and is essential in the quest for personhood. However, an imbalance between the cycles can lead to social sanctions for the individual (Parry & Bloch, 1989).

The constant negotiation between the two cycles and the effects the actions have on the network make transnational circuits fluid, as every decision on the monetary flow can change the circuit (Pathirage & Collyer, 2011). For example Bouba told me about a fight he had with his sister because he decided to give her son a car. Because Bouba heard from other people in his network that the son was not being responsible with his new gift, he decided to confront his sister with this information. His sister defended her son and was angry with Bouba for questioning her son's integrity. Bouba explained that this fight caused him to not talk with his sister anymore and will probably cause her spreading rumours within the family. In this example it becomes vivid that his practice of calling her and standing up for himself, influences not only the relationship between him and his sister but can also influence (when rumours are spreading) his social status within the family. This shows that affective circuits are complex systems and cannot simply be seen as stable notions, as they move with the decisions made by different members within the network (Cole & Groes, 2016).

4.4 Strategies to reduce pressure

After being a few years in the Netherlands Bouba decided to start two businesses in the Gambia, a gym and a taxi-van service, to support his family financially. Because of those businesses he did not have to send the money from the Netherlands every time his family asked for it. His brother Kawsu is now running both of the businesses in Serrakunda. Bouba decides for himself what amount he gives to his family; part of the money earned with the businesses goes to the family- for instance to buy rice or pay for other important things-, Bouba uses the other part to invest in his businesses and in building houses in the Gambia (for family or to rent out). By investing in those businesses he reduces the amount he has to send from the Netherlands to the Gambia and he enables his family members to participate in order to earn the money. Bouba is glad that he started the businesses since it reduces a bit of the pressure to send money. Nevertheless he still gets phone-calls everyday with requests for help, this made him develop also other strategies to deal with the pressure of sending money.

Another strategy Bouba uses to reduce pressure is by talking with his wife Fatou to weigh the consequences originating from whom and how much to give. Since there are two families –Fatou's family and Bouba's family- that rely on their support, they always have to consider when to give to which family. They talk about it together, but since Bouba earns the money he has the first and last words in the conversation. The financial consideration between his family in the Netherlands, his own family in Gambia, and Fatou's family in the Gambia

causes complicated considerations. Being able to discuss these matters with his wife, make these considerations more bearable, it makes him feel less lonesome in his struggles.

Moreover, Bouba and Fatou created a *Saving-system* together with fourteen other Gambian migrants, which is managed by Fatou. Every month each member of the group gives 100 euros to one of the members in this group, resulting in receiving 1400 euros every 14 months. When receiving this big amount, the member can decide for him or herself what to do with the money. Bouba and Fatou have used this money to invest in Bouba's businesses or to give it to their family in the Gambia. The envelope I was bringing to Mariama –elaborated on in the introduction of chapter 3- included the money saved due to this system. According to Bouba and Fatou this system helps them to spend their money wisely and thereby contributes to reduce the pressure put on them within the flow of monetary investments.

Furthermore, migrants often decide to postpone their economical responsibility towards the family by using different strategies. This postponement buys them some time to focus on building up their life in their new environment. Bouba told me about one of the strategies he and other migrants use:

"In the beginning when I just migrated to Holland my family was calling me all the time to ask me for money. In that time I did not have a job and I was not able to give it to them. I was saying: I am in school right now. Most migrants do that: if they ask you for money you are saying you are in school. That is a really nice way, because it buys you some time to get your shit together. Also if you have a job then you still say you are going to school, because you do not have enough money yet to support them. Maybe the first year when you are working you say that you are in school, hiding yourself a little bit for the mean time. Everybody uses this excuse, even Fatou did. You say I am going to school I am going to school, while you are making money. Sometimes after a while when they call you for money and you use this excuse they are being suspicious and they start asking question like: what kind of school do you go to and how long does this school take? Also they are saying: go find money, why do you have to go to school?"

In this example Bouba decides to postpone the responsibility on the long-term cycle, in order to build up his own life in the short-term cycle (Parry & Bloch, 1989). By using the excuse of going to school he reduces the negative social consequences in his network and buys himself time to focus on his life in the Netherlands. Then, when he feels like he has build up a more

stable life in the Netherlands, he can start supporting his family in the Gambia. This is an effective strategy since investing in the long-term cycle is only possible when resources are gained from the short-term cycle (Parry & Bloch, 1989). Using this excuse makes migrants more likely to reach a balance between the two cycles in the future, without socially and financially sacrificing themselves in the present. Another strategy to postpone pressure came to the fore when I asked Bouba what he said to his family when he did not want to give money for a certain purpose:

"In the Gambian culture you cannot say I do not want to give you money. In such situations I always say things like 'I don't have the money' or 'I will give you the money later' or I give a smaller amount than what they are asking me to give. It is not done in our culture to be honest about this by saying 'I don't want to give you money for this'. I always use excuses not to give or to buy me some time to gather the money".

This second strategy is also a way to postpone responsibility and pressure from the family. When alternating these excuses with giving the asked amount to the family, migrants are able to maintain their affective circuit without losing themselves. By using these different strategies migrants try to postpone their moral obligations on the flow of monetary investments. However, the monetary obligations will not disappear forever and at some point the migrant has to take action.

In this chapter it became clear that the monetary flow causes many different emotions for migrants, from pride and 'being the man' to experienced pressure, or stress. Finding a good balance in this flow is an everyday challenge for migrants, since they have to overthink every action on this flow. In what follows, I analyse the effects the monetary flow within the transnational network has on the other side of the network, on the family in the Gambia.

4.5 Bouba's monetary system in the Gambia

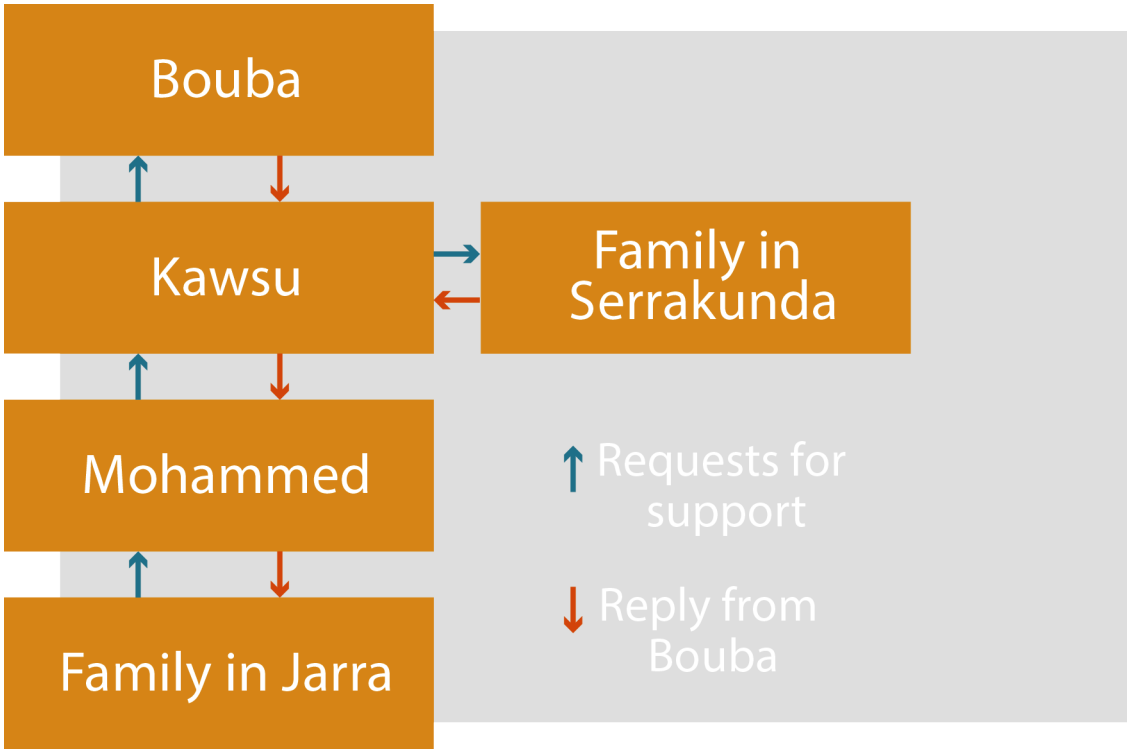

Figure 4: Schematic representation of Bouba's monetary system.

This figure is a schematic representation of the course of events on the monetary flow within the transnational network of Bouba. Although not all of the contact goes through this system and in some situations the contact goes directly from other family members to Bouba, this figure shows how most of the contact is regulated on the monetary flow in Bouba's affective circuit.

Within his network Bouba has most contact with Kawsu, his brother living in Serrakunda. Kawsu takes care of his monetary flow in the Gambia as he looks after his gym and his taxi-company. Kawsu on his turn receives requests for money from both the family members in Serrakunda area, as well as from Mohammed. Mohammed –half-brother of both Bouba and Kawsu and head of Jarra- receives requests from the family-members living in Jarra. When Kawsu calls Bouba with a certain request for money, Bouba tells his decision and Kawsu takes care of the rest and makes sure the right amount is going to the right place. In the Gambia I decided to follow these links as a common thread to get more insights on the monetary flow of this network. Since Kawsu is the first significant link for the monetary flow, I decided to interview him in Bouba's gym.

In a busy street in Serrakunda is Bouba's gym located, consisting of one room with different training-equipment. The time we were there, nobody was working out since it was the hottest period of the day. Kawsu told us that most members are working out from 5 till 11 o'clock in the evening since it is cooler then, and sometimes up to 15 people are working out at the same time. Kawsu told us that he supervises the gym, the van-company, and he supervises the construction of a new house that Bouba is building. Kawsu often gets calls from Mohammed, head of the village, with requests from the village for money. He also gets calls from family-members in Serrakunda, asking for the support of Bouba. After getting a request, Kawsu calls Bouba to discuss the demand. Bouba gets to decide whether he gives or not, subsequently -depending on the decision made- Kawsu handles it. Either he tells the family '*there is no money right now'*, or he makes sure the money ends up in the right place. Kawsu told me that if Bouba wants to give money he always finds a way to make sure the person gets it. For example sometimes Kawsu gets a call from Mohammed that the rice in Jarra is finished. When there is not enough money from the companies to cover the costs, Bouba calls a shop-owner he knows and arranges the rice with the promise he will pay him back later. Afterwards Kawsu makes sure the bags of rice will reach Jarra. Kawsu told me that he is happy with his role as a link in the network. He does not get a fixed amount per month from Bouba for the work he does, but when he needs something he most of the time gets it from Bouba. Kawsu told us about the duty to send money as a migrant: *"when you are travelling, you have to support your family, you cannot leave your family like that"*. Although Kawsu is mostly happy with the support Bouba gives, he thinks that Bouba is not giving enough money to the family: *"but that is his choice, I am not going to ask for more money"*.

Picture 5: Gym in Serrakunda. Self-made picture on 18th of April

Kawsu, as an important link in the monetary system of Bouba, maintains close ties with Bouba as he calls him multiple times everyday to discuss business things with him or to propose requests for help he received from the family. Both Bouba and Kawsu attach special

importance to their bond. Bouba told me that Kawsu is one of the few family members he fully trusts, this is why he gave Kawsu this role in his monetary flow. Since Bouba and Kawsu have contact everyday it surprised me that the rosy picture that many Gambians have about Europe is also present in Kawsu's worldview. Kawsu, like many others, has aspirations to go to Europe one day: *"I would like to go to Europe, because there it is easy to work and earn money and then my family would be proud of me"*. When I asked him about what he thinks of Bouba's life in Europe he replied: *"I am happy for him that he is in Holland, but I don't know what his life is like. Bouba never talks about his life in the Netherlands"*. While talking everyday on the phone with one another, even Kawsu had no clue what Bouba's profession in the Netherlands is, or in what kind of house he lives. And although Kawsu is closely involved in every decision Bouba makes, he thinks that Bouba is not giving the family enough money.

While further following Bouba's monetary flow I talked to the next important link in this system: Bouba's half-brother Mohammed who lives in Jarra. After Fatou's father passed away Mohammed became the chief of the village and he is also the imam in Jarra. Since he is the chief, people in the village come to him when they have a problem, this can be a relational problem or a financial problem. When Mohammed does not have the knowledge or resources to come up with a good solution he calls Bouba. When I asked him about his role in the support from Bouba he replied: *"When people in the village have a problem and need money they come to me. When the problem is from a family member from Bouba or Fatou, I decide if the request is serious enough to contact Kawsu"*. Mohammed told me that Bouba never says no to a request from his family in the village: *"for example I just asked Bouba (through Kawsu) to invest in a fence for the cows in the village because they are now walking everywhere and eating our crops. Bouba told me that he does not have the money right now, but when he has it he will give it to me"*. During the conversation I noticed that Mohammed was proud of the way Bouba supports the village. Moreover, he also noticed that people sometimes ask too much from Bouba: *"Some people think that Bouba is very rich and ask for too much, then I decide to tell them that Bouba does not have it, without contacting him about it"*. In this way Mohammed is influencing the amount of requests for money coming from the village through him and thereby influencing the obligations on Bouba's shoulder as well as the relationship between Bouba and his family.

Following the monetary flow one step further, I talked to some of Bouba's family members living in Jarra. One of them is Kumbah, the second wife of Bouba's father. Since Bouba was born on the day that Kumbah married Bouba's father, Bouba's mother decided to give the new born to Kumbah as a gift for her wedding, saying: "*this is your baby now*". For Kumbah this resulted in her having a special connection with Bouba: *"I always took care of Bouba and if he needed something I made sure he got it"*. Kumbah told me that she feels very proud of Bouba that he is living in Europe and she has a lot of respect for him: *"travelling is not easy, but Bouba has an open heart and cares for the family"*. She also told me that the village received a lot of support from Bouba: *"he build a new house for the family, because the previous one was dangerous. He pays for my son's school. He also invests in religious matters like renovating the mosque or giving sugar for Koriteh (sugar festival). The first time he even brought the sugar to the village himself, everybody was so happy"*. Nevertheless Kumbah never asks Bouba for any money: *"I don't know the conditions that Bouba is in, that is why I don't ask for money"*.

Picture 6: in Kumba's house. Self-made picture on 13th of April 2019

Although I had good conversations with different family-members of Bouba in the Gambia, I often felt that the answers they gave me were socially acceptable answers (which I already elaborated on in chapter 3). First because the answers from the family did not always match the stories I heard from Bouba and second because when it came to the pressure they put on Bouba, family members were often talking in a more general sense rather than talking about how they themselves put pressure on Bouba. At first this bothered me since I felt like I did not get open and honest answers about certain subjects. However, now I see that it makes perfect sense that the family-members of Bouba are not being totally open about their struggles within the relationship. There is much at stake when talking to me about their relationship with Bouba. Being careful about the answers given is important since they are afraid that I

might tell Bouba about the frictions they experience in their relationship with him. This could influence their relationship with Bouba and might result in influencing the support they are getting through the flow of monetary investments. These precautions in their conversations with me are an example of the considerations and negotiations on their end of the network.

Not only the migrant himself, but also the family on the other end of the network has to be careful what to tell and has to constantly consider their choices made in this circuit. This also came to the fore in my conversation in Mohammed where he told me that he was first deciding for himself if a request for money was serious enough, in this way he reduces the requests for money towards Bouba, in order to maintain a good connection with him. Furthermore Bouba's fight with his sister (mentioned in chapter 5.2) is also a relevant example and shows how rumours – on the Gambian side of the network- caused Bouba losing confidence in his nephew, probably resulting in no longer supporting him. It becomes vivid that practices on the Gambian side of the network also –just like practices from Bouba- influence and shape their transnational network and the flow of monetary investments. Consideration and negotiation on their actions is needed in order to avoid frictions and maintain a good relationship. Since the monetary flow of Bouba consists of many people involved, people have to be careful in what they tell other people in this system, since members actively make decisions that might influence the future direction of their relationship and thereby influencing the flow of monetary investments (Cole & Groes, 2016).

4.6 Conclusion

Within Bouba's affective circuit the flow of monetary investments plays a major role on both ends of the network. Bouba -on his side- experiences obligation, pride, pressure, and changes in his social status. This emotional rollercoaster results in a need for him to deliberately consider every action he makes in order to determine the future of his network. He (tries to) shape this flow by tactical moves; giving the right amount to the right person in the right time, without losing himself. Since those tactical moves are easier said then done, it takes a lot of effort and consideration to make moral decisions.

On the other side of the network the people in Jarra as well as his family in Serrakunda also negotiate and consider their actions in order to get the most positive outcome -or most support- on the monetary flow. By carefully choosing –as elaborated on in section 4.5- when to ask and what to say, they try to make the transnational network work in their favour. There is much at stake for them on their side of the network since they financially depend on people who are 'travelling'.

Chapter 5 - Affecting distance and social relations

"Every time I see these pictures it feels like Fatou is close to me, I can see her kids and see that they are happy, that makes me feel good" – Mariama, April 2019

Picture 7: Photograph of Bouba and Fatou in Mariama's house. Self-made picture on the 12th of April 2019.

In a transnational relationship keeping in touch while not being present is very important to maintain close ties with family living abroad (Cole & Groes, 2016). This chapter sheds light on the flow of social connectivity and gives more insights in the use of technology and photography, sending of goods from and to the Gambia, and it delves further into social frictions and non-contact within the network. Furthermore it elaborates more on the social negotiations members of the network make in order to give directions to their relationships.

5.1 New technology: contact and non-contact

The increasing level of national and international mobility in the Gambian society gives a major importance to new technologies, not only for organizing everyday life but also for maintaining close relationships with friends or kin abroad (Kea, 2013). While not being present, migrants are finding new ways to maintain close contact with their family in the Gambia as they build affective circuits, through which they maintain connections to their loved-ones (Kea, 2013). Communication technology (such as sending messages, calling, or sending pictures) is not something 'out there', since it is interwoven in transnational relationships as they are appropriated, domesticated, and integrated into the practices of daily life (Miller & Slater, 2000; Hirsch & Silverstone, 1992*)*. Since new technologies have not been around for so long, Bouba told me about the advent of these technologies:

"When I just migrated to Holland in 2008, it was not common to have a smartphone in the Gambia, especially not in Jarra. This meant that calling was really expensive, because I paid per minute instead of through Whatsapp call, like we do now. In that time I had little contact with my family, which made me miss the Gambia and my family a lot. The few conversations I had with family-members were very valuable to me. Back then when I wanted to talk to Fatou she went to an internet-cafe in the city and we agreed upon a time to meet and then we talked briefly, because it was expensive. Other times I bought credits to call someone but it cost me 1 euro per minute, so I had very short conversations. Sometimes I gave pictures to people who were visiting the Gambia and they were giving them to the right person. Since new technologies became more normalized in the Gambia and more people are having a smartphone -even in Jarra- I have more and more chats with family-members. This is nice because I am now more involved in their lives and I miss them less".

The expansion of new technology helped migrants and their family members to communicate with greater ease, speed, intensity, and regularity (Carling, Menjivar & Schmalzbauer, 2012).

With this technology embedded in the transnational relationship, cultural values and practices come to the fore. The norms and values of the transnational relationship become vivid when looking at communication technology (Cole & Groes, 2016). For Bouba this expansion resulted in more attachment to his family-members in the Gambia. However, new technologies also resulted in him experiencing more obligations from his family:

"Sometimes it drives me crazy that everybody wants to talk to me all the time, especially when I'm busy. They call me all the time or send me voice messages on Whatsapp. When I do not reply or pick up my phone some people become impatient, they get mad when I don't pick up the phone. They don't know your situation here, you are busy with other things but they don't know. Sometimes I feel like not talking to anybody for some time, I want to switch off my phone, but I cannot do that because they don't know what's going on"

These increased possibilities of contact between family members can be used to discipline, control behaviour, assert authority, and reinforce obligations (Kea, 2013). Furthermore they can be used as an oppressive force, particularly when migrants seek to distance themselves from their family members back home (Bacigalupe & Camara, 2012). This conversation with Bouba shows that the use of technology in a long-distance relationship can cause conflict and tensions at times, highlighting the complexity of transnational relationships (Cole & Groes, 2016). With the expansion of new technologies come new moral obligations for migrants, as well as new possibilities to force and control these obligations. Bouba's desire to switch off his phone sometimes is not a stand-alone desire, rather this is a common strategy to break free from the attachments to the family:

"Many young boys who are living in Europe have two simcards in their smartphone, one for the Gambia and one for their lives in Holland and the important things here. Then when they feel the pressure is getting too high or they do not feel like talking to their family they just turn off this specific simcard. Then they are still able to use their other simcard for their things here. When people don't want to talk or they don't know what to do they just switch off their phone. I never did that, I am always real to them, I always tell them: 'it is my money if I can help I will help but if I cannot I don't'."

Although Bouba did not use this strategy himself, I heard about this strategy from other migrant respondents as well. This strategy however causes radical consequences since it

disconnects the transnational network. Social sanctions within their network are a likely consequence when using this strategy, as a matter of course depending on the frequency that the migrant uses this strategy. By disconnecting the network migrants increase the chances of an imbalance between the short-term cycle and the long-term cycle, since this practice makes it possible to focus more on the short-term cycle while ignoring the long-term cycle (Parry & Bloch, 1989). By using this practice –depending on the frequency and time- migrants may cause a definitive breakup between them and their network. Resulting in negative consequences for their quest for personhood since there is a significant imbalance between the short- and the long-term cycle (Parry & Bloch, 1989). Therefore this strategy is often used as a last resort to reduce pressure, when the migrant feels that he has no other choice. The fact that Bouba decides not to give in to his desire to switch of his phone shows that he is aware of the social consequences such an act might have on his relationships. Thereby he is negotiating when to answer a call and when not to, in order to determine the future of his relationships.

On the other side of the network, the importance of new technology is vivid in the everyday lives of people in Jarra. As life in Jarra is basic and people struggle to make a living, the visibility of smartphones all around the village is striking. Nevertheless this makes sense since having contact with the outside world is needed as it provides (a big) part of their income. Having a smartphone and being able to have contact with the world outside of the village is really important for many people in Jarra.

When Karlijn and I visited Jarra we brought a phone with us that Fatou bought for her sister Fatima. Fatou told us that she wanted to give the phone to Fatima because it would enable them to have more frequent contact. Heretofore Fatou and Fatima were only having contact through their mother: when Fatima wanted to ask Fatou for something she went to their mother and their mother called Fatou with her phone. The value Fatima assigned to the fact that she was having a phone became vivid when we delivered the gift; Fatima was completely happy and started telling the whole village: *"I have a phone, I have a phone!"* while she showed the device to everyone who was interested. Nowadays Fatou and Fatima are able to communicate on a daily basis, which helps to confirm and strengthen their bond. Fatima was not the only person of the family who had received a phone from Bouba or Fatou since the time they migrated to the Netherlands. Many persons within the family received smartphones from Bouba and Fatou in order to maintain contact with them. By doing this, migrants invest and influence the future of their transnational relationship.

However, this dependency on technological devices also has a downside, this came to the fore in my conversation with Kumbah. Kumbah told me that she and Bouba often called each other before, when she still had a phone. Now, unfortunately the phone broke and this resulted in less contact with Bouba. When she wants to call Bouba she has to ask someone to borrow their phone, but a lot of people in Jarra do not have money or credit enough to call the Netherlands. This results in them only talking approximately twice a month.

Picture 8: Fatima with her new phone. Self-made 12 April 2019

New technology helps to support migrants' and their family members' attempts to produce and maintain affective circuits. It is used to work through and negotiate tensions as well as to satisfy the ideals of their relationships (Kea, 2013). In deciding who to give a phone and who not to give, migrants not only determine the influence of the gift on the relationship, but also the amount of contact they are able to have with their family member in the future. The practice of giving someone a smartphone probably results in feeding expectations on the flow of social connectivity by having more frequent contact with one another. However –just like practices on the flow of monetary investments- every decision made on this flow has social consequences for the migrant in question, these practices can have positive or negative influences on their future relationship. Furthermore jealousy can arise when migrants are giving phones to people within the network, while not giving it to others. Bouba told me that he has to always be careful in the decision whom to give a smartphone, since it can influence the relationships he has with other people, thereby highlighting the structural inequalities inherent in the use of technology (Parrenas, 2005).

5.2 Giving advice

Due to the social status of Bouba within his family-network in the Gambia, many family members come to him to ask for advice when there is a problem. Kumbah told me about this: *"When there is a problem in the village and we cannot solve it together, we ask Bouba for*

advice. For instance there was one time that two people in the village were fighting over a cow, they both thought that the cow belonged to them. When the people in the village called Bouba he solved this problem by buying an extra cow and the fighting stopped …. We also call Bouba about problems that cannot be solved with money like: clashes between people, relationships within the family, or things like that. We first go to Mohammed, but if he does not know how to solve it, he will call Bouba".

The exchange of advice is bidirectional in the relationship between Kumbah and Bouba, since Kumbah also gives Bouba advices like: *"think about the family and have an open heart*". This flow of information in the form of advices is present in the affective circuit and it confirms the relationship between the different members. These exchanges of advices allow migrants and their family members to enact their roles and maintain social relations (Kea, 2013). It is used to work through and negotiate tensions as well as to satisfy the ideals of their kin-relationship.

5.3 The importance of photography

In Jarra we stayed at the house of Fatou's mom; Mariama. We slept in her bed during our stay, Mariama herself was sleeping in another part of the compound. Every early morning Mariama came into the room where we were sleeping and she was always busy showering and dressing the children, carrying screaming chickens through the house into her backyard, or getting things out of her big wooden closet. The hospitality of Mariama was comprehensive during our stay: in the morning she brought us porridge in a big aluminium bowl with two spoons and put it next to our bed and we were able to use her fan, which was not an unnecessary luxury in 45 degrees Celsius. Her wooden closet was an important part of her house, since she

Picture 9: photos in Mariama's house. Self-made picture on the 12th of april 2019

spends a lot of time taking brightly collared cloths –which she used as skirts-, clothes for the children, and other stuff in and out of this closet. From the outside the wood was engraved with "F&B forever", when we asked her about the meaning she told us that these were the initials of Bouba and Fatou. In the rest of her house there was a lot of decoration in comparison to the other houses in the village. On every wall there were posters with pictures of Imams, but more importantly many pictures of Bouba and Fatou and their children, her grandkids.

Since Mariama has eight children and many grandchildren, it was striking that only Fatou's household was represented on the closet and the pictures in her house. When we asked her why there where so many pictures of Fatou and Bouba in her house she told us that it was good to feel their closeness while they were living far away: *"Everytime I see these pictures it feels like Fatou is close to me, I can see her kids and see that they are happy, that makes me feel good"*. Fatou gave some of the pictures to Mariama before she migrated, other pictures were sent to her by Fatou: *"I asked her to bring me pictures of my grandchildren, so she did. It is good to have them in my house. I really want to see the kids, but that is not possible right now unfortunately"*. Mariama told us that she felt proud of Fatou when looking at the pictures: "*she is supporting the village and her family that makes me feel proud of her*".

The emotional importance of photography comes to the fore in the conversation with Mariama. Photography's generate an affective and sensory response beyond the actual images they capture (Edwards, 2012). The pictures document the relationship in which they are enmeshed -giving rise to different forms of sociality- as they confirm the social status of their relationship. They evoke strong feelings -of love, attachment, tenderness, happiness, frustration, or loss- through exchange and visual and tactile engagement because they constitute and are constituted through social relations. Their materiality ensures distribution and use (Fedyuk, 2012) as well as lingering presence and a degree of permanence. This information is rendered public when photographs are displayed in the living room of Mariama, as it serves a social proof of their relationship (Kea, 2013). These photographs provide an on-going sustenance to affective circuits because of their materiality and permanence (Fedyuk. 2012).

In the house of Fatou and Bouba in the Netherlands there are mostly pictures from their kids on the walls. However, in the conversations I had with Fatou I noticed the importance of visual technology in her relationship with her family in the Gambia. During the conversations she showed me many pictures from her family in the Gambia on her phone. Every important

ceremony she gets many pictures and videos and sometimes she even video-calls them: *"when I video-call them during a ceremony it feels like I am there. Sometimes it makes me feel good because I can see them and be a part of the event, but at other times it makes me miss the Gambia even more, I see everybody having fun and I wish that I was there"*.

For Fatou visual technology is a big part of her life and her relationship with her family, everyday she sends and receives pictures and videos. The technology allows her to relive the experiences of daily life in the Gambia, evoking many emotions. When talking about the pictures Fatou affirms collectively valued and frequently idealized aspects of the Gambian culture and life worlds and her own connections to those worlds (Kea, 2013). Furthermore this visual technology helps her to overcome physical distance and supports her efforts to secure recognition of their bonds as real and legitimate. These video-conversations generate information and knowledge about the nature of the relationship Fatou maintains with her relatives (Kea, 2013).

Furthermore Fatou –like many Gambians- uses Whatsapp story (this is a medium where you can share self-selected pictures for 24 hours with your contacts) to share parts of her life with her relatives and friends living in the Gambia. Since this story consists of self-selected pictures, people can choose for themselves how they want to be represented. On the 23rd of September 2019 Fatou chose to share a picture on her story, showing her mother wearing the jewellery that she bought for her as a present. She added a text showing her love and appreciation for her mother: *"When I say that no one can take your place in my life. I don't just say that to hype but to appreciate you for giving birth to me"*. By sharing this picture, Fatou shows her bond and her commitment to her mother to her whole network. In this way she is actively and deliberately putting effort in her relationship with her mom and therefore contributing to the maintenance of her affective circuit.

Moreover, the technology helps to provide public recognition and the range of emotions such recognition generates (pride, contentment, generosity etc.), of the exemplary fulfilment of the kinship relation (Kea, 2013). More prosaically, it confirms the existence of a kin relationship in the first place (Carling, Menjivar & Schmalzbauer, 2012). This shared picture proudly generates information and knowledge about the nature of the relationship and seeks for recognition of their relationship (Kea, 2013). Photographs in this way serve as social proof of the continued bond between parent and child and the fulfilment of intimacy and affective circuits (Kea, 2013).

Not only are pictures used to increase social connections with one another, they can also serve as a way to deliberately choose how to represent yourself towards your network. For example when I asked Mohammed in Jarra about Bouba's life in the Netherlands he referred to the pictures he received when he replied: *"Everything looks beautiful there, on the background I see the house of Bouba and Fatou and it all looks nice, the furniture, the walls, the clothes. It looks way more beautiful than the houses in the village. This place and that place is not the same"*. This shows the importance of how technology and photographs can influence the image people in the network have of Bouba.

On the other side of the network is Bouba aware of the image he gives when sharing pictures: *"I make sure everything is cleaned in the background … I see the differences between here and there. In Jarra everything is dirty and there is sand everywhere, so I know it is a completely different world when they see my pictures"*.

By sharing pictures of his life in the Netherlands Bouba is showing his family members in the Gambia part of his life in the Netherlands. He thinks about how he represents himself through his photographs and how the family will perceive this. Bouba often shares pictures of his party's, clothes, and food, thereby confirming the image of his improved financial standing. For example on Korinteh he shared a video on his Whatsapp story showing all the food that he, Fatou and the kids were going to eat as a celebration. In the video there were many aluminium scales with different kinds of food inside and he showed it to the viewer by opening the lids one by one. Picture 10 is a cropped version of a picture he put on his Whatsapp story, again with food at the table in his home.

Picture 10: Bouba representing himself on Whatsapp story. July, 2019

5.4 The importance of goods

Another flow present in the affective circuit of Bouba and Fatou is the sending and receiving of goods. Bouba and Fatou send many things to the Gambia –like football shoes for Fatou's brother, smartphones for family-members in Jarra, candy, chocolate, jewellery for Mariama, or sometimes even cars - in order to demonstrate their relationship to them. Not only do they bring products when visiting the Gambia, they also send stuff to the Gambia by giving it to other migrants who are visiting the Gambia or sending it by boat. Bouba told me: *"people in the Gambia like things from Europe, this is why I send it to them. It is easy to send the stuff by boat and then I send a family member to pick it up from the port and distribute"*. Family members in the Gambia ask Bouba and Fatou to send them clothes, bags, and other goods. In doing so, they not only recognized their role as providers but also affirmed the material dimensions of affective circuits and the link between obligations, intimacy, and (financial) support (Kea, 2013). In most cases Bouba and Fatou meet these demands because they are financially able to do so and were keen to occupy the role of remitter, thereby fulfilling normative notions of their role as breadwinner (Kea, 2013).

In return Bouba and Fatou receive pictures of their gifts and investments from their family members. Fatou told me that for her it is important to receive pictures when she decides to send a gift to someone. For example she gave her younger brother Musa -who lives in Serrakunda- a car so that he can be a Taxi driver. Musa told us how happy he is with his gift and this became vivid in his practice of cleaning his car everyday from the inside and the outside. Fatou received many pictures from him with his car, showing her his gratitude. Bouba told me that he also expects pictures from the goods he sends to his family members: *"I expect pictures from my investments in somebody because I can see that they received it and taking good care of it, it gives me control over my gifts. Also I see these pictures as a way for them to thank me for what I sent to them"*.

However –unlike the flow of monetary investments- the flow of goods is bidirectional since Fatou also receives goods from the Gambia, brought by migrants or other people who are coming back from a visit. When Karlijn and I came back to the Netherlands halve of our luggage was filled with Gambian things for Fatou. For Fatou these products -like certain types of food, clothes, or headscarves- are very important: *"the things that I miss here I ask people to bring it for me. Those things make me happy because it makes me feel like the Gambia is closer to me. You will not miss the food or the clothes anymore. And my mother is always so happy to make Cous or groundnuts or something like that for me"*.

The goods we brought with us for Fatou travelled through many people, just like Bouba's flow of monetary investments. Mariama in Jarra first collected part of the goods Fatou received, thereafter she sent it to Aisetou (Fatou's cousin living in Serrakunda). Aisetou at her turn, gave the goods to us, to take it with us on the airplane to the Netherlands. The physical presence of these goods, that Fatou receives from the Gambia, give her a feeling of closeness to her family and her culture as they enable her to hold onto part of her daily practices in the Gambia. By cooking Gambian food, wearing Gambian clothes or wigs she partly relives her daily practices in the Gambia and integrate them in her new life in the Netherlands (Kea, 2013). Every time we came to Bouba's and Fatou's home, she cooked Gambian food or made a Gambian drink like Wonjo or Ginger juice, whereby she received part of the ingredients from the Gambia. For Fatou her connections to the Gambia are very important, every item- physical or unphysical- that reminds her of the Gambia is something she cherish and implements in her life in the Netherlands (Kea, 2013).

5.5 Conclusion: social negotiation

The flow of social connectivity is –most of the time- bidirectional and has influence on many members within the network. Photographs, new technology, and goods can be used to convey the intention to fulfil normative notions of the ideal and a commitment to family members, revealing successes and concealing failures (Kea, 2013). The exchange of these flows encapsulates a larger exchange relationship that is central to kinship relations and personhood. The exchange of information, photographs, or goods in maintaining affective circuits is about the making of persons and relations between them (Kea, 2013). The goods and photographs reflect a 'network of intentionality's': the intention to fulfil normative notions of the ideal kin-relationships based on the intention to produce novel identities and change (Kea, 2013).

However, being and staying connected is not a required condition for an affective circuit, as frictions and non-contact can also play a role within these networks. Not being able to stay connected as well as deliberately disconnecting one-self, influence the transnational relationships. Members in the network are changing their connectivities by using new technologies, photographs, or goods. On the flow of social connectivity –just like on the flow of monetary investments- there is consideration and negotiation needed from the migrant, trying to determine, shape, and control the future of their affective circuit. Nevertheless social connectivity and being connected asks for input from both sides of the network, as it stems from the interplay between the different individuals that are part of this system. This makes social connectivity and social negotiations a relational story, where members try to influence

and shape the future direction of their relationships by using different practices on the flow of social connectivity. However, only in the interconnectedness between the different members within the network and the multiple dimensions present, the future of the affective circuit will be determined.

Chapter 6 - Entangled mobilities

"In Gambia there are so many people that all want something from you, they have opinions about you. For me to be far away from them gives me the chance to rest my head a little"- Bouba, July 2019

Picture 11: A road driven by Bouba on his way to Jarra. Obtained from Bouba on the 22th of November 2019.

This chapter delves into the entangled mobility as it shows the interplay between becoming mobile and staying, and the influences these (im-) mobilities have on the affective circuit. Furthermore it examines the importance of physical presence within this scattered network, giving room to people's temporary mobilities to overcome distances within the network and the obligations as well as other affective aspects emerging from this.

6.1 The role of mobility in Jarra

Mobility -as discussed in chapter 4- is an inevitable factor in the lives of the people in Jarra: in order for people to stay in Jarra and be immobile, it is needed for other members to become mobile and migrate to other places. Migration, both national and transnational, encompasses a multi-sited journey for everybody who is just slightly involved. Every member of a transnational family is having their own role within the network as they are trying to meet the moral expectations that are part of their role, from immobility to (inter-) national mobility. As discussed in section 2.1.2, every member originating from a certain family in rural Gambia has a their own role within the mobility-immobility realm in order to sustain the family's wellbeing (Gaibazzi, 2015).

Immobile members, or so-called Sitters are creating opportunities for others and are making sure that migrant's investments will be meaningful (Gaibazzi, 2010). This also applies to the family strategies people in Jarra implement in their daily lives, as they are facilitating migration and trying to make the mobility of others as beneficial as possible for the members within the network. There is a special role for the first wife within the family; since the first wife is seen as the most important woman in a family, she has a higher social status than the other women in the family. She stays in Jarra and makes important decisions and takes care of her kin. An example of such a first wife is Mariama, since many family members come to her when they are having problems. Fatou told me that many people call her mom because she was the first wife of the head of the village (Fatou's father) and therefore an important woman in Jarra.

Furthermore, as mentioned, in most families in Jarra the eldest sons are staying in the village to take care of the family there and to, eventually, take over as head of the family when the father dies. In Bouba's network Mohammed is fulfilling this role in Jarra as he became head of the village en stays there in order to take care of the family. In Fatou's network there is her older brother Ousman, who has to stay in Jarra for the same purpose. He is handling problems within the family in Jarra and is making sure that the money coming from outside is going to the right people. During my conversations with Ousman we noticed

that he sometimes feels stuck in his role as immobile elder son: *"I like to go to Serrakunda, I secretly have a girlfriend there. I wish that I was able to go there more often, but unfortunately the family needs me to be here … There is nothing to do here in the village, so I am always looking forward to the harvesting time because then it is busy in Jarra and my brothers are here again"*. The time we were leaving Jarra again, he was sad and waved us goodbye until we were not longer able to see him. Although Ousman is not always happy with the role he has to fulfil as a sitter, his share and effort is needed in order to make this family system work.

Moreover, in order for this system to work there are also certain members who need to become mobile. In Bouba's family there are many of his family-members living in different areas in the Gambia (see figure 3, chapter 4). Livelihood methods encourage and facilitate mobility for many members within Bouba's network. In Bouba's and Fatou's family network there are multiple members fulfilling this role for their family. In Bouba's family for example Kawsu is living in Serrakunda to take care of Bouba's companies and thereby supporting his family members living in Jarra. In Fatou's family there is Musa (her younger brother) – amongst others- who is a taxi driver in Serrakunda and is frequently sending money home to Jarra. These are just two examples of people who are fulfilling this mobile role, there are many of Bouba's and Fatou's family members living in urban areas in the Gambia working on markets, as a tailor, in tourism, as a construction man, or many other kinds of occupations, in order to support their family in Jarra.

Within the mobility domain there are people, like Bouba and Fatou, who are living abroad and supporting the family transnationally. Although there are fewer members fulfilling this role, the amount of expected support is higher (as discussed in chapter 4). Therefore, these transnationally mobile members are very important to the family in Jarra and facilitating as well as maintaining their mobility is of major importance to them.

6.2 Facilitating mobility

For many members in Bouba's family network mobility is encouraged in order to fulfil their role within the family. National migration from rural Jarra towards urban areas is seen as a preferable way to support the family. Many families in Jarra maintain close ties to the urban areas of the Gambia. Bouba's and Fatou's family both have members living in these areas, which is facilitating mobility for other members. For instance when Fatou had the opportunity to study in Serrakunda, she was able to live in her uncle's compound close to her school. Nowadays one brother and one sister of Fatou are living in this compound to work and to go

to school. By facilitating a place to live in the urban area the family of Fatou is lowering the threshold to migrate to those places. Furthermore since their kin is living with family members, the family in Jarra is still able to control their lives and make sure that they are thinking about the family and meet their expectations. In this way members living in urban areas of the Gambia also contribute to facilitate mobility by offering a place to stay in their compounds.

Moreover, I noticed that the most preferable outcome for families in Jarra is for their kin to migrate to Europe. Families encourage this kind of migration by nurturing aspirations to migrate amongst the young people in the village. Families show respect and pride towards migrants living in Europe, hence these emotions influence young boys within the village. Some boys told me about their aspirations to go to Europe in order to make the family proud. They get these aspirations from role models (like Bouba), migrants who have great prestige within their families, as they are able to support their family. This often results in young boys willing to take the risk of migrating in order to obtain this expected social status within the family. Ousman (the brother of Fatou) told us about these aspirations: *"All the young boys want to go to Europe. Family members show big pride towards people in Europe that support the village. This pride is for many young boys a big motivation to go. The boys want to make the family proud"*.

These two strategies show how the families living in Jarra and Serrakunda are facilitating migration on a national and an international scale. However, not only the family living in the Gambia encourage migration, Bouba himself is also helping people to become mobile.

On the other side of the network Bouba is likewise investing in facilitating mobility, by helping other family members to migrate towards Europe. Bouba told me an example of how he facilitates international migration:

"My brother wanted to come also to Europe and he used the back way with my money. I already told him that Europe is not what he thinks it is, but he still wanted to come so I decided to help him. When he was in Libya he called me and he sounded panicky when he told me that the money was finished and that he was afraid and wanted to get away from there. But I did not have the money to help him right away, so I told him to stay there and wait and be safe. Then I contacted some people to see what I could do for him. I knew that there is a family living in the Gambia who has family members in Libya. I decided to buy a second-hand

car in the Netherlands and to ship it to the Gambia as a gift for that family. Because of the gift, the family in the Gambia instructed their family in Libya to help my brother and a few months later he arrived by boat in Europe".

This example is showing how Bouba literally facilitates migration for his brother. By facilitating this migration Bouba is contributing to the family strategy of mobility as a livelihood method. Not only does he himself execute his role as breadwinner living abroad, he also enables his brother to obtain the same role within the family. Nowadays Bouba's brother is living in Malta and has –just like Bouba- the role as a breadwinner for the family in Jarra. Furthermore, in order for this family system to work, kin *becoming* mobile is every bit as important as for them to *stay* mobile.

6.3 Maintaining mobility

In order to support and maintain mobility from other members within his transnational network, Bouba is putting effort to help family members living in Europe. Since Bouba is the first one in his family who migrated towards Europe he also has a certain role as an advice giver for other migrants in his family in order to help them overcome their struggles in their new place:

"*When they have a problem they will call me for advice and we will talk. About the job they complain about it and they want to leave and I tell them that they better find another job before they leave their current job. Better than to sit at home and search from there, it can take halve a year and that is a lot of money. They ask me because they have the mentality of Africa and they are used to that system. So I think in advance that is different than in Africa. In Africa we think the other way around, you just quit the job and then search for another one".*

Therefore Bouba does not only facilitate the journey to become mobile, he also sustains this mobility by giving advice to family members on different subjects, for instance on the European culture and how to deal with it. He helps family members in Europe to get used to their new life and to enable them to fulfil their new role within the family network. Bouba himself was not able to ask for advice when he just arrived in Europe: *"It was really difficult, I didn't have anybody that was here before, I was the first. I have a lot of friends who live here but they came here the same time so they couldn't tell me what to do".* This is why he

struggled in the beginning to create a stable life in the Netherlands and at the same time meet the obligations from the family. Because he does not want his family members to struggle the way he did, he gives them advices, for instance on how to cope with pressure from the family and what kind of strategies he uses in order to postpone these obligations (discussed in chapter 4). In this way Bouba helps them to create a stable life in their new environment; where they are able to meet the expectations from their family without socially or financially sacrificing themselves. By doing this, Bouba is helping to maintain their mobility.

On the other side of the network, in order to make mobility profitable, families in the Gambia are trying to maintain the mobility of their kin living abroad. They developed a social strategy to keep people in their place and maintain their mobility namely by discouraging return.

In the introduction of this thesis the story of Lamin- a friend of Bouba and Fatou who will be deported from Germany back to the Gambia- is mentioned. In this story we can see another family strategy on the flow of people's mobility. The family members of Lamin discourage return to the Gambia by 'turning their back on him' when he comes home with small or no money. The fact that Lamin did not fulfil his role that the family had in mind -and is thereby ending his mobility-, causes negative social consequences for him when returning to the Gambia. These social consequences resulting in Lamin not wanting to go back to the Gambia as he would prefer to maintain his mobility. This is not a stand-alone story, since I heard this story from more respondents. In order to get more insights on this social phenomenon I will introduce Kebba, a Swedish migrant from a different family, who experienced those same social consequences when he decided to come back to the Gambia:

I met Kebba while visiting one of our friends who lives on the beach in Tanji. While playing music and drinking Attaya (a traditional drink: a strong tea with a lot of sugar that many Gambians drink), I started talking to Kebba about my research and the practical hurdles I experienced during my fieldwork, not knowing that he could be a valuable respondent. The next day Kebba invited me to his bar in Tanji to talk about the subject of my research and to tell his story:

"15 years ago I migrated to Sweden because I got married to a Gambian girl living there, my family was really happy when they heard about my plans to migrate. After migrating, I started to sent money to my family in the Gambia every month, and even some extra when they called me for help, for example for Koriteh (sugar festival). In that time I was not able to save money to build up my life in Sweden. I was not able to go to school and worked long hours to make

enough money for my family. I did not like life in Sweden; it was cold, people were not friendly, and I missed my family. This is why the first time I visited the Gambia I decided to stay for a long time -maybe three months-, because I didn't want to go back. During the second month my family members started talking about me, because they thought the reason that I was still in the Gambia was because I was deported from Sweden. Nobody understood that I rather stayed in the Gambia than going back to Sweden. But more importantly to them: the amount of money I was giving them during my visit decreased because I was running out of money. The first month I gave all my family members 100 dalasi, the next month 50, and the 3rd month 25 dalasi, because I didn't have more. My family started to ask me when I was going back to Sweden, because they wanted money from me. I felt bad about this because they would rather have my money than my presence. This happened a few years ago and it influenced me a lot. But since a while I decided to choose for myself and now I am staying almost permanently in the Gambia. Some of the people that were close to me before don't want to have anything to do with me anymore, because I am not in Sweden making money for them. They think that I am selfish and they don't understand me. For many migrants their mobility feels like a burden on their shoulders, because they feel like they are not able to visit their family without a certain amount of money on their bank account. This is why I am now trying to help them and tell them that it is not necessary to have a lot of money when going back. But they have a long way to go yet. Because when you are visiting the Gambia as a migrant everybody is observing you: the shoes that you wear, the amount of money that you exchange, to see if they can get something from you. It is hard to choose for yourself when so many people are watching you and want something from you".

Kebba's story shows the complexity of transnational mobility within a family network. Having kin becoming mobile and migrating towards Europe is seen as a desirable outcome for many families. However, coming back from this mobility is only socially accepted when the migrant is still fulfilling their role as a breadwinner in the family, giving the same amounts as before when he was living in Europe. Coming back without meeting these expectations often results in rumours or even breaks in the social network, as becomes vivid in the example of Kebba. This is why many migrants prefer to stay mobile instead of returning to their family in the Gambia.

However, some migrants do not have a choice in maintaining their mobility as they are deported back to the Gambia. Kebba also told me about migrants who are deported with little money according to the family norm can become *'mad man'* as they are excluded from the

family and are living on the streets: *"as a returnee from Europe without money you are worth nothing in the eyes of the Gambian society. You failed and nobody will give you anything. Nobody will offer you Attaya anymore. Many returnees become crazy and are living on the streets because of social exclusion from the society"*. Moreover, the pressure to meet the moral obligations to stay mobile are not only directly put on family-members but also indirectly experienced by seeing examples of others. Seeing examples of people who made it in Europe and are loved and looked up to by the family, as well as examples of people who are excluded from families because they did not make it and returned to the Gambia, influence other people in the decisions they make on the flow of people's mobility. This can be seen as a social strategy from the families in the Gambia as these examples are navigating people's mobility by encouraging and maintaining mobility as a preferable outcome.

Because migrants know about the social consequences when returning to the Gambia without money, they will do anything to avoid this, resulting in lots of pressure to succeed in their role as international breadwinner. Not only are their burdens in migrants their lives to have contact, send money, or put other types of effort in their transnational circuit; there is general obligation on staying mobile. In order to maintain their social relationships with their family-members, physical distance is often preferred.

6.4 The importance of physical presence

Apart from the obligation members in affective circuits experience to become and to stay mobile, there is also another moral obligation vivid on the flow of people's mobility. Since mobility and immobility are playing big roles in the lives of all the members within the family network of Bouba and Fatou, there is also temporary mobility needed to visit family-members living in other parts of the Gambia. In what follows, the journey Karlijn and I travelled to Jarra is described, to give better insights in the effort the mobile members has to put into a family visit.

Since Jarra is a remote village it is quite an undertaking to get there. In order to avoid the hottest period of the day and to be in time for the ferry Musa (Fatou's brother) came to pick us up around 6:30 in the morning. First we had to drive for almost two hours from Tanji towards the port in Banjul, to take the ferry to the North-bank of the Gambia. There are many people crossing the Gambian river through this ferry on a daily basis, and this resulted in an overloaded place with women carrying their stuff in baskets on their heads with children wrapped in fabrics on their back and people taking their animals to the other side of the river

to sell them on the market. We had to be there well in advance in order to buy a ticket and ensure ourselves of a place on the boat, especially since we brought a car with us. Musa joked about the chaotic situation: "in Gambia there is no system". Although he knew where to buy the ticket and where to wait, it was still a hassle to get a spot on the boat, since people tried to queue-jump. It was important to get on this boat since we had to wait several hours for the next one if we missed it. Once we were on the ferry we had to stay inside the car since the boat was so packed with people that we were not able to open the doors. After 35 minutes we were in Barra, where we had to drive for another hour to get to Kerewan. In Kerewan we bought water and rice for the family and we continued on a bumpy sand-road for ten kilometres. On this bumpy road we took some family members with us that were coincidentally walking there towards Jarra. And then, in the middle of the sand, we were able to see some houses: we arrived in Jarra.

This description of the journey from the urban places in the Gambia towards Jarra shows the effort and time family-members living in other parts of the Gambia have to put into visiting their home village. In this journey we had the huge benefit that we were able to go by car, most of the Gambians do this by public transport, which takes way more time. Apart from the effort and time family members have to put into such a visit, this journey is also expensive for Gambians to make, since transport-costs are relatively expensive in the Gambia compared to their income. Therefore, although Serrakunda is less than 70 kilometres away, the practical hurdles present in this journey result in family members being frequently physically absent in each other's lives. Many family breadwinners are living in Serrakunda for most of the year, providing financial resources for their family-members. However, during the ending of the raining season, there is farming work to do in Jarra harvesting crops. Most of the young men are coming back for this occasion in order to offer their services. During this time of the year Jarra is a crowded place with most of their members being present in the village, apart from the ones living abroad.

The transnational family members experience different obligations when it comes to physical presence. Bouba told me that when being a migrant there are certain moments that ask for physical presence within a transnational network. An example of such an event is a funeral of a close family member- like the funeral of Fatou's father, where Fatou had to visit Jarra for the funeral-. Furthermore, there is a more general obligation for visiting the family as a migrant, which is not linked to special events. While being in the Gambia and talking to

different family members of Bouba and Fatou, I noticed the importance of physical presence in their relationship.

In Jarra different family members told me to ask Bouba that he should visit them soon, because they missed him. And in Serrakunda for instance his brother Kawsu told me: *"Since Fatou is living in the Netherlands Bouba is not coming anymore. Tell him to don't forget about us"*. In this conversation I noticed the pressure family-members put on Bouba to come and visit them. Although it is probably out of good intensions -because they miss him-, the pressure can have negative effects for Bouba.

Bouba told me that visiting the Gambia is not just about buying a plane ticket and going there, you have to take multiple factors into account. First it is important to visit every (extended) family member, the ones in Jarra, in Serrakunda, but also in other areas of the country. If you- for whatever reason- do not visit one of the family members, chances are that this will influences your relationship with them: "*The ones you do not visit will get jealous and will think that they are not important to you. They can start rumours about you and this might have big consequences for your relationship with them and the rest of the family"*. Furthermore Bouba told me that while visiting the Gambia there is an obligation as a migrant to bring presents for the family; from phones, to candy for the kids, money, or products from Europe. *"When buying everybody presents you have to think carefully about what you give to whom because they can get jealous when someone else is receiving a bigger gift from you"*.

These expectations increase the threshold for migrants to visit their family-members in the Gambia. Every decision Bouba makes on the flow of people's mobility can influence the future direction in his relationship with his family (Cole & Groes, 2016). Therefore migrants have to constantly consider and negotiate the decisions they make on the flow of people's mobility when it comes to visiting and physical presence, in order to regulate their network.

When Bouba just migrated to the Netherlands, he visited the Gambia a lot because he missed his family and did not have a stable life in the Netherlands yet. During that time, he was struggling to find work because of a lack of understanding in the new culture, a language barrier, and a lack of sufficient diplomas. Furthermore he did not have a social network here since he did not know a lot of people in the Netherlands. This resulted in Bouba attaching special value to his transnational relationships with his family in the Gambia. Resulting in often visiting the Gambia to overcome these feelings.

Over time, since he was able to build up a life in the Netherlands -he found work, Fatou came to the Netherlands, their kids were born, he build up a social network, and

because his parents passed away- he does not feel the urge to go to Gambia that often anymore: *"I have no reason to go to Gambia anymore besides my businesses. There is not a special person I miss there, I have everything here now"*. For him it feels like a relief to be in the Netherlands: *"In Gambia there are so many people that all want something from you, they have opinions about you. For me to be far away from them gives me the chance to rest my head a little"*.

These quotes from Bouba show that he experiences being in the Netherlands as a way to break free from the attachments towards his kin and community (Lucht, 2011; Plambech, 2014). When the distance increases between him and his family members, he feels that the moral obligations decrease. He feels freer to do what he wants and to avoid the pressure from his family. Striking about this is that Bouba still has to deal with lots of moral obligations and feels responsible to support his family and has contact with them everyday. Although he does not feel like being there with them, he still feels the obligation and the urge to help them as a big part of his money earned goes to his family in the Gambia.

6.5 Fatou's immobility

"When I was marrying Bouba I did not expect that he wanted me to migrate to Holland. I thought that I could stay in the Gambia while being married to him. But Bouba wanted me to come to Holland, so I did. Now I am here for marriage and that is my role".

In my conversations with Fatou I experienced that she is feeling immobile in the Netherlands. She told me that she is now not able to go wherever she wants anymore- as discussed in her quote in the introduction-, she is not able to go see her friends and family whenever she wants to, like she did before she migrated. When she just migrated to the Netherlands she felt very lonely, she had nothing to do, and did not have a social network. She was being at home most of the time and she felt like Bouba never showed her around. Luckily her situation improved a bit: *"Now I do a weekend job since 2015, cleaning in the Zara. It is only 2,5 hours but I like it. But if I compare it to the work I was doing in the Gambia it is very different … There I was an accountant for a foundation working on women empowerment. Anyways, it is better than staying in the house the whole day. I like it because it makes me interact with people and doing things"*.

While being one of the 'mobile' members of the family, Fatou is experiencing immobility in her life. According to Fatou, having two children made her less mobile, since she has to take care of them when Bouba is working, resulting in her being at home a lot. In

the Gambia having kids is less impactful for the mother's mobility and social contact, since there is a system of joint parenting, where the women of the family raise their kids together. Due to this system women still have frequent social contact and are able to visit other family-members or friends elsewhere.

Fatou told me that Bouba plays a big role in her immobility: "*I really want to go to the Gambia to visit my family, because I especially miss my mother a lot. Unfortunately that is not possible because of the children. Last time I was there for my father's funeral, I brought our daughter. She got sick because of the heat, she is not used to the Gambian climate. This is why Bouba doesn't let me go to the Gambia anymore with the kids because he thinks it is not good for them –Sorry one minute talk, one minute caring for the kids- … But this big man can be there",* she said while holding her baby son, who asked for her attention. She continued: *"But in the end he is the boss because he is the man. I have to listen to him, but I find it hard sometimes"*. This resulted in Fatou visiting the Gambia one time in the four years since she has been in the Netherlands. The emotions she experiences due to her physical absence from her family are sensible in the way she talks. The moral obligation to maintain her mobility feels like a burden on her shoulder and she has troubles to cope with her restricted agency to move wherever she wants. Her life is dominated by her role as Bouba's wife, and therefore she has to obey to his wishes.

Since Fatou is having children she is feeling more restricted in her mobility. Gambian migrant parents often decide to send their children to the Gambia to be cared for by grandparents and/or other extended family members (Kea, 2013). When I asked Fatou about this she replied: *"Yes for me I like that idea, because I know my mother can raise them. They can learn there, there are good schools. For me learning Arabic is very important for the kids. The thing is I want my kids to go to the Gambia to know the culture a little bit. Also I would be able to work more often and have more time for myself. But Bouba does not want that because he thinks health care is not good in the Gambia. He is afraid that the kids will get sick and that there is no good treatment. So now that discussion is closed because he is the boss … When I talked about this problem with my aunt she said to me that she could send my niece to live with me in Holland and help me take care of the kids. That was sweet but she doesn't know that you cannot come to Holland easy like that"*. For Fatou her mobility and freedom would increase if she did not have to take care of her kids. However, Bouba has the first and last word in this conversation and he decided that the children stay in the Netherlands with them.

Striking about this is that Bouba first facilitated her mobility –and facilitates mobility for other members in his network as well, like for his brother in Malta- by marrying her and arranging for her to come to The Netherlands, and now he is in some way retaining Fatou's mobility by keeping her in the house and making decisions for her.

6.6 Flow of people's mobility: conclusion

Mobility and immobility are playing big roles in the lives of the Bouba's and Fatou's families. Every member has a certain role in this realm, which is connected to mobility. There are multiple dimensions to this (im) mobility realm that all are interconnected to one another, as every member is having a specific role and contribute in their own way to (im) mobility. Although some people are overall happy with their role in the family -like Bouba or Kawsu-, others –like Fatou or Ousman- are struggling and experience feelings of restricted mobility. Every role within the network –whether being mobile or immobile- is ensued with other obligations. By putting moral pressure, family members navigate the decisions made by other members in the network: pushing them to become mobile by nourishing aspirations as well as facilitating places to stay, keeping them mobile by discouraging return, or pulling them to visit more often –only possible when there is enough money obtained-, resulting in an interchange of presence and absence as preferable outcomes. Mobility and immobility can therefore be seen as moral plights.

One can imagine that Bouba sees this physical distance from all these opinions and obligations as advantageous, in order to 'rest his head a little'. However Bouba is also part of this system as he feed expectations (for instance by visiting often in the beginning of his migration), functions as a role model for others, and even puts effort in facilitating and maintaining mobility for other members within his network while on the other hand retaining the mobility of others (Fatou). Thereby he is not only part of the system, but also fuels it in order to pursue in the future. Morality is playing a big role in the interplay between mobility and immobility for the family in Jarra, since everybody is constantly influenced by the obligations that are part of their role fulfilment, and is trying to make wise decisions on this flow.

Chapter 7 –Conclusions and discussion

The aim of this research is to gain more insights on how affective circuits of Gambian migrants living in the Netherlands with their family members living in the Gambia, are influencing their members, and how the members influence this circuit. The main research question that guided me through this research is:

How are moral and affective dimensions in the networks of migrants practiced, experienced, and shaped in a transnational setting?

This research has focussed on the obligations, affections, and expectations present within this setting, dwelling on how this context affects the lives of different members within an affective circuit. And although the story told is perhaps an unusual one, and based on a singular case –following the affective circuit of a Gambian migrant couple living in the Netherlands-, the affective and moral sides and effects of this transnational network I describe illuminates more general issues.

Answering the main research question is done using three steps within this chapter: section 7.1 delves into the moral and affective dimensions of the transnational relationship by synthesizing the findings of the empirical chapters and delving into the overarching interconnectivities between the three flows of exchange. Section 7.2 examines the different notions of *practicing*, *experiencing* and *shaping* in these moral and affective dimensions. Section 7.3 integrates these two elements and answers the main research question of this thesis. After answering the main research question, section 7.4 shows a number of implications and recommendations for further research -on migration, transnational networks, the influences of gender, and multi-sited research-, concluding with some recommendations for policy-makers.

7.1 Interconnections between the flows

The three different flows of monetary investments, social connectivity, and people's mobility are each discussed in one empirical chapter of this thesis. These flows are all a part of the whole affective circuit as they are connecting the livelihoods of migrants in the Netherlands to the livelihoods of their family-members living in the Gambia. Since these flows are not stand-alone issues and are interwoven within the affective circuit, there are many connections between these flows.

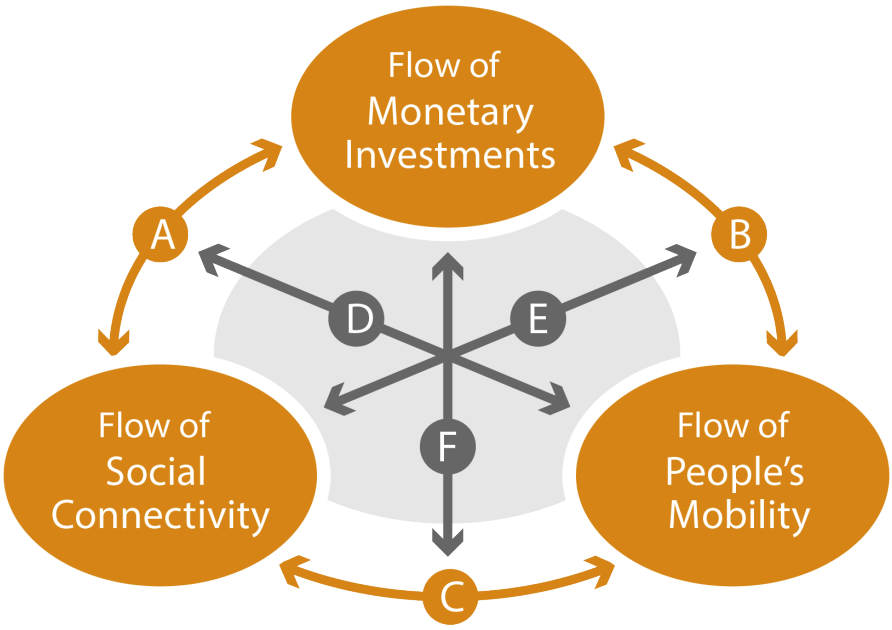

Figure 5: Analytical framework on the different connections between the three flows.

In figure 5 the flows circulating within the affective circuit are represented, arrow A, B, and C show each another connection between two of the flows, and arrow D, E, and F are representing the interactions between the three flows. I make use of this framework to display the connections present between the flows. However, I am aware that there are many more interconnectivities present in this dynamic circuit and that this figure is therefore a simplification of the reality. Ethnographic research was needed to explore, interpret, and try to understand the complex realities of the affective circuits migrants and their family members maintain (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). I try to capture the essence of these complex realities by displaying and thereby summarizing them in this framework (Lave & March, 1993). I make use of this simplified version of the interconnectivities within an affective circuit to expose, point out, specify, and clarify certain elements, realizing that the reality is much more complex than this figure display.

In figure 5, arrow A represents the connection between the flow of monetary investments and the flow of social connectivity, which is found in many ways within the affective circuit. In general, investing more in the flow of social connectivity –as found in exchanges of new technologies, photographs, goods, and advices- emerges more moral obligations on the flow of monetary investments, i.e. sending money. However, a disconnection between the two comes to the fore when the flow of social connectivity is not used in the network –for

example by switching off your phone- often resulting in experiencing less moral obligations on the flow of monetary investments.

Arrow B represents the connection between the flow of people's mobility and the flow of monetary investments. Overall, when moral obligations around the flow of people's mobility are met –when people are meeting their expected (im) mobility- the moral obligations on the flow of monetary investments increase for the mobile members within the network. However, a disconnection between these two flows becomes vivid when not meeting the moral obligations around mobility –for example by ending the expected mobility as a migrant-, the moral obligations on the flow of monetary investments can decrease, since it can cause breakages within the affective circuit.

Arrow C represents the connection between the flow of social connectivity and the flow of people's mobility. In general, this connection becomes vivid when meeting the moral obligations around mobility –members performing their expected (im) mobility- results in increasing moral obligations on the flow of social connectivity (exchanges of new technologies, photographs, goods, and advice), in order to maintain close contact with mobile members. However, a disconnection between these two flows is found when the moral obligations on the flow of people's mobility is not met –for example by ending the mobile role as a migrant-, whereby the moral obligations around the flow of social connectivity can decrease, because of breakages within the network.

Arrow D, E, and F represent the interactions between all of the three flows. As mentioned, this research distinguished these three flows in order to get more grip on the complexity of an affective circuit as a whole. However, within the interactions of those three flows –schematically represented using these arrows- the moral and affective dimensions of this transnational relationship is found. Within these moral and affective dimensions the members of a transnational network practice, experience, and shape their network. The next section elaborates on how different members within the network use these activities within the moral and affective dimensions, and is thereby showing the dynamics of these moral and affective dimensions, which guides us towards answering the main research question.

7.2 Practicing, experiencing, and shaping the affective circuit

This section explicates -based on the findings of this research- the three different notions present in the main research question: practicing, experiencing, and shaping. Figure 6 shows a

guiding scheme for this section; it represents different notions that play a role in each activity and guides us in finding an answer to the main research question.

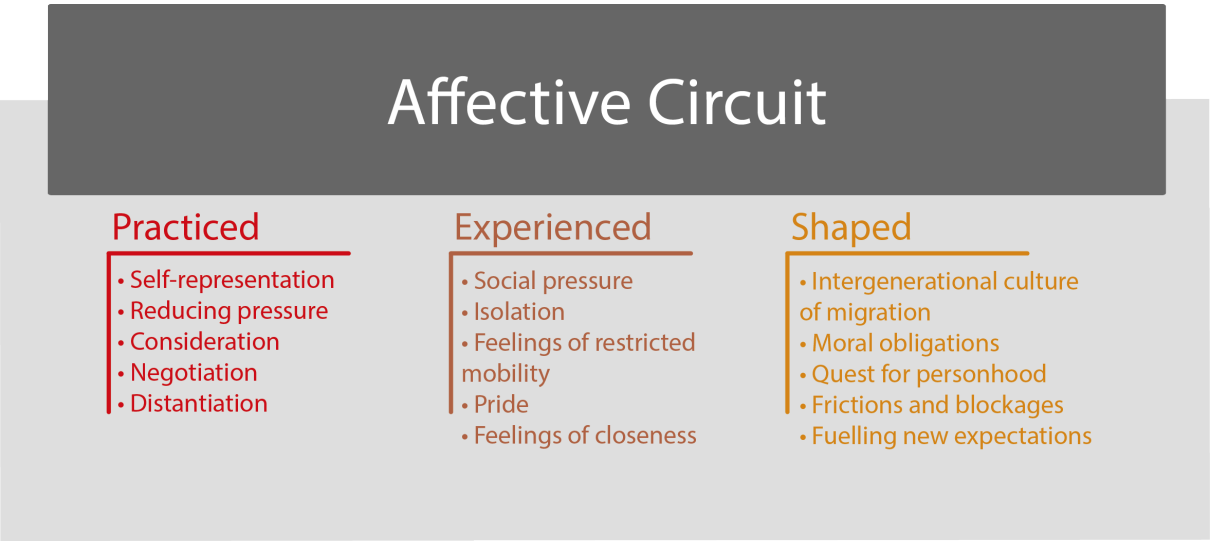

Figure 6: Schematic representation of practicing, experiencing, and shaping.

Practiced

Every member within an affective circuit *practices* –defined in the introduction as: performing an activity- their network. Drawing from the findings of this research, it shows that at times, members decide to practice activities in order to reinforce the shared norms and values of the network, while at other times they may perform activities that go against these shared norms, for example by not giving into the moral obligations present.

Migrants can reinforce the shared norms and values by practicing their self-representation; they deliberately select what their family members in the Gambia see from their life in Europe. By sharing pictures on Whatsapp migrants are constructing a particular kind of self, showing their family that they are doing well in the Netherlands, garnering recognition of their achievements and successes as a migrant to family and friends back home (Kea, 2013). They can confirm the images their family members in the Gambia have about Europe in their images, thereby fulfilling normative notions of the ideal migrant and confirming their role as breadwinner imposed by the family in the Gambia (Kea, 2013).

However, migrants can also decide not to reinforce the expectations from their family members in the Gambia. In order not to undermine themselves and still avoid negative social consequences, migrants practice different strategies in order to make the obligations present within the affective circuit more bearable for them. Saying you are still in school, or telling your family members that you will give it to them later are examples of how migrants reduce

pressure and postpone obligations. In general, there is constant consideration and negotiation needed in practicing the circuit, weighing the consequences of each decision. Where for some, practicing distantiation from their network will feel like their only way out.

On the other side of the network the family in the Gambia is also using ways to practice their transnational network. For the family in the Gambia it is important to maintain their transnational network since the mobility of members is their way to make a living. Therefore constant consideration and negotiation is needed to weigh consequences to certain actions. Being careful what to tell to whom, calling and keeping close contact with people living far away, or showing gratitude towards migrants when they come to visit the Gambia are examples of how the family practices the circuit.

Experienced

Based on the findings of this research, each member experiences –defined in this thesis as feeling an emotion or sensation- the affective circuit in their own way.

For many migrants building up a new life in a new environment combined with the contact with and moral obligations from the family in the Gambia can be experienced as an emotional rollercoaster. There are often many emotions experienced in this precarious phase and position, as became vivid in this thesis. First, migrants can experience the moral obligations to send money to their family members as a burden on their shoulders and migrants often struggle to get used to the moral obligations that are a part of their new role within the family. Furthermore, migrants often experience feelings of social isolation in this phase, as they are missing their life in the Gambia. They can feel alone and displaced in their new environment and often experience lack of feelings home. This makes particularly this starting period of migrating challenging with many emotions emerging.

Unfortunately, it became vivid that some of these experiences keep on playing a role, even though the migrant is settled and used to the new environment. Finding a balance between dealing with the pressure from the family –to visit, to support, or to have contact- and focussing on the self, is often experienced as an on-going struggle in their lives. Moreover, these negative experiences can be fuelled by the knowledge that most of their family members does not understand or believe their situation, which can result in experiencing loneliness. Therefore, some Gambian migrants experience their mobility as a burden on their shoulder, because returning with a small amount of money will probably cause negative social consequences for them. And feelings of restricted mobility, while being a ‘mobile’ member of their network, can be present in their lives. Nevertheless, I also noticed

positive emotions experienced by migrants because of their role in the affective circuit. Their ability to support their family and the social status they have obtained because of this ability, can result in feelings of pride, because they are able to enjoy modern standards of living and to help their family members at the same time.

Not only migrants experience burdens attached to their role, since I noticed that some family members also feel stuck in their role as an immobile member within the family and experience feelings of restricted mobility. Furthermore, feelings of jealousy can emerge on this side of the circuit, for example when they are exposed to images of Western wealth in the photographs they receive from migrants combined with seeing the social status migrants obtain because of their mobility. And finally, in such a scattered network physical absence of family members is normalized, since not being able to see each other for months or even years is part of their lives. Therefore I noticed that family members in the Gambia are often experience missing the mobile members of the family. In order to overcome these feelings, some people use pictures of their mobile kin to evoke feelings of closeness to one another.

Shaped

According to my findings, *Shaping* of the network happens in many ways within the affective circuit. As mentioned, I define shaping as the forming of an affective circuit: by shaping the network, members influence and change the future form of their network.

The shaping of an affective circuit brings up the question on individual agency: do individual people have the agency to give direction to their future relationships? I argue that within an affective circuit it is hard to distinguish individual agency, since it is a relational dynamic system where individual freedoms are constantly negotiated through relations. Every practice attempting to shape the circuit is mediated by the experiences and practices of others. Therefore I argue that agency on shaping the network is a relational entity and comes to the fore in the togetherness of an affective circuit, which makes it challenging for individuals to shape their networks in order to work in their favour. I argue that in the practices members use there can be individual agency distinguished, but how these practices then influence and shape the network depends on other members as well as their relationships with them.

On the Gambian side of the network an important notion on shaping of an affective circuit is *the intergenerational culture of migration*. This intergenerational culture of migration can be defined as ‘a development where youth can only imagine a future through migrating, decreasing their willingness to work and build a future locally, due to exposure to relative wealth and success of migrants’ (de Haas, 2010; 237-238). Different actors as well as

different aspects within the network generate this culture of migration. One example of how Gambian family members shape their network through the intergenerational culture of migration I noticed is by nourishing aspirations. Families create and nurture these aspirations by putting migrants on a pedestal. In this way, families are shaping their network and influencing the mobility of other members. Another example of this intergenerational culture of migration became vivid in how families in the Gambia discourage return of mobile members, when there is not enough money obtained. By creating negative social consequences, that are shown in examples of 'failed' migrants, they are lifting the bar for others to come back, whereby they are shaping the affective circuit by keeping members mobile. Furthermore, Gambian families shape their networks by creating moral obligations towards their (im-) mobile kin. Families implement moral obligations concerning supporting the family and keeping the family close (for example by visiting or calling). These moral obligations are maintained by social consequences as a reaction on certain practices of their members. In this way, families in the Gambia are shaping their network in order to determine the future of their relationships and make the circuit work in their favour.

On the other end of the network it became vivid that migrants are also fuelling this culture of migration for example by creating opportunities to become mobile for others, confirming the image of being the rich migrant, or giving advice to other migrants in order to stay mobile and support the family. In this way they are nurturing this culture of migration and thereby –consciously or unconsciously- shaping their network. Moreover, the ways migrants shape their network come to the fore in the quest of personhood. Obtaining personhood for migrants means finding a balance between thinking about their family and thinking about themselves. Migrants trying to shape their network become vivid in their quest for personhood, as they are making decisions on when to give in to the moral obligations from the family, and when not to. By not giving in to moral obligations attached to their role, migrants are trying to shape the network in order to reduce expectations now and in the future, but it can also cause frictions or even breakages within their affective circuit. However, by giving in to moral obligations and thereby confirming the norms and values of the family, migrants are also –consciously or unconsciously- shaping their network since they are sustaining the image the family members have of them and are thereby fuelling new expectations in the future for themselves and for others with the same role.

7.3 The dynamics of the moral and affective dimensions of a transnational network of migrants

Each member of the transnational network -Gambian migrants in the Netherlands maintain with their family members living in the Gambia- has a certain role within the mobility-immobility realm, ensued with certain moral obligations. Using different flows, members on each side of the transnational network are connecting their livelihoods, evoking many emotions. Moreover, members use these flows trying to influence the future form of their relationships in order to make the circuit work in their favour and attempting to achieve personhood. However, since these flows are all interconnected and shaping the circuit is a relational entity, constant consideration and negotiation is needed in order to make the right decisions. In some cases, members are making decisions that can (consciously or unconsciously) reinforce existing shared norms and values of the network, which can result in increasing moral obligations in the future for the self and others, whereas in other cases these members can try to transform the network hoping to cause a decrease in their moral obligations in the future, which can also result in frictions or even breaks within the affective circuit.

In this research I link to the work of Cole and Groes (2016) on affective circuits and this research contributes to more insights on this notion, especially in how different members within these circuits practice, experience, and shape the moral and affective sides of their transnational relationships. Looking at transnational networks as affective circuits shows that these networks are not as clear-cut and stable as the literature makes believe, rather the affective circuits migrants maintain with their family members can be seen as one big interplay of aspects, emotions, relations, actions, and attempts, in which positioning the self and making the circuit work in your favour is a challenging task.

7.4 Reflection and recommendation for further research

In this research I have focussed on a series of aspects that, to date, have received limited attention, such as: the affective and emotive sides of transnational relationships, the fluidity of these relationships –which gives room to frictions and disconnection-, the considerations and negotiations necessary in these networks, and how different members are feeding expectations influencing future moral obligations for themselves and for others.

In the process of analysing my data and writing this thesis I decided to focus on the affective circuit of Bouba and Fatou. Although I spoke to many more respondents during the

second phase of my fieldwork –as discussed in section 3.3- and I could describe and cite many more stories from different people I spoke to, I decided to focus predominantly on Bouba and Fatou's affective circuit. I chose to do so because in my opinion an in-depth analysis of one family network was more valuable on this theme rather than to strive for broadness. Analysing in-depth how the affective circuit of Bouba and Fatou is practiced, experienced, and shaped by different members in their network enabled me to take the benefits from a multi-sited approach. Because of this approach I could see how the three flows of exchange within the network influenced the same network from both sides, in the Netherlands and in the Gambia. For instance it enabled me to analyse how the practicing and attempts to shape the network on one side of the circuit, influenced how other members experienced the same circuit from the other end of the network. This gave me valuable insights since affective circuits are all about the interplay and interconnections between different members of the network. Getting in-depth information on these interconnections would not have been possible when focussing solely on single respondents from different networks.

Nevertheless, the other respondents and interviews I had with people outside of Bouba's and Fatou's network, gave me many insights on the effects of an affective circuit. I used this information as a base for this research and considered this as preliminary knowledge -for analysing the data and writing this thesis- on affective circuits maintained between migrants in Europe and Gambian families. Because of this knowledge –as discussed in the methodological chapter- I was able to see the differences between becoming 'part of the' affective circuit (which was the case in Bouba's and Fatou's network) and being an outsider, who did not have any ties to other family members in the circuit.

Although this approach enabled me to gain in-depth data on Bouba and Fatou's affective circuit, studying these elements involved dealing with multiple methodological issues and limitations. In spite of the fact that I tried to overcome these limitations, I was not able to solve all of them. In the methodological chapter there are some of these limitations I encountered discussed, however a reflection on other elements besides these methodological limitations needs to be given. In the following section I discuss some of these limitations and how they could lead to ideas for future research.

The first limitation I encountered in my fieldwork is a bias I had during the second phase of my fieldwork. Based on the interviews with Bouba in the first phase of my research, I got a certain view on his family network for example on how people in Jarra are being

mostly dependent on Bouba's support as a remittances-sender. However, when I was in the Gambia I found out that many people within this network were supporting their family members in their own ways. In my questions to different members of the network I was mostly focussed on how Bouba supported them, instead of looking at the broader picture of everybody playing their role in this support (for example internal migrants supporting from urban areas, consist of way more people within the network). However, this is an assumption I unintendedly took for granted. After finding out that the support is not only based on the monetary investments of Bouba, I adjusted my questions. This is an example of how important it is to have a multi-sited view in doing research, because if my findings were solely based on Bouba's answers I would not have been able to get the bigger picture. But even when doing a multi-sited research it is important to stay open-minded and not letting the answers of the respondents influence the whole view, although this can be very challenging.

Second, the role of gender should be more explicitly examined in affective circuits migrants maintain with their family. In this research differences between men and women in their role, function, and opportunities came to the fore. However, it is of great importance to further examine these differences and thereby specifically having a more in-depth analysis on the role of women in this realm. Future studies should collect more information on how married migrant women interact with their family within an affective circuit. Moreover, future research should also include how single migrant women from countries traditionally characterised by sending male migrants, such as the Gambia, navigate their affective circuits.

More specifically, there should be more research on how women practice, experience, and shape their flow of monetary investments. In this research I decided to focus on Bouba's flow of monetary investments, based on the fact that Bouba and Fatou told me that this flow is more active on his side. However, the ways in which women navigate their flow of monetary investments might be of relevance for understanding the guiding mechanisms of affective circuits. This is especially of great importance since development aid is nowadays often focussing on empowering women economically. The affective circuits migrant women maintain and the influences of their flow of monetary investments might therefore be an interesting field for future research.

Furthermore, in this research I came across three different roles for people within a transnational family namely being immobile, an internal migrant, or an international migrant. However, these three are not always as clear-cut as this research presents. Somebody can be a mobile as well as an immobile member at the same time or shift from one to the other over time. International migrants can return to immobility by moving back to their hometown, or

immobile members are sometimes finding ways to mobility and moving between different localities. Therefore it is crucial for future research to acknowledge that mobility can be fluid and change over time and combinations of mobility and immobility can be found in members of a transnational network. Future research should be focussed on the interplay between mobility and immobility for each member of an affective circuit and how this fluid (im) mobility shapes their experiences and practices on this circuit.

Finally -on a more practical side-, policies should move away from looking only at remittances and their influences on development in receiving countries. This research shows that transnational networks include way more (affective and moral) aspects that need more attention from policymakers. Looking at transnational networks as affective circuits shows policy makers that remittances are only a small part of a bigger structure of social dynamics. Moreover, it shows that the one-sided and overoptimistic view on remittances is not how the reality of affective circuits influences many people in transnational networks. Because of globalization transnational networks are becoming more and more important in many people's lives and families do not always consist of nuclear and bounded networks. Therefore it is of major importance not longer to overlook the influences these transnational (family) networks have on their members, by delving into the broader picture.

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Appendix 1: "Topic guide interviews phase 1"

Part 1: Short migration history

-How was your life in the Gambia before you came to the Netherlands? Who were the most important people in your life back then?

-How do you experience your life in the Netherlands? Who are the most important people in your life now?

Part 2: Network analysis

The basis of the transnational network in this research is Bouba, he is the starting point and the main link in the network researched. Therefore an ego-centred network analysis (Herz & Olivier, 2012) will help to determine Bouba's network:

Bouba (ego) is asked to name 25 respondents (alters) that he supported in the Gambia over the past year. There will be a list made with the 25 important people within the supporting network including the following information: name, age, nationality and place of residence. In the following part there will be more information gained on how this support and flows influence the network and Bouba himself.

Part 3: Flows

1. Monetary flow

Can you tell me a bit about how you support your family in the Gambia financially? Or how they support you financially?

Key words: senders and receivers/ use of the money/ who initiates/ pressure/ social status

Possible topics not yet discussed:

-How often do you send money to your family?

-Where does the money go to (directed/ indirected support: for example school fees)?

-Are there funds/ programs that you have access to that help you to support your family?

-Are you taking care of your house or land in the Gambia? How are you doing this?

-How did the financial support develop over time? (Was it sometimes also coming from the other side of the network?)

-Does you family ask you for money or do you send it yourself?

-How do these remittances make you feel in general?

-Why are you sending remittances?

-If you do not have money at one moment, what do you do?
-Do you sometimes experience pressure from remittances? How?
-Does it make you proud that you can support your family?
-Do you think your social status depends on the amount of money you send?

2. Social connectivity

How do you experience the contact your have with your family in the Gambia?

Key words: frequency/ persons/ kind of contact/ who initiates/ obligation
Possible topics not yet discussed:
-How often do you have contact with your family?
-With whom do you have the most contact?
-What sort of contact do you have with your family?
-Why do you call your family?
-Do you call them or do they call you?
-What other ways of contact do you have with your family except calling?
-What do you talk about when you call each other?
-How do you feel about calling your family?
-How do you think your family in the Gambia feels about calling you?
-Do you feel like it is your own choice how much contact you have with your family?
-Do you wish there was less or more contact or the same?
-In what situations do you want to have contact with your family?
-What do you do when you do not want to have contact with your family?
-What happens when you forget to call? How do you feel about forgetting to call?
-Do you think the contact your social connectivity has influence on your social status within your family?

3. Mobility

How do you feel about visiting the Gambia?

Key words: frequency/ occasions/ who initiates/ experiences/ obligation/ social status
Possible topics not yet discussed:
-Do you often travel back to the Gambia?
-What kind of occasions make you travel back?

-Does your family ask you to come to the Gambia or do you initiate going yourself (if yes, who asks you)?
-How do you feel about visiting the Gambia?
-Do you feel like it is your own choice if you go to the Gambia?
-What happens when you are not able to travel (do you for instance send more money or call more often)?
-Do you wish you could go more often to the Gambia?
-Do you feel like you have shortcomings concerning your presence towards your family?
-Does your family more often expect you to visit them than possible for you?
-Do you think your absence or presence has influence on your social status within your family?

Interrelations 3 flows

What do you think that the relation between the 3 flows – sending remittances, calling and being present- is?

Possible topics not yet discussed:
-Which flow do you use the most? Which do you think is most important?
-Which flow do you prefer to use?
-Do you compensate shortcomings on one flow with the other flows?
-How do you combine the three flows?
-Do you feel like you need all the three flows in order to maintain your connections?

In general in each part: ask for examples

Part 4: Plan Gambia

In this last part Bouba and I will look together at the list of the 25 people from the Ego-network analysis. There will be a check with Bouba if there are people missing on the list made before.
Moreover the following distinctions are made within the list of people: family versus non-family, living in the Gambia versus somewhere else. And eventually contact information of the most important people in the network and where to find them are determined in order to make a plan for the next phase of the research.

Appendix 2: "Topic guide interviews phase 2"

General questions

How is your relationship with Bouba/ Fatou?

Do you talk often to Bouba/ Fatou?

What do you think of Bouba/ Fatou?

Part 3: Flows

1. Monetary flow

What do you think about the support Bouba or Fatou send to their family members?

Examples of possible more specific questions:

Does Bouba supports you financially? If yes, in what way?

Do you sometimes ask Bouba and Fatou for money? Can you give an example when you ask for it?

Does Bouba sometimes say that he does not have money? What happens then?

Do you feel that Bouba is giving enough support to his family members?

2. Social connectivity

What do you think of the contact you have with Bouba and Fatou?

Examples of more specific questions:

How often do you call Bouba/Fatou?

What are you talking about when you are calling Bouba/ Fatou?

Does he call you or do you call him/her mostly?

How do you feel about calling Bouba/Fatou?

Are there certain situations when you call Bouba/Fatou?

Do you have pictures from Bouba/Fatou? If yes> elaborate.

3. Mobility

How do you feel about Bouba/Fatou visiting the Gambia?

Examples of more specific questions:

Is Bouba/Fatou coming back for special occasions? If yes, can you give an example of such an occasion?

What do you think about the frequency that Bouba or Fatou visit the Gambia?

Do you miss the presence of Bouba or Fatou?

Appendix 3: "List of key informants mentioned in this thesis"

Name	Gender	Place of residence	Role within family network	Relation to Bouba or Fatou
Bouba	Male	The Netherlands	Internationally mobile	Himself
Fatou	Female	The Netherlands	Internationally mobile	Herself
Mariama	Female	Jarra	Immobile	Mother Fatou
Kawsu	Male	Serrakunda	Nationally mobile	Brother Bouba
Mohammed	Male	Jarra	Immobile	Brother Bouba
Kumbah	Female	Jarra	Immobile	Second wife of Bouba's father
Ceriff	Male	Jarra	Immobile	Brother Fatou
Fatima	Female	Jarra	Immobile	Sister Fatou
Musa	Male	Serrakunda	Nationally mobile	Brother Fatou
Ousman	Male	Jarra	Immobile	Brother Fatou
Aisetou	Female	Brusubi	Nationally mobile	Cousin Fatou
Adama	Female	Serrakunda	Nationally mobile	Sister Fatou
Dembo	Male	Tanji	Nationally mobile	Single

				respondent
Ali	Male	Serrakunda	Nationally mobile	Single respondent
Kebba	Male	Sweden/Tanji	Internationally mobile	Single respondent