*West African positionalities*

*How Gambians actively and creatively navigate their lives and create opportunities in the globalized world*

Radboud University

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## *How Gambians actively and creatively navigate their lives and create opportunities in the globalized world*

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**Executive summary**

Both within the academic world and outside the academic world there can be found opposing understandings of the impact of globalization on 'localities' in the developing world. On the one hand, the understanding that the 'global' would overpower the 'local', leaving the local merely powerless. On the other hand, there can be found a more optimistic view that believes that localities are 'agents' in globalization as they interact with the global and are able to create conditions for resistance.

Especially, for many the hegemonic narrative of Africa as a *homogenous, hopeless* and *disconnected* continent is in their opinion the current state of affairs. To move beyond this narrative, this research 'puts bottom-up processes of West African livelihoods within a broader framework that is sensitive to the position of West Africans in processes of globalization'. By adopting this theoretical lens, this thesis shows through two and a half months of ethnographic fieldwork in the Gambia, how Gambians – in both urban and rural areas – are 'agents' in this global era, as they are able to actively and creatively navigate their lives in the globalizing world. In doing so, also the processes that oppose and impede, as well as the encounters that may have extensive effects regarding the creations of new directions in their lives will become clear.

This thesis concludes that although each individual has a different positionality, which initiate a variety of values and interpretations of what is seen as right and wrong, helpful and no longer needed or useful. It can be nevertheless said broadly that this thesis shows that by the diversification of income generating activities, Gambians navigate their lives – as a resilience strategy – along sectoral and spatial lines. This in order to *hustle small amounts of money together* as a family in order to mitigate poverty, and thus to survive, and to achieve an individual's own aspirations in life – which is the result of the interplay between influence of socio-cultural obligations and expectations, and personal desires.

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**Chapter 1: Introduction**

The Gambia has been plagued by political turmoil ever since its independence from the United Kingdom in 1965. Simultaneously, the Gambia began facing economic difficulties that have worsened over the years (the cause of which was not only due to Jammeh's – former president – greed) (Kebbeh, 2013). The majority of the Gambian population are employed in the agricultural sector and this is upon today the principle source of export revenue (Kebbeh, 2013). Unfortunately, the agricultural sector faced the most economic distress throughout the years. Extensive erosion, caused by deforestation and increased land exploitation, Sahelian drought and the reduction of the groundnut export prices (Kea, 2017; Kebbeh, 2013).

As a result, in the 1970s a process of de-agrarianization took place as large-scale rural-to-urban migration and international migration to Europe, North America and other West African countries began to develop as a family coping strategy in the absence of an institutional social welfare system in order to mitigate poverty (Ceesay, 2016; Kea, 2017; Kebbeh, 2013). The Gambians who migrated to the coastal-urban areas of the Gambia found their 'employment' mainly in the tourist industry (which has overthrown the groundnut production as primary source of foreign exchange) and hustling – petty trading (Ceesay, 2016; Kea, 2017).

In fact, two developments had a negative impact on the tourist sector in the Gambia, namely: the political upheaval caused by former leader Yahya Jammeh and the ebola crisis in other parts of West Africa (Ceesay, 2016; Kea, 2017). Therefore, the Gambians became more dependent on remittance from family members who were already abroad (Kebbeh, 2013). Simultaneously, the lack of employment in the Gambia is a remarkable problem as the youth unemployment rate in 2018 was unbelievably high – 43,9 percent (Boogaerdt, 2018). Therefore, a significant part of the youth aims to leave the country through the so-called backway – the dangerous illicit route along Niger up to South-Italy (Boogaerdt, 2018). In attempts to discourage the outflow of young Gambians the government's 'Operation Feed the Nation' and 'Back to the Land Campaign' imitate similar West African initiatives that promote agrarian livelihoods (Gaibazzi, 2013). This is in fact a hard task for the Gambian government, because as long as Gambian youth equate agrarian livelihoods with tradition and office jobs with being modern and global, such campaigns will hardly pay off (Kea, 2017).

As you may have noticed, the above text illustrated how Gambians link up with processes of globalization, such as mobility, migration, tourism and the global food market. Therefore, and in line with the mutual understanding that 'localities' are embedded within the complex global flows (e.g. capital and information) and interlinkages between geographical spaces

within geographic studies this thesis takes 'globalization' into account while studying Gambian livelihoods (Rofe, 2009).

There are in fact opposing understandings of the impact of globalization on 'localities' in the developing world (Zoomers and van Westen, 2011). According to the 'global pessimists' the local is merely powerless and overpowered by global forces (Gibson-Graham, 2002). For instance, the fact that the global South – including Africa – is subjected to exploitative mineral industries, large-scale land grabbing by foreign companies and systems of corruption resulting in extreme poverty (Smith and Schapendonk, 2018; Weng et al., 2013).

A more optimistic response comes from Massey (2004) as she expresses that it is too narrow minded to threat the local as merely passive victims of globalization in which they have no agency at all; and in which they would lose their local culture, local trade flows, and livelihoods due to the global (Wilson, 2012). In addition, she expresses that localities are 'agents in globalization'; they interact with the global, and they are capable to actively and creatively overcome structural constraints and even act power and influence upon the global (Massey, 2004, p. 11; Wilson, 2012). Thereby acknowledging that it is true that globalization entails a paradox in which different people have different accesses and possibilities to connect to global flows and interactions due to hegemonic and dominant policies. In which on the one hand, globalization creates many opportunities and openness for only some people – global elite. Unfortunately on the other hand, the others – the marginalized – indeed have limited accesses and possibilities to connect to global flows and interactions than the global elite. Therefore, the local's relationship to the global is based upon *power geometry* – politics of connectivity (Massey, 2009).

Consequently, I argue that in this thesis the extreme viewpoint which treats Africans as passive victims of globalizations should be abstained from. In order to do so, this thesis 'puts bottom-up processes of West African livelihoods within a broader framework that is sensitive to the position of West Africans in processes of globalization' (Smith and Schapendonk, 2018, p. 1182). Eventually, drawing on ethnographic fieldwork this thesis will show how Gambians – in both urban and rural areas – are 'agents' in this global era, as they interact with the global, and they are capable to actively and creatively overcome structural constraints and even act power and influence upon the global. Thereby, also leaving room to untangle the so-called frictions that impose and impede Gambian livelihoods, as well as the encounters in this globalizing world that may have extensive effects regarding the creation of new directions in their lives (Tsing, 2005).

*1.1 Research objective and research questions*

As this thesis starts from the notion that West African livelihoods 'cannot be addressed in isolation from other flows that mark the impact of globalization on the world, at various scales' (Smith and Schapendonk, 2018, p. 1182). Gambians are nowadays engaged in an extensive range of off-farm income generating activities, avail oneself of resources and opportunities at various and frequently different localities in order to mitigate poverty (Aboderin and Hoffman, 2015; Benz, 2014; Ceesay, 2016; Gaibazzi, 2013). Therefore, the research objective of this thesis is to gain in-depth insights into how Gambians have broadened the basis of their livelihoods by diversifying their income generating sources and activities – as a strategy – along sectoral and spatial lines in order to navigate their lives in the globalizing world (Benz, 2014). In doing so, this thesis tries to untangle how the various income generating activities link up with processes of globalization.

As a point of departure to be sensitive to the various income generating activities of Gambians in order to make a living. This thesis makes a distinction between: farming, tourist industry, migration and hustling – for now understood as informal income generating activities such as petty trading. Note that Gambians shift between the various income generating activities throughout the year, but also practice various income generating activities often simultaneously (Gaibazzi, 2013).

For that matter, one main question and three sub-questions are pivotal in this thesis:

*Main question*

How do Gambians actively and creatively – in both urban and rural areas – navigate their lives and create opportunities in the globalized world?

*Sub-questions*

1. How are Gambian livelihoods connected through the globalizing world?

   *Getting information about how Gambian livelihoods are connected through the globalizing world is the main purpose of this question. In doing so, the translocal 'connectivities' and the so-called 'frictions' come to the fore.*

2. How do Gambians create opportunities for themselves in terms of money, goods, social and human capital?

   *This sub-question provides essential information on how Gambian households cope with their challenge to make a living in the globalizing world. It then aims to show by taking into account the positionality of Gambians, how Gambians are 'agents' in*

*globalization. Consequently, it provides significant insights into how Gambians are capable to actively and creatively navigate their lives and even act power and influence upon the global.*

3. How are Gambian aspirations formed and negotiated?

*It is necessary to understand how Gambian aspirations are formed and negotiated. This because the diverse and often intersecting income generating activities someone chooses depend significant on someone's aspirations in life. In other words, someone's aspirations influence how she/he actively and creatively navigate her/his life and creates opportunities in the globalized world.*

*1.2 Scientific relevance*

This thesis is conducted from a geographic perspective. For a long time within geographic studies, livelihoods have been studied from a local perspective. Nowadays, trends in globalization ensure that livelihood studies incorporate global-local interactions while studying 'local' livelihoods (De Haan and Zoomers, 2003; De Haan, 2012).

Although various studies have been carried out where different West African livelihoods – in particular Gambian livelihoods – link up with processes of globalization. For instance, Ceesay (2016) who did ethnographic research amongst two types of hustlers in the Gambia and Gaibazzi (2013) who did ethnographic research on agricultural livelihoods and migration in the Gambia. As both studies put mainly mobility – one aspect of globalization – central. This research aims to transcend that by focusing also on other processes of globalization like migration, tourism and the global food market.

In order to do so, by adopting the positionality approach of Sheppard (2002) this thesis untangles how West African livelihoods link up with processes of globalization (Smith and Schapendonk, 2018). In short, the power of the positionality approach is that it shifts the focus from a shrinking, networked world towards a world in which the 'position in relational space/time within the global economy is conceptualized as both shaping and shaped by the trajectories of globalization and as influencing the conditions of possibility of places in a globalizing world' (Sheppard, 2002, p. 307). In doing so, the multilocality and the translocal connections of Gambian livelihoods become clear. Thereby, leaving room to untangle the so-called frictions.

In other words, by combing within this thesis the four pre-defined income generating activities a more holistic picture of Gambian livelihoods – both in the urban and rural areas of the Gambia – will be sketched. Therefore, this thesis contributes significant knowledge to the

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geographical knowledge of the diverse and often intersecting income generating activities in West Africa in order to make a living in the context of globalization.

*1.3 Social relevance*
Ever since the European expansion overseas Europe is highly involved in the narrative formation of the African continent

> *as a place of beautiful landscapes, beautiful animals and incomprehensible people. Fighting senseless* [brutal civil] *wars, dying of poverty and scary diseases, unable to speak for themselves, and waiting to be saved by a kind white foreigner.*

(Adichie, 2009)

Nowadays this single – colonial – narrative is still kept alive in order to benefit the legitimization of the European Union and its actions. For instance, the obsession of the European Union to keep Africans in *their place* (Lucht, 2012). This is one of the many frictions that can be observed in this globalizing world in which Africans are still exposed to systematic, institutionalized and legalized forms of discrimination by a party that strives to achieve freedom and equality (Andersson, 2014).

Also, in the Gambia the aforementioned friction can be observed. As many people from the global North can travel easily – by plane – to the Gambia and once there, they are able to enjoy the luxury in a resort for relatively little money or even settle down there. In comparison to Gambians who cannot travel to Europe that easily. In fact, without sufficient financial means and/or good social connections in order to obtain a visa, Gambians are forced – due to European border regulations – to go on a dangerous illicit route to reach Europe (Andersson, 2014).

Moreover, the border regulations are an attempt of the European Union to keep the unwanted out (Andersson, 2014). Although on the basis of the Africans who have managed to enter Europe, it is proved that the European border is still porous. In fact, the border regime of the European Union touches upon the uneven distribution of mobility in this globalizing world; mobility is paradoxically both a *privilege* and a *stigma* at the same time (Andersson, 2014).

Thus, in order to move beyond the hegemonic narrative of Africa as a *homogenous, hopeless* and *disconnected* continent (Adichie, 2009; Smith and Schapendonk, 2018). That would be full of 'poor and needy' people seeking fortune in Europe. This euro-centric notion

of Africa is further enhanced by media images of African youths taking the backway (Ceesay, 2016). This notion ignores the endeavors and experiences of Africans who have broadened the basis of their livelihoods by diversifying their income generating sources and activities – as a strategy – along sectoral and spatial lines within the African continent and within the national borders of African countries. Therefore, migration is not merely the movement of people from 'the global South' to 'the global North'. Hence, by taking into account the positionality of Gambians. This study is devoted to construct, spread and share a West African counter-narrative by taking part in the daily income generating activities of Gambians, and actually listen to *their* voices.

*1.4 Short historical overview of the Gambia*

The Gambia is geographically located in West Africa and is almost completely enclosed by Senegal, except for a 60 kilometers Atlantic Ocean front (see figure 1). The Gambian river – that already rises in the Fouta Djallon plateau in the north of Guinea – flows 450 kilometers through the country (Coomes, 2013; The World Bank, n.d.). With a surface of 10,689 square kilometers and a population of 2.1 million – of which 57 percent of the population is concentrated around urban and peri-urban centers – it is one of the most densely populated countries in Africa with 176 people per square kilometer (The World Bank, n.d.).
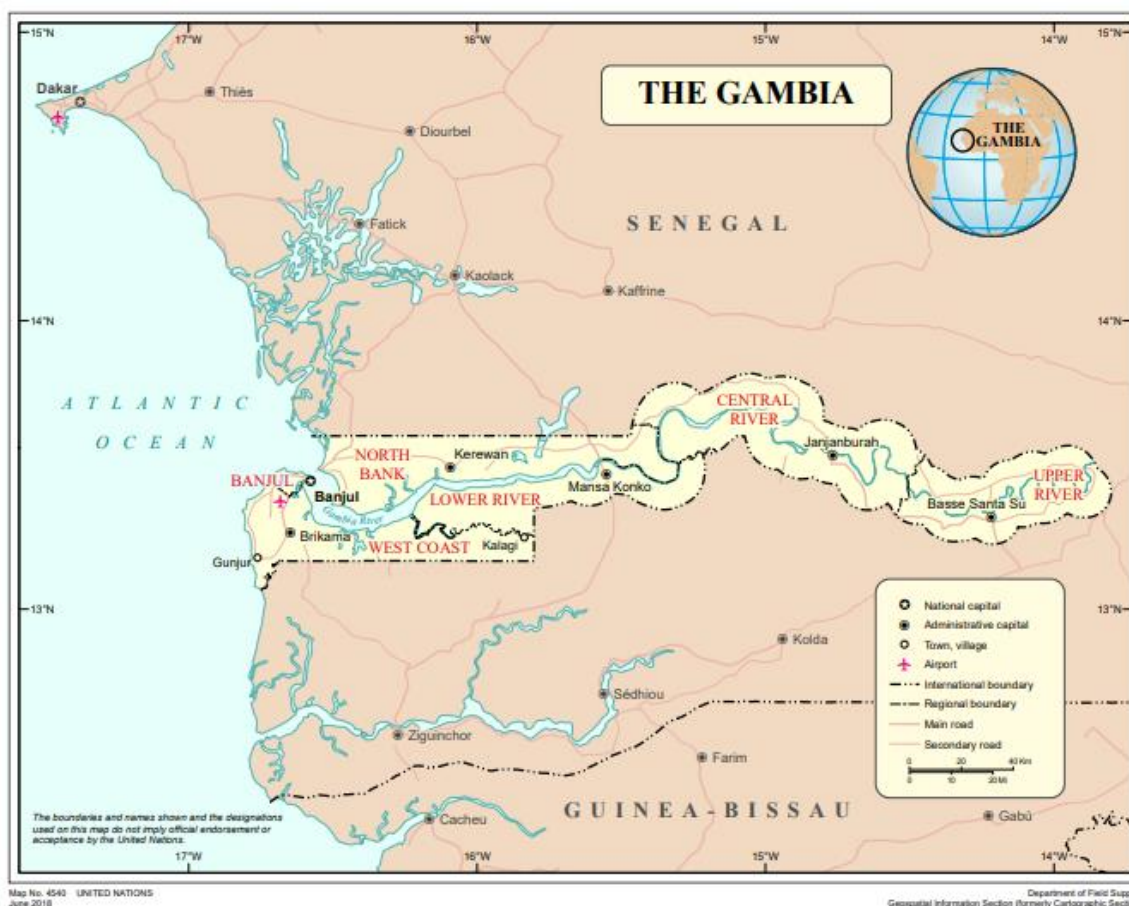
Figure 1[1]: Map of the Gambia.

The Gambia – a former British colony and protectorate and in that time due to its geographic location a very important point of departure for enslaved Africans – gained independence from the United Kingdom in February 1965 (Hughes and Perfect, 2006; Kebbeh, 2013). After being a constitutional monarchy for a short period, the Gambia became a republic in April 1970 under the authority of president Alhaji Sir Dawda Kairaba Jawara (Hughes and Perfect, 2006). Jawara's *sembocracy – sembo* meaning power or force in Mandinka is used to describe the 'covert authoritarian' practices of Jawara's government under the guise of democracy – was overthrown in 1994 by Yahya Abdul-Aziz Jemus Junkung Jammeh who had led the country for twenty-two years up until December 2016 (Saine, 2009; The World Bank, n.d.). In fact, under Jammeh's regime the abuse of human rights caused the continuous fear of being arrested, tortured or sudden disappearance among many Gambians (Davidheiser and Hultin, 2012; Wright, 2018).

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[1] Source: https://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/gambia.pdf

In December 2016 after a campaign of radical protest, direct action and revolutionary music the Gambian people rose up and thereby bringing a new democratic elected president to power called Adama Barrow (BCC, 2019; The World Bank, n.d.; Wright, 2018). After a turbulent time of six weeks when the Senegalese army entered the Gambia, Jammeh finally acknowledged his loss and fled to Equatorial Guinea (Maclean, 2018; Wright, 2018).

The new government has the difficult challenge to restore the Gambian economy, because under Jammeh's authority the Gambia became bankrupt as he was only concerned about his own prosperity and the enrichment of it (Boogaerdt, 2018). Also, the new government faced another hard task: how to deal with the horrifying crimes that have taken place in the Gambia? In order to provide reconciliation in the Gambia, the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission (T.R.R.C) was established in October 2018 to untangle the human rights violations committed during the military regime of Jammeh (Justiceinfo, n.d.).

Although Barrow promised to be in charge for only three years, he recently changed his mind and expanded his own term to five years. As a result, there are concerns that Barrow may also try and cling to power. Not only this, the current 'democracy' got rid of *some* of Jammeh's companions. Therefore, Gambians still fear that the presence of some attendees has led to a continued culture of especially police repression. Already on the eighteenth of June 2018, turmoil unfolded when police clashed with locals who were protesting against a construction of a mine in Faraba Banta (BCC, 2019).

*1.5 Thesis structure*

In the upcoming chapter the theoretical framework of this research will be discussed. In fact, the theoretical lens from which this thesis addresses Gambian livelihoods will become clear. Chapter three then introduces the research method of *ethnography*; which is being used for this research. In doing so, the most important field sites in the Gambia, the way how data has been recorded and how data analysis has been accomplished for this research will become clear. Chapter four – Glocal livelihoods in rural Gambia – focuses through the story of Dembe and his extended family on how Gambians in the rural areas of the Gambia navigate their lives in the globalizing world. Subsequently, chapter five – Glocal livelihoods in urban Gambia – focuses through two different stories, how Gambians in the rural areas of the Gambia navigate their lives in the globalizing world. Consequently, in the last chapter, the most significant outcomes will be given along with recommendations for further research.

**Chapter 2: Theorizing West African positionalities in a globalizing world**

This chapter aims to provide a theoretical framework of how this thesis addresses Gambian livelihoods within the globalizing world. The first paragraph touches upon how livelihood studies evolved itself into a study that nowadays incorporates *global-local interactions*. Thereby, acknowledging that 'a livelihood is multidimensional' and the diverse and often intersecting income generating activities employed by Gambians can be seen as way to achieve among other things desired aspirations (both materialistic and non-materialistic). The second paragraph focuses on how this thesis integrates global-local interactions while studying Gambian livelihoods. In order to do so, the concepts of positionality, translocal development and friction are being used because they contribute to the unpacking of global connectivities regarding Gambian livelihoods.

In order to gain a more holistic picture of Gambian livelihoods the third paragraph discusses the so-called informal economy. This because more than often the diverse income generating activities Gambians adopt occur within the informal economy. Also, this paragraph explains a particular strategy called hustling that Gambians employ as an income generating activity which in fact takes place within the informal economy. Then, the fourth paragraph focuses on aspirations and the formation of aspirations. Because, this contributes significant to the understanding of why someone employs certain income generating activities.

*2.1 A livelihood perspective*

Since the 1990s development geographers have incorporated the livelihood perspective in order to untangle how the 'poor' and 'vulnerable' themselves attempt to make their living in the context of stress and risk (Bohle, 2001 in Sakdapolrak, 2014, 19; De Haan and Zoomers, 2003). This was highly encouraged by the necessity to develop more effective impoverishment alleviation policies (De Haan, 2012; Lohnert and Steinbrink, 2005).

Before the 1990s, there was a tendency 'to portray poor people as *passive victims* of structural constraints and focused [solely] on the material and economic aspects of life from the perspective of specific, locally bound man-land interactions' (De Haan and Zoomers, 2003, p. 350). This perspective changed by adopting an *actor-oriented approach* – which is an expression of the Zeitgeist and substituted the previous structural perspectives of dependencia and neo-Marxism approaches of the 1970s and 1980s (De Haan and Zoomers, 2003; Lohnert and Steinbrink, 2005). In fact, 'a micro-orientation became predominant, accompanied by a clear focus on *local actors*, often households' and 'it was increasingly acknowledged that the poor people were able to adapt or respond to changing circumstances' (De Haan and Zoomers,

2005, pp. 28-29). More specifically, in that time the majority of the studies focused on survival strategies of households. These studies 'were more sociologically than economically inspired and were mainly interested in the micro-social behaviour of poor people in coping with and surviving different types of crises, such as falls in prices, droughts and famines' (De Haan and Zoomers, 2005, p. 29).

Nevertheless, according to Guyer and Peters (1987) the more sociologically inspired livelihood studies still neglect the role of ideology (Guyer and Peter, 1987 in De Haan and Zoomers, 2005). In fact, the ideology of a livelihood was already in 1984 reported by Wallmann:

> 'Livelihood is never just a matter of finding or making shelter, transacting money, getting food to put on the family table or to exchange on the market place. It is equally a matter of ownership and circulation of information, the management of skills and relationships and the affirmation of personal significance... and group identity'

> (Wallmann, 1984 in De Haan and Zoomers, 2005, p. 32).

In addition to this role of ideology, De Haan and Zoomers (2005) utter that there is a need for a *holistic understanding* of livelihoods. This statement is building on the already existing definition provided by Chambers and Conway (1992) as they defined the livelihood as a system 'that refers to the means of gaining a living, including livelihood capabilities, tangible assets, such as stores and resources, and intangible assets, such as claims and access' (Chambers and Conway, 1992, pp. 9-12 in De Haan and Zoomers, 2005, p. 27). Meaning that the 'livelihood is multidimensional, it includes more than economic aspects, such as social, ecological, cultural and social aspects' (De Haan and Zoomers, 2003, p. 350). Therefore, the livelihood is a highly complex and all-encompassing concept that transcends conventional assets (De Haan and Zoomers, 2003; De Haan and Zoomers, 2005).

Another definition of the livelihood system is provided by Hoon et al. (1997):

> 'A dynamic realm that integrates both the opportunities and assets available to a group of people for achieving their goals and aspirations, as well as interactions with and exposure to a range of beneficial or harmful ecological,

social, economic and political perturbations that may help or hinder a group's capacities to make a living.'

(Hoon et al. 1997, p. 5 in De Haan and Zoomers, 2003, p. 352)

Thus, Hoon et al. incorporate in their definition of the livelihood system the holistic understanding of livelihoods as well as the role of ideology. Therefore, often in contemporary livelihood studies, likewise in this thesis, their definition of the livelihood system is being used.

So, from studying merely the household's material and economic activities, the livelihood approach has now evolved itself into a theoretic framework that encompasses all the multidimensional aspects of a livelihood. In addition, also 'the perspective of specific, locally bound man-land interactions' has changed within present-day livelihood studies as trends in globalization ensured that livelihood studies nowadays acknowledge that there is a need to incorporate global-local interactions (De Haan, 2012; De Haan and Zoomers, 2003). This because, localities do not function as an isolated entity in this world. They are in *connection* – 'within the same planetary space and time' – with other places in this globalizing world (D'Amico-Samuels, 1991, pp. 68-98). Therefore, livelihoods are based on 'a range of assets, income opportunities, and product and labour markets which are located in different places and interact in turn with other places' (De Haan and Zoomers, 2003, p. 350).

*2.2 The positionality approach, translocal development lens and friction*
In order to integrate global-local interactions it is necessary to conceptualize how places are connected across space in a globalizing world. On that account, this thesis uses the concepts of positionality (Sheppard, 2002), translocality (Zoomers and van Westen, 2011) and friction (Tsing, 2005).

Place, scale and networks have been deployed as geographic tropes for discussing how places are connected across space (Sheppard, 2002). Sheppard suggests that 'our understanding of the spatiality of globalization will be impoverished if positionality is neglected' (Sheppard, 2002, p. 319). Therefore, Sheppard introduces a fourth trope – positionality within the global economy. The power of positionality is that it shifts the focus from a shrinking, networked world towards a world in which the 'position in relational space/time within the global economy is conceptualized as both shaping and shaped by the trajectories of globalization and as influencing the conditions of possibility of places in a globalizing world' (Sheppard, 2002, p. 307).

In other words, positionality emphasizes that the conditions of 'possibility' in a place, do not depend primarily on 'local' initiative or on embedded relationships splayed across scales but just as much on direct interactions with distant places (Sheppard, 2002, p. 319). In addition, it underlines the unequal power relations that stem from such asymmetries (Sheppard, 2002, p. 319). Thereby stressing how powerful global systems, such as the European Union, still create conditions for resistance and struggle (Simone and Pieterse, 2018 in Smith and Schapendonk, 2018, p. 1183; Sheppard, 2002).

In order to gain a deeper understanding of such positionality, one example is provided in which West African's by linking up – direct or indirectly – with processes of globalization can become one of the pathways towards social-economic progress (Smith and Schapendonk, 2018). As on the one hand the European Union has adopted a strict [and above all an absurd] border-regime, who in fact constructed the 'illegal' migrant herself. On the other hand, 'illegal' migrants keep coming, and their routes and methods take increasingly innovative and surreal forms (Andersson, 2014). Ceesay (2016) shows how two types of Gambian hustlers (see next paragraph for a detailed explanation of the concept 'hustlers') undermine the European border regime by establishing a *connection* with people from the global North with the purpose to migrate out of the Gambia. So, in other words, the strategy that hustlers employ can be understood as 'globalization from below in which 'small' players make use of the opportunities offered by globalization' (Mohan and Zack-Williams, 2002, p. 21). As a result, a whole range of global connectivities become visible.

To be more sensitive to these so-called global connectivities the translocal development approach has been applied. This approach is introduced by Zoomers and van Westen (2011) and building on the already existing relational geography and Sennian development approach. The translocal development approach starts from the notion that 'localities hardly ever stand by themselves' (Zoomers and van Westen, 2011, p. 379). This in order to gain a better understanding of 'local development' in a globalizing world (Zoomers and van Westen, 2011, p. 277). The approach takes spatial interconnectedness and translocal links into account by placing the 'local' within a pluralistic web of interdependent localities – the interplay between local and extra-local influences (Zoomers and van Westen, 2011, p. 379).

In fact, numerous processes contribute to the production of translocalities. For instance, relations that span the so-called urban-rural divide, endeavors of diaspora organizations and migrants to contribute to the development of their home areas. In addition also, foreign tourists spending money 'locally', people and/or businesses spending money for the purchase of land and/or starting a business. Thus, through (foreign) exchange, mobility, and information flows,

places are interconnected in different ways and this influences their meaning and the possibility for humans and for development (Zoomers and van Westen, 2011, p. 380). Therefore, the translocal approach is contributing to the unpacking of the geographical complexities of the diverse and often intersecting income generating activities in the Gambia (Benz, 2014).

Not yet appointed, the translocal development approach not only highlights 'specific synergies that facilitate local development' (Smith and Schapendonk, 2018). It also emphasizes on the so-called frictions (Tsing, 2005). As Tsing (2005) describes in her 'Ethnography of Global Connection' that friction is 'a methaphorical image, friction reminds us that heterogeneous and unequal encounters can lead to new arrangements of culture and power' (Tsing, 2005, p. 5).

In other words, on the one hand friction keep 'global power in motion' (Tsing, 2005, p. 6). On the other hand, 'friction refuses the lie that global power operates as a well-oiled machine' (Tsing, 2005, p. 5). Therefore, friction – as a concept – in this thesis addresses the factors and/or processes that impede and oppose Gambian livelihoods. As well as drawing attention to encounters in this globalizing world that may have extensive effects regarding the creation of new directions – opportunities – in their lives.

## 2.3 The informal economy and hustling in the Gambia

After the term *informal economy* became more common in the 1970s, Keith Hart (1973) was the first who investigated in-depth the informal economy in the Ghanaian capital Accra. To be more specific, Hart untangled a typology of informal urban income opportunities in Accra. Following Hart, other researchers investigated in the first instance the informal activities that took place in the urban areas of the global South (Thieme, 2018). These studies showed that the lack of a well-functioning formal economy (e.g. the inability of the government to provide enough wage employment) in the absence of an institutional social welfare system results in the engagement of many urban citizens – who often do not have access to sufficient education – in informal economic activities (Ceesay, 2016; Hart, 1973; Thieme, 2018). In particular, Sandbrook and Barker's (1985) research in Ghana showed how young Ghanaians in the 1980s cope with the economic crisis. As a response to the economic crisis, many Ghanaian youth adopted in fact several 'survival strategies' by engaging in informal activities. In line with Sandbrook and Barker's thesis, Ceesay (2016) states that 'Gambian youths adapt and invent ways to cope with the economic hardships caused by, among other things, a malfunctioning government and neo-liberal market policies that threaten their everyday livelihoods' (Ceesay, 2016, p. 23).

Despite the fact that the informal economy has already been mentioned a few times, it is nevertheless important to define this concept. According to Sassen (1993) the informal economy entails

'[…] those income-generating activities occurring outside the state's regulatory framework that have analogs within that framework.'

(Sassen, 1993, p. 2289)

This is also the way how this research interprets the informal economy. In addition to this interpretation, informality is quickly associated with illegality such as drugs dealing and trading in stolen goods. To emphasize, within this research this is not the norm. The norm and focus within this research regarding informal activities is on legal informal activities performed by Gambians 'who self-identify with hustling as a way to navigate [both urban and rural] precarious environments beyond the governed formal economy and advance their own interest against odds' (Vigh, 2006 in Thieme, 2018, p. 1).

Even though it seems to appear that when an economy functions 'properly' and therefore is able to provide sufficient wage employment the informal economy is pretty much non-existence. This is not the case, because the formal economy and informal economy are always coexistence and in a reciprocal relation (Dovey, 2012). How this reciprocal relation is assembled is beyond the scope of this research. Nevertheless, it is necessary to be aware of this relationship.

Although the term hustling has already crossed this thesis several times, it still needs clarification. In West Africa, the term hustling describes the image of a hard-working man who tries to obtain something (either wage or profit) from his work in a determined and smart way (Ceesay, 2016; Gaibazzi, 2013). Therefore, 'by becoming good farmers, young men also become productive hustlers, as migrants and other off-farm workers are called in the Gambia' (Gaibazzi, 2013, p. 260).

One crucial strategy that Gambian hustlers employ in order to earn something is petty trading such as the buying and selling of imported secondhand goods (e.g. clothes, mobile phones, and shoes) (Ceesay, 2016). Another strategy employed by Gambian hustlers is the use of multiple (romantic) relationships (and sometimes simultaneously) in order to obtain financial and material resources of their – financially more superior – partner, which is locally known as *mbaran* (Ceesay, 2016). Most of the hustlers who are engaging in mbaran – both males (usually

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defined as *beach boys* or *bumsters*) and females – can be found in Senegambia and Kololi area – Gambia's main touristic spaces. In fact they stroll around, thereby eager to *connect* with tourists from the global North in order to establish a long-term friendship and/or (romantic) relationship with one or more tourists (Ceesay, 2016; Smith and Schapendonk, 2018). This not only with the hope to obtain financial and material resources but also with the aspiration to migrate one day to the global North (Smith and Schapendonk, 2018). Moreover, not only through a defined geographical space also through virtual space – locally known as – *chanters* try to establish relationships in order to obtain financial and material resources from their distant love. Although the latter group is beyond the scope of this research, it is worth to be informed about this particular hustling strategy (Ceesay, 2016; Smith and Schapendonk, 2018).

*2.4 Aspirations and the formation of aspirations*
The diverse and often intersecting income generating activities can be seen as a *strategy* to achieve desired aspirations (both materialistic and non-materialistic). In other words, the strategy someone chooses depends significant on someone's aspirations in life (Ceesay, 2016). Therefore, this paragraph focuses on aspirations and the formation of it.

As Appadurai (2004, p. 67) defines aspirations as a part of wider

'ethical and metaphysical ideas derived from cultural norms, that are either complementary or may substitute each other, and are never simply individual as they are formed in interaction and in the thick of social life.'

Thus, aspirations are not entirely formed by an individual *an sich*. They are shaped and developed in relation to different contexts, environments and circumstances (Ceesay, 2016). According to Ceesay (2016) aspiration formation in the Gambia is strongly influenced by cultural norms, close and knitted extended kinship system, and the community.

The close relationship people have with their relatives serves for a support system that mitigate poverty in the absence of institutional social welfare system in the Gambia (Aboderin and Hoffman, 2015; Ceesay, 2016). In other words, the Gambian extended family system ensures that in times of economic difficulties the family hustle small amounts of money together in order to survive (Beute, 2010). In fact, the extended family system in the Gambia involves high socio-cultural obligation for relatives to provide sufficient financial and material assistance to (less fortunate) family members and the expectation to provide sufficient financial and material assistance will increase for family members who find themselves abroad (Ceesay,

2016). This socio-cultural obligation more than often transcends the extended family, due to generational relations and reciprocal social exchange (Ceesay, 2016).

The fact that West Africans are *partial excluded* from the circulations of material and symbolic goods through hegemonic neo-liberal regulations – coined and maintain by the global North – ensures that the acquirement of a 'powerful' mobile phone and/or other luxury consumer goods can be seen as 'a kind of magical reversal of one's exclusion from the circulation of material and symbolic goods or, perhaps, as one of the avenues to re-enchantment that thrives in circumstances in which real participation is denied' (Jackson, 2005, xxv in Lucht, 2012, p. 88).

Therefore, owning a mobile phone and/or other luxury consumer goods from the West represents the fantasy of becoming connected. In fact, the ownership of a mobile phone and other luxury consumer goods from the West call into question not only someone's financial situation, it also defines someone's very existence in this world (Lucht, 2012). This because, currently vital to someone's existence are 'wealth, worth, work, status, strength, renown, knowledge, recognition' (Jackson, 2006, p. 161 in Lucht, 2012, p. 93). Therefore, the ability to take matters in one's own hands and direct it to one's own aspirations is essential to someone's existence (Lucht, 2012). If these aspirations are accomplished, a sense of justification for existing is generated (Bourdieu, 2000 in Lucht, 2012).

Note that the accomplishment of someone's aspirations goes beyond merely symbolic goods. Therefore, also non-material assets such as the achievement of a certain education level, and the achievement and the maintenance of social relations – thereby take into account the social and moral obligations – arouses a sense of being important (for others). Therefore, again a sense of justification for existing is generated (Bourdieu, 2000 in Lucht, 2012).

*2.5 Conclusion*

The way how Gambians actively and creatively navigate their lives and create opportunities in the globalized world in order to make a living is in this thesis mainly based upon the various income generating activities employed by Gambians. Therefore, the theoretical lens from which this thesis addresses the various income generating activities is the livelihood approach. The livelihood approach evolved itself throughout the years from studying merely the household's material and economic activities into a theoretic framework that encompasses all the multidimensional aspects of a livelihood. Therefore, in order to study contemporary livelihoods not only the material and financial assets must be payed attention to. Also, non-material assets – that may help or hinder a group's capacities to make a living – and the opportunities and assets available for people to achieve their goals and aspirations in life should be taken into consideration. As the aspirations someone has in her/his life influences the choices regarding the employed income generating activities. Therefore, this thesis pays special attention to the understanding of the participant's aspirations in life.

In addition, as it became clear that it is necessary to incorporate global-local interactions while studying contemporary livelihoods, this thesis takes as a starting point Sheppard's notion of positionality. Through Sheppard's notion of positionality, the bottom-up processes of Gambian livelihoods are conceptualized within a broader framework that is sensitive to the position of West Africans in processes of globalization. By doing this, connectivities that transcend the 'local' come to the fore. In particular, linking up to processes of globalization is used by Gambians as one of the pathways towards social-economic progress. However, the connectivities contains not only encounters that have extensive effects regarding the creation of new direction's in their lives but also, all the connections that oppose and impede Gambian livelihoods.

Thus, it should be noticed that in order to portray a holistic picture of Gambian livelihoods this thesis emphasizes on the multidimensional aspects of a livelihood as well as the global-local interactions.

**Chapter 3: The beauty of strategically multi-sited ethnography in a global era**

Ethnographic fieldwork has been carried out in both urban and rural areas of the Gambia between the first of April 2019 until the eleventh of June 2019. In the field I was the entire time accompanied by a fellow master student – Luka Meijer. Although we went to the Gambia for two different studies, we nonetheless have collaborated a lot. While reading this chapter the way how we collaborated in the field will become clear.

In order to adopt an *actor-oriented approach* to study how Gambian livelihoods link up with processes of globalization this research has mainly used the predefined method of *ethnography*. Therefore, the first paragraph explains this methodology and focuses on how I have conducted ethnographic fieldwork, how data has been recorded and how data analysis has been accomplished. The second paragraph reveals the research areas where the data collection took place, and how access to those places and people has been gained. Then the third paragraph focuses on the suitable participants for this research. Lastly, the fourth paragraph reflects in-depth on the relationship between the ethnographer and the participants in this research. Thereby with a special focus on how access has been gained in the field and on how rapport has been established.

*3.1 Ethnography*

The beauty of ethnographic research entails the establishment of *rapport* – relationship – with one's own research participant(s) in order to gain deeper understanding of her/his own social-spatial reality. This in order to understand what drives, and influences one's thoughts, actions, ways of being and feelings in life (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2010). Therefore, ethnographic research contributes to the unraveling of the aspirations of the participants. This is essential in order to foreground why participants employ certain income generating activities.

Traditionally ethnographic research, which is actually *single-site ethnography*, emerged in the nineteenth century – during the colonial era – in order to understand humans in different settings and periods (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2010). Therefore, the researcher went to a 'faraway local community' in order to gain a holistic understanding of the daily lives of this 'indigenous community' (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2010; Gielis, 2011). This native community was inherently treated as completely cut off from the world.

As a reaction to the fact that the faraway local community was treated as completely cut off from the world D'Amico-Samuels (1991) suggested that ethnography 'must treat the subjects of its research within the same planetary space and time and with reference to the same world political, economic and cultural hierarchy' (p. 68-69). Therefore, I would prefer to call

my research method rather: '*strategically multi-sited ethnography*' instead of single-site ethnography. Strategically multi-sited ethnography is in fact based on Gielis his 'strategically situated (single-site) ethnography' (Gielis, 2011; Marcus, 1995). Strategically situated (single-site) ethnography is a particular form of single-site research which allows the researcher to stay in one place, while studying a multi-sited setting (Gielis, 2011; Marcus, 1995). To elaborate on it, a single [faraway] place (still) entails (trans)national experiences, which are relationally and emotionally lived through that particular place. Therefore, a [faraway] single place is still 'a relational, and a phenomenological (and hence emotional) place' (Gielis, 2011, p. 262).

Thus, by adopting the strategically multi-sited ethnography this thesis acknowledged the fact that the multiple 'faraway' places – both rural and urban – in the Gambia are existing within the same planetary space and time as all the other so-called 'local communities' in this world and that the multiple 'faraway' places that I have visited for this research entail (trans)national experiences.

### *3.1.1 Conducting ethnographic research*
In order to conduct ethnographic research in the Gambia – previously an unfamiliar field site for me – I mainly have made use of *participatory observation*. Therefore, it is necessary to learn the *explicit* and *tacit* aspects of the life routines and the culture of Gambians (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2010). This has been achieved through taking part in daily activities (e.g. eating with participants, going to the market and taking part in their various income generating activities), rituals (e.g. attending weddings and naming ceremonies), and through 'hanging out' with Gambians (e.g. hanging out at a local shop and hanging out at compounds). Through participatory observation not only the explicit and tacit aspects of the Gambian culture will be better understood, also the *emic perspective* of Gambians (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2010).

Participatory observation combines two different processes – (pure) participation and (pure) observation (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2010). Although former ethnographic fieldworkers had the aspiration to *go native* – meaning that the researcher adopts the identity of her/his research population, also known as *pure/complete participation* (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2010; Spradley, 1980). Currently this way of performing ethnographic research is generally associated with a loss of analytic interest. Therefore, the aspiration was to perform *active participation*. Active participation allows the ethnographer to actually engage in almost everything that other people in the field are doing (e.g. participating in Ramadan) (Spradley, 1980). In fact, this particular type still leaves room for an analytic perspective. Through the constantly critical

reviewing of field notes and transcripts. Thereby, continuously renouncing old perspectives and ideas, and posing new questions (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2010).

Once in the field, active participation was not met. Instead, *moderate participation* has been performed. This type occurs when the ethnographer engages in only a certain of the (everyday) activities of the community (Spradley, 1980). In fact, two and a half months was not sufficient to completely get used to the different climate and culture. Also, I was not able to join conversations when they were performed in one of the local languages – usually it was in Mandinka. Therefore, the deficiency in at least one of the local languages formed a huge obstacle to engage in active participation. The deficiency in at least one of the local languages has also resulted in the missing of a lot of potential valuable data. Nevertheless, I think a more active role would have been possible if I was able to speak one of the local languages fluently.

In particular during participatory observation, *small talk* is of huge value. Driessen and Jansen (2013, p. 250) defined small talk as 'light talk or conversation, and chit-chatting.' The huge value of small talk is that it is essential in order to establish *rapport* between the researcher and the participant. Small talk is also crucial to establish, maintain and expand the network of interlocutors. More importantly, it provides access to information that is difficult to get otherwise and could be more central to their social-spatial reality (Driessen and Jansen, 2013).

Besides participatory observation also a more 'formal' technique – *semi-structured interviewing* – has been used to gain more and in-depth information and understanding about a participant's life and how she/he views certain aspects of life. Before I entered the Gambia, I made several topic lists and interview questions (see appendix 3). However, once in the field, some modifications have been made in order to align the interview questions to each participant individually.

### 3.1.2 Recording data and data analysis
During participant observation nine aspects (space, object, act, activity, event, time, actor, goal and feeling) are important to constant observe and describe in detail (Spradley, 1980). These nine aspects were preserved in a little notebook that I always brought with me during my stay in the Gambia. This notebook was also used to make *jot notes* – short notes to record what happens in the field (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2010). These jot notes were every night (and sometimes the next morning) expanded to detailed and proper *field notes* on my laptop.

While conducting ethnographic research I have noticed that formality had a negative effect on the safe and trusted atmosphere that was created between the participant and me as a researcher. Although I am aware of the huge benefits recording entails. Such as the ability to

careful listen back to what exactly the participant said during the interview. This because, the inability of the researcher to record everything by only making notes throughout the interview. Also, recording provides the ability to reflect on the researcher's own stance, behavior and actions during the interview (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2010). Nonetheless, in the field the decision has been made to not record the interviews in order to preserve the safe and trusted atmosphere.

In order to challenge the inability to record everything by only making notes throughout the interview. Luka and I made during an interview (and in the field) both our own notes, and after the interviews (and after a day in the field) we expanded these notes together to detailed and proper field notes. Thereafter, we analyzed these field notes together in order to give meaning to the answers we have received from our participants. Thereby, continuously renouncing old perspectives and ideas, and posing new questions (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2010). Moreover, this technique also provides the ability to reflect on my own stance, behavior and actions during the interviews and in the field.

Furthermore, another technique is also being used to reflect on my own stance, behavior and actions in the field, namely by keeping a diary (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2010). In fact, this is incredibly important during ethnographic research, because the researcher is her/his own's *research tool*. Which means, that my own stance(s), behavior, actions and the way how I perceive social-spatial reality influences this research in a significant way. Thus, in order to give meaning to this, a diary is kept where all my experiences during the ethnographic research have been recorded. Thereby, also recording personal thoughts, reactions, feelings, frustrations, and the relationships with the participants.

*3.2 Gaining access to the Gambian community and building rapport*
Three different research areas in the Gambia play a role in this research. Two of these areas are located in what can be defined as belonging to the *rural areas* of the Gambia. This in order to explore how Gambian livelihoods in the rural areas link up with processes of globalization. One of these areas are located in what can be defined as belonging to the *urban areas* of the Gambia. This in order to explore how Gambian livelihoods in the urban areas link up with processes of globalization. As the starting point of this research was in Tanjeh[2], first the focus is on how access is gained to the community of Tanjeh and how the establishment of rapport there has been achieved.

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[2] Tanjeh and Tanji is used interchangeably by the Gambian community.

*3.2.1 Gaining access to Tanjeh*

To gain entry to an unfamiliar field site and the establishment of rapport can be a challenging task for researchers (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2010). Kairoh Garden Guesthouse has functioned as our – Luka's and Karlijn's – *gatekeeper*[3] in order to gain access to the Gambian community. The guesthouse has two locations, one located in Tanjeh and the other one is located in Kuntaur (see figure 2).



Figure 2[4]: The geographical locations of Kairoh Garden Tanjeh and Kairoh Garden Kuntaur.

During our stay in the Gambia Luka and I visited both of the guesthouses. The vast majority (with the exception of eleven days) we spent in Kairoh Garden Tanjeh, which is located in the urban-coastal area of the Gambia. Of the twelve days we spent one week in Kairoh Garden Kuntaur – upcountry – and five days in a village[5] – which is located in the North Bank (see figure 3). As a matter of fact, both Kuntaur and the Village belong to the rural areas of the Gambia.



Figure 3[6]: Red outlined area is defined as the 'North Bank'.

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[3] Gatekeepers are often (local) leaders and/or organizations who represent the group/community in which the research take place and/or who have access to the setting in which the research take place (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2010).

[4] Source: https://www.google.nl/maps/search/kairoh+garden+kuntaur/@13.5752571,-16.1228705,8z/data=!4m5!2m4!5m3!5m2!4m1!1i2

[5] From now on this specific village will be defined as 'the Village'.

[6] Source: https://www.google.nl/maps/place/North+Bank,+Gambia/@13.6157422,-16.1223191,8.5z/data=!4m5!3m4!1s0xee846c4430af699:0x50cf914db005b2e9!8m2!3d13.5285436!4d-16.0169971

Both guesthouses are founded by a couple – Kawsu Sillah, a Gambian man, and Barbara Somers[7], a Dutch woman. The couple in collaboration with *extended family members* of Kawsu and some staff run and live in both of the guesthouses. The couple uses the income from both guesthouses for their own foundation – the Kairoh Garden Foundation. The Kairoh Garden Foundation aims to help children to go to school by sponsoring the children financially (e.g. by paying their school fees, school supplies, and school uniforms) and to improve and support development in the Gambia (e.g. building a library for the Islamic school of Tanjeh). To realize this the couple co-operates a lot with the Gambian community. Moreover, the Foundation is almost active in the entire Gambia – the Foundation divided the Gambia into three different areas, namely: West (Banjul-Serekunda-Brikama), Central (Kuntaur) and East (Basse) (Somers, n.d.). Therefore, they have a broad social network in the Gambia, and they allowed us to use their social network in order to conduct our research.

So, after a good night of sleep, Luka and I had an appointment with Barbara around 9.30 am in order to discuss our research with her. We already knew via e-mail that Barbara was willing to help us to allocate the right people for both of our research. After we discussed both of our research with her, she suggested that her 'nephew' – Ebrima – would give us a tour of Tanjeh, which included visiting the English school (Tanji Lower Basic School), the Islamic school, and the Hospital[8].

During the tour Luka and I were able to meet a lot of people from Tanjeh (e.g. teachers who work and/or live in Tanjeh) and we did exchange our phone numbers with some of them. So, on April third one of the teachers of the English school – Sainey – invited us through a text message to the *naming ceremony* of one of his colleague's newborn son. In fact, the wife of his colleague – Malik – gave birth to their first son the week before we entered the Gambia[9].

The fact that we were already invited on our second day in the Gambia to a traditional naming ceremony, made us both feeling delightful[10]. Sainey provided for us access to the other teachers from the English school during the naming ceremony as he proudly introduced *'his strangers from the Netherlands'*[11]. Soon we would learn that all traditional festivities in the Gambia involves a certain gender separation (e.g. men and women are located in separate spaces during festivities). Naturally at the naming ceremony the gender separation became

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[7] With the exception of the owners of Kairoh Garden, the other names that will be mentioned in this thesis are pseudonyms. This in order to safeguard the anonymity of the participants.
[8] Reflections from my diary of the second day in the Gambia (02-04-2019).
[9] Reflections from my diary of the second day in the Gambia (02-04-2019).
[10] Reflections from my diary of the second day in the Gambia (02-04-2019).
[11] Reflections from my diary of the *naming ceremony* (07-04-2019).

immediately clear; the women occupied the left part of the space in front of Malik's compound and the men the right part[12].



Figure 4[13]: Eating *chakery* – pudding made from couscous – during the naming ceremony at the 'male occupied space'.

The result of the fact that we were taken to the naming ceremony by a male made sure that we *sat* during the entire ceremony with men – mostly colleagues of Sainey and Malik – who attended the naming ceremony[14].

In the beginning of the naming ceremony I felt very uncomfortable. This because, first I am not used to a separation between men and women at a social gathering. Second, because – obviously – we were the only two women in a male occupied space. Although I felt uncomfortable at first, the fact that Sainey took good care of us by offering us *benachin* – jollof rice –, *chakery*, *baobab juice, wonjo juice* and *attaya* – Chinese green tea served with lots of

[12] Reflections from my diary of the *naming ceremony* (07-04-2019).
[13] Photo taken by van Driel, K. (2019) at the naming ceremony (07-04-2019).
[14] Reflections from my diary of the *naming ceremony* (07-04-2019).

sugar – made me and Luka feel very 'welcome'. In addition to Sainey's hospitality, the fact that I was together with Luka – another woman in a male occupied space – and the fact that I was wearing covering clothes – a long blue skirt and a white blouse with long sleeves made me feel less uncomfortable. Because, I soon felt less uncomfortable ensured that I was able – and Luka also – to have conversations – *small talk* – with the men who were present at the naming ceremony[15].

In short, this section described how Luka and I gained access to the Gambian community through the social network of the guesthouses and how we therefore could establish our own social network in the Gambia. Although we made grateful use of the social network of the guesthouse, it did not provide us access to the Village. We therefore made use of Cheikh – a Gambian migrant – and Aissatou – Cheikh's wife –, who now live in the Netherlands with their two children.

### 3.2.2 Gaining access to the Village

Although the official language in the Gambia is English, not everyone is able to speak English. Instead everyone speaks at least two or more 'local' languages (e.g. Mandinka, Wolof, Jola, and Fula). Although I did not plan to interview people who are not able to speak English, it is nevertheless nice to know some 'local greetings'. Therefore, dr. Joris Schapendonk suggested that Luka and I would learn a little bit of Wolof before we would enter the Gambia. Wolof was chosen to learn, because Cheikh and Aissatou are descendants of the Wolof tribe, and therefore Aissatou could teach us Wolof very well[16].

As a result of the short Wolof language course of four lessons I was able to say hello – salaam aleikum, to introduce myself in Wolof – mangi tu da Karlijn, and to ask how someone is doing – nanga deff? Further, my little notebook that I brought with me during the Wolof language course was filled with other Wolof sentences such as: naka ngon si? – how is the evening? Once in the field, I brought the notebook with me in order to write down more Wolof translations (and other translations of local languages such as Mandinka, Jola and Fula).

In the field I had noticed that it was a huge benefit that Luka and I could speak some words of Wolof in order to establish contact with Gambians. For instance, when I said *'Djerre jeff'* to Sainey he responded happily and surprised. His voice went up and he shouted with a big smile on his face: *'Whoah you speak Wolof!'* Then my response was always something like:

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[15] Reflections from my diary of the *naming ceremony* (07-04-2019).
[16] Reflections from an informal-conversation with dr. Joris Schapendonk and Luka Meijer in October 2019 at Radboud University.

*'Not much ... just a little bit'*[17]. Although I only could speak some words and some sentences of Wolof, nevertheless, people always responded quite surprised and enthusiastic that we had learned some Wolof before we entered the Gambia.

For both of our studies, Luka and I went to the Village from the eleventh of April 2019 until the fourteenth of April 2019. This is the village where Cheikh and Aissatou were both born and raised. The Village was for me crucial in exploring the agricultural sector, the way people hustle, and the impact of migration in one of the rural areas of the Gambia.

The Village exists mainly out of *extended family members* of both Cheikh and Aissatou, and the father of Aissatou – unfortunately already deceased – is the so-called founding father of the village. Among other things, Cheikh and Aissatou informed the Village that Luka and I would enter the Village, arranged the transport to the Village (Aissatou's younger brother – a taxi driver – brought us to the Village with his own car), and the accommodation in the Village (we stayed in the compound of Aissatou's mother). Once in the Village the family of Aissatou took good care of us, as they provided us three times a day with a meal[18].

### 3.2.3 Gaining access to Kuntaur

Besides the visitation to the Village, Luka and I visited Kuntaur area – another rural area of the Gambia – together with Momodou – Momodou is the son of Kawsu's younger sister. During our trip in Kuntaur Luka and I stayed from the fourteenth of May 2019 until the twentieth of May 2019 in Kairoh Garden Kuntaur and Momodou stayed with his aunt in Jakaba (located 3,3 kilometers away from Kuntaur)[19].

Momodou works as a contractor for his uncle Kawsu in Tanjeh area and Kuntaur area. During our stay in Kairoh Garden Tanjeh Luka and I met him, because Momodou also stayed in Kairoh Garden Tanjeh. In fact, Momodou invited Luka and I the first week of our stay in the Gambia to a djembe party. This party was held in another guesthouse – owned by another nephew of Kawsu – which is also located in Tanjeh[20]. Since that party a close friendship has been developed between Momodou, Luka and I, as we almost *hanged out* with him every night.

Before Luka and I entered the Gambia besides visiting Tanjeh and the Village we also had the aspiration to visit Kuntaur area. In the beginning of May Luka and I told Momodou about our aspiration. Therefore, during the *Ramadan* – the ninth month of the Islamic moon calendar in which Muslims between sunrise and sunset fast (Hafsaoui, n.d) – Momodou took

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[17] Reflections from my diary of the second day in the Gambia (02-04-2019).
[18] Reflections from my diary of the time Luka and I spent in the Village (11-04-2019 up to 14-04-2019).
[19] Reflections from my diary of the time Luka and I spent in Kuntaur (14-05-2019 up to 20-05-2019).
[20] Reflections from my diary of the third day in the Gambia (03-04-2019).

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us to Kuntaur area. Mainly in the evening – during the day it was too hot–, Momodou took us to his extended family members and friends to celebrate *iftar* – festive moment when Muslims eat together after sunset during the Ramadan (Hafsaoui, n.d). Through visiting Kuntaur area along with Momodou both Luka and I were able to learn more about the *explicit* and *tacit* aspects of the life routines and the culture of Gambians[21].


Figure 5[22]: *Iftar* in Jakaba

*3.3 Participants*
Throughout the research the endeavor was to gain a holistic and in-depth picture of the four – often intersecting – pre-defined income generating activities. Therefore, both males and females are potential suitable participants. Unfortunately, – by accident – in the field Luka and I were often in a male occupied space. Resulting in more informal conversations and semi-structured interviews with men (see appendix 1 for the list of key informants and appendix 2 for an overview of the most important informal-conversations and semi-structured interviews). Therefore, this research became highly gender biased with a skewed distribution towards men.

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[21] Reflections from my diary of the time Luka and I spent in Kuntaur (14-05-2019 up to 20-05-2019).
[22] Photo taken by Meijer, L. (2019) during *iftar* in Jakaba on 14-05-2019.

In fact, a total of eleven in-depth interviews were conducted along with numerous valuable informal-conversations and with eight participants *rapport* was established. Although through interviewing only insights and in-depth information about how the participant views certain aspects of life became vivid. The latter mentioned participants were able to acquire us with – some – knowledge of the *explicit* and *tacit* aspects of their life routines and the Gambian culture by taking us for instance to their income generating activities, rituals and their extended family.

*3.4 Reflections on fieldwork in the Gambia*
You may have noticed, some 'reflection' on aspects of the ethnographic research that have been performed has already been discussed in this chapter. In fact, 'ethnography becomes the interaction of the people being – *the Other* – studied with the ethnographer – *the Self*' (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2010, p. 40). Therefore, the quality and the richness of the data depends heavily on the relationship between the ethnographer and her/his interlocutors. In order to give meaning to this, a reflection will be given on first how access has been gained in the field and then on how rapport has been established.

*3.4.1 Reflections on gaining access to the Gambian community*
Gaining access to the Gambia community went smoother than expected. As Claude Lévi-Strauss (1973) observed that ethnographers move across barriers not just of culture but of social class. In fact, Strauss meant that in leaving their 'own' society the researchers often acquire a higher social status. This means thus that inherent to the research encounter are power relations (Hemment, 2007). As ethnography emerged during the colonial era, the knowledge produced by researchers was being used to justify European colonial expansion, human exploitation and ethnic domination in the global South (Hale, 2006). Thereby, the marginal and powerless were being objectified by the researcher (Hale, 2006). Although, current ethnographic research turned its back to the imperialist political stances (Low and Merry, 2010). By acknowledging explicit, 'the awareness of the power inequalities built into the [ethnographic] research process; the explicit alignment with subordinated peoples; and the energetic deconstruction of powerful ideas, institutions, and practices that these peoples confront' (Hale, 2006, p. 101-102). In doing so, ethnography nowadays is primarily concerned with addressing social and global issues such as economic inequalities (Low and Merry, 2010). Nonetheless, still in many studies, the research encounter between 'researcher' and her/his 'participants' is still paternalistic and therefore *unequal.* Unfortunately, also in my own research. Not only the paternalistic research

relationship in the Gambian context is of importance. In fact, the unequal relationship is due to the intersection between the installed *racial grammar*[23] and the paternalistic research relationship.

Before entering the Gambia, I was not really aware that I was able to obtain a 'higher' social status to this extend. However, once in the Gambia I became almost immediately – after one day – aware of my so-called higher social status (especially economically).

*Fragment from my diary on April second, 2019:*

> (…) Barbara's nephew – Ebrima – guided us first to the English school. As soon as we – Ebrima, Luka and I – entered the English school through the [heavily rusted] iron gate, almost immediately screaming and laughing children ran towards us, all wearing white blue school uniforms. Before we – Luka and I – could recover from these screaming children, we were suddenly taken to the head of the school by Ebrima. The headmaster sat behind his desk. As soon as he saw us, he stood up and greeted Ebrima first by giving a handshake to him. Then he walked to us while he held out his hand. I tried to answer his body language by extending my right hand towards him. There it was, a proper handshake. While he was shaking my hand, he introduced himself by mentioning his name and function. Actually, I was not able to recall his name, as he was muttering instead of speaking. (…) After a monologue of approximately ten to fifteen minutes about student performance, of which I only understood half of it due to his muttering. (…) Unfortunately, I had to admit that I already felt drained. Not only the heat was intense, also listening to this man his muttering was – extremely – exhausting. As his monologue came to an end, the headmaster tried to speak louder. While his voice went up and he tried to articulate proper the words out of his mouth were: *'We are looking for funding to renovate the school and a lot of Dutch people have helped us before.' (…) 'Also, we would be more than happy if you come here*

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[23] The racial grammar is installed in the nineteenth-century when Europeans tried to conquer the whole world by the route of imperialism. It implies that 'subjected races should be ruled, that there are subject races, that one [superior] race – the white race – deserves and has consistently earned the right to be considered the race whose main mission is to expand beyond its own domain (Said, 1993, p. 52-53)'.

> *to help us with the English lessons.' (…) 'You are very welcome to our school and in Tanjeh.'*

Actually, this short fragment is one of the many fragments from my diary which reveals the installed racial grammar in the Gambia owing to 76 years of British imperial rule (Davidheiser and Hultin, 2012). The fact that the headmaster considers us capable to teach English to Gambian children without a proper English degree in teaching reveals the outcome of the installed racial grammar – the so-called *white privilege* (Wekker, 2016). Consequently, white privilege ensured us – Luka and I – that we could easily gain access to people, places and positions where 'ordinary' Gambians do not get that easy access to.

In addition to the installed racial grammar, the headmaster saw an opportunity in us as two students from the global North came to visit him. So actually, a *friction* during my ethnographic fieldwork can be witnessed. As the headmaster made use of the opportunities offered by globalization as he had hoped that this *global encounter* would result in financial and/or material support. Again, we moved across barriers not just of culture but of social class. As in *our* Dutch society we 'belong as students' to a group of people without large financial means. Here in the Gambian context, we obtained even a higher – financial – social status than a headmaster of a primary school. In fact, I then became really aware of the fact that I am – indeed – financial more superior than the man who sat in front of me. In the field, not only the headmaster saw an opportunity in us. Also, other Gambians saw the same opportunity in us, and tried by making contact with us to actively and creatively navigate their lives.

*3.4.2 Reflections on building rapport*
How does one establish *rapport*?

> To large extent, rapport is built in much the same way as any other personal relationship. It is built over time. It requires that the researcher put effort into learning appropriate behavior in a setting; showing respect for people in a setting; being a good and careful listener; and being ready to reciprocate in appropriate ways. It means that if the researcher expects informants to tell the truth, at least as they see it, the researcher must also be prepared to tell the truth (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2010, p. 49-50).

Ever since the party in the other guesthouse a very close friendship has been developed between Momodou, Luka and I during our stay in the Gambia. Primarily during the day Luka and I went 'out' for our research. Mostly, we returned to the guesthouse at the end of the afternoon – around four o' clock. This because, it gets dark in the Gambia very early – around eight o' clock in the evening. We therefore made sure that we were back in the guesthouse before it got really dark outside.

This was the time that Luka and I were able to hang out with everyone who were also in the guesthouse. We often played a Gambian card game with among others Mamadou, Momodou, and Ebrima. As our friendship developed more over time, we also went more and more 'out' with Momodou. At first this was mainly during the evening. So, after diner Luka and I often had nothing much to do. Therefore, we were able to enjoy the company of Momodou. Mostly, after Luka and I ate our diner, he was still hungry and therefore we went with the three of us to the shop of his cousin. Sometimes we were there for hours. Then we enjoyed ourselves by chatting with the other customers in the shop; and of course with his cousin. Other times, we just *bought* him a Gambian sandwich and went back to the guesthouse.

As both Luka and I tried to avoid directly paying participants. Nonetheless, we always paid for the drinks, food and transport when we were 'out' with our participant(s). In addition, we also have more than often bought some small gifts (e.g. teapot, *attaya*, sugar and various types of fruits) for our participants. This to show her/him that we were very grateful for their willingness to help us with our research.



Figure 6[24]: Playing the Gambian card game.

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[24] Photo taken by van Driel, K. (2019) on 07-04-2019.

Figure 7[25]: *Hanging out* in the shop of Momodou's cousin.

*3.4 Conclusion*

This chapter described in detail how 'strategically multi-sited ethnography' in the Gambia has been practiced. Unfortunately, in this research the 'traditional' unequal research relation between 'researcher' and 'participant' can be witnessed. Consequently, this research raises questions about who owns and benefits from this research (Pain, 2004). In order to address both issues, chapter six will address this shortly by delving into 'collaboration', which is one of the various manners that are being developed (e.g. advocacy, and activism) in which the researcher co-operates with the participants instead of working hierarchically with them (Low and Merry, 2010).

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[25] Photo taken by van Driel, K. (2019) on 16-04-2019.

**Chapter 4: Glocal livelihoods in rural Gambia**



Figure 8[26]: Dembe shows his *'soon to be cultivated-land'*.

*I met Dembe in the Village in the beginning of April 2019. Dembe is a twenty-nine-year-old man who is born and raised in the Village, he is also a husband and a father of two children. In fact, he is the so-called stepbrother of Aissatou; as they share the same father.*

*While Dembe shows us – Luka and I – his land that 'soon' – in the beginning of June when the rainy season starts – will be cultivated mainly by him, his wife, his mother, and his sister – with whom Dembe shares the same mother and father. While Dembe is waiting for the rainy season to start, he is also busy to obtain something in order to provide for his family. As the week before Luka and I came to the Village, Dembe had laid tiles at a compound of extended family members in the Village. Dembe also engages in what he calls 'doing business'. Then as a response I asked him what exactly he meant by 'doing business'. He responded with the following: 'The buying of goods* [e.g. second-hand goods such as clothes, shoes and electronic

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[26] Photo taken by van Driel, K. (2019) on 12-04-2019.

devices – such as phones and headphones –, and cooking material, jewelry, farming products and fabric] *in Serekunda area, and the selling of those goods in the Village and the surrounding villages. In order to buy the goods, I often bring cashew and groundnuts which I first sale in Serekunda area and/or to the foreign companies in Kerewan'*[27].

The story of Dembe is not unique. Therefore mainly based on the life of Dembe and his extended family this chapter aims to illustrate the contemporary existence in the rural areas of the Gambia. Or in other words, it aims to show how Dembe and his family have broadened the basis of their livelihoods by diversifying their sources of income and activities along sectoral and spatial lines in order to mitigate poverty. So, it will become clear that they are not merely engaged in agriculture. In fact, Dembe and his family are engaged in an extensive range of off-farm income generating activities – as a strategy – in order to navigate their lives in the globalizing word (Benz, 2014).

As a matter of fact, not only Dembe's own aspirations in life influence the choices regarding the diverse income activities. In fact, it is very influenced and shaped by 'the socio-economic system of the Gambia'. As it 'regulates' among other things the distribution of income and goods within a family and that is why, as a point of departure, the first paragraph focuses on the 'socio-economic system of the Gambia'. The second paragraph touches upon Dembe's aspirations in life and the formation of it. This because the diverse and often intersecting income generating activities can be seen as a strategy to achieve Dembe's desired aspirations in life. What will become clear is that Dembe itself is active in *farming* and in *hustling* (e.g. laying tiles and doing business); which are two income generating activities that are mainly performed in the Village itself. Therefore, the third paragraph focuses upon these two income generating activities. Then, it will become clear that they are feasible because they both link up with processes of globalization. In doing so, the translocal connections become clear and one friction will be defined. Then, the fourth paragraph touches upon two other income generating activities, namely *tourism* and *migration.* At first site they are less visible in the life of Dembe, but in fact these two income generating activities are also an integral part of Dembe's very existence. Again, the translocal connections become clear and another friction will be defined. Then, in the last paragraph, it will become clear that the four mentioned income generating activities in this chapter are feasible through intensified mobility, and by linking up

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[27] Reflections from an informal-conversation with Dembe on 12-04-2019.

with other processes of globalization. Because of that, translocal livelihood systems in the Gambia have been able to develop over the years.

## 4.1 Gambian livelihoods and the socio-economic system of the Gambia

The Gambian household is complex in size and composition due to the patriarchal and gerontocratic extended family system (Ceesay, 2016; Touray, 2006). In general, core and extended family members live together in one compound. Core family members include the head of the house – the husband –, his wive(s), and his offspring. Extended family members include other relatives such as grandparents, grandchildren, paternal and maternal uncles, aunts, and cousins (Ceesay, 2016).

So too in the life of Dembe. After the death of his father, he became as the oldest son of his mother the head of the house. In Dembe's compound he lives together with his wife and their two children, his younger brother and his brother's wife and their child, and his mother [28]. Together, they *hustle* small amounts of money together in order to survive (Beute, 2010).

Therefore, during the rainy season all the members of Dembe's compound work on the family's land. Despite that all the family members, so both men and women, are obligated to work on the land during the rainy season. Patriarchy in the Gambia still ensures strict gender dynamics between men and women (Ceesay, 2016). Among other things it defines how wealth and power is distributed within the Gambian family and assures the traditional division of roles between men and women in the Gambia. Men providing financial, material and moral support for the family, and dispose the authority in the household (Ceesay, 2016). Women take care of the children and other household chores (e.g. washing clothes, cooking, and cleaning). The downside of this patriarchal system is that it ensures high pressure on men in the Gambia, and due to financial difficulties men are not able to bear all the costs. Therefore, nowadays in mainly the urban areas of the Gambia also more and more women work in order to contribute to the family expenses (Ceesay, 2016). In contrast to the urban areas, it is for women in the rural areas more difficult to contribute to the family expenses, besides working on the land, due to a lack of working opportunities.

In the Gambia the extended family system involves high socio-cultural obligation for relatives to provide sufficient financial and material assistance to (less fortunate) family members (Ceesay, 2016). This 'family co-operation' in order to make a living together transcends the compound to other extended family members and non-relatives due to

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[28] Reflections from an informal-conversation with Dembe on 12-04-2019.

generational relations and reciprocal social exchange (Ceesay, 2016; Roth 2008 in Gaibazzi, 2013). In fact, this redistribution of resources among family members is not just simply an act of 'obligation' only, it is also an act of 'empathy' (Gaibazzi, 2013). As one man told me *'I cannot let my brothers and sisters suffer'*[29].

Further worth to be mentioned is that the expectation to provide sufficient financial and material assistance will increase for family members in Europe. This because, they are according to the family members who stayed in the Gambia more *powerful* – richer. Therefore, the money migrants send back to their family members – remittances – are of significant importance in order to contribute to the family expenses (Ceesay, 2016).

*4.2 Aspirations and aspirations formation*
As according to Ceesay (2016) aspiration formation in the Gambia is strongly influenced by cultural norms, close and knitted extended kinship system, and the community. This is also how Dembe's aspirations are shaped and influenced by his family.

> You know in the Village and in the Gambia there a not many opportunities to earn sufficient money to support all the family members. That is why, just like all the other youngsters in the Village, I wanted to go abroad to earn money. Unfortunately, as the oldest son of my mother, I bare the biggest responsibility to take care of her and other family members. Therefore, the family expects of me that I continue to live here [in the Village]. With these thoughts in mind, I adjusted my aspiration to satisfy their needs to only study mechanics abroad, and then return back to the Gambia once I have finished the study. (…) This in order to increase my job opportunities in the Gambia once I would eventually return.
>
> At that time – four years ago – I asked my aunt who lives in Canada with her Canadian husband and their offspring, if she was willing to help me with applying for a student visa. She agreed. Unluckily, my visa application was rejected by the Canadian government. Consequently, I was never able to study abroad [30].

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[29] Reflections from an informal-conversation with a friend of Ousman on 10-05-2019.
[30] Reflections from an informal-conversation with Dembe on 12-04-2019.

This illustrates how the aspirations of Dembe are 'influenced and shaped by socio-cultural obligations and expectations' (Ceesay, 2016, p. iii). Also, this illustrates perfectly how Dembe uses the connectivity with people from the global North – as a strategy – in order to create more opportunities in this globalizing world (this will be further discussed in paragraph four).

Although the socio-cultural obligations and expectations play a major role. In fact, the formation of Gambian aspirations is the outcome of the interplay between the influence of socio-cultural obligations and expectations and personal desires such as in Dembe's case completing a study (Ceesay, 2016).

> After the rejection I felt devasted. I was disappointed, and sad, that I did not get the change to develop myself abroad. Then, on top of that, my father passed away and I became the head of the family. That means that currently, I have to make the important decisions for the family. That is the reason why I have to be here in the Village. That is why I now try my best to provide for the family in the Village itself by working on our family-land and doing some business *here* and *there*. For the business, I sometimes do travel all the way to Serekunda area. Luckily that is no problem, because then I will only be gone for a few days[31].

## *4.3 Farming and hustling*

As it was the beginning of April and the dry season was according to the inhabitants of the Village almost at its end as many people uttered: *'Soon the rainy season will start'*. Because of that, many families of the Village – including Dembe's family – were preparing for the rainy season by *'burning the land'*. This in order to increase the fertility of the soil.

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[31] Reflections from an informal-conversation with Dembe on 12-04-2019.

Figure 9[32]: Dembe's burned land

In fact, the agriculture in the Gambia depends heavily on the rainy season as in the rainy season the Gambians plant the seeds of the crops they want to grow. Dembe's family, like many families in the Village grow different types of crops:

> We [Dembe and his family] grow different types of crops such as groundnuts, cashew, maize, cous – couscous –, eggplant, cassava, pepper, cabbage, carrot, and onion. We also have mango, papaya and baobab trees[33].

To understand exactly how Dembe and his family earn money through agriculture I asked Dembe to explain which products are sold to whom, and which products remain for their own use.

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[32] Photo taken by van Driel, K. (2019) on 12-04-2019.
[33] Reflections from an informal-conversation with Dembe on 12-04-2019.

Only the groundnuts, cashew, maize and cous are sold [the rest of the crops is grown for own consumption] on the local market and in Kerewan to the government which sells the products to foreigners [mainly Chinese and Indian companies]. Sometimes the foreigners come to the Village to buy the products from us. (…) They come with big trucks so that they can buy a lot from the Village, and the surrounding villages at the same time[34].

As I was curious how they feel about the so-called 'foreigners' – mainly Chinese and Indians – coming to their village to buy their crops Dembe explained to me:

I think it is *'more easy'* if the foreigners come to the Village to buy the products, instead of bringing the products to Kerewan by ourselves. This because the transport cost a lot and takes a lot of time. (…) The foreigners *'pay us better money than the Gambians'*. As they pay us for one kilogram of groundnuts 17 Dalasi (approximately 0,30 eurocent), for one kilogram of cashew 95-100 Dalasi (approximately 1,68-1,77 euro), for one kilogram of maize 18-20 Dalasi (approximately 0,32-0,35 eurocent), and for one kilogram of cous 18-20 Dalasi[35].

At first it seems that Dembe is fairly satisfied with the foreigners coming to the Village. This because, it saves the Villagers a lot of time, money and effort to arrange the transport to Kerewan themselves. Secondly, the foreigners simply offer the Villagers more money for their products than Gambians.

However, it soon became apparent that although the foreign companies offer more money than the Gambians, it is not enough to bear all the costs of Dembe's family. Therefore, while waiting for the rainy season to start, Dembe is looking for opportunities to provide for his family. Just like Dembe, also other men in the Village are looking for opportunities in order to mitigate poverty[36]. So too his stepbrothers, as they are *'doing business'*. During my stay in the Village Dembe's stepbrothers – Abdoulaye and Lamin – went around six o'clock in the morning to ten surrounding villages together with a car from the company ComAfrique to buy cashew from the other surrounding villages. The cooperation between ComAfrique and

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[34] Reflections from an informal-conversation with Dembe on 12-04-2019.
[35] Reflections from an informal-conversation with Dembe on 12-04-2019.
[36] Reflections from an informal-conversation with Dembe on 12-04-2019.

Abdoulaye and Lamin has been established because Lamin has been in 'the business' for over ten years[37].

When around seven o'clock in the evening Abdoulaye and Lamin came home, Abdoulaye was the one who told me how their day went:

> We [Lamin and Abdoulaye] left early this morning by motorcycle to the main road where we would meet with the truckdriver of ComAfrique. Then our business day started, and we visited a total of ten surrounding villages. (…) In fact, the truckdriver is not really involved in 'doing the business'. He only drives the truck and Lamin and I arrange the purchase of the cashew from the villagers. In general, we were able to buy the cashew for 40 Dalasi per kilogram. Then we sell the cashew to the company for 45 Dalasi per kilogram. (…) Today we were able to buy a total of 2500 kilograms…[38]

The cashew Abdoulaye and Lamin sell from the surrounding villages have been preserved by the farmers to sell them or to consume them in times when they run out of resources[39]. This is one of the resilience strategies people in the rural areas of the Gambia use to deal with the hardships of daily life. So too Dembe, as he stores the groundnuts and cashew in large plastic bags in the barn next to his mother's compound. In order to preserve the groundnuts and cashew Dembe explains to me that he needs to add some *'medicine'* – pesticides – to protect it from insects[40].

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[37] Reflections from an informal-conversation with Abdoulaye on 13-04-2019.
[38] Reflections from an informal-conversation with Abdoulaye on 13-04-2019.
[39] Reflections from an informal-conversation with Abdoulaye on 13-04-2019.
[40] Reflections from an informal-conversation with Dembe on 12-04-2019.

Figure 10[41]: Dembe's barn

The first part of this chapter illustrated how Dembe and his family in the Village are still primarily engaged in agriculture with the intention of self-use and limited cash-crop (Benz, 2014). In addition, Dembe and his family are looking for opportunities to supplement their income by not just merely selling the agricultural products to the foreign companies. They also are actively involved in, among other things (e.g. buying and selling of second-hand goods), 'doing business' with the foreign companies themselves. During the buying and selling of various agricultural products in the surrounding villages, the translocal connections between the Village and the surrounding villages are of essential importance. Not only, the translocal connections are of essential importance while doing business, this is in fact an example of how currently in the Gambia the agriculture links up with processes of globalization. As Gambia attracts foreign companies, because the farmers sell their agricultural products cheaply. In this process, one friction can be identified. One the one hand, by linking up with processes of globalization brings opportunities such as selling the of agricultural products and doing

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[41] Photo taken by van Driel, K. (2019) on 12-04-2019.

business. On the other hand, this is an 'unequal encounter' as foreign companies are still able to offer Gambian farmers not enough money in order to survive. Therefore, there is still a necessity that other family members of Dembe – including himself – are active in other off-farm income generating activities such as tourism and migration.

*4.4 Tourism and migration*
For people who live in the Village travelling to Senegambia and Kololi area (SKA) – the centre of Gambian tourism – is a long and costly task. By taxi with a private driver from Banjul to the Village is a half-day journey – that I made myself –, however this is a luxury that the average Gambian cannot afford. Therefore, they are usually dependent on public transport, which is still quite expensive for the average Gambian and which extends the journey from a half-a-day to a whole day.

Usually when people from the Village of Dembe decide to make a living out of tourism they migrate to the SKA for an unspecified period of time. Once in the SKA, the people from the Village start living with family members (in a family compound) who already established a live in the SKA or start looking for a place to rent. The latter is done the least often, due to the expensive of it.

Also, Abdoulaye went to the SKA at the age of twenty-five for approximately two years as he returned to the Village at the age of twenty-seven[42]. In fact, he was looking for the so-called *connectivity* with people from the global North as he explained to me that he was also looking for a *toubab* – white person – wife, just like his cousin Cheikh in order to mitigate poverty in their family.

> After dinner Abdoulaye, Luka and I sat on a wooden bench that was about twenty meters away from his mother's compound. As the conversation was first about farming, it turned into a conversation about his time in the SKA. I worked in a bar for a while, where toubabs regularly came. Especially in the *'season'* the bar was filled with toubabs and there I spoke regularly with toubabs. As I lived in the compound of my aunt, I could not bring a [female] toubab to the compound. So, when I was off from work, I mostly spoke with them through WhatsApp. Actually, I really wanted to travel to Europe, just like my cousin Cheikh, who's toubab wife brought him to Holland. (…)

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[42] Reflections from an informal-conversation with Abdoulaye on 12-04-2019.

Unfortunately, after almost two years I was not able to establish a serious relationship with any of the toubabs I had met in those years. Because I was not earning enough in the bar to support both my aunt in the SKA and the family in the Village, I returned to the Village. Once back, my parents decided that I had to marry a girl from the Village and had to help them again with farming[43].

So, Dembe's and Abdoulaye's cousin – Cheikh – had succeeded to reach Europe by the establishment of a romantic relationship with a female *toubab* from the Netherlands, with whom he eventually married. Unfortunately, the marriage between Cheikh and the Dutch woman did not last, however he still managed to stay in the Netherlands. When Cheikh came back to the Village as a divorced man he married Abdoulaye's sister Aissatou and together they returned to the Netherlands.

As a strategy Dembe actively keeps the strong family ties intact with family members who are migrated to the global North (his aunt in Canada, and Cheikh and Aissatou in the Netherlands) by for example, still involving them in family decisions[44]. This with the intention to still be able to make a living together in times when various family members are located in different localities. As Dembe told me that in times that he was financially – in his own words – *'less powerful'* he called his stepsister Aissatou and asked her for support. As a response I asked Dembe what kind support he was asking for. Then he explained to me: *'Sometimes I will ask for some money to buy stuff for the family like oil* [to cook] *and rice. Other times I will ask her for stuff like shoes, and then she will send them* [from Holland to the Gambia]*'*[45]. But in the past, he also used this strategy to increase his chance to study in Canada.

So, currently Cheikh and Aissatou live together in the Netherlands and they still support the extended family in the Gambia. Besides merely sending remittances and goods (e.g. mobile phones, clothes, shoes etcetera) to extended family members a lot of Gambian migrants also support their family by creating small enterprises in order to ensure income for daily expenses (Ceesay, 2016). These enterprises include opening shops and sending second-hand materials (e.g. mobile phones, and clothing) that can be sold in the Gambia (Ceesay, 2016). So too Cheikh and Aissatou, as they bought two vans – local bus – and one taxi (for the younger brother of

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[43] Reflections from an informal-conversation with Abdoulaye on 12-04-2019.
[44] Reflections from an informal-conversation with Dembe on 12-04-2019.
[45] Reflections from an informal-conversation with Dembe on 12-04-2019.

Aissatou) in order that the family can earn money themselves[46]. In addition, they also owned a gym in the SKA that I had visited. The gym was supervised by the older brother of Cheikh and together with other extended family members they took care of the gym[47]. Currently the gym has been sold, because it did not generate enough money[48]. In fact, Cheikh told me this when I already returned from the Gambia.

The second part of this chapter illustrated how Dembe's family members are looking for a *connectivity* with people from the global North with the aspiration to migrate to Europe. By establishing a romantic relationship with a toubab, Dembe's cousin Cheikh succeeded to enter Europe. Unfortunately, Dembe's stepbrother, could not establish a long-term romantic relationship with a toubab and therefore he did not succeed to enter Europe. Thus, by linking up with processes of globalization Gambians create opportunities for themselves in order to achieve their aspirations. In this process, another friction can be defined. On the one hand, the tourists bring opportunities for Gambians, as they spend their money in the Gambia and give Gambians an opportunity to 'connect' with people from the global North. On the other hand, the mobility of people from the global North contradicts the mobility of Gambians themselves as for instance the European Union employs multiple policies in order 'to keep Gambians in *their* place' (Lucht, 2012). Therefore, Gambians need to be creative in order to undermine the European policies, by among other things, the establishment of romantic relationships with people from the global North.

Thus, the migration of family members to the SKA and the migration of family members abroad – such as his cousin Cheikh and stepsister Aissatou to the Netherlands and the migration of his aunt to Canada – has ensured that Dembe's household became multilocal. To elaborate on it, the migration from the Village to other localities created translocal ties within Dembe's household, and have led to increased levels of resilience (e.g. the capacity to cope with poverty) through the *support* (e.g. remittance, goods, and the creation of small enterprises) Dembe receives from them (Benz, 2014).

*4.5 Conclusion: The existence in the Village*
In short, the socio-economic system of the Gambia ensures that families in the Gambia *hustle small amounts of money together* in order to mitigate poverty, and thus to survive. In fact, the socio-economic system is so powerful, that individuals such as Dembe and Abdoulaye adjust

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[46] Reflections from an informal-conversation with Cheikh on 22-03-2019.
[47] Reflections from an informal-conversation with Cheikh on 22-03-2019.
[48] Reflections from an informal-conversation with Cheikh on 13-06-2019

their own aspirations in life for the sake of the family. In fact, this influences the income generating activities both Dembe, and Abdoulaye actually wanted to carry out. As Dembe and Abdoulaye initial both wanted to migrate out of the Gambia. Instead, they are both due to different family obligations/circumstances in the Village for the sake of their family.

Also, the various income generating activities that have been discussed transcend thus merely the Village – the *local*. In other words, the Village, the other surrounding villages, the SKA – urban area of the Gambia –, the Netherlands and Canada are all connected through the various income generating activities employed by Dembe and his family. In addition, the connectivity that can be found between different *localities* within Gambian, link up with processes of globalization. As the farmers in the rural parts of the Gambia make use of the opportunities offered by globalization by selling their products to foreigners as they offer more money than Gambians, one major friction come to the fore. The first friction, the incredible low prices the foreigners offer Gambian farmers for their products. In fact, the amount of money the foreign companies offer is still not sufficient in order to survive, and therefore Dembe and his family are forced to create *opportunities* in order to cope with the poverty. By 'doing business' and by migrating to the SKA, the Netherlands and Canada they have broadened their income generating activities along sectoral and spatial lines. Consequently, Dembe's household became multilocal. Then, a second friction can be defined. The mobility of people from the global North contradicts the mobility of Gambians themselves. Moreover, not only the mobility of people from the global North contradicts the mobility of Gambians. Also, the fact that Gambian (agricultural) products easily travel around the globe stands in stark contrast to the fact that Gambians are trying to be kept in *their* place by the European Union.

**Chapter 5: Glocal livelihoods in urban Gambia**

As it is true that in the 1970s a process of de-agrarianization took place in the Gambia and the Gambians who migrated to the coastal-urban areas of the Gambia found their employment mainly in the tourist industry and hustling. At the same time, agricultural activities can still be observed in the urban areas of the Gambia.

Although, in contrast to the rural areas of the Gambia. In most 'urban' lives, agriculture is a less central part of daily life. Yet agricultural activities are present in most of the families that I had encountered in the urban areas of the Gambia. Not surprisingly, other income generating activities, such as hustling, migration, and being active in the tourist industry are more central aspects of 'urban' daily life in order to make a living. In order to illustrate how agricultural activities are present in most of the families in the urban areas of the Gambia, and how other income generating activities, such as hustling, migration, and being active in the tourist industry are more central aspects of 'urban daily life', this chapter touches upon two different stories. The first story is about Kawsu – a Gambian migrant – who has returned to the Gambia, accompanied by his Dutch wife – Barbara. This with the aspiration to generate more income for their extended family members in the Gambia, and with the aspiration to give young Gambians a chance to develop themselves and to achieve and improve development in the Gambia. The second story is about Ousman – a beach hustler – that mainly by migrating to the SKA aims to generate more income for his extended family members by becoming active in the tourist industry and hustling. In doing so, Ousman is looking for the so-called connectivity with people form the global North with the aspiration to obtain financial and/or material support from his European friend, and to migrate one day to the global North.

It will become clear, that by linking up with processes of globalization (e.g. intensified mobility, migration, and tourism in the Gambia), both Kawsu, and Ousman created opportunities for themselves in order to achieve their aspirations in life. Thereby they have both broadened the basis of their livelihoods by diversifying their sources of income and activities along sectoral and spatial lines in order to navigate their lives in the globalizing world. Then, in the last paragraph, it will become clear that the two illustrated cases in which both individuals both are mainly dependent on tourism are better understood by taking positionality into account. Consequently, the hegemonic conception that Gambians are only active in the tourist industry in order to search for the so-called connectivity with people form the global North with the aim to only use the established relationship to extract resources from them for personal gains only, and the chance to migrate one day to the global North can be nuanced.

*5.1 Kawsu*

*Kawsu is a fifty-four-year-old man and married twenty years ago to Barbara. They had met each other in Senegal. At that time, Kawsu worked there as a tourist-guide, and Barbara was there on vacation. By marrying Barbara, Kawsu was able to obtain a Dutch passport. In fact, he migrated to the Netherlands, but after four years he really wanted to go back to the Gambia.*

*As we sat down on the terrace of Kairoh Garden Tanjeh in the beginning of April 2019 Kawsu told me that he founded Kairoh Garden with the aspiration to give people* [young Gambians] *an opportunity and to improve development in the country. Honestly, Karlijn a lot of the younger generation, mainly 'young bois' want to leave the Gambia. Just like I used to. I feel so sad, and I believe that it is a shame that so many youths want to leave the county... and even risk their own lives for this*[49].

In fact, a lot of Gambian migrants return to the Gambia and create small enterprises (Ceesay, 2016). Often, this is done by Gambian migrants in order to generate more income for family members in the Gambia. Although Kawsu and Barbara not only founded Kairoh Garden in order to generate more income for family members in the Gambia. They also founded Kairoh Garden with the aspiration to give young Gambians a chance to develop themselves by helping children financially with paying their school fees, school supplies, and school uniforms and to improve and support development in the Gambia (e.g. by building new boreholes throughout the Gambia,  providing computers for the English school of Tanjeh, and building a library for the Islamic school of Tanjeh) (Somers, n.d.).

Despite the fact that Kawsu nowadays expresses his concerns about young people leaving the Gambia. In the past he used to be one of them. As Kawsu told me that he already at the age fifteen had the aspiration to leave the Gambia one day. This because, he comes from a poor rural family where life revolves primarily around agriculture[50]. Without education, and not much opportunities in the village besides farming, Kawsu decided to leave the village when he was around twenty-years old. First, he traveled to the SKA, and from there he traveled on to Senegal. So, after many years of *hustling* in the coastal-urban areas of the Gambia and Senegal he met Barbara. That time, Kawsu just turned twenty-seven and he really saw in Barbara an opportunity to migrate out of the Gambia[51].

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[49] Reflections from a semi-structured interview with Kawsu on 10-04-2019.
[50] Reflections from a semi-structured interview with Kawsu on 10-04-2019.
[51] Reflections from a semi-structured interview with Kawsu on 10-04-2019.

After a two-year relationship, Kawsu asked Barbara to marry him. Before the proposal Kawsu and Barbara had already decided that when they got married Kawsu would move to the Netherlands. After he got his *'papers'* he was able to travel to the Netherlands. Unfortunately, it was very different in the Netherlands than he had imagined. Because, once he was in the Netherlands Kawsu felt very frustrated. First of all, he had a hard-time getting used to *'the Dutch way of living'*. *'People are like robots in Europe. Everyone goes to his nine to five job five days a week. I was not used to that'*[52]. In addition, almost immediately when he arrived in Europe, Kawsu's family started requesting for support. He told me that he had no choice, and thus had to earn money for the family as quickly as possible.

> The pressure was so high, that when I did not send money for a month, the family immediately called me with *'Kawsu I need new shoes. Kawsu I need support for the wedding of your cousin. Kawsu, my car broke down ... can you help me please'* [53].

Although Kawsu at first was joyful that he was able to migrate out of the Gambia. He really missed the Gambia as he told me:

> After a while, the hard work in the greenhouses broke me up. I really missed the Gambia and my family. For the first time I realized that *the grass ain't greener on the other side.* Luckily, Barbara was very supportive, and together we decided to move back to the Gambia. We talked a lot with each other what we would like to do there for a living. Then together, we decided to set up Kairoh Garden and the Kairoh Garden Foundation with the money I was able to save during the time I worked in the Netherlands, and with the financial support of Barbara. (…) As the Kairoh Garden Foundation eventually aims to improve the Gambia by not only helping children finishing their education, but also providing more facilities in the Gambia such as boreholes. Currently, we want to build new boreholes in the villages around Kuntaur. Luckily, almost all the money needed has already been collected. Maybe, nice to know … actually are all the sponsors from the Netherlands. This because, Barbara is very active in bringing the foundation, and the guesthouse to Dutch people's

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[52] Reflections from a semi-structured interview with Kawsu on 10-04-2019.
[53] Reflections from a semi-structured interview with Kawsu on 10-04-2019.

attention. (…) But for me the most important achievement would be that the Kairoh Garden Foundation is able to offer young Gambians opportunities here in the Gambia, and thus helping them to build a life in the Gambia, instead of leaving the country through the backway[54].

In addition to supplement their income Kawsu and Barbara are also engaged in small-scale agriculture on their own plot of land. There they cultivate many different crops such as: mango, lemon, orange, banana, cabbage, onion, eggplant, cassava, carrot, potatoes, pumpkin, tomatoes, mint and bitter leaves with the intention of self-use and limited cash-crop at Tanjeh's local market[55]. In contrast to the Village, the crops are not sold to foreign companies, but at the local market to Gambians.



Figure 11[56]: Mamadou – the son of Kawsu's older brother – and Karlijn in Kairoh's *Garden.*

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[54] Reflections from a semi-structured interview with Kawsu on 10-04-2019.
[55] Reflections from an informal conversation with Mamadou 02-04-2019.
[56] Photo taken by Meijer, L. (2019) on 02-04-2019.

The first part of this chapter illustrated how Kawsu found the so-called connectivity in order to migrate – and thus to achieve his aspiration – during his time as a tourist-guide in Senegal. Currently, Kawsu and Barbara together use their *connection* with people from the global North as an opportunity to raise money for their foundation and to attract potential guests to their guesthouses. Thus, by linking up with processes of globalization Kawsu and Barbara aim to achieve and improve development in the Gambia and to support Kawsu's extended family. In doing so, they contribute to the growing production of translocalities in this globalizing world. As became clear, not only the tourists – mainly Dutch – who stay in Kairoh Garden, and the fund-raising projects generate income for the Kairoh Garden Foundation and the extended family. They are also engaged in small-scale agriculture on their own plot of land for the intention of self-use and limited cash-crop (Benz, 2014).

*5.2 Ousman*



Figure 12[57]: Ousman and his friend on the private beach at one of the best-know hotels in the Gambia.

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[57] Photo taken by van Driel, K. (2019) on 10-05-2019.

*When Luka and I – on our day off – were on the private beach at one of the best-known hotels in the Gambia – Senegambia Beach Hotel. Three Gambian men in their late twenties tried to make contact with us by screaming 'hey how are you?' from the lounger that stood in front of us. In the beginning we ignored their cry for attention, but just a few seconds later one of the three – Ousman – stood up and asked us 'what is your name?' and 'where are you from'. In a split-second Luka and I looked at each other hesitantly and she was the first to answer them. (...) As the conversation proceeded and we both had made it very clear that we did not fell for their charms and that we were 'just students' – only in the Gambia to do research. (...) After we both explained our research topics, Ousman was the one who reacted very enthusiastic. 'Woooh, I also hustle. Then he opened his bag and showed us the 'goods'* (see figure 13 and 14)[58].



Figure 13[59]: Necklace          Figure 14[60]: Blue blouse, powerbank and 4G Hotspot

As already became vivid throughout the thesis, it is in Gambia not exceptional to make a living in collaboration with extended family members. Therefore, the strategy used by

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[58] Reflections from an informal-conversation with Ousman on 10-05-2019.
[59] Photo taken by van Driel, K. (2019) on 10-05-2019.
[60] Photo taken by van Driel, K. (2019) on 10-05-2019.

Ousman is not only to realize his own aspirations in life, but also in order to contribute to the family expenses. Thus, in order to get a more holistic view of how Ousman's family makes a living together, the income generating activities of his closest family will first be discussed. After that, the different income generating activities Ousman employs will be discussed.

> My mother works as a seasonal worker at RadVille Farm in Toubakuta and my father works as a teacher at a primary school in Toubakuta [this is also the place where Ousman was born and raised]. (…) In times when there is work my mother earns 200 Dalasi per day (approximately 3,52 euro). My father earns around 2000 Dalasi per month (approximately 35, 22 euro). You know… with two older sisters and one younger brother my parents struggled to make ends meet. As a matter of fact, my father also has a second wife with whom he has three other children. My stepmother – his father's second wife – earns *'small money'* by selling home-made wonjo juice in Toubakuta[61].



Figure 15[62]: Ousman's mother at RadVille Farm

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[61] Reflections from a semi-structured interview with Ousman on 23-05-2019.
[62] Photo taken by van Driel, K. (2019) on 22-05-2019.

On my request Ousman took us – Luka and I – on his 'day-off' to the farm where his mother worked. Behind the highly secured gate, there was an enormous 'hidden' farm of no less than 280 hectares. By appointment, the manager of the farm – a Brazilian who has been working at RadVille Farm and living in the Gambia for eight years – showed us – Ousman, Luka and I – by SUV the entire farm.



Figure 16[63]: Tour by SUV through RadVille Farm

In fact, RadVille Farm is founded in 1985 by an Englishman with Indian roots and all the products RadVille Farm cultivates (e.g. mango, pepper, maize and pumpkin) are for export only. Therefore, the products are first exported to the United Kingdom where they are processed for sale (e.g. packing mangos in plastic). Then, they are distributed throughout the UK, and to other European countries[64].

Also, again the socio-economic system of the Gambia ensures, just like Dembe's and Kawsu's family, that Ousman's family – including the females of his family – hustle small

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[63] Photo taken by van Driel, K. (2019) on 22-05-2019.
[64] Reflections from an informal-conversation with the manager of RadVille Farm on 22-05-2019.

amounts of money together in order to survive. Because Ousman's family is not very *powerful*, he decided three years ago – when he was eighteen years old – to travel to the SKA in order to earn some money[65].

Once arrived in the SKA, Ousman moved in with a cousin who already established a live in the SKA. His cousin rents an apartment and introduced himself to me as a 'taxi driver'[66]. Soon I found out that his cousin has an English girlfriend that pays among other things for his apartment.

> When I came to the SKA I had big dreams… You met my cousin and saw his apartment with your own eyes. Even though he says he is a taxi driver and was able to show you his license. He never drives and is just talking the whole day long with his English girlfriend. (…) He is able to support our family in Toubakuta, and therefore his family now has fewer worries. I wanted that too. Therefore, I started living here. My biggest dream is to pay the school fees of my younger brothers and sisters. That is why I need a toubab. Nobody here in the Gambia can afford so much money. (…) I also want to build a compound for my father and mother[67].

Thus, Ousman now twenty-one, looks for a connectivity in the SKA with people from the global North in order to achieve to pay the school fees of his siblings, and to build a compound for his parents. As our relationship grew during my stay in the Gambia, Ousman told me that he once tried to take the backway.

> I tried to reach Europe, once. So… when I was sixteen years old, I decided 'to do the backway'. I left the parental home in the middle of the night. From the Gambia, we [fellow Gambians] came together and traveled to Senegal. After being in Senegal for two days we traveled on to Libya via Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger. Once arrived in Libya, I payed 30.000 Dalasi (approximately 528, 53 euro) to take the boat to Italy. Unfortunately, the Libyan coast guard had signaled our boat and arrested all of us [all the 150 fellow West Africans who were on the same boat as Ousman]. (…) Once, in prison the Libyan police

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[65] Reflections from a semi-structured interview with Ousman on 23-05-2019.
[66] Reflections from an informal-conversation with Ousman on 23-05-2019.
[67] Reflections from a semi-structured interview with Ousman on 23-05-2019.

abused us. They beat us with their steel pipes and guns. [Ousman showed me the big scar on his leg]. I saw people die in prison…. three Gambians and two Senegalese. Luckily, in prison I was able to call my mother, and she sold a piece of our family land to get me out of prison. Then, the IOM paid for my flight home, and gave me 16.000 Dalasi (approximately 281,80 euro). (…) I owe my parents a lot… I have to show them that I am a good son, and therefore I really want to send my younger siblings to school [68].

As Ousman told me during a walk on the beach that he still wants to travel to Europe to earn money there. In order to accomplish his dream, he is now using a different strategy – beach hustling [69].

In fact, when I met Ousman it was *'off-season'* – the period between April and September. During off-season, the Gambia is not visited that extensively by Western tourists. Therefore, Ousman has fewer opportunities to make new contacts with people from the global North. To obtain something in order to survive, he hustles – in this case, petty trading is meant (see figure 13 and 14). Besides the petty trading Ousman is nonetheless during the off-season looking for the so-called connectivity.

I usually go to the beach around four o'clock in the afternoon. This because toubabs usually go to the beach in the morning and afternoon. Around five o'clock they return to the hotel to freshen up for dinner. So, before they disappear behind the gates of the hotel, I will try to have a chat with them by ask something like: *'What is your nice name? … How are you'* If they are not interested in a chat, I will leave them alone. But if they are interested in a chat, just like you and Luka. I will invite them to eat together with me (and my friends). (…) And when they do not want to eat with me (and my friends). I will ask them what they do tomorrow, and if I can join them as a free tour guide. Then, I will show them the beautiful beaches, my family, my friends… I will show them the *real* Smiling Coast[70].

[68] Reflections from an informal-conversation with Ousman on 22-05-2019.
[69] Reflections from an informal-conversation with Ousman on 23-05-2019.
[70] Reflections from a semi-structured interview with Ousman on 23-05-2019.

Currently, Ousman is still in contact with some tourists from the global North. Mainly through WhatsApp and Facebook on his phone, Ousman is able to communicate with his 'friends'.

> I have still contact with a Dutch couple – Sandra and her husband Cor. I have met them last *'season'* – the period from October until May. They stayed three weeks in the Kairaba beach hotel in Kololi and I met them at the beach. I have shown them everything that the Gambia has to offer (e.g. reptile farm, baboon island, crocodile pool, and the traditional life in a Gambian village). Just like you, they met my family in Toubakuta. They saw the poor conditions in which my family lives. Therefore, they felt very sorry. When I told them that my siblings could not go to school, they offered to help one of my siblings. So, I send Sandra and Cor sometimes photos of my younger sister, because she is now able to go to school because of them. In addition, since they left the Gambia, they have sent me some money to buy rice and oil for the family[71].

The second part of this chapter aimed to illustrate how Ousman by migrating to the SKA with the endeavor to generate more income for his extended family members by becoming active in the tourist industry and hustling. Thereby, looking for a connectivity with people from the global North with the aspiration to migrate out of the Gambia and to obtain financial and/or material support. Thus, by linking up with processes of globalization, Ousman aims to make a living and to achieve his aspiration in life. Again, within this process the same friction as in the previous chapter can be defined. Namely, on the one hand the *opportunities* that tourism brings to the Gambia – which is inherently interlinked to the ease with which people from the global North can travel. On the other hand, the ease with which people from the global North can travel contradicts the mobility of Gambians themselves. Also, the second part showed another friction that can be defined. On the one hand, the Gambian government attracts foreign companies, such as RadVille Farm, because of the cheap land and cheap labor. This 'unequal encounter' allows to exploit the Gambian population as they pay far too little to the Gambian laborers and (farm)land. On the other hand, RadVille Farm provides working opportunities – although underpaid – for some Gambians.

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[71] Reflections from a semi-structured interview with Ousman on 23-05-2019.

*5.3 Conclusion*

In sum, both Kawsu and Ousman are making use of the opportunities offered by globalization while making mainly a living out of tourism. In these two cases, without taking into account the positionality of the individual, the role of making a living through tourism cannot be fully understood. The first case discussed how a voluntarily returned migrant wants to contribute to the development of the Gambia by running a guesthouse. The second case illustrated a more common occurrence of an individual who seeks a connection with people from the global North in order to obtain something through hustling in the coastal-urban areas of the Gambia. As each individual has a different positionality, which, successively initiate a variety of values and interpretations of what is seen as right and wrong, helpful and no longer needed or useful (Smith and Schapendonk, 2018). Consequently, these numerous interpretations can initiate a variety of frictions.

Then, in the case of Kawsu it is understandable that he wants to prevent young people from taking the backway because his experiences in the Netherlands did not meet his expectations. Simultaneously, because Kawsu was able to earn and save money by migrating to the Netherlands, he was able to build Kairoh Garden and was able to found the Kairoh Garden foundation. In fact, a friction can be witnessed as Kawsu unintentionally became one of the many examples of Gambian migrants who are able to build houses for family members and offer other support through migration abroad.

Also, the case of Ousman is understandable as well. As he is driven by guilt to restore his own honor within the family, and to realize his own aspirations. Ousman navigates his life by hustling in the coastal-urban areas of the Gambia with the hope to obtain something for his family, and to migrate one day to the global North.

Consequently, the hegemonic conception that Gambians are only active in the tourist industry in order to search for the so-called connectivity with people form the global North with the aim to only use the established relationship to extract resources from them for personal gains only, and the chance to migrate one day to the global North can be rejected. Thus, a more nuanced picture of Gambian tourism is outlined here.

**Chapter 6: Conclusions**

This thesis 'putted bottom-up processes of West African livelihoods within a broader framework that is sensitive to the position of West Africans in processes of globalization' (Smith and Schapendonk, 2018, p. 1182). In doing so, attention was drawn to the various positionalities that play a role in these processes. By taking various positionalities into account, this thesis moves away from the extreme viewpoint which treats Africans as passive victims of globalization, and therefore it is able to share a West African counter-narrative. Consequently through the positionality approach, a whole range of global connectivities became visible, and room was left to untangle the frictions that impose and impede Gambian livelihoods, as well as the encounters in this globalizing world that may have extensive effects regarding the creation of new directions in their lives (Tsing, 2005).

As each individual has a different positionality, which, successively initiate a variety of values and interpretations of what is seen as right and wrong, helpful and no longer needed or useful (Smith and Schapendonk, 2018). Consequently, the way how Gambians navigate their lives and create opportunities in the globalizing world is therefore depending on an individual's own experiences, conceptions, and aspirations in life. Which is shaped and negotiated in the context of a powerful socio-economic system in which the average Gambian is born and raised. However, it can be said broadly that this research is able to show how Gambians – in both urban and rural areas – navigate their lives and create opportunities in the globalizing word. By the diversification of income generating activities that link up with processes of globalization, Gambians navigate their lives – as a resilience strategy – along sectoral and spatial lines. This in order to *hustle small amounts of money together* as a family in order to mitigate poverty, and thus to survive, and to achieve an individual's own aspirations in life – which is the result of the interplay between influence of socio-cultural obligations and expectations, and personal desires.

Although, that each individual has a different positionality. Nevertheless, more insight has been obtained about the way how the four pre-defined income generating activities link up with processes of globalization, how various Gambians create opportunities in the context of globalization, and how various Gambians negotiate and form their aspirations in life.

*6.1 The connection of Gambian livelihoods through the globalizing world and the creation of opportunities in the context of globalization*

In previous livelihood studies, there was a clear focus on 'the perspective of specific, locally bound man-land interactions'. This has been rejected, as 'localities' do not function as an

isolated entity in this world. As a matter of fact, they are in connection; they are highly embedded within the complex global flows, and interlinkages between geographical spaces. Therefore, livelihoods in a particular locality, depend not primarily on 'local' initiative or on embedded relationships splayed across scales but just as much on direct interactions with distant places' (Sheppard, 2002, p. 319).

With that knowledge in mind, the task for me was to gain a deeper understanding of how the four pre-defined income generating activities link up with processes of globalization. To begin with, farming in the urban areas of the Gambia. Not only small-scale agricultural activities with the intention of self-use and limited cash-crop can be found. Also, foreign companies are on a large-scale active in the agricultural sector. This because, the Gambia is attractive to foreign companies, owing to the fact that the country offers them cheap land and cheap labor. Consequently, the first way – which is also the first defined friction – is the establishment of large farms owned by foreigners in the urban areas of the Gambia. Although, this provides working opportunities for Gambians, the wages are not sufficient to support the entire family.

The second way in which foreign companies are widely active in the agricultural sector in the rural areas of the Gambia is in contrast to the first way, not by owning a plot of land on which they cultivate their own products – which is the second defined friction. In fact, the companies buy the agricultural products (e.g. groundnuts, cashew, and cous) very cheaply from many different farmers in the rural areas of the Gambia. Although, the farmers prefer to sell their products to foreigners, because they offer the farmers more money than Gambians. The amount of money the foreign companies offer is still not sufficient in order to feed the whole family.

Both of the aforementioned encounters are unequal, because the foreign companies are still able to offer the Gambian farmers in the rural areas of the Gambia, and the people who work on their farms not enough money to make a living. Therefore, Gambian families – in both urban and rural areas – cannot depend on merely 'farming'. In other words, there is a necessity to create other *opportunities* – as a resilience strategy – in order to cope with the poverty. The people from the rural areas complement their income by 'hustling' and 'doing business' in the villages and by migrating to the SKA and to the global North – this is done by relatives who migrate out of the rural villages. The people from the urban areas complement their income by 'hustling', 'hustling in the tourist business', and by migrating to the global North. Thus, through the diversification of income generating activities Gambian families together navigate their

lives – as a resilience strategy – along sectoral and spatial lines. Consequently, this had led throughout the years to the development of translocal livelihood systems.

Although it is true that a lot of Gambian hustlers in the SKA are looking for the so-called *connectivity* with people from the global North – as strategy – to eventually move out of the Gambia. Yet this is not everyone's goal in the Gambia, there are also Gambians who use the income out of tourism to improve development in the Gambia. In spite of the fact that there are Gambians, who use their income to improve development in the Gambia. Still many youths want to leave the Gambia, then perhaps not by being active in the tourist industry, but by 'taking the backway'. Thus, not only through strolling around in the SKA, also taking the backway is being used – as a strategy – by Gambians in order to reach the global North. These two strategies are born out of the [absurd] obsession of the European Union to keep Africans in *their place.* So, in other words, through these two strategies Gambians undermine the European border regime. Therefore, it is a form of resistance, in which Gambians show their own agency in this globalizing world.


*6.2 The negotiation and formation of Gambian aspirations*
The reason why this thesis incorporated the negotiation and formation of aspirations was because, the diverse and often intersecting income generating activities can be seen as a *strategy* to achieve desired aspirations – both materialistic and non-materialistic. By taking various positionalities into account, deeper insight has been gained into how this process works.

As has become known that individual aspirations are formed, influenced and negotiated in the context of the Gambian socio-economic system. Therefore, the formation and negotiation of Gambian aspirations is the result of the interplay between the influences of socio-cultural obligations and expectations and personal desires.

Then, not entirely unexpected, the male participants who were discussed in chapter four and five uttered all a strong sense of responsibility to support their families. This is due to the fact that in the Gambia the socio-economic system ensures strict gender dynamics between men and women, in which men should provide for financial, material and moral support for the family. Although, in the Gambia women nowadays also work in order to contribute to the family expenses. Still, the man remains financially responsible to take care of his family.

In two cases, two participants – Dembe and Abdoulaye – adjusted their own aspirations in life for the sake of the family. Therefore, it shows that the socio-economic system in the Gambia is very powerful. This had a direct effect on the income generating activity both of the participants initial wanted to carry out. Despite the powerful socio-economic system, Dembe

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showed how he – as head of the house – was able to meet his obligations in the Village, but also created opportunities for himself to leave the Village from time to time in order to hustle.

*6.3 Recommendations*

By conducting ethnographic fieldwork in the Gambia, I tried to sketch a holistic image of how Gambians navigate their lives in the globalizing world by the diversification of income generating activities along sectoral and spatial lines. Although the four pre-defined income generating activities are of significant importance in the lives of the families that I encountered during fieldwork. Of course, there are more income generating activities to be found in the Gambia, such as fishing. This is an income generating activity which is not only carried out by many people in the Gambia who live in the coastal-urban areas of the Gambia. In fact, to the fishing a whole different range of other income generating activities are connected, such as cleaning and selling the fish on the local market, making fishing nets, painting the fishing boats, and smoking the fish. In addition, fishing is not only a small-scale activity performed by the Gambians themselves. Also, foreign companies are on a large-scale active in the Gambian fishing industry. In particular the opening of factories that process the fish – the factories are mainly in the hands of Chinese investors. As a result, it becomes interesting what the influence of the Chinese factories is on the Gambian fishing industry, and therefore thus on Gambian livelihoods. Therefore, the first recommendation is to gain more in-depth information about the 'fishing industry' in the Gambia.

The second recommendation for further research is to gain more in-depth information of how Gambian women navigate their lives and create opportunities in the globalizing word. This because, this research became highly gender biased. Although currently in the Gambia more and more women work in order to contribute to the family expenses. Still, the most pressure is on men to provide for the family. With that in mind, and with the fact that generally women take care of the children and other household chores. Most likely, distinct perspectives on creating opportunities in the globalizing world would be displayed.

The third recommendation for further ethnographic research while studying Gambian livelihoods is to be more sensitive to the unequal power relations built into ethnographic research. In other words, ethnographers should co-operate with their interlocutors instead of working hierarchically with them. Then, not only the researcher benefits directly from the research, also the interlocutors can then benefit directly from the research. Various forms of engagement are available, such as for instance 'collaboration' (Low and Merry, 2010). Collaborative research enables the research to work with local organizations or social

movements. In doing so, the role of the researcher is to carry out their missions, instead of actively leading those missions. Consequently, the research is then not completely owned by the researcher itself but shares the ownership of the research with his interlocutors.

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**Appendix 1: List of key informants**

|  | Name | Gender | Age | Current income generating activities | Current place of residence | Place of birth | Aspirations |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Momodou | Male | 32 | Contractor, migration and tourist industry | Tanjeh | Jakaba | Migrating to the global North |
| 2 | Kawsu | Male | 54 | Tourist industry, hustling, farming and migration | Tanjeh | Jakaba | Generating income for extended family members and improving development in the Gambia |
| 3 | Cheikh | Male | 41 | Hustling and migration | The Netherlands[72] | The Village | Generating income for extended family members |
| 4 | Aissatou | Female | 34 | Hustling and migration | The Netherlands[73] | The Village | Generating income for extended family members |
| 5 | Ousman | Male | 21 | Tourist industry, hustling and migration | The SKA | Toubakuta | Migrating to the global North and generating income for extended family members |
| 6 | Dembe (stepbrother of Aissatou) | Male | 29 | Farming and hustling (including doing business) | The Village | The Village | Generating income for extended family members and has the aspiration to follow education abroad |
| 8 | Abdoulaye (brother of Aissatou) | Male | 27 | Farming and hustling (including doing business) | The Village | The Village | Generating income for extended family members and migrating to the global North |

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[72] In order to safeguard the anonymity of the participant the exact place of residence in the Netherlands is not mentioned.

[73] In order to safeguard the anonymity of the participant the exact place of residence in the Netherlands is not mentioned.

**Appendix 2: Overview of the informal-conversations and semi-structured interviews**

| | Name | Gender | Age | Date of conversation | Purpose of the informal-conversation/semi-structured interview | Current income generating activities |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Cheikh | Male | 41 | (1): 17-01-2019 and 22-03-2019 | (1): Gain more insight into his income generating activities and gaining a deeper insight into the life of Aissatou and Cheikh and their extended family in the Gambia | Hustling and migration |
| 2 | Aissatou | Female | 34 | (1): 07-02-2019, 17-01-2019, and 14-02-2019 and 22-03-2019 | (1): Learning more about the Gambian culture through a short Wolof language course and learning more about the life of Aissatou and Cheikh and their extended family in the Gambia | Hustling and migration |
| 3 | Dembe (stepbrother of Aissatou) | Male | 29 | 11-04-2019 until 14-04-2019 | Learning more about Dembe's income generating activities, Dembe's family and Dembe's aspirations | Farming and hustling (including doing business) |
| 4 | Abdoulaye (brother of Aissatou) | Male | 27 | 11-04-2019 until 14-04-2019 | Learning more about Abdoulaye's income generating activities, Abdoulaye's family and Abdoulaye's aspirations | Farming and hustling (including doing business) |
| 5 | Ousman | Male | 21 | (1): 10-05-2019, 23-05-2019, 26-05-2019 and 04-06-2019 | (1): Learning more about Ousman's income generating activities, Ousman's family and Ousman's aspirations | Tourist industry, hustling and migration |
| 6 | Kawsu | Male | 54 | (1): 10-04-2019 and 05-05-2019 | (1): Learning more about Kawsu's time hustling in the SKA and Senegal, Kawsu's journey to the Netherlands, Kawsu's current income generating activities, Kawsu's family and Kawsu's aspirations | Tourist industry, hustling, farming and migration |

| 7 | Mamadou (nephew of Kawsu) | Male | 26 | (1): 02-04-2019 (2): 02-05-2019 | (1): Gave Luka and I a tour through Kairoh Garden Tanjeh (2): Learning more about Mamadou's extended family and Mamadou's work in Kairoh Garden | Tourist industry (employee of Kairoh Garden) and migration |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8 | Momodou (nephew of Kawsu) | Male | 32 | 14-05-2019 until 20-05-2019 | Learning more about the Gambian culture through hanging out, visiting Momodou's friends and family, learning more about Momodou's income generating activities and Momodou's aspirations | Contractor, migration and tourist industry |
| 9 | Fatima (stepsister of Aissatou) | Female | 42 | (1): 29-04-2019, 08-05-2019, and 29-05-2019 (2): 03-06-2019 | (1): Learning more about Fatima's relationship with her British husband and the relationship between Fatima and Cheikh and Aissatou (2): Celebrating Koriteh | Receives support from her British husband and migration |
| 10 | Ibrahima | Male | 31 | (1): 21-04-2019 and 30-04-2019 | (1): Learning more about Ibrahima (e.g. the guesthouse Ibrahima owns, Ibrahima's opinions in life, Ibrahima's family, Ibrahima's *toubab* wife and Ibrahima's aspirations) | Tourist industry, hustling and migration |
| 11 | Sainey | Male | 32 | (1): 02-04-2019 (2): 07-04-2019 (3): 01-05-2019 | (1): Informal-conversation about the English and Arabic school in Tanjeh (2): Learning more about the Gambian culture by taking Luka and me to a naming ceremony (3): Learning more about Sainey's aspirations and opinions | Teacher and tourist industry |
| 12 | Ismaila | Male | 36 | (1): 25-05-2019 (2): 07-06-2019 | (1): Learning how Ismaila's mother contributes to the family expenses through small-scale farming | Teacher and tourist industry |

| | | | | | (2): Learning more about the Gambian culture by visiting a wedding of an acquaintance of Ismaila | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 13 | Saikou | Male | 26 | (1): 20-04-2019<br>(2):13-05-2019 | (1): Learning more about Saikou's involvement in the tourist industry by visiting some of the lodges where he used to work<br>(2): Learning more about Ismaila's opinions in life, Ismaila's family and Ismaila's aspirations | Tourist industry (employee of Kairoh Garden Tanjeh) and migration |
| 14 | Adama | Male | 42 | (1): 24-04-2019, 07-05-2019, and 27-05-2019 | Learning more about Adama (e.g. the guesthouse Adama owns, Adama's opinions in life, Adama's family and Adama's aspirations) | Tourist industry, hustling and migration |
| 15 | Salim (brother of Cheikh) | Male | 55 | 18-04-2019 | Learning more about the the relationship between Salim and Cheikh, and how Salim runs Cheikh's gym | Hustling and migration |

**Appendix 3: Topic guide**
Semi-structured interviews have taken place in order to enrich the data for this research. This topic guide is especially made in order to collect all the relevant information from all the informants consistently. The guide is organized around the following four different sub-subjects: personal background, family background, aspirations, income-generating activities of the informant and his family.

| Name | |
|---|---|
| Date of birth | |
| Gender | |
| Date of the interview | |
| Place of the interview | |

*Personal background:*
- Can you tell me something about yourself? (e.g. place of birth, current place of living, achieved studies, civil status, religion, tribe, education etc.)

*Family background:*
- Where and with whom did you grow up? (e.g. father, mother, stepmother(s), (step)brother(s) and/or (step)sister(s), maternal and/or paternal aunts and uncles, maternal and/or paternal grandparents etc.)
- Current household (e.g. father, mother, stepmother(s), (step)brother(s) and/or (step)sister(s), maternal and/or paternal aunts and uncles, maternal and/or paternal grandparents etc.)
- Can you tell me something about the Gambian extended family system?

*Aspirations*
- What are your aspirations in life? (e.g. things you want to achieve)
- Do you have the feeling that some factors are positively affecting your aspirations in life? (e.g. help from family and/or friends, socio-economic system, your job etc.)
- Do you have the feeling that some factors are negatively affecting your aspirations in life? (e.g. lack of help from family and/or friends, socio-economic system, your job etc.)
- What have you done in the past to realize your aspirations? (e.g. seeking support from family and/or friends etc.)
- What are you currently doing to realize your aspirations? (e.g. seeking support from family and/or friends etc.)

*Income-generating activities*
- What are your income-generating activities? (e.g. farming, hustling, tourist industry, migration etc.)

- Do you have the feeling that some factors are positively affecting your income-generating activities?
- Do you have the feeling that some factors are negatively affecting your income-generating activities?
- How do you contribute to your family/household?

- What are the income-generating activities of your family/household? (e.g. farming, hustling, tourist industry, migration etc.)
- Do you have the feeling that some factors are positively affecting their income-generating activities?
- Do you have the feeling that some factors are negatively affecting their income-generating activities?
- How do your family members contribute to your family/household?