“Now, she is the new husband”

Positions and changing roles of female stayers in mobile Gambia

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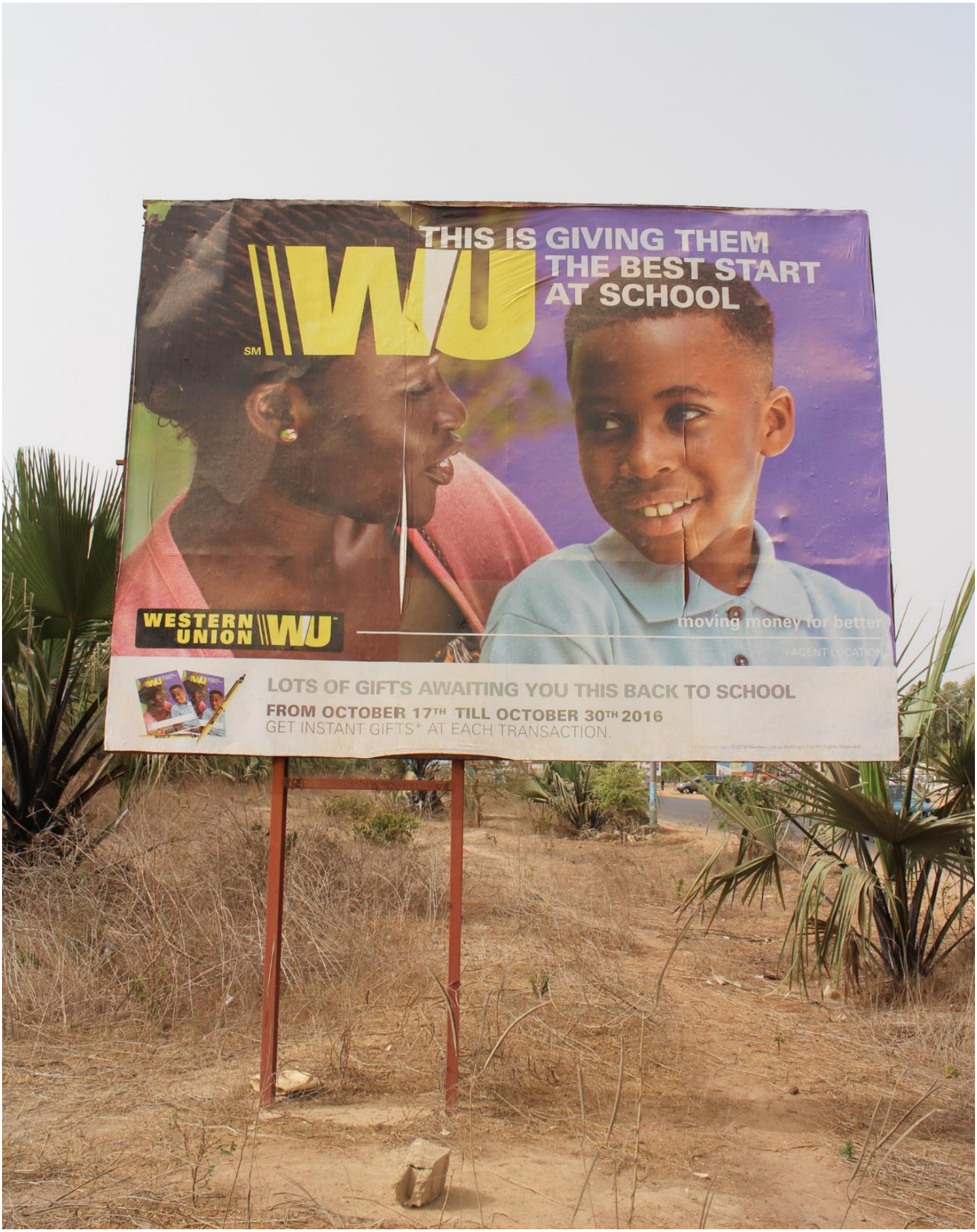

[1] Figure 1: Giesbers, E. (2017) Picture of a Western Union advertisement next to the road. Made on 16th of June 2018. Advertisements like these in which the importance of the movement of money is mentioned, are seen along the roads in The Gambia. It is a sign of the omnipresence of migration is The Gambia.

Preface

So, everything comes to an end, even the process of writing this thesis. Although I am happy and in a way also relieved that I can say that am finished writing my thesis, it simultaneously symbolises the end of one of the most wonderful experiences of my life. This experience, this process, would not have been the same without the people I met and who helped me along the way.

At first, my sincerest gratitude to all the lovely women who have helped me with this research. Without all of you, there would not even be a thesis. Thank you for sharing your deepest thoughts with me and giving me an inspirational insight in your life. Not only did you give me very interesting insights regarding my research, you also gave me interesting insights about life as well. All my respondents are not the only one who made my stay in The Gambia a wonderful time. My experience would not have been the same without my Gambian friends; everybody I met while I stayed at YMCA and my Gambian friends Binta and her family, Mamadi and Aisha, Amie and Ebrima. You all helped me to make The Gambia feel like home.

During my stay in The Gambia I got the opportunity to be a part of the Gamjobs family for three months. Thank you for this amazing opportunity Ebrima. Through this internship, I met many people, went to different places and learned a lot about The Gambian society. But especially I met the amazing Gamjobs team. Thank you all for showing me around and helping me with practical stuff, but most of all; thank you for accepting me as a part of Gamjobs. I wish all the best too you. Hopefully one day I will be back, Inshallah.

Furthermore, I would not have been able to do this research and to write this thesis without the help of Joris. Each time we had a conversation, I left your office with even more enthusiasm than before, all because of your contagious enthusiasm. You motivated me to go and explore The Gambia and to do write my thesis with passion. In my opinion, you are the best supervisor I could have asked for.

And of course, all the credits to everybody at home. Not only for supporting me to go to The Gambia, but also people who helped me during the whole process. Friends who always wanted to listen to my endless confusing thoughts about my research. At times I was not so sure what I actually was doing it really helped me to say it all out loud. Michelle thank you for your critical comments on my English writing style, it certainly helped. And Stijn, thank you for your endless patience and your willingness to listen to me over and over again, when I was in The Gambia but also when I returned.

So far, my stay in The Gambia was the most amazing thing I ever got to do. Although I was kind of scared before I left and I asked myself the same question over and over again when

I was on the airplane: “what are you doing?!”, I am so happy I went for it. Kind of cliché, but I felt in love with The Gambia and with the people I met there. Although I certainly had some struggles and I did not always feel at home, overall I look back on an amazing time. The Gambia will forever be my Smiling Coast.

Summary

Migration is a 'hot' topic. Not only in academic literature, but every day one can read something about migrants in the media. However, migration is not only about migrants. This study focusses on the other side of migration; non-migration. It focusses on female non-migrants in The Gambia specifically.

The goal of this research is to gain insights into the double-sided relation of Gambian women with the *culture of migration*. What is their perspective on migration, and how are their lives affected by migration of others? The focus is not on migration as a financial strategy, but it is considered as a social phenomenon. Hereby it is deliberately discussed that migration has consequences for other people besides the migrant. It is embedded in all facets of the Gambian society; therefore The Gambia is an example of a *culture of migration.*

In a field where there is many attention for actual movement, people who do not move are often 'forgotten'. This is happening in academic literature but also by local organisations or within general thoughts. Because of all research done to 'migration aspiration' or 'migration desires', an image is created in which stayers are considered to be 'left-behind'. This stimulates their ascribed position in which they are seen as powerless and passively acting human beings. However, this research wants to change this negative image. The power that women who stay have and their importance for migration will be emphasised.

In this qualitative research, conducted in The Gambia, the stories and thoughts of women are the central point of view. Information is gathered through observations, small talks and interviews. Hereby not only the perspectives of women, but also general ideas about migration and gender relations are central issues that are discussed.

This study concludes that migration certainly has its consequences for women, but women who stay have consequences for migration as well. Migration is a sensitive topic about which everyone has a different meaning, based on different experiences. When you want to understand migration, not only the migrant is an important actor. Everybody who is somehow involved plays an important role as well. The role of immobility within mobility need to be acknowledged by migration studies whereby non-migrants have to be seen as individual, actively acting people.

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

On a Friday afternoon I met with my friend Kaddy in front of her school where we took a gelly-gelly to the crowded Serekunda market. Since we did not know what present we should get for the wedding, we bought envelopes and put some money in there. We took another car in the direction of 'Borehole' where her sister who was getting married today lived. In the cab we talked about the wedding; how the couple met each other and Kaddy's relationship with her sister. Kaddy told me that she informed her whole family that I joined her to the wedding and that everybody was very excited. When we entered the compound, many women's and children's gaze turned our direction. All women wore colourful dresses, most of them wore make up and the ones who were not cooking sat together and chatted. After we greeted many women, and failed attempts to answer questions people asked me in Wolof, we entered the room. About eight women were sitting on the couches, accompanied by children who were walking and running around. The television in the room was on, although nobody seemed to watch it and on the wall hung a really big poster of an imam. The curtain that hung in the doorstep to the next room was pushed aside, allowing me to see a lady sitting on the bed. My friend Kaddy told me that this woman was the bride. In a yellow dress, she sat on the bed with her head bend low, covered with a thin, golden veil. Kaddy ordered me to go outside again, because they had a plate with Benechin for us. Together with Kaddy's stepmother, we sat down on the veranda and ate from a big, silver bowl. I asked were all the men where, and Kaddy said that they went to the mosque. She explained that the official part of the wedding is that men go to the mosque to pray together. Not long after that, when we were still eating and chatting on the veranda, about twenty men entered the compound. I asked Kaddy which one of the men was the groom, and she said that he was not there, he was in the UK. I surprisingly asked her if the marriage was happening without his presence. Yes indeed, she said, maybe he will come next month, but that does not matter for the marriage. I asked whether many marriages happen without the man's presence, and she said this was the case. Not only was I surprised about the groom's absence, I actually was more surprised about the fact that nobody told me about it in our talks about the wedding. It did not seem like a big deal that he was not present.

This elaboration of my experiences of a wedding I attended during my time in The Gambia is a perfect example of the omnipresence of migration in the Gambian society. My friend Kaddy, a student who is just as old as I am, invited me to her niece's wedding. In the week prior to the wedding, Kaddy and I spoke a lot about it; about the bride and the groom, rituals during the

wedding ceremony are and how they got engaged. During all our conversations and during the first thirty minutes I attended the wedding, nobody told me about the groom's physical absence on his own wedding. Since I did not knew it was possible for people to get married while one of them was not attending the wedding, this was an unexpected observation from my perspective. However, as I found out during my stay, this way of getting married is definitely not uncommon in The Gambia. In fact, it perfectly illustrates the close link between the Gambian society and migration.

As becomes clear from the observation above, migrants are not the only ones whose lives undergoes perceptible changes after his or her migration. The whole society is involved in processes of change (Graw & Schielke, 2012; Salazar & Smart, 2011). Graw and Schielke perfectly describes this:

> "After all, migration is not just about people migrating. It is a process of change that affects a society at large, and by doing so changes the experiences and perspectives also of those who have not migrated and perhaps never will." (2012, p.9)

Migration encompasses so much more than only a physical journey. In fact, migration encompasses a multisided journey for everybody who is just slightly involved. Also for non-migrants, migration is a daily issue in some circumstances (Gaibazzi, 2010). This especially applies to societies like the Gambian society, in which a so-called *culture of migration* is noticeable (Hahn & Klute, 2007). In the West-African context, migration is omnipresent as Lambert (2007, p. 129) argues. It is difficult to think of a community in West-Africa that has not been significantly shaped by the movement of its members. Not only the movement between rural and urban locations are of importance, the movement from both rural and urban locations to other countries as well (ibid.). It can be argued that almost all people who live in The Gambia are connected to migration in one way or another.

Gaibazzi (2015) examined the meaning of immobility among young Soninke men in The Gambia. He found that they talk about people who are *sitting.* This is the way they describe the position of stayers. However, 'sitting' has a deeper meaning than only non-migration. It also refers to a situation in which someone is trapped in an unwanted position of dependency without any value (ibid., p.116). With this thesis, I focus on a different way of seeing non-migrants. The focus is on the acknowledgement of the power and value of stayers in The Gambia, specifically of female stayers. The majority of the migrants in the Gambian society

are men, which means that the majority of stayers are women. Women's thoughts and opinions on migration are of great importance to capture a complete image within the migration debate, but they are relatively understudied within the field of migration studies (Boccagni & Baldassar, 2015). Not only need their stories to be heard, it is also important to recognise the power of these women. While it is clear that they experience many changes as a result of migration, their stay is also inevitable for the ones who do migrate. This thesis is about the twofold relation between female stayers and the migration of others, as is elaborated in the following paragraph.

1.1 Aims and research question

With this thesis I want to shed light on the people who are often forgotten in the migration and mobility debate: female non-migrants. The research objective for this thesis is to gain in-depth insights into the perspectives of women in The Gambia regarding the *culture of migration*. In doing so this thesis investigates to what extent, and in what way, their lives are affected by migration flows of others. Knowledge about the role of people who stay in the *culture of migration* will be enhanced. In this thesis, one research question and several sub questions are central:

What is the perspective of 'women who stay' on the culture of migration and to what extent does the culture of migration affect the lives of these women?

1. How are 'women who stay' related to migration and what is their own position in relation to migration?
2. How do 'women who stay' think about their own role in the *culture of migration*?
3. What consequences regarding migration flows do 'women who stay' experience in terms of:
    - Changes in income
    - Changes in responsibilities
    - Changes in the feeling of freedom

With 'staying', this thesis refers to women's physical position as a non-migrant. Hereby I carefully want to explain that I do not refer to either the dependent and valueless position Gaibazzi mentions, neither to a position in which women are physically non-mobile. This might seem confusing: the boundary between a migrant and a stayer can be very unclear and it strongly depends on the context. One can move from a village to a city and be considered a migrant by

some, while from an international perspective this person is considered a stayer since he or she did not cross any international border. This asks for a closer examination.

Just imagine a husband and wife lived together in a village where both were born. The husband moves to a city by himself, which makes him a migrant and his wife a stayer. If the wife moves to the city with her husband, they both are migrants. However, from an international perspective, they are in both cases stayers. When the man decides to move to another country, he is still a migrant, but this time he is also a migrant in international spheres. The wife, however, can be a migrant as well as a stayer simultaneously. When one looks at her relationship with her husband, she is a stayer. She stayed in the country where they both were born and raised while he left. Though, regarding the relation she has with the village, she can be considered a migrant. After all, she left the village. In relation to different people and on different scales, one person can achieve multiple, and somehow contradictory, positions in the migration debate.

1.2 Relevance

"The migration literature can be said to have thus far 'left-behind' the 'left behind'" (Toyota, Yeoh, & Nguyen, 2007, p. 158).

In their research, Toyota et al. argue that research about migration focusses too much on the migrants and thereby almost 'forgets' about the ones who stay. Therefore, this research on the perspective of Gambian women on the *culture of migration* – which focusses exactly on this topic that is 'left behind' – has a great added value scientifically as well as socially. The scientific and the social relevance should not be considered as two separate fields of interest. Since migration is studied from a social perspective, migrants are not seen as individual or rational acting actors. They are regarded as social human beings who are an integral part of their social environment and vice versa. The social and the scientific relevance are additional factors which both depart from the same point; the undervaluation of immobility.

1.2.1. Scientific relevance

Migration is a "booming business" (Schapendonk, 2017, p. 664) in science, politics and in the media. As illustrated by Toyota et al. through their the quote in the beginning of this chapter, most research in the field of migration studies focusses on migrants but migration "has two components that are equally important: the migrant and the family left behind" (De Snyder,

1993, p. 391). Almost everywhere migrants are leaving, there are even more people staying. One of the countries with relatively – in terms of percentages of the total population in the country of origin – the most migrants in Europe is The Gambia (Zanker & Altrogge, 2017; The World Bank, 2018b). Furthermore, internal migration flows in The Gambia are huge. But still, there are even more Gambian people who are not-migrating. However, not much research is devoted to this group of people (Biao, 2007) as for example becomes clear in the book 'The Age of Migration' (Castles, De Haas, & Miller, 2014). This book is considered one of the most complete informative books on migration. Nevertheless, there is almost no attention for non-migration in this book (King, 2015). The overestimation of migration and mobility can be considered to be a paradoxical phenomenon compared to reality (Van der Velde & van Naerssen, 2011).

The relatively small amount of research that has been devoted to non-migrants in relation to migration mainly focusses on the developmental impact that results from migration (Jónsson, 2011). These researches often "tends to be dominated by concerns of economic welfare, health and well-being" (Toyota, Yeoh, & Nguyen, 2007, p. 158). However, in this research the focus will be on the role of immobility in migration processes. Immobility is considered an integral part of migration and mobility studies. Focussing on the perspective of the stayers contributes to a not very well-developed field of study. Hereby, the influence migration has on their life in broad perspective, concerning for example feelings, responsibilities and how they cope with the migration of others, is also taken into account.

Non-migration is of great importance for migration studies, even though this is about people who are not on the move. Mobility and immobility are contradictory but at the same time cohesive phenomena (Hahn & Klute, 2007; Reeves, 2011). Due to this strong connectivity, it is insurmountable to include non-migrants in studies to mobility or migration. Non-migrants are not just people who do not migrate and passively fill up the positions that are left open by people who migrate. Instead, "[s]taying behind is an active process" (Gaibazzi, 2010, p. 11) in which people make active decisions to reframe and reshape their way of life.

The focus of this research is on the female perspective of migration. Therefore it is important to examine the gender relations in general. As Brettell argues in her book *Gender and Migration* (2016), considering migration through a gendered lens gives a more complete and holistic view. When you want to understand and explain migration and its causes and effects, gender issues need to be taken into account. Since most literature about migration is strongly male-orientated (Erman, 1997), this research pays attention to the other side of the gender division. This gendered lens is important when you try to understand the effects

migration has on people who do not migrate. Even though most migrants are male, women have a great role as well. In most of the cases, migration is not an individual decision. The whole family is involved, in many different ways (Gartaula, Visser, & Niehof, 2012).

In this thesis, this all is contextualised in The Gambia. The Gambia is one of the countries where migration flows are noticeable in all facets of the society. Along the Gambian population, international migrants counted for 14,8 percent of the total population in 2000 and 9.8 percent in 2017. This is the highest percentages of all West-African countries (except for Saint-Helena, one of the British Overseas Territories) and also one of the highest percentages in Africa (United Nations, 2017, p. 26)[2]. According to the World Bank, the amount of remittances that has been send to The Gambia explosively increased over the last decades till over 21% of the GDP of The Gambia in 2017. With these numbers, The Gambia relatively is the second largest recipient of remittances on the African continent, only Liberia has a higher percentage of the GDP that consists of remittances (The World Bank, 2018a). Even though this only focusses on international migration and not on internal movements, these high percentages already are a sign that migration can be seen everywhere in the country. This, and the open and welcoming appearance of Gambians, made The Gambia the perfect location for this research. In addition to these factors, the social relevance is just as important.

1.2.2. Social relevance

"I am happy that you write about this, more people need to know. It is important for more people to know about it." – Marie 31-05-2018

Many women I approached for my research said that they were happy to share their story with me. They appreciated it that someone listened to their side of the story and not only to the side of the migrants. Not only women I interviewed expressed that their voices were not heard, organisations working on migration issues told me exactly the same. I went to the office of the International Organization of Migration (IOM) in The Gambia to ask if there would be the possibility for me to interview one of the employees for my thesis. A woman working on projects dedicated to returnees spoke with me and told me they did not have any project that focussed on people who stay in The Gambia. She explained me that the flows of people that

[2] At least, these are the official numbers given by the United Nations. Because not every migrant is registrated, this are by far not all the migrants. For lack of ways to know the 'real' numbers, let's assume for now that these are the 'real' ones.

leave The Gambia were enormous so that was their primary focus point at that time. Despite that, she said, it is important they start to focus on issues that concentrate on the population that stays in The Gambia. Although the stayers are part of migration flows, their stories are "easily forgotten" (Marchetti-Mercer, 2012).

The people who stay are not only part of migration flows, their stay is crucial for migrants as well. Without them staying, others might not be able to leave. Their role in the maintenance of migration does not receive the attention it should. Social networks in the community of origin are of significant value when a potential migrant considers whether he or she can and will migrate. Strong ties with family and friends on the one hand could reduce the tendency to migrate while on the other hand, migration might not even be an option without the presence and support of the ones who stay (Haug, 2008).

Another call not to forget this side of the stories, came from an article released in August this year by the Correspondent – a Dutch journalist website – in which it was argued that in order to really understand migration, one has to look at the stayers in African countries (Vermeulen, 2018). In her research in Nigeria, Vermeulen experienced that stayers argued that the migration of others is their only hope. It changed their lives and will shape their future. The influence of migration flows in the country of origin are too big and complex not to be taken into consideration in migration studies (ibid.).

The effects of migration on the women who stay can be visualised by the outcomes of this thesis and will contribute to a greater awareness of the experiences of people who stay. Although everybody knows they are there, sometimes it seems like they have been forgotten in both academic literature as well as in practical projects. The conversation with an employee of the IOM in The Gambia accentuated the need for more knowledge on the experiences of stayers. This research contributes to the visualisation of this other side of migration which leads to the contextualisation of other 'issues' surrounding migration. Both the scientific as well as the social relevance point out that it is essential to pay more attention to immobility within the field of mobility studies.

1.3 The New Gambia

With a surface about 11.000 square kilometres, The Republic of The Gambia – also known as the Smiling Coast of Africa – is the smallest country on the mainland of the African continent. On the West-coast it is faced by the Atlantic Ocean and besides this side, the country is entirely enclosed by Senegal. The river the Gambia, from which the country derives its name, floats through the middle of The Gambia (Wright, 2018). According to the most recent information, The Gambia is home to 1.9 million people, of who the majority is located in the (peri)-urban areas in the West of the country (The World Bank, 2018b).

For a period of 22 years, president Yahya A.J.J. Jammeh ruled the country. His alleged abuse of human rights and the suppression of free press caused many Gambians to live in fear of being arrested, tortured or sudden disappearance. President Jammeh's tyranny worsened till the presidential election in December 2016, where he was defeated by Adama Barrow. After six weeks of thwarting and only after the Senegalese army entered The Gambia, Jammeh eventually accepted this outcome and left the country (Wright, 2018). The political upheaval in The Gambia has been calmed down.

In The Gambia, as well as in many other parts of the African continent, mobility is an important issue (Cole & Groes, 2016). The migration trajectories, mostly of young men, play an enormous role in the Gambian society and are a concern as well as an important source of income for many Gambian families (Gaibazzi, 2012; Tumbe, 2015). Some people leave the country by plane, but a relatively big part of the migrants go *through the backway*. The fact that relatively seen most of the migrants that entered Italy are Gambians, shows the large extent of migration in The Gambia (Boogaerdt, 2018).

People are not only leaving The Gambia, others are entering The Gambia as well. When I walked on the streets I met people from other countries, mainly from neighbouring countries as Senegal and Guinee-Bissau. The relatively large number of Lebanese restaurants revealed the presence of Lebanese in the country. Some immigrants settle in The Gambia while others use it as a transit country to leave the African mainland to go to Cape Verde by boat (Wright, 2018). Even though the extent of in-migration is by no means as big as out-migration, the traditional deviation of sending or receiving countries is not right in place (Castles, De Haas, & Miller, 2014). Even though this thesis is about the *culture of migration*, it is mainly focussing on flows of out-migration.

As said, most migrants that leave The Gambia are male. This is related to the ascribed gendered roles in private and public life. These roles are not always complied in the reality but

they are often considered to be the ideal division of roles. The man has the authority in the house and should take care of his wife, or wives, and children financially. Women are responsible for the household and are often economic active in gender specific activities like farming or selling vegetables at the *Lumo*, the local market. Nevertheless, it is not her task to take financial care of the family (Babou, 2008).

It is often difficult to find a paid job in The Gambia, especially in the rural areas. This is seen by the (youth)unemployment rate which is terribly high with 43,9% (Boogaerdt, 2018). Many people leave the place they used to live with the intention to find work somewhere else. This could be leaving The Gambia for another country or leaving rural areas to move to the *Kombo* area, the urban area surrounding Serekunda and Banjul. This research is mainly conducted in the *Kombo* area and a small part took place in the village Kuloro.

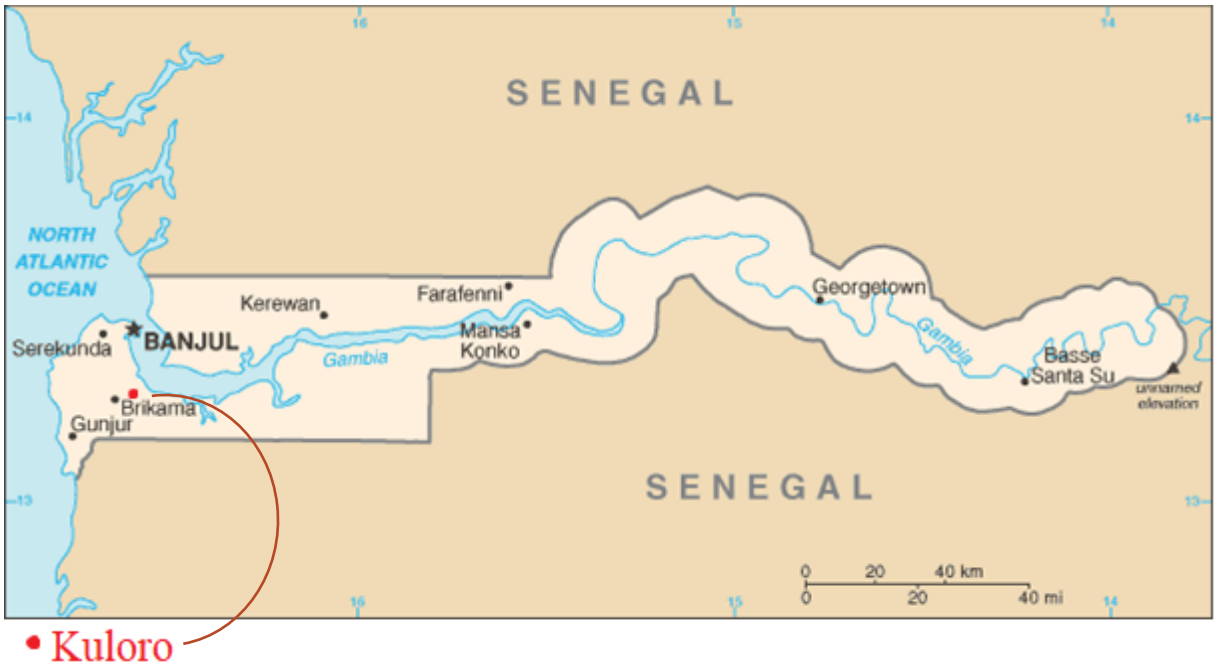

Figure 2 - Map of The Gambia (Central Intelligence Agency, 2018), own adjustment.

1.4 Structure

After this introduction, in which the focus of the research and the Gambian context is introduced, the following part will be devoted to the existing literature about (female) non-migrants and migration in general. The third paragraph will describe what methods are used to gain information for this thesis and a brief introduction of the respondents will be given. After that, the information that has been gained by the fieldwork will be discussed in two empirical chapters. Chapter 4 will be devoted to the thoughts and position Gambian women have

regarding the *culture of migration* while the focus of chapter 5 will be the other way around; the way women experience the *culture of migration* encompasses the focal point in this chapter. The thesis will be completed with a conclusion, a reflection and the list of used references.

Throughout the whole thesis, quotes of respondents are listed. These quotes are not a summary of the thoughts of all the respondents, but these will illustrate one of the thoughts. While I use more quotes of certain women, and less or none of others, that does not mean that the thoughts and sayings of these women are more important compared to others.

Word list

Words are not neutral, this is especially the case with words that cover a controversial subject. I chose to use some of the words and expressions in this thesis that I often heard in The Gambia. They may not be the common expressions in academic literature, but it adds value since translations not always keep the meaning intact. Therefore words used in this thesis and other common heard words or expressions that ask for an explanation are listed below.

- *To sit* – many people I spoke to referred to stayers as 'people who sit' or 'people who sit and wait'. Gaibazzi clearly describes it as "[a] metaphor for the inability to move either physically …, financially… or socially. [It] is not solely a signifier for geo-social immobility; (…) [it] indexes specific ways of somatically attending to this impasse." (Gaibazzi, 2015, p. 116);
- *Papers* – these are the legal documents migrants can receive. 'Asking for papers' is the same as applying for asylum;
- *Crossing* – in certain contexts, this referred to the crossing of the Mediterranean sea. People who 'crossed' are people who went on a boat to cross the sea;
- *Going through the backway* – this is the route from The Gambia and through Mali towards Libya. From Libya, people try to cross the Mediterranean sea.

Futhermore there are other words or expressions that people often used, like 'little money' (a small amount of money), 'fishmoney' (money women have or get to buy food at the market), 'just managing' (finding ways to earn some money) or 'it is not easy' (being in a difficult situation). Using these words myself allowed me to blend in more.

Chapter 2 – Theoretical framework

In this globalised world, distances seem to get smaller and people seem to be more mobile. Even though it seems like there are more people that migrate than ever before, Van der Velde and van Naerssen (2011) argue that even in the most mobile societies, immobility still is the rule. With other words, there are way more people who do not move compared to people who do move, also in a *culture of migration* like The Gambia. The majority of the Gambian population is involved with migration, or notices effects of migration in their life.

According to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), migration refers to "[t]he movement of a person or a group of persons, either across an international border, or within a State" (IOM, 2011, p. 62). 'Migration' encompasses not the same as 'international migration'. Taylor (1999) points at the importance of the internal movements as he argues that the movement of people from the rural to the urban areas "perhaps [is] the most pervasive demographic correlate of economic growth" (p. 66).

The definition used by the IOM raises several questions. One can question if everybody who spatially moves is a migrant. For example people who cross borders for their work or pleasure motives, like me when I did research in the Gambia, are usually not categorised as a 'migrant' (e.g. Hage, 2005). However, the line between business people on the move and (people who are generally considered to be) 'migrants' is not a strict line, because the so called 'migrants' may also move for business purposes (Salazar & Smart, 2011). The definition of a migrant that I use in this thesis is: people who are spatially mobile and move across borders of a State or a region, with the intention to live somewhere else, for a short or a long period of time.

Clarification about who is a migrant lead to questions about non-migrants, the stayers. This brings another, but comparable discussion along: are all people who are not migrants per definition stayers? In this research, people are considered to be 'stayers' when they were not migrating at time of the research. Staying is relative since people may have migrated in earlier stages of their life from rural to urban areas, or within the urban areas, but at the specific moment of my research they were residing in one place. Hereby I admit that I did not draw a straight line. In this research, Isatou's husband who lives in Switzerland for over 12 years is considered a migrant, while I considered Halima who moved to another village five years ago a stayer. As mentioned in the introduction, the concepts 'stayer' and 'migrant' can only be used correctly when the context and relations to other people are taken into account. Eventually, the line between a migrant and a stayer may not be as strict as literature often assumes it to be.

2.1 (International) migration as social phenomena

In this thesis and the research that preceded, the social importance of migration is emphasised. Many migration theories focus on financial aspects and regard migrants as rational actors who make the decision to migrate on their own (Taylor, 1999; Castles, De Haas, & Miller, 2014). However, the new economics of labour migration (NELM) considers migrants to be social actors who operate within the social context of their community (Taylor, 1999). Furthermore, not the migrant as an individual but the household he or she belongs to is seen as the main actor in the decision-making process (Start, 1991).

In this NELM model, instead of income maximalization (which was by many previous theories considered to be the main reason to leave a site), risk minimization is considered the main trigger of migration (De Haas, 2006; 2010). This implies that migration often is a choice made to improve the living standards of families. Castles et al. describe three main motivations for migration that are in line with the NELM approach. The first is to "diversify income sources in order to spread and minimize income risks", the second is to generate resources in the form of remittances for investments and the third is to gain a higher socio-economic status in the society (2014, p. 38). Migration is not seen as a result of "absolute poverty" but as a response to "relative deprivation". A decision in which the neighbouring households have a role and where, besides the migrant self, multiple actors are involved (Stark & Taylor, 1991, pp. 1176-1177). Despite that, migration can of course be an individual choice to strive after new opportunities in a broad sense. For instance people who flee from family conflicts or social control, or others who migrate for education purposes or to overcome gender inequality (De Haas, 2006; Castles, De Haas, & Miller, 2014).

According to NELM, migrants are considered to be a coherent part of their social surroundings and it is taken into account that they are trapped in a *bounded rationality* (Taylor, 1999). Their knowledge about what is waiting for them is limited (Van der Velde & van Naerssen, 2011). Not only do migrants lack full knowledge about their journey, unforeseen circumstances can derive during the trajectory. Decisions that are made and opportunities or difficulties that arise along the way, all lead to changes in the preferable destination, way of traveling and timeframe. The complete trajectory and thoughts prior to that are of importance, not only the place of destination and the place of settlement (Schapendonk & Steel, 2014).

There has been critique on the NELM because it primary sees migrants as rational and economic decision makers (Taylor, 1999), while economic considerations are not the only important factor in the decision-making processes. Furthermore, NELM focusses on movement within mobility studies and leaves non-movement out of the picture. Van der Velde and van

Naerssen (2011) try to broaden this scope by discussing the importance of the reason why people would stay, *keep factors*, or not go, *repel factors*. Nevertheless, this is also mainly about migrants and mobility instead of non-migration. This leads exactually to the gap this thesis wants to contribute to; immobility in the context of migration.

2.1.1. Migration and (social) connectivity

Globalisation has led to a rearrangement of jobs, goods, ideas and people worldwide (McKenzie & Menjivar, 2011) and has made it more easy for people to live according to a 'mobile' lifestyle (Menjívar & Agadjanian, 2007). Due to technological improvement, transport developments and an increase in the worldwide use of technology, it is easier for people to maintain close ties with people all over the world (Grillo & Mazzucato, 2008; Menjívar & Agadjanian, 2007). The same counts for migrants for whom it is easier to remain in contact with people in the country of origin. The world in this sense seems to be smaller and more connected, a so-called global world (Castles, De Haas, & Miller, 2014).

The opportunity for people to be simultaneously connected to multiple places increases in and through this global world. The transnational approach speaks about 'transmigrants' who have "multi-stranded social relations" that cross borders and whose identities are formed with influences of more than just one state (Glick Schiller, Basch, & Blanc-Szanton, 1995, p. 48). This indicates that migrants have a 'double engagement', which means that the lives of many migrants – socially and mentally – take place in more than one site. Ties with the countries or places of origin are maintained while at the same time new ties in new places are created (Grillo & Mazzucato, 2008). The transnational approach considers migrants part of both the society of origin, the society of destination and everywhere in between.

2.2 Culture of Migration

> "The exposure of rural youth to the relative wealth and success of migrants, combined with changing 'urban' tastes and material aspirations, makes the rural way of life less appealing, discourage local people from working in traditional sectors and encourage even more out-migration. This would lead to a 'culture of migration' in which youth can only imagine a future through migrating, decreasing their willingness to work and build a future locally." (De Haas, 2010, pp. 237-238)

Migration can become the norm in a society. If more people migrate, values and perceptions within that society will change which can eventually lead to a generalisation of migration (Massey, et al., 1993). In the quote above, De Haas speaks about rural youths who become attracted by an urban lifestyle. The same counts for youths who become interested in an international lifestyle that crosses borders. Youths often experiment with ways to deal with the different opportunities and possibilities they have in their life. This makes them a "social *being*" and "social *becoming*" at the same time (Christiansen, Utas, & Vigh, 2006, p. 11). They are often committed to new ways of communication whereby they easily gain information about lifestyles physically far away from them. Living that life could become interesting for them. Their purpose is not only to *live* that other lifestyle, but also to navigate in a social way. Vigh (2006) describes that for young men in Bissau "migration is, despite the difficulties it entails, seen (…) as one of the only means (…) of having a tolerable life" (p.42-43). This is a perfect example of a *culture of migration*.

One can speak about a *culture of migration* when migration is the preferential livelihood strategy in a society (Hahn & Klute, 2007). As Massey et al. (1993) argue, "[a culture of migration is created when] migration [is] deeply ingrained into the repertoire of people's behaviours, and values associated with migration become part of the community's values" (pp. 452-453). When migration becomes an integral part of the society, it is likely more people will migrate. This on its turn, will make migration even more popular and in this way a *culture of migration* maintains itself. For some people, migration can be a way to gain a higher social status. As a result of this glorification of migration, a social pressure to migrate can develop itself (de Haas, 2006; Adhikari & Hobley, 2015).

2.2.1. Effects of migration on the society of origin

As a matter of course, the lives of the people who migrate will undergo a lot of changes. However, one does not have to migrate to notice effects of migration in their lives since "non-migrating does not mean being outside the realm of migration" (Gaibazzi, 2010, p. 13). As McKenzie and Menjivar argue, "the family members left behind experience some of the most intense effects of migration – not only financially but also socially and emotionally (2011, p.64)."

Many migrants tend to send money back home. Internal and international remittances are a reliable source of income for many households, which often counts for a large share in the total household income (de Haas, 2006). People who do not receive remittances directly, indirectly gain profit from it as well, for example by new employment opportunities that are

created or through the development of public institutions (ibid.). On the other hand, remittances are an insecure source of income at the same time. While many migrants expect themselves to be able to send remittances on a regular basis, not everybody will actually get the opportunity to do so and the amount of money can be lower than expected or wished for (Gunnarsson, 2011). This, compared with incomplete information or false expectations, can cause the whole situation to be very insecure for both the migrant and the ones who stay. Because migration comes associated with insecurities it can raise either hopes and fears for both the migrants, as for his or her family and friends (Castles, De Haas, & Miller, 2014, p. 55).

In the debate about the effects of migration on development, especially in developing countries, two tendencies are entangled in a discussion; migration optimist versus migration pessimists. As the denotation already suggest, migration optimists believe that migration will lead to more development in the sending country since people are exposed to new flows of capital, new ideas and qualitative better education. On the other hand, migration pessimists opine that migration undermines development because remittances are not always converted to projects that will develop a society but are often spend on luxury goods, which causes inequality, individualism and the dependency on remittances to grow (Castles, de Haas, & Miller, 2014; de Haas, 2006). These ideas can also be applied on the micro level, the level of the household. While some households with migrants will experience an increase in their wealth, comfort and prosperity, others experience a decrease in these aspects and will endure more difficulties. One story has different points of views; somebody who leaves the country is considered to be an embodying of the 'brain drain' problem by some, and of an agent of development by others (Bakewell, 2008). Migration cannot be considered solely a positive, neither a negative occurrence.

2.2.2. Non-migrants in a culture of migration

Castles et al. describe the enormous extent to which effects of migration are noticed nowadays as they say that "[t]here can be few people in either industrialized or less developed countries today who do not have personal experiences of migration and its effects; this universal experience has become the hallmark of the age of migration" (2014, p. 13). People who are not moving are not only linked to migration because they experience changes, they are influencers for the organisation, shaping and maintenance of migration as well. Gaibazzi (2010, p. 25) argues that migration is a social construct "in which relations between mobile and immobile agents may take an organized form". Staying is an active process, he argues and he strongly

advocates to acknowledge the active role of people who stay. This must start with the use of the right appellation.

Frequently, people who do not migrate while others surrounding them do, are defined as people that are 'left-behind' (e.g. Toyota, Yeoh, & Nguyen, 2007). This evokes a strong negative connotation of a homogeneous group of people who are passive victims trapped in a powerless and helpless situation (Jónsson, 2011; Reeves, 2011). The word 'left' implies that their social position is less compared to the social position of migrants, while 'behind' also suggest that they are in a less worthy position compared to the ones who moved 'forward' (Gaibazzi, 2010). Immobility is in this way always the negative opponent of mobility and studied in relation to mobility.

Using the word 'stay' instead of 'left behind' or 'stay behind', "suggests an active maintenance of continuity" (Reeves, 2011, p. 558) and gives people a dignified and powerful status. Therefore, people who are currently not on the move[3], all people accept migrants, will in this thesis be ascribed as 'stayers'. It is important to keep in mind that staying does not always come aside leaving. A stayer can also not personally know or be connected to somebody who is a migrant, and still be a 'stayer' him- or herself.

No matter what description is being used, stayers in a *culture of migration* are often analysed as people who are against their will trapped in an immobile position, while it should not be assumed that it is everybody's goal to migrate. Stayers are of indispensable value and staying can be a strategic choice to give rise to (mobility) opportunities of others while keeping the household in control and make sure migrant's investments will be meaningful (Gaibazzi, 2010; Reeves, 2011). While some perceive their situation as a stayer as unfavourable, others comprehend it as positive (Gaibazzi, 2010). The assumption that everybody wants to migrate is kept alive by the fact that in certain countries or under certain circumstances, migrants are considered to be heroes (Gresham, Smit, & Smith, 2015) while the position of stayers is associated with failure (Castles, De Haas, & Miller, 2014; Massey, et al., 1993; Start, 1991). Power asymmetries between migrants and stayers are most likely to be in favour of the migrant (McKenzie & Menjivar, 2011) as migrants are considered to have something stayers do not have (Carling, 2008). Nevertheless, migrants and stayers both go through stages in which they

[3] It is important to notice that 'stayers' are not completely physical immobile persons. Within certain boundaries they are also mobile, e.g. a trip to the market or visit family in another place. The difference here is that migrants have moved and are away for a longer period of time while stayers still physically live in their home.

are vulnerable and in some situations this can lead to a more powerful position for the stayer (ibid.).

Gaibazzi (2010) described two main types of stayers in the Gambian context who experience their position in a different way. On the one hand, there are people who '*sit*' but also make money themselves, with or without the support of migrants. They could be called 'active stayers'. Others '*just sit*', where there 'just' is the keyword and the reason this totally differs from 'sit'. These people do not only have a lack of mobility within a society where mobility is highly valued, as people who 'just sit' they are often inactive and they passively wait for better opportunities to come (pp. 15, 214).

This shows that everybody deals differently with their role as a stayer and everyone has different expectations regarding the migrant. The way migrants act does not always confirm with the way stayers hope and think they will. Stayers are in fact entangled in insecure relations with migrants. Migrants find themselves in many uncertain situations too, but they know what to expect from the people that stay. On the contrary, migrants are a source of insecurity for people who stay. Migrants leaves to a new site that is often unknown for the stayer. They do not know what to expect from the migrant and its new (social) environment. On the other hand, the migrant knows the environment of the stayer and the stayers might be one of the only secure things in their lives when they start their trajectory (Bauman, 2011 in Huijer, 2016, p.52).

Also, the way in which migrants are able to support stayers is uncertain. Some stayers receive financial and mental help, while others do not receive support from migrants. There are migrants who do not want to send money but a probably more common reason is that they do not have the opportunity to give (financial) support. In line with that, migrants are frequently criticized for being ungrateful because they would not give their family enough attention or the support they give in terms of remittances or facilitation of migration is considered to be inadequate. Thereby they are often blamed to "forget where they came from" (Carling, 2008, p. 1458). It is expected for migrants to be a "rooted cosmopolitan" (Appiah, 1997; 2005 in Gaibazzi 2010); they can explore the world but in the meantime they have to make sure that they never forget where they came from.

2.3 Gender and/in Migration

In this thesis, a gendered lens will be used to look at migration issues. Carling (2008) argued that it is important to gasp the "gendered nature of mobility and immobility" (p.558) in the understanding of migration. Hereby is meant that the focus should be on "how men and women

relate to one another (…), how their experiences might differ and how gender roles (…), which vary from one culture to another, might both affect and be affected by geographic mobility" (Brettell, 2016, p. 3). This regards not only the question who is a migrant and who is not – which of course is a part of it – but it strongly focusses on the division of power that is connected to migration flows.

2.3.1 Gendered migration flows

Every society has preferences for either females or males to migrate. In certain societies, families are more likely to invest in the daughter's migration journey, for example for marriage purposes or in societies where the daughter is (financially) responsible for her parents (Quisumbing, 2010). In the Philippines, people prefer to have a female family member to work abroad in comparison to a male family member. Women are known to send a relatively larger amount of their income back home and do this on a more regular basis (IOM, 2013). The situation in the Philippines can be seen as exceptional because in most societies it is preferable for men to migrate, just as in The Gambia.

Gaibazzi (2010) did research to Young Soninke Men who "stayed behind" in The Gambia and argues that in this context, migration often is "[h]istorically and culturally, … a male domain" (p. 14). Especially when patriarchy is the rule, like in The Gambia, where the normative ideal of a household is a "heterosexual male-headed household, preferably based on formal marriage" (Chant, 2003, p. 4; Gunnarsson, 2011), men are more likely to migrate. Social expectations and (social) pressure to gain a higher social status are the important reasons for migration. It can be a *rite de passage*, a liminal phase for young men to become a 'real' man (Gaibazzi, 2010).

In the Gambian society, women's position – following the patriarchal ideal – is as caretaker of the family and household. They are expected to stay in the private sector while men are the supposed to be the sole breadwinners (Chant & Jones, 2005; Erman, 1997). There is often not a big social pressure for women to migrate and to find *greener pasture* somewhere else. On the contrary, women in The Gambia are often expected to stay at home and migration is not always allowed because it is not considered as something a woman 'should' do. Women usually only migrate if it is to join their husband (Gaibazzi, 2010).

2.3.2 Female non-migrants in a culture of migration

Non-migrants are often considered to be passive followers. This assumption is even stronger for female stayers; they are considered to follow their male family members if they migrate. However, women's role in migration is much more active than the mainstream literature claims them to be (Erman, 1997). Just as there are debates regarding their role in the migration flows, there as well are contradictory opinions considering the emancipatory consequences of male migration for their wives (Menjívar & Agadjanian, 2007).

On the one hand, scientists embraced and reinforced the idea of the dependent female who faces more difficulties when their husband migrates. In their research conducted in Armenia and Guatemala, Menjivar and Agadjanian (2007) concluded that gender inequalities increase after a husband leaves. Women still live in the same patriarchal society with hardly any employment opportunities while men are physically more mobile and earn more money. Most of the time, migration does not lead to an abolishment of patriarchal systems (Reeves, 2011). Gunnarsson (2011) endorses this when he saw that Gambian women remained dependent on their husband's income. In many cases, the amount of remittances the women received was not enough to replace the lost of capital at home. This caused the women to experience social tensions with other family members. Gaibazzi (2010) argues that many men barely involve his wife (or wives) in the decision-making process and that she can be exposed to discrimination and isolation by other women after her husband migrated.

On the other hand, studies demonstrated that male migration resulted in more female empowerment, opportunities and autonomy (Adhikari & Hobley, 2015). New roles, opportunities and skills would become available for women. In that line, Gaibazzi (2010) experienced that some women had a relatively big role in the decision-making process and they motivated their men to go. Migration of men in their society could be positive for women's own position. Some men take their wife with them to urban areas or abroad where they often live a much more autonomous life because the control of family members fades away. In some cases, women who stay also gain more autonomy. Gulati (in Rashid, 2013) argued that women's mobility and the size of their network in Kerale State India increases with male migration. Women living in nuclear families are confronted with more autonomy and new responsibilities. McKenzie et al. (2011) showed that women in Honduras faced more responsibilities and feelings of independence after their husband left. Although they achieved more freedom, it did not seem to be the kind of freedom the women liked to receive. Reeves (2011) underlines that even though some women may be more visible in the public domain, that does not automatically lead to more empowerment.

Overall, the social environment has a big influence on how women experience the migration flows. Gulati noticed differences in experiences of women who lived in nuclear families compared to women who lived in extended families. Furthermore, the family system (patriarchal, matriarchal, egalitarianism) is of great importance. Whereas women may gain more control over several aspects of their lives, they can lose control over other aspect at the same time (Menjívar & Agadjanian, 2007).

This all mainly refers to married women whose husband is away. Next to these female stayers, there are many women who stay who do not have a husband or (close) family member who is away. Migration related changes in their lives are often left out of migration literature. This research tries focus on gender roles in a broad, social sense because economic, social and political effects of migration are noticeable throughout the whole society. Generally, consequences cannot be captured in solely positive neither negative terms. Remittances for example may increase "the objective wellbeing of the women left behind, but it may not have increased their subjective wellbeing" (Gartaula, Visser, & Niehof, 2012, p. 401). Subjective wellbeing depends on more than only an increase in income (objective wellbeing) and is rather complex and more about feelings. For this research, the subjective wellbeing is most important since it covers women's perspectives and feelings.

2.4. Perspectives and positions

By focusing on the perspectives of Gambian women, this research tries to combine geographical thoughts with some dimensions of social psychology. A perspective or attitude can be seen as "a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor" (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993 in Eagly, 1992). By taking several perspectives into consideration, it will become clear what women think of migration flows. Do they believe it is a pathway to success for migrants, do they think it is necessary for (personal) development or do they not think it is good at all? And what do they believe the effect will be on families that stay in The Gambia? Perspectives are a result of imaginations together with the lived reality, and therefore perspectives are a subject to change. These perspectives are not often the point of attention within migration studies, more often the focus is on the perception of people living in the country of arrival. When searching for 'attitudes migration', the most links are all about the attitudes *towards* migrants or the attitudes *of* migrants (e.g. Facchini & Mayda, 2008; Coenders, Lubbers & Scheepers, 2003).

With the focus on attitudes of Gambian women, a deeper understanding of how migration is perceived in The Gambia will be created. Emotions and attitudes are crucial and

central aspects for understanding migration flows (Conradson & McKay, 2007). Boccagni and Baldassar (2015) point to the importance of studying migrant's emotions for the understanding of the "migrant experience" (p.74). In the same line, the emotions and experiences of stayers are crucial for the understanding of the total 'migration experience' since emotions are central aspects for understanding migration flows.

On the one hand, Gambian women's attitudes – as well as other family members' attitudes – towards migration are of great importance for the actual performance of migration flows (De Jong, 2000). As Ajzen (1991) describes in his theory of planned behaviour, there are three main considerations that determine human's behaviour. These are behavioural beliefs, control beliefs and normative beliefs. Behavioural beliefs focus on the likely outcomes, control beliefs pay attention to "the presence or absence of requisite resources and opportunities" (p. 196), while normative beliefs are the expectations others have of the behaviour and a "person's motivation to comply" with these beliefs (p. 195). These normative beliefs are the attitudes other people have towards the possible behaviour of one. It varies per person how willing he or she will be to disregard these meanings.

On the other hand, women are also big and important influencers on the attitudes of others (non-migrants). Within a family or household, woman often have a central role as caretaker. The meanings and interpretations these women have often contribute to the shaping of meanings of other family members, including children (McKenzie & Menjivar, 2011). Either way, the meaning and attitudes of women are an important factor in the maintenance of migration flows.

2.5 Analytical framework

All these theoretical insights lead towards one analytical frame that is used for this thesis. In this analytical frame, migration is considered to be a social phenomenon rather than a financial strategy. Hereby, the roles of (female) stayers are not undervalued against the roles of migrants; stayers are central in this thesis. They have a crucial role in all aspects of the *culture of migration* and they notice many effects of migration. To understand the roles that female stayers have and the effects they experience, research to their subjective wellbeing is crucial. This covers perspectives, thoughts and feelings and illustrates how the *culture of migration* is noticeable throughout the Gambian society and how gender shapes the creation and understandings of mobility and immobility in The Gambia.

Chapter 3 – Methods – Ethnographic research

What surprised me the most during the first days of my stay in the Gambia, was that everybody seemed to talk to each other. Asking '*how are you?*' or answering *'fine fine'* to everyone you pass on the street was a common thing to do. This open appearance most people had really helped me during my research. In this qualitative research, social reality is described and explained through "the medium of language" (in contrast to quantitative research, where information is gathered and analysed through "the medium of mathematics") so conversations are one of the important ways to gain information (Beuving & De Vries, 2015, p. 19).

Ethnographic research differs from most other forms of research in the way that it not only uses verbal or written resources but that observations are the main way to gain information (Gobo & Marciniak, 2011); it focusses on people's actions instead of people's sayings. Observations are crucial for the researcher's final interpretations, which are the sum of textual research, anthropological knowledge and the memory of the field experiences. These memories might be unwritten but they are "inscribed in the fieldworker's being" (Okely, 2002).

By focussing on happenings, ethnographers observe what members of the group of respondents do not tell because they take it for granted. 'New' information can hereby come to light (Herbert, 2000). The researcher tries to study the *emic* perspective, which means that the native's point of view is the leading one (Brodsky & Faryal, 2006). As Malinowski described, the researcher has to "grasp the native's point of view (…) to realise *his* vision of *his* world" (1922 in Gobo, Doing Ethnography, 2008, p. 8). This is nicely said but there is not *one* truth but "every view is *a* way of seeing, not *the* way of seeing" (Wolcott in Taylor, 2011, p. 6). A researcher can try to look as much as possible from a native's point of view but of course he or she will always create an own truth based on his or her own insights and perspecives.

However, as a result of this focus on the emic perspective, the research can undergo unexpected changes. This makes it impossible for an ethnographer to plan and order everything on forehand. Herbert argues "that order should emerge *from* the field rather than be imposed *on* the field" (2000, p. 552) which is why the focus and way of doing research is a subject to change.

3.1 Research Methods

Thus, ethnographic methods are used in this research, but since ethnography can include many different variants (Herbert, 2000), this alone does not clear up how the research is conducted. To gather empirical information, I spent three months in The Gambia. During this stay, I was

an intern at Global Unification The Gambia and I conducted fieldwork to gain empirical insights for this thesis. The research can be described as a *Strategically Situated (Single-Site) Ethnography*. This is a form of ethnographic research in which the researcher does not physically move around while studying a multi-sited setting (Marcus, 1995; Gielis, 2011). This allowed me to focus on transnational lifestyles and situations and on personal experiences women had with migration while staying at one place. The fact that I did not had to move around a lot for my research had the benefit that my relationships with the people surrounding me, including with some of my respondents, became closer and more trustworthy (Hage, 2005).

Within this ethnographic research, I used three main research methods to gain information; (participatory) observation, semi-structured interviews and small talks. During my stay, I made many notes. Notes of places, happenings and sayings; sometimes in the form of little written stories, sometimes short jottings and sometimes voice recordings in my cell phone. As Okely (2008) argues, it is better to gather a lot of notes because you never know what might be useful in the end. Because I did not always feel comfortable to write notes down, I made many spoken notes in my phone. I felt more comfortable with this because many people used their phone all day long. The disadvantage of this is that you cannot make short drawings or add notes.

Most of the research took place in Serekunda, which is the largest urban area in the Gambia. During one week of my stay, I went to a small village 200 kilometres *upcountry* for my internship, where I did mainly spend my time observing daily life. One day I went with a friend to the village he came from, to interview women there. This small village is named Kuloro, located about 30 kilometres from Serekunda. These locations were additional locations to an urban field to enlarge the diversity of the research population of my research.

3.1.1. Participatory Observation

(Participatory) observation can be done at (almost) any time, which makes it easier and simultaneously more difficult to do. In order to somehow understand the (gender) relations within the Gambian context, observations were of great importance. In the beginning, I strolled around the neighbourhood during the weekends. Often I did this with the intention to meet women I could interview for my research or to observe at events that were suitable for observation. Here the argument from Herbert that order should be created in the field became extremely clear. Sometimes I only seemed to meet men, people who could not talk English or people who were mainly interested in selling me goods. But on the other hand, opportunities sometimes arose at the most unexpected moments. For example while I walked on the market

or went to a friend's house; so many insights were collected at random occasions or at unexpected places. As my English friends in The Gambia told me "just when you expect something to fail, in The Gambia it is happening right at that time".

Within ethnographic research a distinction is made between *non-participant observation* and *participant observation*. *Non-participant observation* has advantages like not being able to influence the behaviour of the research subjects. As a researcher you observe everything but you do not participate in any happenings, nor involve yourself in any way. *Participant observation* allows you to be part of the environment, built a relationship with the social actors, participate in their social happenings and "[learn] their code (…) in order to understand the meaning of their actions" (Gobo & Marciniak, 2011, p. 105). Hereby a deeper understanding of the observed behaviour can arise. Participant observation sounds good and comprehensive, although within the context of my research, I was and will always be an outsider. This position in some ways destabilised participatory observation methods, as I will reflect on later in paragraph *3.3 Position in the field*. This paragraph will zoom in on the broader and general discussions regarding participant and non-participant observation.

So, the advantage of participatory observation is that information can be achieved from the 'inside' of a society. It requires ethnographers "to participate in the social life of the actors observed, while at the same time maintaining sufficient cognitive distance so that he or she can perform his or her scientific work satisfactorily" (Gobo, 2008, p. 6). This can be quite contradictory, but Gobo refers to the concern that it is a challenge, or maybe even an impossible task, to observe when you yourself are completely part of the situation you are observing. Won't you lose your own etic insights when you are part of the society (Ergun & Erdemir, 2010)?

In their article, Ergun and Erdemir recall the words of Weber: "one need not be Caesar in order to understand Caesar" (ibid., p. 17). They wonder if it is necessary to have an insider's point of view to understand what happens. On the contrary, they emphasise the importance for researchers to embrace their etic perspective as well. This might seem inconsistent but etic perspectives are crucial for the neutrality of the research and for building trusting relationships with respondents. As an outsider with etic insights, you avoid the risk of distrusted by insiders because of social connections and biased knowledge of the community (ibid.). The most perfect line between participatory and non-participatory observation has to be found in every research.

Furthermore, trying to fully integrate in a society yields the danger that habits and happenings become too familiarised which causes the researcher not to notice important aspects anymore. Therefore the researcher has to prevent to accidently neglect information by constantly "reflecting, taking notes [and] asking questions", to stay curious to the 'unknown'

(Gobo, 2008, p. 7). To prevent the ignorance of information, I kept on asking questions in all settings (maybe I sometimes asked too much because one co-worker got a bit frustrated and asked why I always wanted to know everything). Also, in situations in which I thought I understood what was happening, I asked people for an explanation. This often resulted in receiving the exact same information I already had, but sometimes people gave me different insights by what they told or the way they told it. Although I tried to stay curious all the time, it is difficult make sure you do not take happenings or saying for granted. It can give an enlightened view when one leaves the research site for a while to refreshes and come back with less biases. Due to a lack of time and space to leave the field for a short time, I was not able to fully refresh my mind.

3.1.2. Semi-structured interviews

In line with the quote from Herbert (2000) that argues that the structure of ethnographic research takes place within the field, the final structure for the conducted interviews was also shaped in the field. All interviews held for the research were open and semi-structured. An interview guide was created (which can be found as appendix 2), of which I always brought a copy along. However, I did not strictly follow this guide during the interviews. The interviews were led by a few covering questions but besides that the information given by the interviewees themselves were guiding the interview. I used the interview guide to check if the conversation had covered all topics I listed on forehand. Hereby, the interviews were semi-structured but not fully unstructured since I did have covering questions in mind and I made sure that I covered all the topics I thought of before (Fylan, 2005).

I deliberately decided not to record most of my interviews in order to create a trustful environment in which I could conduct the interviews. This decision was made with a great knowledge of the benefits on recording an interview. In this way, the interviewer can focus more on the interview itself than on the process of writing the information down, and in certain settings the interviewee might get less distracted by the acts of the interviewer (Harvey, 2011). In his research, Harvey interviewed employees in the pharmaceutical sector and he also decided not to use any recording mechanism. Even though the field of study is completely different, the reasons for this choice are quite similar. By not recording the interviews, he felt that his respondents told him more important information which they did not want to talk about on tape (ibid.). Schapendonk (2011) describes the possible pitfalls of this approach. Some information might get lost and the credibility of the data could get affected. The notes and the elaboration

of these notes later on are all interpretations of the interviewer and mistakes cannot be corrected by listening to the interview again[4].

Nevertheless, these disadvantages and pitfalls do not overweigh the positive outcomes of not recording most of the interviews. I had the feeling a trustworthy environment was created in which the respondents, and me, were more likely to feel comfortable. This resulted in the women willing to tell me more. A trustworthy environment was important for many women I interviewed because the topic was quite sensitive for them. They were not used to give their opinion about these topics or tell others about their experiences. Especially women whose husband was away during the time of the interview sometimes were afraid to tell me their true thoughts because it was not always in favour of their husband and/or his family. This was the reason one of the ladies I knew did not want to be interviewed at all. She was afraid that her husband (who was in Germany) or his family would hear about her feelings.

This shows the sensitivity of the topic. It seemed that for some women it was difficult to share their personal feelings and thoughts, even when we spoke multiples times before and the interview was held in private spheres (Adhikari & Hobley, 2015). Maybe I believed we had a trustworthy relationship I which I felt myself comfortable but that does not mean my respondents felt the same. Sometimes I noticed that a woman's stories changed a bit over time, that could have something to do with the level of personal trust they had in me. Furthermore, I got the feeling that women became a little nervous when I asked them: "Can I interview you for my research?". By reframing that question into: "Can I ask you questions for my research?", women seemed to be more comfortable.

There were two women whom I asked if I could record an interview, Isatou and Awa. With these two women I had a close connection; I knew them personally and more important, they knew me personally as well. When I asked Isatou if I could record an interview with her, she was more than okay with it. One day when we sat together to record the interview she seemed a little nervous. Just before I started recording, she said that she hoped she would give the right answers. I told her that there were no right or wrong answers but I could not totally get her nervousness away. Only after a few minutes, she became her relaxed 'self' again and started to talk with more confidence.

[4] I must say that because of this decision not to record most of my interviews it cannot with persuasion be said that the quotes of respondents in this thesis are the exact literal sayings from the respondents. The quotes are based on my notes, memory and interpretations.

During most of the interviews, I made many small notes. On my way home after the interview, I made a voice memo with more notes for myself. As soon as I arrived home, I elaborated everything in my research diary. However, I did not make notes during all the interviews. At some very unexpected moments, I had some talks that turned into interviews. For example when I walked with someone on the street, when I was cooking with somebody or when we had dinner. During these interviews it was either practically not very doable to take my notebook, and it did not feel like an appropriate thing to do (Gaibazzi, 2010). Although I think I remembered most of the information later on, I cannot say with certainty that I did not lose some information as a result of this approach. The duration of the interviews differed from 20 minutes till one and a half hour. In some of the interviews, I asked a lot of questions and women gave short answers, while during other interviews women kept on talking without me asking much questions.

3.1.3. Small Talks

Not all information I verbally received was through interviews. The informal talks (small talks) I had every day were of great importance for my research, even though it might not be always considered to be a 'real', valuable, or appreciated technique. As Driessen and Janssen describe it, small talk is "the hidden core as well as the engine of ethnographic research" (2013, p.249). In the beginning, these small conversations were indispensable since they made me more familiar with the Gambian society and thoughts about migration in general. I gained information I could elaborate further on during interviews.

It can be difficult to clarify the difference between an interview and an informal conversation. For this differentiation, I used the guidelines Schapendonk defined. For him, a conversation turned into an interview when he "informed the respondent about the goals and research questions and he/she agreed to answer questions within the framework of this project" (Schapendonk, 2011, p. 86). During small talks I also asked questions, but I did not emphatically ask people if I could question them for my research.

Even though it is called 'small' talks, the influence it had on my research was enormous. The advantage of small talks is that it is an easy and low-key way to get to know more about values and habits in a society. By talking and questioning about situations or objects I saw, I learned many things I would never have asked for during an interview. Due to these talks, I received a lot of useful information about among others gender relations and structures in the Gambian society. As a result of this information, I adapted my interview guide throughout the period of fieldwork.

Despite this, a small talk also has its disadvantages. Since small talks happen all over the day with all different kind of people, it can be overwhelming and the information that is gained can sometimes be too much. During the small talks, you do not have the time and space to write the information down, so it all comes to your memory. Sometimes I had time the opportunity to write information down just minutes after the talk, but other days it could last the whole day before I would have the change to do so. In these cases, it is definitely possible that valuable information has drifted out of my mind. Small talks sometimes lead to 'big' talks, which almost looked like an interview. In some cases I was able to ask if I could write information down, but during other conversations I felt like it was not one of the possibilities to ask for this (e.g., because we were walking or because I did not want to interrupt a personal story). In retrospect, for the research it would be better if I would have been more confident in these cases to ask if I could take notes. The possibility to lose or misinterpret information would have been smaller.

3.2. Respondents

The most important people of this research are of course all the respondents who trusted me enough to share their thoughts and feelings with me. In the following paragraphs I will elaborate how I came to meet them and I will shortly introduce them.

3.2.1. Collection of respondents

During my three months' stay in The Gambia I conducted my research besides an internship. This internship helped me to gain access to several respondents. At the first day of my internship, I met a woman who turned out to be an important source of information. Besides this woman, it took some time before I met other respondents. In the end, staying patient is the keyword. Respondents were gathered in many different ways, with a lot of surprising turns.

Through my internship I met more women, others were introduced to me by mutual friends and I 'accidentally' met some women while walking along the streets of Serekunda. Sometimes *snowball sampling* was the way to get introduced to women, when one respondent or friend introduced me to another woman. In other cases there was no link – at least not that I knew of – between the woman and me. The different ways in which I got to meet my respondents helped me to gather a "multiplicity of voices" (Driessen & Jansen, 2013, p. 259) which is important when a research zooms in on meanings. Driessen and Jansen underline the importance of including people that are often overlooked, for example youths and women who work in private spheres. On forehand, it will always remain uncertain what people can add at first sight, but their perspectives can be of great importance in the end (ibid.).

While I tried to have a diverse group of respondents, there still are groups of women I failed to include in my research. As seen in the following paragraph, I mainly interviewed women whose husband migrated or who did not have a close family member that migrated. Somehow, I did not meet women whose children migrated. Although I wanted to include them in my research, at a point I had to make a decision. One option was to keep 'searching' for these women and therefore 'let go' of interviewing other women. The second option was to go on with the research and meanwhile stay alert to hopefully meet mothers of migrants. After all, I chose the second option. This worked out well since I got to interview many women and I will never know what would have happened if I had chosen the first option. However, the lack of the mothers' perspective is a shortcoming of this research.

3.2.2. Who are the respondents?

Because, as said, nearly everybody in The Gambia is somehow affected by migration, it was of great importance to approach a broad range of women and not only women I knew had a close link with migrants or migration. With that in mind, I tried to include women from different age groups, living areas, household composition, occupation and marital status. In appendix 2, an extended scheme with more details about the respondents is listed, Table 1 below shows a shortened version[5]. This are only the respondents that are interviewed regarding this research, the women (and men) with whom I had informal talks or who were included in my observations are not listed.

In total, 24 interviews were carried out, most of them with one respondent and one interviews was conducted with two respondents at the same time. The majority of the interviews was conducted in Serekunda and the area surrounded. Five interviews were conducted in Kuloro, where Halima went with me to translate from English to Mandinka and back. One of these interviews was with two shy ladies who only answered questions, also open questions, with 'yes' or 'no'. I decided not to include that interview in my research since the it did not give me much information and I doubt the reliability of the answers. My respondent's age varied from 20 to 59 years old and all of them were Muslims, the one more practicing than the other.

Polygamic marriages are not exceptional in the Gambia. Of all my respondents, two women were involved in a polygamic marriage. One, Allamouta, as the first wife out of two and the Mai as the second wife out of two. In total I interviewed 13 women whose had a partner

[5] To secure the anonymity of the respondents, I refer to every women with a pseudonym. All these pseudonyms are also common Gambian names.

who, at the time of the study, was living somewhere else; one was engaged and the rest were married. All but two migrants migrated for job purposes or to seek a job, only Halima's and Ndey's husbands migrated for education purposes. Furthermore, Fatoumatta had a daughter who lives in Senegal with her Gambian husband. Two women had lived abroad themselves, multiple women had migrated from rural to urban areas within The Gambia.

Name	**Age**	**Relation to migrant**	**Years abroad**	**Current household**
Isatou	36	Husband	12	Own nuclear household
Awa	31	Husband	2	Own extended household
Ndey	25	Husband	10	Own nuclear family
Satang	24	Husband	2	Nuclear in-law family
Maimuna	33	Husband	11	Own extended family
Jenaba	25	Husband	4	Own nuclear family
Mai	45	Husband	7	Extended family of husband, second wife
Binta	35	Husband	*multiple years*	Own nuclear family
Kutu	25	Fiancé	2	Own nuclear family
Halima	26	Husband	2	Extended in-law family
Rohe	±32	Husband	9	Extended in-law family
Fatou	20	Husband	*multiple years*	In-law family
Allamouta	±45	Husband	15	Extended in-law family, first of two wives
Fatoumatta (mom Jenaba)	59	Daughter and another son in-law	6, 4	Own nuclear family
		No partner who is a migrant		
Oumil	33	Ex-husband, divorced		Son (13)
Kaddyatou	±47	Ex-husband, divorced		Two daughters (22) and (29)
Marie	±46	Ex-husband, divorced		Own nuclear family
Mariama	40	Husband (currently home)		Own extended family
Yata	±48	Studied and worked in USA. 8 brothers and sisters abroad	10	Own nuclear family
Aji and 'auntie'	20, 53	Auntie lived in the USA	10	Aji; own nuclear family Auntie; with husband
Jabou	30	No direct links		Husband and two children
Sainabou	33	No direct links		Own nuclear family
Karima	±30	Migration expert at the Migration Project		Husband

Table 1: Summary list of respondents

It is difficult to state what the profession of the women is. Some women had a contract were paid for the work they were doing, so it is easy to say that they had a 'job'. However, other women did voluntary work, had their own *small business*, worked at the village's farm or did the household (or all together). Even though these women do not have a contract, do not regularly earn money or have set times on which they go to work, they also work in my opinion. When this is the way 'work' is interpreted, all women were working.

Sometimes it was difficult for me to understand the composition of the household. Many people live in a house in a *compound*, a place where multiple houses and a shared open space are surrounded by a fence. When I asked people about their household, most of them refered to the people who lived in the same house. Although, sometimes people were refering to all the people in the same compound.

Also, who exactly belonged to a 'family' was sometimes confusing for me. I noticed that the terms *brother* and *sisters* are used in a different way compared to how I use these terms, as becomes clear in the following description:

When her training was finished, Kaddy went with me to YMCA to take a shower and change her clothes. When she was ready, she showed me pictures of her family. She is now living with her stepmother and she has three brothers and one sister who have the same father and mother. The last time we met, she told me her sister got married. When she showed me the picture of her sister, I asked if this was the one who got married. She looked a bit confused and asked why I thought that. When I explained, she had to laugh and told me that her sister who got married is not from the same father and mother. From that moment on, when she talked about a brother or a sister, she explicitly named if it was her sister from the same mother and father or not.

So a sister is not always a girl who has the same mother and father, but it can also be similar to – what I would call – a niece (*our mothers are from the same mother)* or good friend. After a while, I also had *sisters* in the Gambia, which gave me a warm feeling.

3.3. Position in the field

While doing qualitative research, it is important to try to adopt a native point of view (at least, to the extent in which this is possible). To accomplish this, I tried to 'fit in' by greeting in the local language, dress appropriately and adopt habits (like the way of eating and joking). However, as a Dutch *toubab* from the Netherlands in the Gambia, on many aspects I would

always be an outsider. Because of this, I did not understand everything that happened in the ('new') field. Furthermore, I tried to stay objective in my role as a researcher. But no matter how hard I tried, there will always be preconceptions and biases that I must deal with (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). Therefore it is important to think critically about my position in the field.

My position as an outsider in the field led to practical issues. First of all, I did not speak one of the local languages. In the urban areas it was not a big problem because I could get around with the English language. I tried to learn one of the local languages (Pulaar), which was more difficult for me than I expected. Eventually I was happy that I could say common used sentences and introduce myself. Unfortunately for me, not everybody spoke Pulaar, but many people spoke Mandinka, Wollof or one of the other local languages. For my interviews, I mainly spoke to women who could talk (proper) English and in Koluro I went along with the help of a translator. During some interviews, women asked their family member or friend who was around for help if they wanted to say something but did not know how. So eventually, I learned how to deal with the language gap.

Furthermore, I had other ideas or opinions that sometimes led to struggles or a feeling of misunderstanding. There were, for example, many advertisements against the practice of female genital mutilation. In several talks, I noticed that I had a completely different opinion about this compared to certain friends or colleagues. Due to that, I decided to not always share my opinion but to keep it for myself and just stay quiet.

I sometimes felt uncomfortable as a result of being an European woman. One of my respondents had not seen her husband in over twelve years. No matter how hard she tries, she cannot get a visa to go to Europe to visit him. Common friends asked me if I could arrange something for her. I honestly told them that I did not have any idea how to arrange that and the whole situation made me feel quite uncomfortable. The fact that I could just go to The Gambia, without having to apply for a visa on forehand, while the majority of the Gambians cannot come that easily to Europe (or cannot come at all), made me feel ashamed, angry and sad. At first, I was afraid that people would judge me because of this, but I never felt this in practice. Indeed many people acknowledged that the world is unfair, but they never seem to blame or judge me personally for these injustices. However – what in this case could be described as – my privileged position sometimes led to difficult and mixed feelings from my side.

A critical glance will not only show differences between me and the respondents, it also reveals certain similarities. Through several characteristics, an outsider can in some occasions or within specific groups be considered as part of the group (Hellawell, 2006). In my case, the fact that I am a woman and at that time physically separated from my loved ones, was the basis

of relationship between some women I interviewed and me. Because I am a woman, it was easier for me to get access to female informants compared to men (Ergun & Erdemir, 2010). Not only did I get access to private spheres, I also noticed a difference how woman behaved when there was a male around who was not part of their family. Some women seemed to be more comfortable when they were alone with women or with male relatives. Not only did they take off their hijab, they also made more jokes and sometimes seemed to talk more relaxed.

For myself it was important to not think of myself as a Dutch student with a privileged position. Rather I presented myself as a student with an interest in hearing personal stories and as someone who is willing to learn. Ergun and Erdemir (2010) show that people wanted to participate in their study because they appreciated it that somebody came all the way from another country and thought it was their duty to help them. In specific cases I recognise this, in a way that women also wanted to participate because they appreciated it that I came all the way from the Netherlands to listen to them.

3.4. Methodological reflections

While preparing fieldwork, you will never have a complete clear vision on what will work out in reality. Looking back at the research process, there are things that I perhaps would have done differently or that I would have considered twice if I knew on forehand how it would turn out.

As said, I tried to learn one of the local languages, Pulaar. Afterwards, it would have been better to already start to learn Pulaar before I went to The Gambia. Perhaps learning another local language would have been more useful since Pulaar turned out not to be the most spoken language in the Serekunda area. The majority of the people I knew spoke Wolof. Of course I could not expect that I would be a fluent Pulaar speaker within three months, but on forehand I hoped my knowledge of the language would have grown more.

During most of the interviews I did not experiences many difficulties with the fact that the language was English. However, the interviews conducted with help of a translator were a different compared to the rest. Admittedly, I believe these interviews were not the ‘best’ interviews. Sometimes the women gave a long answer, and my translator translated it into only one English sentence to me, or the other way around. Due to this, I wonder if the translator precisely told me what the women said, or mingled it with her own opinion. On the other hand, because she lived in the same village she could give me a lot of background and inside information while we walked around, so I definitely received a lot of useful information.

The translator helped me in Kuloro, the only rural area where I conducted interviews. Focussing the research on the urban area made it easier for me to gain information (not only

regarding the language, also practically seen). Although, as a result of this decision I missed interesting stories as well. There are perhaps significantly even more people that leave rural places. However, regarding the available time and my own feelings, I still support the decision to mainly focus on the urban areas for this research. If I would have had more time in The Gambia and spoke one of the local languages more fluently, I could have shifted my focus to both areas.

Before I went to The Gambia I did not want to set a clear number of respondents for the interviews. This because I wanted to prevent that I would hold onto a number of respondents instead of concentrating on the information that was gathered. Since I am convinced that quality is way more important than quantity, the focus should also be on the quality of the information. In the end 23 interviews were conducted. Focussing on the quality of the information, I believe this is a good amount, although I could have gone on for more months. Even though I am satisfied with the number of respondents in the end, I sometimes experienced difficulties to ask women for an interview. This led to regretting myself sometimes for missing out on the opportunity to ask somebody if I could interview her. I had some struggles because I did not want to bother or embarrass anybody and I sometimes felt that I did. The thoughts of Driessen (in Kastner, 2009) in which he wonders whether one can bother another with a research when they are in a difficult plight themselves, often wandered through my mind.

Fortunately, women I spoke to did not gave me the idea that I bothered them. Although several women hesitated a bit to participate, the majority of them was willing to participate when I explained them more. I had a personal relationship with most women, or with the one who introduced me to them. This either positively as negatively affected my research. On the one hand, women had a feeling of trust when they talked to me because they knew me. This could have lowered the threshold to participate. On the other hand, for some women this was exactly the reason they did not want to participate in the research. One woman explicitly said that she did not want to be interviewed. Since I knew her husband's brother quite well, she was afraid she would say things her husband would not appreciate and his brother would tell him about it. Because of my personal relations, I knew some stories quite well which made me emotionally involved. Different roles (researcher, friend, colleague) and the position of an 'intimate insider' can bring difficulties along, e.g. emotional attachment and ethical questions on how to use information that has been told to you as a friend and not as a researcher (Taylor , 2011).

Maybe partly as a result of my personal relation with many women, I almost have no negative experience regarding the research. One time I was with a guy I met who said that he

could arrange an interview with his mother for me. I really appreciated that but then he started to hug me tightly and he touched me multiple times. When I said that I did not want him to touch me like that, he said that I acted very weird. According to him, it was extremely normal to touch another in The Gambia, while my experiences were completely different. I told him that it was not normal for me and things became very awkward. Not long after that I took a *gelly-gelly* home. Unfortunately, the interview with his mother eventually never took place since he ignored my calls and messages.

Chapter 4 – Female position and relation to migration

The main question that is leading throughout my research and thesis is twofold. On the one hand, the relation and the position of women in the *culture of migration* is elaborated while on the other hand the consequences of this phenomena on the lives of Gambian women is explored. This chapter is devoted to the first part of this question.

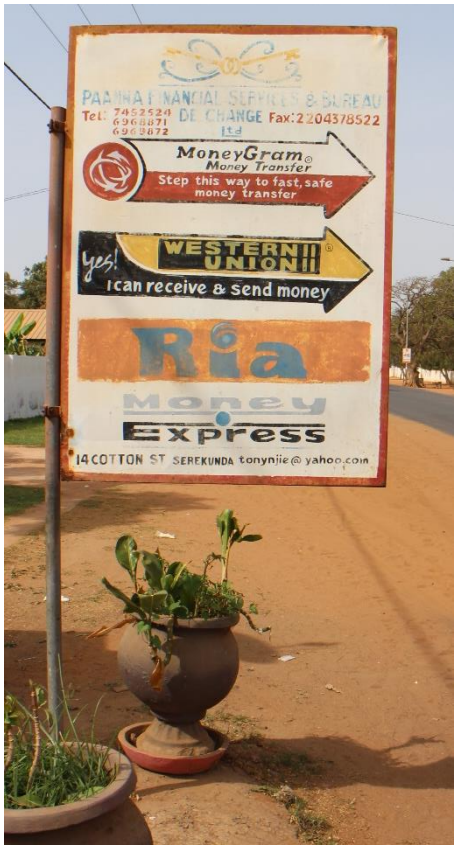

Figure 3 - Sign with money sending institutions. Picture self-made on the 25th of May 2018

While I was in The Gambia, at first it seemed that everybody was somehow related to migration. Not everybody has a close relation with migration as a result of their own experiences or direct family members' experiences as a migrant, but everybody seems to know someone who was away at the moment, of who already returned. Effects of migration are seen in all facets of the society. As Gaibazzi (2010, p. 14) claims in his research in The Gambia: "[m]igration is a daily matter: from the rice the villagers buy with remittances, to the brick houses in which they sleep, to the schools and clinics that migrant associations have (co)developed".

Throughout the Gambian society, effects of migrants are noticeable. As figure three shows, there are multiple ways in The Gambia to send and receive money from a distance. Transferring money via a bank account is not so common since the majority of the people does not have access to a private bank account. But there are multiple other ways to do this, and many different places where this can be done. The omnipresence of Western Union, Money Gram and Money Express offices (and other institutions with the same purpose), indicates that many people use these offices to receive and send money. Of course, this money can have many different origins and purposes. My impressions and the conversations I had make me believe that most of this money comes from family members who live in other areas or countries. The availability of these offices in every street and in every village, illustrate how the *culture of migration* is presence all over the Gambian society.

De Haas (2006) argued that households can be connected to migration is different ways. He distinguishes five types of households, as seen in the following box:

Box 1: Households and migration de Haas (2006, p. 567-568)

- Non-migrant households > those who are currently not involved and have never been involved in either internal as international migration flows;
- Internal migrant household > households who have a previous household member who migrated within the country;
- Current international migrant household > the households that have a previous household member who is currently living abroad;
- Returned international migrant household > households who currently do not have a former household member abroad, but who used to have;
- Indirect international migrant household > households who know people who have migrated internal or international (but were not household members) and receive financial supported from them.

With these categories, De Haas puts every household in a strict enclosed box. There is no room for households who, for example, have members who migrated within the country as well as outside of the country. Or households in which one member has returned while another still is away or people that move back and forth. Or for example the case of Yata. She lives with her parents in The Gambia and has some brothers and sister who live outside of the country. Her household would be described as a 'current international migrant household'. However, one brother of her returned, which would make it a 'returned international migrant household'. Furthermore, she herself has lived in the United States for 10 years, but there is no description of that. This is exactly why it is hard to put people in boxes and why one can wonder what the purpose is to distinguish migrant households in different categories.

The advantage of these boxes is that they can create a clear overview. Though, it is important just to see them as guiding lines to create a structure instead of a strict delineation. Before these categories can be translated into specific categories of women that deal with migration, the concepts of 'household' and 'family' both need further explanation as "families do not [always] form households, and (…) households are not [always] composed of families" (Yanagisako, 1979, p. 163). While 'family members' refers to people in the same family, bounded by blood, adoption or marriage, 'household members' refers to people who "eat from the same bowl and live under one roof" (Gregory et al. 2009, p. 345). This can include the same persons, but it certainly does not have to be that way.

In the Gambian context, a family structure that is often seen is the so-called extended family. Where a nuclear family consists of a wife, husband and their (adopted) children, an

extended family also includes adult married children or brothers and sisters of the husband and wife, with their children (Armstrong, et al., 1993). Since the majority of the women live in a compound that they share with multiple people, they are part of several family structures and compositions of households. Somebody can live with her nuclear family in a house while the compound is shared with the patrilinear extended family (ibid.). For most of the women I interviewed, this was the composition of their household. Nevertheless, some women lived with their own family (married as well as unmarried women) and others lived (with their husband) in a compound with non-family members.

This underlines the importance of the differentiation between 'household' and 'family'. However – when you want to apply the categories from De Haas to the reality – the same 'problem' occurs. There are situations which cause women not to strictly fit into one of these categories. Mai for example, has a husband who lives in a city on the other side of the country, but who often moves back and forth. And Aji's auntie used to live in America herself, but now she is in The Gambia again while her children are still in America at the moment. Also, not everybody may be directly financially supported by a migrant (De Haas' last category), but they might indirectly receive support through school materials or clothes from institutions that are financially supported by migrants.

In order to create more structure, a distinction is made between women who had a previous household member or other family member who is a migrant or who used to be a migrant on the one hand, and on the other hand women who do not have a migrant in their family. This will be determined with use of information given at the time of the interviews. Hereby, it is determined to what extent women have a close connection to migration, which also affects the way flows of migration are perceived or experienced.

4.1 Female thoughts about migration

On a Sunday morning I went to Mariama's compound. I always loved it to come there because Mariama and her husband were very hospitable and, not in the last place, because their three and six-year-old daughters were very lovable. Mariama and I cooked Domoda and after that we sat down in their small living room where we ate this for lunch. They told me about their 18-year-old son who I have not seen yet. He spends much time with his friends, they said, and often he only came home in the evening. I asked about him, what he wanted to become and if he wanted to further his education. Mariama sighted and said that he did not really do much with his life, but he has to realise that he has to learn skills. She wants him to do something

with technology since that will become more important in the further. I asked if he could do that in The Gambia and she said he could, but maybe education abroad is better for him. "It would be good for him to study abroad, to get some experiences. But I do not support him going.", is what she said about it.

Reflections from my diary: conversation with Mariama – 06-05-2018

Women I spoke had very different opinions about migration; some were predominantly advocating migration while others mainly pointed at the negative sides and negative effects of migration flows. Several women, as further discussed in chapter 4.3, supported their family members' decision to leave while others did not do so (Adhikari & Hobley, 2015). Some women mainly focussed on the opportunities in The Gambia, while others pointed to the importance of new experiences one could gain abroad. Ideas about migration of others were often not in line with their own aspirations to migrate.

Starting with thoughts about migration in general, thereby not focussing women's own aspirations, the thoughts of Awa and Ndey cover two opposite beliefs. Awa and Ndey are both highly-educated women who have a strong opinion and passionately talked about migration issues with me. On the one hand, mother of three Awa states that in order to learn something, people need to go abroad. Even though she completed her education for the largest part within The Gambia and she previously had a well payed job at the Lebanese embassy in The Gambia, Awa argues that there are not many opportunities within The Gambia to develop yourself. One will gain more knowledge when he or she will study abroad. Even if you are blessed with a good education in The Gambia, that does not mean you will also get a (good) job because too many people fight over too little jobs opportunities. That is why she said that migrants '*don't have an option'* when she talked about people who do not understand why others migrate. Especially in rural this problem is the main trigger for migration according to Jabou. The lack of a proper payment system and opportunities to earn money in rural areas are the reason many men leave these sites to move towards the urban areas or to another country. These ladies were not the only ones who expressed concerns or negative thoughts about the educational system and job market in the Gambia. Nearly everyone I asked about reasons why people leave The Gambia, pointed to the lack of job opportunities as main trigger of migration.

However, food inspector Ndey strongly disagrees with Awa's statement that there are more opportunities abroad. She told me that her husband studied in the USA now he insists on staying there because he does not foresee any good job opportunities for him in The Gambia. Ndey emphatically told me that she is certain that there are good chances for him as well. '*There*

are many opportunities in the Gambia, only not everybody knows about it' she said. That is why she is determined to convince him to change his mind and to come and work in The Gambia. She said that mainly people who are higher educated try to show others that there definitely are opportunities in The Gambia. For her, it is important to stay and help develop the country herself. Yata, another highly educated women, mentioned that people believe they have to go abroad to be successful, while they don't notice the successful people in The Gambia that have never migrated. They both said that this was the point of view highly educated people had. However, Awa who had a different opinion also got her master's degree.

This are two examples of women who have a strong opinion regarding migration. Awa mainly focusses on the positive sides of migration for the development of the migrant and the whole country. This makes her an optimist in the migration-development debate. Ndey can be described as a migration-development pessimist who concentrates on the importance of staying in The Gambia for the development of the country. Yet, not everybody has such a clear vision on migration as these women. Mariama's quote in the beginning of this paragraph shows that her attitude towards migration is quite ambivalent. On the one hand, she deliberately said she is not an advocate for people to migrate. But in our conversations, she shared some ambivalent thoughts with me. She pointed towards the importance of youths to learn skills so they can find work in The Gambia. She said they could learn these skills abroad. Mariama mentioned women who were *sitting and waiting* for their husband. But she would not do that: "*if my husband would go, I would not stay with him.*" However, her husband had been abroad for three months, something that she supported. And if her son could go abroad, she would want him to embrace that opportunity.

In Mariama's case, general thoughts about migration and the thought about her family members migrating, might be equivocal. This ambivalent attitude might develop itself because migration is a topic with many different sides and different norms and values. It depends on the occasion and the circumstances how migration is perceived. Oumil, a 33-year-old tailor, lives together with her 13-year-old son. Her viewpoint towards migration stands in line with Mariama's ideas. Although she did not appear as confident as Mariama, she also said she did not encourage migration. She prefers her son to stay with her after he finishes his education. Although, if there are more and better opportunities for him elsewhere, it may be better for him to leave. Even though she is not in favour of migration, she relies her opinion of the available opportunities and makes a consideration based on that.

This is a discussion with many different angles. Some women believe migration is necessary for financial achievement in life, while others strongly disagree with that. They

believe migration is not wished or necessary at all, but that dreams can be achieved within The Gambia itself. Although some people point towards the negative and difficult sides of migration in general, they might still be supporter of the migration trajectory of a family member. Their view of migration in general can differ from the throughs about migration for one specific person.

4.1.1. Female thoughts about male migration

On a Monday morning I was alone in the office. Around noon, Amadou – one of our male colleagues – came and not long after that, Isatou walked in and sat down. When I asked about her weekend she said that she had a wedding from one of her best friends. She started talking and seemed a little frustrated. The groom was in the United Kingdom, she told me, and the bride did not mind that. "Many girls like to marry a man who is abroad, but me I don't like that", she said: "I never wanted it but for me it is destiny. It is God's will". I asked her why some girls prefer to marry a guy who is abroad and she said it is "just for the name. Just to say that the husband is away, that is what they like". While she talked about this, it seemed to even make her more frustrated. Amadou also started to join our conversation and said that indeed he knew a lot of girls from school who just prefer to marry a man who is abroad, even if it is just Senegal. Therefore, he thinks it is hard for him to find a wife in The Gambia, because girls do not want to marry a man that lives in the Gambia. Even if he is richer compared to a migrant, they would not care about that. When Amadou was done talking, Isatou sighed and said, "I never wanted it, but it is God's will", referring back to the fact that she was not a supporter of the migration of her husband herself.

Reflections of my diary: conversation at the office – 28-05-2018

In this conversation with Isatou and Amadou, two things stand out. At first, Isatou indicates that she does not like the fact that her husband is away for many years but she feels it is God's will so there is nothing she can do about it. Therefore she just accepts it. Furthermore, she says that some girls and women do prefer their (future) husband to be a migrant. This preference can have something to do with an expected increase in the financial position or with the positive image migration has in the society. As mentioned in chapter two, migration can be a strategy "to achieve upward social mobility" (Fresnoza-Flot, 2009, p. 262) in the country of origin. This status is more important for many people compared to the social status they achieve in the country migrants migrate to (ibid). This does not only count for the migrant, but the spouse can achieve a higher social status as a result the migration as well. However, this is not important

for all women, for example Isatou who does not link social mobility to migration. Still, in some societies, migration becomes a new measure of wealth (Cole & Groes, 2016) which could be the reason women prefer to marry a migrant or that parents stimulate their child to migrate. In this way, also non-migrants co-maintain the existence of a *culture of migration*.

This upward social mobility does not necessarily has connections with the occupation in the country of destination Mai told me: *"Africans do not get the office jobs, but they will just get the jobs as a cleaner or taking garbage. And that is good (…) People at home do not know that you took garbage, they only see you with the money".* Mai works as a waitress in a luxurious hotel next to the beach. If she would get the opportunity to go to Europe, she does not mind what kind of job she has to take to earn money. This shows that the social status of migrants in The Gambia is connected with the migration trajectory and economic successes, while education and occupation are important factors to determine the social status in many countries they migrate to (Babou, 2008). In The Gambia, it seems to be more about the money as fact while the way money is earned is of less importance[6]. Not all wives of husbands who were abroad knew what their husband was doing for a living. "*He is doing business"* or "*he is just managing"* was an often heard pronunciation. These thoughts are also in line with the sayings of Isatou that it is "*just about the name"*. This shows that for many Gambians, migration in itself is important to gain a higher social status.

Although multiple women said other (mainly younger) women preferred their future husband to be a (former) migrant, I did not speak with somebody who endorsed this herself. Aji and her auntie said not only girls prefer to marry a migrant, sometimes their parents prefer it as well. Often they do not even know this man but they only think about the possible money he could bring in, Aji's aunt said. According to Isatou and Marie, women prefer this because marrying with a migrant gives you more change to have a big wedding and programs compared to someone who is *struggling* with you. According to Marie, if there are two guys who both propose to a girl, one of them who lives in The Gambia and struggles with her and another who lives in the United Kingdom, she probably will marry the latter. But the wife will never be able to leave her husband because she does not have the money to pay him back. That is why Marie

[6] An article from the Correspondent writes about Nigerian women who moved to Italy in the 80's to constrainedly work as prostitutes. Years later, they returned to Nigeria accompanied with much money, which made others follow their lead. At first, nobody knew how they earned their money but after a while people figured it out; girls went to Italy to work as a prostitute. However, since they got their family out of poverty, it was accepted and people did not speak about it. A common saying in Nigeria recalls: 'Dollars are not a taboo', i.e. it does not matter where the money comes from (Vermeulen, 2018).

wants to share her experiences with as many young girls as possible. She had been married to someone who lived in the United Kingdom, but since she got divorced she experiences more freedom.

The danger, according to Marie and Mariama, is that girls get engaged to someone without having met him in real life. They only speak to each other online, which causes that girls do "*not even know if he is a thief*". One of my respondents, Kutu, indeed got engaged while she has never met her husband in real life. She does not have a problem with this and actually she and her husband both prefer to get married before they will see each other. She said that she would like to be where he is and she herself also dreams about a future in Europe or in the USA. Perhaps marrying a migrant could enlarge her possibilities of actually living in one of those places.

The problem, according to migration expert Karima, is that many migrants only tell good and positive stories. Some will say they have a job while they actually are *sitting* in a refugee camp. In this way – unlike the reality – it seems like getting a job abroad is very easy so in this way these stories encourage others to migrate as well (Kastner, 2009). The image of migration will be much more promising and optimistic compared to the reality, which causes (some) men and women to be very enthusiastic about migration without knowing about the real struggles.

4.1.2. Female thoughts about their own migration

Some women who indicated that it was good for people to go abroad, did not think the same about their own lives. The majority of the women I talked to did not want to leave The Gambia themselves. Reasons they gave was that migration *"is just not for women"*, "*is too dangerous for women"*, that it is not their task since *"men are the ones who should provide"* or they just did not think it would be right for them. When I asked Horeja, a lady selling vegetables on the side of the street, why mainly men are migrating, she said that women cannot go, especially not when they are married and have children. They "*just cannot leave",* she argued. The dominant gender division in the household partly causes the migration flows to be gendered as well, as Awa indicated. Because the husband, in most families, should financially take care of the family, he is the one who looks for greener pasture abroad to make sure he can *provide* for his family.

That does not mean that women do not want to go abroad at all. All women whose husband lived abroad, said that they were eager to visit him. Isatou's husband lives in Switzerland and Maimuna's husband lives in the Unites States and both of the women had not

seen their husband in over 11 years. They individually told me about their most important reason to visit him; they wanted to get pregnant. Since they are getting older and still do not have a child on their own, it gets more and more important for them not to wait too long. Just as most of the other women implied, they said that they did not want to live abroad but they just want to have some time together with their husband.

Some women said they would be okay with living outside of The Gambia, but only for a few years. Kutu explained her position and said, *"I just want to be where he is"*. At the moment we spoke, it did not matter to her if this place was The Gambia or another country. But, she concluded, *"We have to go home in the end"*, by which she referred to The Gambia. Even if she would live abroad for a few years, she would still return 'home'. As Satang said: *"People in The Gambia are very nice and hospitable, so everybody always wants to go back"*.

Jabou, Awa and Mai, said the best opportunities for themselves are abroad as well. Jabou wants to do business abroad while Awa said she is tired of *sitting and waiting* while her husband lives abroad for many years already. She said that she could not go before because her children are too little, but when they are getting bigger it maybe will be possible for her as well. And Mai want to go to Europe just to earn more money.

4.2 Framing of female non-migrants within a culture of migration

We walked through the village while we talked more about gender division in The Gambia. Halima said African women have to work very hard; in the morning they go to the farm and when they get home, they are busy to prepare food for everybody. Besides that, they take care of the children as well. In the meantime, the men are just sitting and brewing Attaya. Out of 100 men, she said, only 10 take care of their children. Just before we entered a compound where five ladies sat outside, one girl of about 18 years was carrying water and 4 little children were running around. Halima started to talk with a more serious looking face. While she pointed at the women sitting in the compound she said that this compound only had one man, the husband of one of the ladies who we saw there. All the other women's husbands lived somewhere else. "You see, there are a lot of victims in Kuloro".

Reflections from my diary: conversation with Halima – 23-05-2018

As discussed in the theoretical chapter, there are optimists and pessimists in the debate about the relation between migration and emancipatory consequences for women. In conversations with Gambian women, this paradox clearly came to light when they talked about themselves.

During the interviews I did not ask specific questions about how the non-migrants saw themselves, but the way they spoke about themselves during interviews but also throughout conversations in daily life, revealed a great deal.

In the literature, the image of victimised women is predominant, as for example seen in Reeves (2011) and Menjivar and Agadjanian (2007). (Female) stayers are framed as victims who have less power compared to the migrant. During my time in The Gambia some people endorsed this, while others strongly disagreed with this conceptualisation. When I arrived in the village Kuloro, I was introduced to primary teacher Halima. She told me about her experiences after her husband left to study in The Netherlands and she stayed with her two young children in Kuloro. As the text above illustrates she repeatedly said "*there are more victims*" and "*she is also a victim*" when we walked through the village on our way to other women who we could interview. Besides that, while she told stories about herself, she referred to herself as a victim as well.

During the interviews and the rest of my visit to Kuloro, others also repeatedly used to word 'victim' while referring to wives of husbands who are abroad. On the other hand, Halima pointed to her own powers and said that she was "*not one who sits with arms crossed."* She said: *"I work and provide myself and my children*". The image that she made in which she is a hardworking woman who takes care of everything while her husband is abroad also came to light when interviewing other women. In the village Kuloro, women victimised themselves more compared to women I spoke to in other places.

In *Kombo* it was a completely different story. Women also pointed to the difficulties they when their husband is abroad. However, during this they focussed on the power and the strength women have to make something of their own life. Oumil, for example, said that Gambian women are very powerful because they do not want their family to see that they are having a hard time. They have to be strong to be able to take care of the children. Even though she also said that it is not easy for her (and other women), she put more emphasis on the strengths of women. This difference in referring to themselves could have something to do with the fact that the majority of the Kuloro women only got money out of the shared garden and most women in *Kombo* either earned money themselves, received remittances from their husband or got money from others.

4.3 Female decision-making role

During the interview with Marie I asked her about the role of women in the decision making. She told me that women can say what they want because they have freedom of speech. But often the man does not listen to it, he will just do what he wants. In the Gambian culture, she said, a wife has to obey her husband so there is not much she can do about his decision. Often the husband does not even tell her about his plans on forehand. He will just arrange everything and then inform her that he will leave the next day. The wife will cry all night, but there is nothing she can do.

Reflections from my dairy: interview with Marie – 31-05-2018

In the interview I had with Marie, she projected an image in which women did not have much to say about the decision whether men would migrate or not. This was the reality for most women I spoke to (Gartaula, Visser, & Niehof, 2012). I was told this was because of the Islam which tells that "women have to accept what the men tells them to do". Others did not really give a reason but told me that men can just do whatever they want, when they want. So the female role in the decision making may not be that big, women can decide to encourage or help people to migrate.

Marie, head director of the Women's Initiative The Gambia, told me that many women at first think migration flows will have a positive outcome for them and therefore they will support a family member who wants to migrate. In reality it often turns out that the migration flow prevalently has more negative sides for them. Women who have helped a family member to migrate in the beginning, maybe would have made another decision if they could do it again. In our interview, Awa described her perspective on the role of the family when somebody wants to go through the backway.

> *"Yeah but inside that backway, most people who will go … don't inform their families. They will just go and … they will tell you I will go to Kasamang or I will go to Bassé [cities in east of The Gambia], and they will go. And when they arrive they will call, say we are here, we are sorry this and that. Like if you inform your family they say 'no, no you won't go, you cannot go'. But some family members also will pay for their people, for their kids to take the backway. Because things here are not easy. Not everyone can provide for yourself. Sometimes it is too bad."*

The ideas of the majority of the women I interviewed matched with what Awa said; they did not encourage family members to go. Yet Satang is a revealing example of somebody who did encourage someone else to migrate. She and her, at that time, boyfriend wanted to get married but he was not able to give her parents the bride price they asked for. Since he could not find a job in The Gambia they decided that he should leave and search for a job elsewhere. Along the way, he was able *to make money* and send that to Satang's parents. Thereafter, they could get married. She said that his migration was a shared decision and she is happy they made the decision this way because "*at least now we can be together*" she said. In her case, being married and romantically connected to each other could only happen if they were physical away from each other, which is why she encouraged him to leave.

Not everyone had a clear meaning whether they would support migration of not. As elaborated before, Mariama said that she would not support her family members if they wanted to migrate at all. Nevertheless, she indicated that it would be good for her son to temporary study abroad and gain more experiences. She emphasized all the opportunities for him in The Gambia, while she on the other hand pointed to experiences he could have abroad from which he could learn many things. Therefore she would support him if he wanted to stay temporarily abroad. The difference between a long term and a short-term stay seemed to be an important differentiation. Another form of migration can thus be desired by someone who generally is an opponent of migration.

The difference thoughts and meanings aligned to diverse forms of migration and mobility is illustrated by Mariama. She does not want all people to stay or all people to leave, but she is searching for a form of temporarily within migration; a more flexible form of migration in which 'stay' or 'go' are not the only two possibilities. With this remark, Mariama actually touches another debate. A debate about what migration is, a debate between 'permanent mobility' and 'flexible mobility'.

Chapter 5 – Changes in women's lives

Omar drove me to Kuloro, the village where he had lived the greatest part of his life. We drove to a primary school located on the edge of the village where we arrived just in time for the lunch break. The children were playing outside and once they saw Omar, they all ran to him. All children seem to know and love him. That was, I found out later, because he brought several sponsors to the school and he often brought books with him. Omar introduced me to Halima and said he had to leave for himself, I could call him whenever I needed him to pick me up.

While Halima must has been surprised with my visit because Omar forgot to tell her, she immediately welcomed me and vividly started to talk about the school. We sat down in the classroom teaches the youngest children. After explaining my research to her, she said that I could first ask her a few questions before she would walk around with me to interview other women. I asked her about her family when she told me that her husband lived in the Netherlands to complete his study. Ever since the two year he has been away, he did not manage to send her any money. He does not earn any money because he is studying and not working. That is why she decided, besides her work as a teacher at the primary school, to start her own small business. She said that life became more difficult after her husband went away, not only because of the financial issues. She lives with her family-in-law, of whom she does not receive a lot of support. They all watch her so it is difficult for her to go out. But, she said: "I am struggling myself, I am not one who sits with my arms crossed. I work and provide for myself and my children."

Reflections from my dairy: interview with Halima – 23-05-2018

As indicated in the previous chapter, I believe everybody in The Gambia will somehow notice consequences as a result of migration flows. The illustration of Halima above shows how she notices changes in several aspects of her life and that she also feels that people treat her differently. People in her surrounding have different expectations compared to before and they ascribe different roles to her, she is seen now as somebody with money who can financially help others.

Not every woman in The Gambia will experience the same changes in her life as a result of migration. This is strongly connected with who migrated and what connection they had to migrants. Due to this, most information in this chapter accrues from conversations with women who do have a previous household member who migrated. Women's experiences are closely associated with the composition of the household. The ones who lived in joint households with

their family-in-law mentioned different experiences compared to women who lived without their family-in-law. In Muslim societies, the mother in-law often has an important role within the household, she has much control (Erman, 1997). Other women in this household, have less control. Especially when a woman's husband is absent, she will experience a decline in her amount of authority (Adhikari & Hobley, 2015; Gartaula, Visser, & Niehof, 2012). Marie's quotes elaborates this:

> *"You cannot have freedom when your husband is out, everything you do is a crime. You have no freedom, no freedom of speech, no freedom of movement, no freedom of communication. So that is why many women stay with their own family when their husband is away, it is somehow easier there."*

So generally, the situation is different for women who live with their own family or women who are head of the household themselves. The latter are the so-called Female Headed Households (FHH). These FHH are prone to arise in cases of labour migration, insecurity or economic stress and are usually classified as the poorest households (Chant, 2003). Along my respondents, four women were head of their household; two whose husband currently was away and the other two were divorced and lived with their children.

The main changes female stayers endure can be roughly divided in three categories that are in line with the sub-questions; changes in income, changes in responsibilities and changes in freedom. However, these categories cannot be strictly distinguished from each other since several cases revealed that these changes can weaken or strengthen each other. An important subordinate factor that arrives from these categories are social relations. This will be discussed in paragraph 5.4.

5.1 Changes in income

As stated in the beginning of this chapter, Halima does not receive any money from her husband, who left for Amsterdam for his study and he did not have any work since then. She lives with her family-in-law, but she does not receive support. This means that Halima is the one who is not only physically but also financially taking care of their three children. Even though she sometimes does not even have enough money to buy *credit* to send her husband a text message on WhatsApp, she explains that her family-in-law is jealous of her.

> *"Another difficult thing is that families think that when the man is away, he will get a lot of money. So that is why people are always watching the woman when she has new things. Sometimes I cannot even buy shoes [without them thinking this]."*

The family-in-law often (financially) watches the wife of their son or brother who has migrated. They distrust the wife when it comes to money or gifts she receives. Several women told me that family members believe they do not receive enough money. They blame the wife for this and think that she keeps money for herself and do not tell them about it. This is perfectly exemplified by the illustration below.

During our interview, we spoke about how Isatou experienced her husband's stay in Switzerland. Throughout the interview, she started to explain her thoughts with more confidence and persuasiveness and her answers became longer and longer. I think this was because she felt more comfortable.

The last question I asked her was if she noticed that people treated her differently after they knew her husband was away. She looked a bit confused and did not know what to say. I reminded her that she previously told me that people think she only stays with her husband because of the money and also believe she is a rich woman now. She started to laugh sarcastically and said very convincingly: "Yes! They have that, that mentality yes!" She said that even his relatives, his own family members treat her differently because they think her husband sends her too much money. They will just come to her and want money; they don't ask or beg her, but they demand it. But, Isatou said, when she does not have money she tells them, but they get mad and do not always believe her. The only thing that counts for them is that her husband is abroad. "They, they have that problem."

She said it with much power of persuasion and seemed frustrated when she talked about it. Following what she just said, I asked if they just demand money from her because her husband is away, or if they also demand money from women whose husband is in The Gambia. Isatou said that they will ask them both, but it is different. People will only ask women whose husband works in The Gambia and of whom everybody knows they are rich, while they will ask every woman whose husband is abroad. The fact that they are abroad, makes people believe that he will send lots of money. People who have family members that live in another country are considered to be rich:

"Even if it is in Nigeria, just that you are away, you are not in the country, you are rich. Even if you are in Senegal, they will say it.. […] Even if my husband is in Europe, is he going to pluck money from the trees and send it? They are like that! You know, African thinking.. That is the mentality we have here. They are just crazy. They are like that."

Reflections from my dairy: interview with Isatou – 16-05-2018

Because of Isatou's description, the jealousy and expectations many women mentioned became perfectly clear to me. Just the fact that her husband is in Switzerland, is enough for people to believe that Isatou is rich and will give them money. Several times she told me that she is frugal with the money she receives but still she cannot always make it to the end of the month.

Not only the family-in-law is suspicious about money issues. Ndey told me that the general idea in the Gambian society is that a migrant provides everything for his or her family in The Gambia. In many cases this false prejudice leads to jealousy, distrust and expectations that cannot be fulfilled. In general, many people think that migrants are, or will become, easily rich. As Isatou said, they think migrants can just "take money from the tree". These thoughts are often also applied to the family and especially the partner(s) of the migrant (Gartaula, Visser, & Niehof, 2012; Gunnarsson, 2011). Both family members as well as non-family members often ask wives of migrants if they could lend or give them money. When women say they cannot do this, people mistreat them and think they keep all the good things to themselves.

On the other hand, when women have money it can be a safety net, financially as well as socially. In some cases, it can be the reason people leave the women alone. The conversations I had in Kuloro revealed that women whose husband was abroad or in the urban areas, experienced a lot of pressure as a result from the social control from many people in the society. During our walk and talks in the village, Halima and the other women often said that people, especially members from their family-in-law, were watching them. However, one of the ladies I interviewed, Horaji, did not have this problem at all. Later on, Halima told me why. Horaji got married to a man who lives in Spain and who has a well payed job there. With his money, he contributed a lot to the maintenance of the compound and he recently bought new and secure fence. Horaji's compound looked well maintained with fresh looking paint on the walls. Due to this, many people are pleased with Horaji's husband and that also worked out pretty well for herself.

So women who do receive remittances have a completely different experience compared to the women who do not (regularly) receive remittances. The latter were watched and bothered

a lot more by people in their (close) surroundings. This shows that the idea of a migrant's family that they will become rich often does not always match with the reality. In most cases, a period in which remittances are received is often preceded by a period without remittances (Adhikari & Hobley, 2015). Also after a while it is not sure that a family will receive money. Out of the thirteen women who have a spouse that has migrated, only six said to get money on a regular basis. Some of them explained that the money is not always enough to buy everything they need for the whole month. Other women receive money occasionally but three women have never received money in the time their husband has been away. This all does not match with the main ideas generated by the academic literature in which migration is often connected to remittances and financial increase (e.g., De Haas, 2010; Rashid, 2013). In a significant part of the literature focussing on migration, it is assumed that remittances are send. However, this assumption can and should be questioned.

When a migrant leaves, the household will also lose the income he or she had in The Gambia. When this cannot be compensated by the migrant, other members of the household often find ways to earn more money. Oumil's husband was the financial caretaker of the family, but after he left for Senegal she did not hear from him. A consequence of this was that Oumil had to earn more money herself to bridge this loss in income. Later on she heard from him, but the only reason for this unexpected contact was because he wanted her to sign the divorce papers.

To make sure women can fulfil this new role as financial caretaker, some women start their own business to compensate for the financial loss. Oumil started to work in a tourist shop, of which she became the boss after a while. Halima and Satang started a business in buying and re-selling products and Maimuna has her own shop at the Serekunda market. Awa also started her own business in which she has other people who re-sell cosmetics and fabrics for her. These products are shipped to her from Dubai by her husband. The products she sells are considerably cheaper over there so together they make a good profit out of this. Awa would not have been able to start her business if her husband would not live in Dubai. For many women, their husband's migration is the reason they have to start their own business, but for Awa it is also the condition she could start her own business.

However, not every husband supported his wife to work. I first met Isatou at a gathering of people who were looking for a job. She just recently started searching for a job because her husband did not want her to work at first. Even though he had been away for many years, he still wanted her to stay home. But after a few years, he noticed that she became less happy and satisfied with her life, which made him decide that she could go and look for a job. If his denial

was only about him wanting her to stay at home, or also about his own pride of showing financial success (Adhikari & Hobley, 2015), remained unclear to me.

Seen from the financial aspect, many women indicated that their life has become more difficult. However, this aspect is not only about money. The majority of the women whose husband was away indicated that they received stuff from their husband, for example a mobile phone, medicine or presents. When a woman receives stuff from her husband, she has to unpack the suitcase in front of her family-in-law, Marie argues. All to make sure they do not distrust her.

While the common (scientific and social) thoughts make people believe that migrants send remittances home so their migration trajectory will count for a financial increase for the family back home, reality often shows different perceptions. Many migrants do not send money home, for a variety of reasons. This observation is contrasting to main ideas about migration and it actually changes the image of migration in which the migrant is taking care of his or her family. The fact that some women start their own business to fill the gap of the missing income of their husband, is one of the (new) responsibilities these women encounter.

5.2 Changes in responsibilities

Awa's husband is living in Dubai for three years now. He has a well payed job over there and regularly sends money to Awa. Before he worked in Dubai, he used to be working in China so Awa is used to living without him she says. However, initially it was difficult to her. She explained that he was the 'backbone' of the family and when she wanted something to be done, she just had to ask him. He would make sure it would be done. But after he left, she was the one who had to replace him. All of a sudden, she had to buy things and she needed to go everywhere. When the children are sick, she has to take them to the hospital and arrange everything. "Your husband's responsibilities fall on your shoulders. So it is usually not… it is not easy. But as time goes on, you get used to it", is what Awa said about it.

Reflections from my dairy: interview with Awa – 05-06-2018

The responsibilities that are left to a woman after her husband migrated increases. She is not only responsible of the household and the children, as she was before, but she is also responsible for the economical welfare of the family (De Snyder, 1993). In their research, Adhikari and Hobley (2015) found that male migration flows lead to many new responsibilities for women, but they still had limited authority and decision-making control. The husband retained control when decisions with big influences were about to be made. Women did gain more authority

with regard to small-scale decisions, like what kind of crop they were about to grow. There are many examples in my research that indeed showed that the main decision-making power stayed in the hands of the husband; Isatou's husband did not allow her to find work or to come with him to Switzerland. He decided that she should stay with his mother and take care of her and the household. There are also women with opposite experiences.

In my interview with Awa, she illustrates how she suddenly became the backbone of the family after her husband migrated. She had to take over responsibilities her husband used to have. She previously indicated that she discussed several decisions with her husband over the phone, so she did not make the decision on her own, neither did her husband. This aligns with the argument of Adhikari and Hobley; small scale responsibilities and large-scale responsibilities are handled differently. Most women agreed with Awa's point of view that her life became more difficult after her husband left because she would have more responsibilities; as Oumil said, the wife will become the head of the family herself.

Although, some women did not notice any differences in responsibilities they were facing. It matters a lot whether the man and woman already lived together before the husband left The Gambia. Ndey and Kutu both got engaged while their fiancé was living abroad. They were used to make decisions on their own, they have never lived with their fiancé and they do not have children. Therefore Ndey and Kutu are still making decisions on their own. They both discuss decisions with their husband, but they do not rely on his approval for every decision they have to make. Ndey's husband for example wants her to come and stay in the USA, but she is determined to stay in The Gambia. As she said, her life did not change much after they got married, she did not feel like she had more or less responsibilities right now. These things might change when they have children.

An enlightening example that pointed towards another process was Mai. I first met her at the bar of the hotel where she is working as a waitress. The touristic season has ended, so the hotel only had a few guests. She did not have much to do, so often I just sat there and talked with her. That is how I got to know that her husband was working in Bassé, a city located 270 kilometres upcountry. This takes, in the most positive situation, a six hours drive. He comes to Serekunda once a month, and then he will stay for about three days or so. Mai is his second wife and she lives in the same compound as the first wife. I asked her about her experiences of being married to someone who is living in another place and if she experiences difficulties when he was away. When I asked her those questions, she laughed a little. She said "*No, it is not hard. You know, when he is here, I have to do everything. You know African men, they are different from Europe[an men]. African women have to do everything.*" When we talked about

her experiences, Mai primarily referred to the heavier workload she experienced when her husband was around, in contrast to other women who mainly referred to their new role as head of the household. Adhikari and Hobley (2015) claimed that "[m]ale migration has increased the workload of women and girls in all types of domains" (p.20). This might be true for most of them, but Mai showed that one can also experience it as a decrease of workload.

5.3 Changes in the feeling of freedom

In one of the conversations I had with a male colleague he expressed some of his hard feelings about Gambian men to me. According to him, there are men living in another country who control their Gambian wife in many aspects. They do not allow their wife to work or to go out at all. They themselves move to another country where nobody will know what they are doing. There they could have a girlfriend but nobody will address that to his wife. And still, they restrict their wives in all kinds of ways. Eventually he said that some women will definitely get more opportunities when their husband is not around. This is true for Isatou, whose husband recently allowed her to look for a job. However – as can be read below – next to her husband's influences, Isatou has to deal with her in-laws' opinions as well.

After she got married to her husband and he left for Europe, Isatou moved in with her mother-in-law, a very old lady who is not able to do much on her own. Isatou was the only one in the household who did not have a payed job, so she had to stay home to take care of the woman. She told me that her mother-in-law was watching her a lot, so I asked if she was able to go out so see her friends or family. She could, she said, but it was limited. When her husband would be here, she would only have to tell him. "But now the husband is not there, now she is your husband", Isatou argued and she clapped her hands as if she wanted to make her words more powerful.

When she wanted to go to her mother's house or to a friend, she had to tell her mother-in-law. But it was always uncertain what she would say. Some days she was totally okay with it while she would forbit her to go the next day. "And you have to obey, you have to sit (…) if you go and come there is problem." Even though she did not go out a lot, only to one of her old classmates, to her parents' house and to the market, her mother-in-law kept complaining "because now she is the husband. They are like that… When the husband is there, anywhere you can go, anytime, no problem. Even if she doesn't like it, she will not talk because it is not her business. But now, her son is not there and she want to control you."

Isatou says she just tried to stay calm, because if she would make a scene it would be worse. But her mother-in-law is not the only one who is watching her, other family members and friends of her husband are watching her closely.

> *"Every time! (…) Every time they are calling him. Every time... Every time... I met your wife this and this, I met your wife. They are like that, they never mind their own business. But it is up to the man [what he does with this]. If both of you understand each other, that's it. No matter what anyone says, you don't listen. That is it. That is why I am not leaving. I am not even scared or something. When they tell him 'I see her' he calls me direct and tells me, yeah. (…) [Y]ou just keep quiet and just say 'no problem', don't bother it is not important. I say just let it go. Ah, it is not even important. Me, I'll not scratch my head on those people."*
>
> Reflections from my dairy: interview with Isatou – 16-05-2018

The way Isatou spoke about her experiences really touched me. Her mother-in-law was the head of the household and anytime Isatou wanted to go out she had to get her approval before she could go anywhere. This is the same role as her husband would have had when he would have been around so it made Isatou feel like her mother-in-law became her new husband. With her husband's migration, her freedom to move around became limited. It touched me because Isatou was her mother-in-law's primary caretaker since there was nobody else who could or would take care of her. So actually she was helping her mother-in-law to a full extent, but her mother-in-law did not sympathise with her at all.

While I expected these women to receive more freedom as a result of less control of their husband, in fact the amount of control only rises. Not only her mother-in-law is watching her, many of her husband's friends, family members and other people are calling her husband to mention where they saw her. As Kutu mentioned, people can get very suspicious with a woman and think she is having a new boyfriend when she is going to a *program*. In this way, her freedom to move will be limited, something that also becomes clear in my conversations with Marie. She compared the position of a women who is living without her husband with a life in prison:

"You cannot have freedom when your husband is out, everything you do is a crime. (…) You have no freedom; no freedom of speech, no freedom of movement, no freedom of communication (…) It is like you are in a prison, a silent prison. Think about it, it is the same! In a prison you don't have your husband or boyfriend, you just get food and have to work. It is just the same as a prison."

The reality in which women have to discuss every single step they want to make with their in-law, is also exemplified by Gartuala, Visser and Niehof (2012). In their research among Nepalese women, they extensively discussed the stories of four women whose husband were working abroad during their fieldwork. One of these women mentioned experiences that are familiar with those sketched by Isatou and Marie. On the other hand, the article also shows different processes, like members of the family-in-law who can be very supportive and helpful or others who does not seem to pay much attention to the wife.

Kutu, Ndey and Awa all do not have much trouble with the family of their husbands. The biggest contradiction in their lives compared to the lives of Isatou and Marie is that the later were living with their in-laws while the former did not. Kutu and Ndey were living with their own family and Awa was the head of her household where she lived with her children and sister. In this way, these women did not face the daily control of their in-laws and maintained a greater amount of freedom. This does not necessarily mean that compared to their lives with their husband still physically by their side, they achieve more freedom to move. Awa argued that her freedom is limited because other people will always 'disturb', while her husband is free in his movements. Nevertheless, it is better to live with your own family than to live with you husband's family, she argues.

Overall, it can be said that a greater mobility for the men in most of the cases does not lead to more mobility for the rest of his family. Quite the reverse, for his wife it often leads to less mobility. Because the wife does not have a husband around who all the time knows where she is and what she is doing, people in their surroundings are getting suspicious. Certain people feel like they have to take over the role of the husband or at least let them know about everything. Women sometimes therefore choose to tell their husband about everything they do and everywhere they go in order to prevent any miscommunications between them.

5.4 Changes in social relations

All the changes mentioned above point towards – and derive from – one covering aspect; changes in social relations as a result of migration. As for the women who stay in The Gambia, the relation they have with a migrant change after that person migrated. And not only that their relationship with other stayers changes as well.

Social relations are affected by feelings of love, jealousy and obligation that come paired with migration (Cole & Groes, 2016). Cole and Groes write about 'affective circuits' by which they refer to "social networks that emerge from the exchange of goods, ideas, people and emotions" (p.6). Not only do new social networks emerge, existing networks are also 'affected' by the exchange of goods or money. As Marcel Mauss argued in his famous book 'The Gift', gifts are never 'free'. According to him, people who give gifts, always want something in return. Gifts are part of a reciprocity system between the giver and the recipient. Some family members might (financially) help someone who wants to migrate. After a while, they expect to receive remittances or goods from him or her. If the migrant cannot (or will not) live up to these expectations, family member who stayed will be disappointed. This will affect the mutually social relations.

Expectations of stayers might be unfeasible for migrants, causing their relationship to change. Allamouta's relationship with her husband, who already lives abroad for a 'very long' time, is an example. Her husband never returned to see her and her children but he did send them money. After he married his second wife (who lived in the same village as Allamouta), he returned within a month and as a consequence of his second marriage, the height of remittances Allamouta received showed a drastic decreased. She is receiving less money and attention than she expected. While she at first was convinced that her husband's decision to migrate was a good choice, she is not sure about it now. What she receives from him is not in line with what she expected. This affected their relation.

Not only the relations with migrants are changing, many women experienced changes in relationships with other stayers as well. As demonstrated in the previous paragraphs, some women experience pressure from their family-in-law or other people to give them money. Before her husband migrated, nobody ever asked Isatou for money. But after he left, no matter how much money he would make, people demanded money from her. All of a certain, she was expected to be rich and her relationship with other people changed. They treated her differently, as they watched her more closely. Marie said that even the smallest children were watching her and reported to her husband when she went out.

Often wives are forced to take over multiple (stressful) roles. Besides their primary roles as mother, wife and caretaker, they all of a sudden face more responsibilities they have to conquer alone. Many women, mainly the ones living without their family-in-law, are expected to take over their husband's role as decisionmaker and financial guard (Tumbe, 2015). For women living with her husband's family, often some of her in-laws take these roles upon themselves. This, on its turn, often has its consequence for the freedom women experiences. In this way, more physical mobility for the husband can lead to less mobility for the wife.

The new relation Isatou has with her mother-in-law, which she compared with a new husband-wife relation, would have never arose if her husband was still living in The Gambia. If the husband leaves, his family members often feel it is their obligation to fill in his position in his wife's life. They strictly monitor the relation between the migrant and his or her spouse, whereby the wife experiences less freedom. Social relations between the wife and her husband's family are therefore a subject of change. Although I did not get to speak to women whose child migrated, migration certainly changes these women's role within the family. Especially mothers of male migrants will experience changes. In the patrilinear system, wives of husbands will often come to live with his family. When the husband leaves, it is possible the daughter-in-law stays to live with her in-law family. It will often be expected of the mother-in-law to take over some of her son's roles, just like the mother of Isatou's husband did. When her son was still living in The Gambia, she did not have to – and was probably not allowed to – interfere in her daughter-in-law's life to the same extent.

All the foregoing seems to imply that migration is an insurmountable and life changing happening for everyone involved. And indeed, in my opinion The Gambia can be described as a *culture of migration* in which migration is noticeable in every corner of the society. But that does not mean that everybody is equally involved with migration. Besides the seemingly omnipresence of migration, some women argued they did not notice many differences caused by migration in their life. For them, migration is not really considered an issue.

Mai for example, said that her life without her husband was not hard at all. Of course, she noticed his absence in the house, but that did not lead to many changes for her. In our conversations, she referred to the non-impact of migration. Also, other women I met said they knew people who have migrated but they argued it did not really influence their lives to a large extent. That does not mean that they do not see the influence it can have on other households, but it shows it has different consequences for everybody.

Chapter 6 – Conclusions

The aim of this research was to gain insights in the perspectives Gambian women have on the *culture of migration* and to what extent this *culture of migration* affects these women's lives. Hereby the focus was on the immobile side of mobility, on the side that is significantly underexposed and that needs more attention. The main research questions that guided me though the research was:

What is the perspective of 'women who stay' on the culture of migration and to what extent does the culture of migration affect the lives of these women?

In light of this research question, I spend three months in The Gambia where I conducted ethnographic research. By means of observations, interviews and small talk, I was able to gain insights that were important for the outcomes of this study. My respondents' experiences regarding migration differed a lot. The way migration affected their life, shaped their thoughts and perspectives on migration in general was different for everybody. Therefore not one sentence or concise explanation can answer this question, instead a number of conclusions can be drawn. Three main conclusions can be given, focussing on the ambivalence of migration, relationality in (im)mobility and the social embeddedness of migration.

Firstly, the social side of migration is perceived as important. It is not only about economic aspects; migration exceeds that. Migration is an ambivalent topic, as can be concluded from the following description of my meeting with Yata.

Together with a friend I went to an ice-cream parlour to buy some ice. When we arrived, we saw many expats and tourists and only a few Gambian people. Right after we ordered, somebody called my name. At first, I did not recognise to lady who waved at me, but then I remembered it was Yata whom I met at the Trade Fair a few weeks before. We talked for a while and exchanged numbers. Another few weeks later, I met with her at her office. It was the most beautiful and luxurious office I had seen in The Gambia. They had multiple computers, shiny dark wooden desks, big chairs and even an A/C. Before I came I already thought that Yata would be relatively wealthy, and this, together with the big car that stood in front of the door, strengthened these thoughts. We sat down in one of the little office boxes – as she called them – and after we chatted about our personal life we started the interview.

Yata told me that she had lived in America for 10 years. She went there to study and after she graduated, she also worked there for a few years. Although she is happy that she came back to live in The Gambia to start her own company, she claims that she feels like she does not fit in. According to her, this is because people think she is rich and they think she completely changed as a result of her stay abroad. And that image of living and working abroad is exactly the problem, she said. "Many people think you have to go abroad to make it". Either for their study as well as their working career, many people feel they cannot make it within The Gambia. Yata said that one of her nephews thought like this so he made plans to go to Europe through the backway. After he left, his family called him and demanded him to come back. Now, she says, he is just sitting and waiting. He refuses to search for a job because he is afraid he will be successful and will not go abroad anymore. But, she says, "things [abroad] are not as easy as they think."

Reflections from my dairy: interview with Yata – 30-05-2018

Yata's perspective on migration was that it definitely was not necessary to become successful in The Gambia. She pointed to opportunities for people within The Gambia itself. Yet, she herself lived abroad for over 10 years and started her professional career in the USA. Nowadays, she is a successful business woman in The Gambia – at least I believe she can be seen as 'successful' – but she did not achieve her current professional status only within The Gambia. Her thoughts do not seem to be in line with her own life experiences.

I believe she wants to show people that migration is a topic with different stories, with different realities. The fact that her stay in the USA turned out quite well for her, does not mean that a decision to migrate will positively work out for everybody. Migration itself is ambivalent. On the one hand there are success stories, but on the other hand there are stories about migration flows that turned out to be less positive than expected. All stories are just as important and need to be taken into account to create a true image. Solely positive as well as solely negative stories do not conform with the reality and migration is not a matter of simply 'yes' or 'no', or 'good' or 'bad'.

For many women, migration had both positive and negative consequences. Some gave more attention to positive experiences while for others negative experiences overshadowed their relation to migration. Because of this, some women were looking for other, more temporary, forms of migration. They did not prefer somebody to migrate for a long period of time, but they would support a short-term stay at another place. However, in the Gambian context, migration most of the time seemed to refer to a more permanent way of living. Further

research to migration could take 'ambivalence' as starting point. Deriving from this point, one could create a more holistic image about migration and staying that covers multiple experiences.

This also encompasses that staying should be regarded as an active choice, rather than a passive action. Regarding staying as a passive happening together with the fact that many studies that focus on migration aspirations, strengthens the idea that migration is the norm everybody strives for. Not many studies are devoted to 'staying aspirations'. However, this is also a diverse situation; certainly not everybody wishes to migrate. Also, the decision people make to stay can be decisive for the decision of others to move. The role of non-migrants is bigger than academic literature assumes it to be; stayers are indispensable for migrants. Not only do stayers affect mobility, the relationship is twofold.

This leads to the second argument; there needs to be more attention for the concept of relationality within the field of (im)mobility. Migration affects more people than only the migrant. The mobility of one influences the mobility of others in many ways. When somebody migrates, others' mobility can be limited, compelled or broadened. In her article published in 2011, Reeves strongly advocates that we should explore mobility *relationally*. For some people, it might be totally appropriate to migrate, it may be even wished. Within the same context, it might be transgressive for others to migrate. This is all connected to social thoughts of authority and respect.

Gender issues and ascribed gender roles are important for the formation of these social thoughts. Therefore, gender issues also need to be involved in this relational thinking. As Brettell mentioned, mobility and immobility shape societal thoughts about gender roles. About this, Reeves argued that many researches focus on the meaning of gender for migration. However conversely, we also need to think about what migration means for gender and gender relations (2011, p. 570). This completely changes the field of migration studies and with this also the politics of mobility change. Several questions can be asked like: who is allowed to move? In what situations is it good to move? Or for who is it good to move?

The third, and last, argument is that migration is everywhere and it is embedded in the social structures of a society. As can be concluded from the anecdote in the introduction of this thesis, migration is imbedded in the Gambian society and it is not a an 'odd thing out' anymore (if it has ever been). It is commonly accepted and its occurrence is widespread. Just as well as non-migrants' role in the *culture of migration* should not be underestimated, the consequences migration has on their lives cannot be undervalued as well. Women who stay do not only notice changes in their lives, they also change themselves. Besides that, others will change their view

on the women. Often women who stay have new roles ascribed to them, roles their husband used to have before.

In this way, migration is becoming an issue of the total social field. Lately, there is more attention for individual stories and individual cases. In these times of individualisation, it is even more important to keep a broad and comprehensive view. Everyone and every part of the society needs to be included in migration research; stayers, returnees and everyone in between are just as important as migrants (Rigg, 2006). Migration is becoming a social construct that is part of many people's lives. As a close friend from Venezuela told me after she said the half of her family migrated to neighbouring countries; "it is like we have migrated too". This shows that not migrating in a physical way can nevertheless mean that one feels like he or she has migrated while staying in the same site.

6.1 Reflection and recommendations for further research

With the conclusion of a research, many questions will arise as well. While I have been able to answer questions and gain a lot of knowledge on a broad spectrum, there are also some parts or topics that perhaps could have had more attention. The methodological chapter already concludes with a short reflection on the methodology. This were difficulties with learning Pulaar, the decision to mainly focus on the urban areas, my personal feelings of bothering people with my questions and a reflection on the used research techniques. However, a reflection needs to be given on other aspects besides these methodological aspects as well.

Although I tried to give a holistic overview over the topics I discussed, sometimes I found out I was biased. As argued in the conclusion, it is often thought that migration is a goal. With this, staying is – in a globalised world – seen as something negative. In the beginning of this research, I think I had the same thoughts as well. I for example asked women if they had aspirations to migrate. However, this is an assumption I unintended took for granted. Later on, I changed my thoughts and started to think of staying as an active choice. Because of this I adjusted my questions to make them more neutral.

A research always leaves doors open, opens new doors, or emphasises opportunities for other researches. In line with my study, it would be interesting to follow women who stay for several years. How does their view on migration change throughout the time? Furthermore, research could be done to how migrants see stayers. How do they feel about the roles and support of stayers?

Furthermore, I believe it is necessary for academic literature to pay more attention to the role of stayers. Hereby, the focus should not be on migration aspirations but staying should be seen as a strategy, as an active decision and as something that can be positive. This will not only change the image of stayers, but it will change the ideal of migration in total. The importance of stayers will be emphasised, which will also be helpful for the attention stayers receive within organisations focussing on migration.

Also, I believe it would be good to pay more attention to certain migration-mechanisms. After all, in order to understand migration, all phases and people that are involved need to be neutrally taken into account. Questions that arise are e.g.: how does a culture of migration work and how is it established? What kind of (long-term) effects does it have on all facets of the society?

On the more practical side, policies also need to (partly) shift their focus to stayers. When I found out that the IOM in The Gambia did not have one single project that focusses on stayers, I was surprised. Also, policy makers are mostly focussed on the financial aspect of migration but they need to understand that migration is more. Migration organisations and policy makers need to understand that migration is a social construct in which other people besides the migrant are involved as well. This will effectively change migration policies and migration projects.

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Appendix 1: Overview of the interviewees

	Name	Age	Current household	Occupation	Migrant in family?	Place
1	Isatou	36	Own nuclear family (mother and sisters)	Unemployed	Husband in Switzerland, away for 12 years	Serekunda
2	Awa	31	Younger sister and three children (3, 6 & 8 years old)	Gamjobs and own 'business'	Husband in Dubai for two years, has been away before for many years.	Lamin
3	Ndey	25	Own nuclear family	Food quality worker	Husband in America for 10 years, married one year ago.	Kanifing
4	Satang	24	In-laws, nuclear	Unemployed	Husband in Germany for two years, married after he left.	Latrikunda German
5	Jenaba (daughter of Fatoumatta)	25	Own nuclear family	Unemployed	Husband in Norway for four years.	Kanifing
6	Maimuna	33	Family of uncle	Own shop at Serekunda market	Husband in the USA for 11 years.	Serekunda
7	Mai	45	Extended family of husband, own house with	Waitress at a bar in a luxurious hotel	Husband in Basse for seven years.	Latrikunda

			daughter (17) and two sons (3 and 7)			
8	Binta	35	Together with daughter (13) at her own parents' house	Immigration officer	Husband in Spain married two years ago.	Kanifing
9	Halima	26	In-laws, children (4, 6 and 8)	Teacher nursery school and own 'business'	Husband studying in The Netherlands for two years.	Kuloro
10	Rohe village	±32	In-laws, son (10)	Unemployed	Husband in Italy for ± nine years.	Kuloro
11	Fatou village	20	In-laws	Unemployed	Husband in Spain, married one year ago.	Kuloro
12	Allamouta village	±45	In-laws, extended family (also living with second wife), 2 children (17, 20)	Unemployed	Husband 'away', somewhere in Europe (don't know where he is, but somewhere in Europe)	Kuloro
13	Kutu	25	Own nuclear family	Secretary Head of Faculty of Law	Fiancé in France for three years, engaged eight months ago.	Serekunda
14	Oumil	33	Son (13)	Own shop at craft market	Husband migrated to Senegal, divorced after a short time.	Serekunda
15	Kaddyatou	±47	Two daughters (22 and 25)	Fruitlady at the beach	Husband migrated to Senegal, divorced after a short time.	Serekunda

16	Fatoumatta (mother of Jenaba)	59	Own nuclear family	Own shop at craft market	Daughter with family in Senegal, son in-law in Norway.	Kanifing
17	Karima	±30	Only with her husband	Migration Expert, Peace Corps	Working as 'migration expert' at the Migration Project	Lamin
18	Jabou	30	Husband, son (2) and daughter (9)	Immigration service	No direct links with migrants.	Kanifing
19	Mariama	40	Own family; husband lives with her family	Councillor Bakau	Husband has been in Dubai for three months (he is currently home).	Bakau
20	Yata	±48	Own nuclear family	Own consultancy agency	Studied in America and worked there for 10 years, came back one year ago. 8 brothers and sisters abroad, one other in the Gambia	Kololi
21	Marie	±46	With her sisters and many children	Director Women's Initiative The Gambia	Ex-husband was away.	Yundum
22	Sainabou	33	Own nuclear family	Employee Butcher	No direct links with migrants.	Kotu

23	Aji and auntie	20 and 53	Aji with parents and brothers and sisters, auntie with husband	Student Political Science and ex-minister of Youths and Sports	Auntie lived in America for more than 10 years.	Kanifing

Appendix 2: The interview guide

Thank you for wanting to join in my research. All the information will be treated confidentially and the only purpose of this interview is gathering information for my research. I will not use your real name in my report I will handle the information with respect to your privacy. Do you mind if I take notes during the interview?

- General information about the interviewee (if not already clear to me):
    - Name
    - Occupation
    - Religion
    - Household
    - Age
    - Education
    - Tribe
- General information about the migrant:
    - Name
    - Education
    - Tribe
    - Age
    - Religion
    - Household
- The migration
    - Where is [migrant] now? When did he left this village / the Gambia?
    - Did [migrant] go through the backway or by plane?
    - For what reasons did [migrant] migrate?
    - Whose decision was it?
    - What is [migrant's] current legal status in the country?
    - Does [migrant] have a job right now?
    - Do you know about the plans of [migrant] in the future? How long is [migrant] planning on staying there?
    - Are you happy with the current situation or would you like to see it differently?
        - How would you like to see it?
    - Would you want your child to migrate too?
    - How often do you speak to [migrant]?
- Changes in life:
    - Does [migrant] send money or other things back to you?
        - If so, do you have to discuss how you spend the money?
    - Have many things changed in your life, regarding:
        - Daily activities
        - Own work
        - Household situation and tasks
        - Sense of freedom
            - Are you able to go out with your friends if you want to?
        - Responsibilities

        - Do you have different responsibilities now [migrant] is away?
        - Do you discuss decisions that have to be made with [migrant]?
    - Do you have the feeling that people in your surrounding treat you differently when [migrant] migrated?
- Do you want to migrate yourself too?