

# **Transit to nowhere: How Sub-Saharan African migrants in Morocco confront life in forced immobility**

**Inka Stock**

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# Abstract

This thesis is based on an ethnographic study of the lives of Sub-Saharan African migrants residing in Morocco. Over the past two decades, an increasing number of these migrants live in the urban centres of the country, mostly without migration status and with very limited access to formal employment, social services and legal protection. While many of these migrants wish to move on to another country, return to their home countries or, in some cases, settle permanently in Morocco, most are unable to do so and are 'stuck' in a situation of 'forced immobility' for indeterminate periods of time.

The study describes how migrants narrate their particular migratory trajectories to Morocco, their arrival in the country, their dealings with fellow migrants and their efforts to survive. It analyses the processes by which they become alienated in space and time from their existential quest for a better life. While in Morocco, migrants' lives are focused on the present and their social relations are often marked by hierarchical and exploitative structures of dependence. These circumstances make them question their feelings of belonging, their values and their ideas about themselves and the meaning of migration as an existential quest. Drawing on Albert Camus' idea of the absurd, migrants' feelings of alienation are compared with an absurd situation, in which old values lose their meanings in an apparently senseless world.

Rather than approaching migrants as passive victims or hopeless individuals, the study seeks to explore how migrants' lives in liminal times and spaces are shaped by the various strategies they employ in an attempt to take control of their own destiny. Social theories of waiting and time are used in this context to highlight how migrants' action - or inaction - can be understood as purposeful from their own perspective. From an existential point of view, waiting for onward migration constitutes a kind of revolt against the absurd conditions they are facing in forced immobility and gives at least some meaning to their lives.

The thesis is framed against conventional discourses of transit migration, which conceive of migrants in Morocco as criminal trespassers of borders or else as victims who have little choice over their actions. This discourse often serves as a justification for increasingly restrictive migration policies and measures to control and prevent migrants from settling or moving through countries bordering the European Union. The thesis argues that the 'transit migrant' is a normative and political construct that does not reflect the reality of migrants coming to Morocco. Furthermore, policies designed to control migrants' movement and stay do nothing to improve their situation in Morocco but rather contribute to their increasing marginalisation. The thesis also draws attention to problems with the relief-based nature of much short-term humanitarian aid granted to migrants in Morocco, showing how these type of activities do not address or take into account migrants' complicated relation to the present.

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.0 Introduction

The first Sub-Saharan African migrant I ever met in Morocco was sitting next to me on a bus in 1999, when I was travelling from Tangier to Tetuan, two cities on Morocco's Mediterranean coast. While we were chatting, he explained to me that he had been living in both Morocco and Spain for several years, depending on where he could get seasonal work. He also said that irregular border crossing had never been an insurmountable problem in the past, but that in recent years, increasing controls in the Strait of Gibraltar were making it very difficult.

I lived in Rabat at that time and worked in the social sector. Since the year 2000, I had noticed that non-governmental organisations (NGOs) were beginning to draw attention to the humanitarian problems of Sub-Saharan African migrants in Morocco, particularly those who were continuing on and arriving at Spanish shores. Media reports about irregular boat people who attempted to reach Spain were multiplying. Whereas some years before, such reports had focused on irregular migrants from Morocco, now, images of half-drowned Sub-Saharan African migrants being assisted by tourists on the crowded beaches in Andalucía were frequently featured in Spanish newspapers. By the time I left Morocco in the summer of 2001, the boats with irregular migrants from Morocco's northern coasts were filled almost exclusively with Sub-Saharan African migrants who had replaced the mostly Moroccan migrants who had boarded them until then (Belgendouz 2009).

When I returned to live in Morocco at the end of 2007, the situation had changed. Rather than being an exception and rarely talked about topic in government circles and NGOs, African migrants living in precarious conditions *in Morocco* had become a key area of interest for many organisations, including certain local NGOs and the academic community in Rabat and beyond. Migrants were living in marginalised areas, often deprived of the most basic rights and services, suffering exclusion and poverty. Even though it appeared that the overall number of migrants present in

Morocco had not changed significantly since 2000<sup>1</sup>, migrants were more and more visible in Rabat and Casablanca, and less frequently concentrated in the woods surrounding Oujda, Ceuta, Tangier and Melilla, the places from where the zodiacs and fisher boats used to leave for Spain. Now, it appeared that the numbers of boats leaving the coasts were diminishing, in part because border surveillance had been increased and Ceuta and Melilla surrounded by a fence of barbed wire. The transition camp in Oujda, close to the Algerian border where most migrants used to stop over before taking the clandestine boats, was now significantly smaller<sup>2</sup>. The dynamics of this migration seemed to have changed. Migrants appeared to 'get stuck' in Morocco in increasingly difficult conditions and for increasingly longer periods, instead of travelling through it (Papadoupoulou Kourkoula 2008).

Strangely enough, in policy circles, the term 'transit migration' appeared to be used much more frequently to describe the situation or characteristics of these migrants than it had been six years previously. NGOs made funding applications for projects about 'transit migrants', policy documents were written about people 'transiting' through Morocco, and the country itself became labelled a 'transit country' (see for example: European Commission 2006, Khachani 2008, Papadoupoulou Kourkoula 2008).

The new popularity of the term was curious, given that migrants seemed not to 'transit' very actively towards Spain now, but rather found themselves in a situation of 'forced immobility' in Morocco. Khachani (2008) for example, found in a survey of more than 1000 Sub-Saharan African migrants in Rabat and Casablanca that, on average, the majority had been in Morocco two and a half years – some of them significantly longer than that. More than 75 per cent of them stated that they wanted to leave Morocco as soon as possible but were unable to do so. Stuck for indeterminate periods in Morocco, they felt stripped the possibility to participate meaningfully in economic, political and social life.

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<sup>1</sup> According to unofficial estimates from NGOs I interviewed and who had worked in the country since then.

<sup>2</sup> According to humanitarian workers from NGOs working in Oujda, there were 300 migrants in the camps in the summer of 2009, as opposed to roughly 600 - 800 three years earlier.

The more I learned about migrants over the course of the years, the more I had the impression that they were living in a 'no-man's land', in which they gradually lost their name, their status, their home, their past and their future. After consulting available literature on the subject, I found that migrants' 'stuckness' in Morocco had striking and worrying parallels with situations in other places in the world where migrants are increasingly immobilised during their migration trajectories (see for example: Sutter 2012, Schapendonk 2011, Hamood 2006, Papadoupoulou Kourkoula 2008, Schuster 2005a) or else are unable to move in the first place (Lubkemann 2008, Chu 2010, Carling 2002, Alpes 2011). The situation of Sub-Saharan African migrants in Morocco therefore deserves research attention.

### **1.1 Objectives of this thesis and research questions**

The process by which immobilised migrants become displaced within humanity is a theme that runs through this thesis. In effect, by studying migrants' lives in Morocco ethnographically, this thesis seeks to make them visible as part of some uncoded movement of people through a space between worlds, where the normal rules and codes through which we recognise the humanity of others are in suspension. Designed to look at these processes from a migrants' point of view, the thesis links their changing feelings of belonging and identity to the interplay of political and economic structures that shape migration trajectories over time and in different places.

By privileging a migrants' perspective in this research, I hope to contribute to the transformation of practices in migration policy in the hope that it may in future afford more centrality to migrants' rights. Marginalised in much migration theory, undocumented migrants' life worlds are often absent or misrepresented in policy making processes and theorizing on migration. This is the case for undocumented migrants in Morocco. I believe that this state of affairs has negative consequences for the applicability and relevance of migration policy and theory in general, but particularly with respect to migrants' own interests. Furthermore, the vision that currently informs policy making can only lead to a partial understanding of the effects of mobility and immobility in peoples' lives, because it rests on a static and categorical



distinction between legal and illegal mobility which does not hold true in reality for the majority of migratory movements.

The objectives of this thesis are as follows. First, the thesis will present empirical research that describes the conditions and everyday lives of Sub-Saharan African migrants in Morocco, with a particular focus on the experience of migrants who have been living there for extended periods of time. Second, the thesis aims to add to the critical literature that documents the human consequences of migration control policies in Europe and beyond (Willen 2007, Anderson 2012, Schuster 2005c, Carling 2007). In addition to exploring the constraints such policies impose on migrants' lives, the thesis explores how policy measures that help to criminalise and persecute migrants also challenge them to design a creative life plan and find strategies to maintain their individual human dignity.

Third, through a critical assessment of migration from a perspective of 'forced immobility', the study contributes to literature that challenges some of the bias in contemporary migration theory with respect to the importance accorded to mobility at the expense of immobility as well as liberal, economic thinking at the expense of universal human rights values. In connection with this, the study challenges the 'transit' concept as a static idea that does not account for the dynamic relationship between mobility and immobility, time and space, and the tension between migrants' actual ability to move versus their aspiration to do so. By doing this, I aim to add to a body of literature that highlights fundamental contradictions between the concepts, norms and rationalities evident in much contemporary migration policy and the lived experiences of migrants (Carling 2002, Bakewell 2008b, Anderson 2012, Alpes 2011, Mallkki 1995b).

Fourth, the thesis contributes to an emerging concern with temporality in migration literature and brings questions about time into dialogue with questions about migration aspirations and immobility (Cwerner 2000, King 2002). In doing so, it adds to a growing body of literature on existential aspects of migration (Hage 2005, Madison 2006).

The research question at the heart of this thesis was initially framed as: 'What does the experience of 'being stuck' do to the lives of Sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco?' In the course of the research process, I decided to approach this question through various, more specific sub-questions that run through the different chapters in this thesis: Why and when did migrants become immobilised during their migration trajectory? Which individual and structural factors contributed to this situation? How do migrants experience this state existentially and physically? How does immobility shape their participation in and identification with community networks in Morocco? How does immobility influence migrants' actions and their perspectives on their present and their future? How does a life in forced immobility influence migrants' view of time? And, last but not least, how are these experiences gendered?

In order to set these questions and objectives in context, it is necessary to provide a brief conceptual overview that situates the migrants I studied in a context of 'forced immobility', rather than 'transit migration'. As I will show below, 'transit' is a politicised concept that does not represent how migrants experience their time in Morocco. As I am approaching this study from a migrants' perspective, I will argue that 'forced immobility' is a better way to conceptually frame their situation.

## **1.2 Transit as a politicised concept**

To begin, it is necessary to explain how, since the late 1990s, 'transit migration' has become such a prominent concept in both policy discourse and migration theory 'talk' about countries like Morocco that some even refer to it as the 'missing link' between emigration and settlement (Papadoupoulou Kourkoulou 2008:4). Rather than describing a new phenomenon and a novel way of approaching migration, however, I argue that 'transit migration' is conceptually and politically biased because it emerged as a result of the perceived political consequences of certain migratory flows for the leaders and policy makers of European countries.

In this context, it is useful to remember that 'transit migration' as a term emerged largely as a result of publications by the International Organisation of Migration (IOM) and some other governmental bodies at the European level (Düvel 2006). Since its

arrival in the 1990s, the concept has been used predominantly by international organisations and governments in Europe to define and describe a specific and apparently new form of migration that posed a security problem for European countries and therefore needed to be managed and controlled (Düvel 2006, De Haas 2007, Collyer 2006).

While a clear-cut definition of transit does not seem to exist (Düvel 2008, Collyer, Düvel & de Haas 2012), the term is often used to refer to a kind of 'ongoing mobility', a movement across space with intermittent stop-overs, involving a set of strategies for undocumented border crossing (Düvel 2006, Icduygu 2005). In these accounts, 'transit' is mostly approached as a form of movement, and the nature of the periods of 'involuntary stay' that most so-called transit migrants are also subjected to are only rarely explored. For example, in a study on transit migrants in Egypt, it is only commented on in passing that most of these migrants had lived in Egypt for years (Roman 2006). Instead, the focus of the study is mostly on documenting and analysing migrants' aspirations to leave the country and their legal and irregular possibilities of doing so. The details their actual lives in Egypt remain unexplored. This is not an isolated case. In studies on transit migration in Turkey (Icduygu, 2005), Greece, (Papadoupoulou-Kourkoula 2008), Morocco (Lahlou 2005, Khachani 2008, Belgendouz 2009), Mexico (Kimball 2007), Azerbaijan (IOM 2003), Lybia (Hammood, 2006) and Italy (Andriujasevic 2007) that I reviewed, attention is generally dedicated to migrants' journeys and the obstacles they face when they have to rely on irregular means of entry or exit. Very little room is given to exploring migrants' lived experience *in* transit countries. Düvel (2006) argues that this is a common feature of transit literature.

A second defining feature of work on transit is the assumption that migrants in transit countries are predominantly persons who intend to migrate to 'developed' economies in Europe in order to escape poverty. A typical transit migrant is generally assumed to be young, single, male and unskilled, i.e. the traditional image of the guest worker and migrant labourer (Icduygu 2005). On first sight, available survey evidence on the socio-economic characteristics of 'transit migrants' in Morocco appears to support this

assumption (Khachani 2008, Mghari 2008, Lahou 2005). But such survey research generally fails to consider the potential for asylum seeking individuals to figure among transit migrants and is likely to underestimate the presence of women, children and other family members, as they are more difficult to access through conventional research methods.

In much of the discourse on transit migration, individual migrants are considered as rational and economic men whose positions in the various stages of the migration process are determined by their 'human capital' and their own 'free-will' (Icduygu 2005:3). As a consequence, economic considerations are given priority in explanations of transit, making the individual the primary conditioning factor for migratory movements and strategies from Africa towards Europe. This type of 'transit' research consequently relies heavily on neoclassical push-and-pull theories of migration (Castles & Miller 2003: 22) to explain migrants' motivations for travel, largely leaving aside structural (Castles and Kosack 1973, Sassen 1888) and social network theories (Goss & Lindquist 1995, Boyd 1989) or migration systems theory (Fawcett & Arnold 1987, Icduygu 2005) to understand migrants' trajectories and plans.

Third, and almost without exception in the studies I had access to, emphasis is put on the fact that transit migrants are irregular migrants who reside in transit countries without the necessary permits to either travel through or remain there (Icuygu 2005, IOM 2003, Roman 2006). In many studies, great attention is generally paid to the functioning of so-called smuggling and trafficking rings, their routes and how they are organised. Rarely is there a detailed and ethnographic analysis of migrants' migratory trajectory from their own view point, in which their decision-making processes with regards to travel arrangements are revisited in light of both choice and coercion, as has been done in the critical literature on 'trafficking', for example (Alpes 2011, Agustin 2005, O'Connell Davidson 2008b). There is therefore an absence of critical analysis of the ways in which 'legal' movement and 'illegal' stay are categories constructed by the state and the market, rather than being objectively verifiable aspects of migration.

These examples show how transit migrants have been constructed in many studies as male, voluntary, irregular and – above all – as labour migrants who engage in criminal acts of smuggling and trafficking in order to escape poverty. Consequently, policy makers can easily conclude that the phenomenon of transit migration represents a 'security threat' to European governments in the form of migrants intending to circumvent border controls and enter the European Union unauthorised, 'snatching' local jobs. The 'myth of invasion' (De Haas 2007) was born. In such a discourse it is generally not acknowledged that the state and the market actually condition these 'irregular' migratory strategies through specific legislation and economic interdependencies. The roles states undertake in migration management are only analysed with reference to their ability to control borders. Despite this reductionist view, these ideas have become widely accepted in policy talk. If policy documents on migration in Morocco (or elsewhere) refer to 'transit' today, the term is normally used in the context of measures to prevent and control migration through increased border enforcement or disincentives for irregular migration in the countries of origin (Collyer 2010, Papadoupoulou Kourkoulou 2008, Streiff-Fenart & Segatti 2011).

In so-called 'transit countries', like Morocco, the 'transit' hypothesis and subsequent discourse has influenced not only migration policy making, but also migration research agendas more generally. In fact, one can probably safely say that the increasing interest of policy makers in transit migration has fostered some researchers' interest in irregular, Sub-Saharan African migration in Morocco in the first place. While local academics do often critically consider the Moroccan state's role as 'policeman' of European migration policies in their analysis of the contemporary migratory regimes at play in the country (Khachani 2008, Belgendouz 2009, Lalou 2005), the assumption that the migrant is an 'economic animal' is rarely questioned in research on Sub-Saharan African migration in Morocco. Consequently, there is little critical analysis of the complicated interplay between market, state and non-state actors in the migration trajectories of Sub-Saharan African migrants and their influence on migrants' legal status in Morocco. More generally, the legal situation of migrants is often analysed from the particular economic and political perspective of sovereign nation-states. Such

a perspective generally fails to connect with migrants' human rights issues and their international governance (Robinson 2003, Blomley 1994, Grant 2005). Most importantly, much of the available research understates the importance of 'immobility' in these migrants' lives and the impact that migration policies have in this respect. In fact, such research on 'transit' migration helps little to improve migrants' situation in Morocco, because it offers a vague and simplistic picture of a far more complicated situation. In so doing, it often caricatures the actual people grouped under its definition and generates doubtful hypotheses about migratory trajectories and stays.

Aside from the dubious political 'benefits' of such a depiction of migrants as 'illegal', and therefore as 'criminals' (Willen 2007), I agree with Collyer, Düvel and De Haas (2012) that transit has nothing to offer for policy making or migration research in Morocco either conceptually or analytically, because it cannot explain adequately what we already know about the phenomenon. First, regarding claims as to the novelty of 'transit', it is worthwhile remembering that migration from Sub-Saharan Africa is not a new phenomenon in Morocco. As the story in the beginning of this chapter indicates, there is evidence to suggest that migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa have been travelling to and through Morocco for decades (De Haas 2007) and there is a centuries-old history of commerce, slave trade and migration between countries of Sub-Saharan Africa and the Maghreb in general (Ennaji 1994). Second, the idea that transit is synonymous with migration towards countries of the European Union has been disproven by a variety of research evidence showing that similar situations were frequent in Mexico (Diaz & Kuhner 2007, Kimball 2007) Indonesia (Lyons & Ford 2007) and also within Europe, in places such as Greece (Papadoupoulou Kourkoula 2008), Calais (Rygiel 2011) Italy (Andriajevic 2007), Malta (Mainwaring 2008) and Paris (Schuster 2005a), where migrants were losing out on their mobility options to travel further to other European countries. This means that 'transit' migration cannot be something particular to the situation between developed and developing countries, and neither is it a phenomenon limited to a particular geographical area of the world. Simple push-pull theories cannot therefore explain the existence of the occurrence of transit areas in different parts of the globe. Furthermore, there is increasing evidence

that transit is not a useful analytical category for research with migrants because they do not always fit the characteristics of an economically motivated, young, single male that they are often associated with (Icduygu 2005). In Morocco specifically, some researchers have started to draw attention to the fact that an important number of migrants are women and children (Escoffier 2006, Pian 2009, Kastner 2010). Another set of literature has highlighted the presence of asylum seekers and refugees among Sub-Saharan African migrants in Morocco (Wender 2004, Papadoupoulou Kourkoula 2008, Van der Klaaw 2007). While it is true that many 'transit' migrants are in fact irregular residents in the 'transit country', there is evidence to suggest that not every irregular migrant starts as such but some instead *become* irregular during their trajectory (Alpes 2011, Icduygu 2005). All these elements are strangely absent from the discussions of 'transit' in policy documents.

Most importantly, the idea of transit does not adequately address the fact that migrants are actually increasingly 'stuck' in places like Morocco for indefinite periods of time and no longer transit to anywhere. In order to be able to distinguish transit meaningfully from longer stays, Düvel (2008) proposes that any migrant's stay that exceeds three months should be labelled as 'de facto settlement'. While Düvel's (2008) approach is certainly a well-meaning attempt to clarify what we should and should not define as transit, it is problematic to link the definition of transit to temporal restrictions. In fact, this does not break up the artificial separation between 'settlement' and 'movement', which serves in much contemporary political theory to determine people's differential access to rights, state protection and community membership (Cresswell 2006). In light of the above, it is doubtful that the term 'transit migration' actually represents an efficient 'ordering devise' for some distinct migratory phenomenon or an adequate way to describe what happens to migrants in Morocco.

### **1.3 The importance of concepts**

Rather than being suggestive of a brand new migration phenomenon, the increasing visibility of Sub-Saharan African migrants who have travelled to and through Morocco in the last fifteen years appears to reflect changes in the scope and dynamics of migration in the region. This, however, is something that the transit terminology is not

able to explain adequately. My own research and that of other authors increasingly demonstrates that many migrants' trajectories are far more complicated than the initial definition of transit migration suggests (Schapendonk 2011, Pian 2009, Escoffier 2006, Cassarino & Fargues 2006, Icduygu 2005). It is increasingly clear that migrants' trajectories differ between countries according to the policy framework, economic situation, social and cultural ties and the role and nature of migrant networks. In the specific case of Morocco, critical research has shown, for example, that transit migrants travelled across varying countries over land where they stayed sometimes for years before travelling on to Morocco (Collyer 2006, De Haas 2007, Schapendonk 2011). In the remainder of this thesis it will become evident that these dynamics are due to a series of complicated political, economic and social developments in the European Union and beyond which cannot be reduced to market forces alone.

While the transit concept does not adequately describe these migrants' situation in Morocco, the creation of this new concept does indicate that there is something in these migrants' experiences that has been overlooked in earlier approaches to migration theory and research. So, rather than dismissing research on so-called 'transit migration' in Morocco or elsewhere as generally of no value, I hope to add new perspective on a phenomenon which makes us question many generally accepted concepts in migration research. As this thesis will show, the ways in which concepts, such as transit migration, are created and converted into objects of knowledge is never value free and can perpetuate or even exacerbate the biased nature of already existing concepts. The perspective from which this knowledge is generated can have profound consequences for the people concerned, particularly if their actual experience is not reflected in the concepts we use (Turton 2003a).

It is important to highlight these issues in a highly policy driven area of research such as migration (De Haas 2006, Bakewell 2008b, Malkki 1995a), where concepts have always played a major role in defining models and theories on human movement and settlement. These concepts have not only 'helped us think' but have also been used to justify very particular political agendas. According to Turton (2003a:3) the usefulness of conceptualising something means constructing it as an object of knowledge, not



simply describing what is already there. In his words, the analytical usefulness of concepts lies in their role as ordering devices:

A concept is a mental representation which stands for, or represents something in the external world, such as a table. We need concepts in order to think about the world, to make sense of it, to interpret it and to act in relation to it. You can't think with a table. You can only think with the concept or representation of a table.

The problem is that certain concepts are more influential than others and shape not only research agendas but also help to consolidate political projects. In migration theory, the liberal-economic inspired distinction between economic push-and-pull factors in migration theory has until now served as a basis for many economic based models of migration (Castles & Miller 2003). The distinction made between political and economic migrants, which soon became the basis for refugee protection policies, has its origins in particular political views on the nation state and international relations (Malkki 1995a, Turton 2003a). Similarly, particular ideas about family, work, nation states and civil rights have laid the foundations for our current understanding of 'mobility' and 'settlement' (Turton 2003a, Vertovec 2006). These notions in turn have been used to a great extent to determine what actually counts as migration and what doesn't (Hammer et al. 1997, Anderson 2012).

Conceptual binary divisions like these threaten to generate oversimplified analyses of far more complicated realities (Malkki 1992, Turton 2004, Bakewell 2008b). Moreover, by giving preference to one binary opposition over the other, some aspects of migrants' experience tend to be systematically overlooked in both research and policy making. Typically, it is the vision of the market that prevails in contemporary migration policy and research (Alpes 2011). This can lead to a distorted picture of migrants' experiences and to a lack of understanding of what a migrant's life entails and what its main challenges are. A range of critical migration scholars have drawn attention to the fact that particular meanings given to mobility or settlement in migration theory and policy making have given rise to approaches that focus on the immigrant instead of

those left behind (Madziva 2010, Carling 2002, Lubkemann 2008), while often ignoring the important interconnections between these two populations (Sayed 2004, Bash 1994, Carling 2008, Faist 2000). Liberal models of migration also have a tendency to overlook how structural factors, like gender, influence the trajectories and experiences of migrants (Pessar & Mahler 2003, Massey 1993).

The focus on voluntary or forced mobility has also given rise to bureaucratic classifications of migrants as asylum seekers, refugees, guest workers or 'highly skilled migrants', trafficking victims or illegal criminals, which are imagined often with a fixed set of characteristics 'as persons'. Bakewell (2008b) criticises the use of these classifications in both policy making and research as analytical categories because this procedure often obscures the fact that migrants are above all normal people. Adding to this, Willen (2007) argues that treating irregular migrants as 'freeloaders' and 'criminals', causes them to lose their status as persons who deserve full human rights regardless of their citizenship status. Furthermore, such thinking overlooks the fact that bureaucratic classifications are not static, but rather constantly changing (Schuster 2005a) and therefore have little if any analytical value in terms of describing a bounded group of people and their characteristics. But more than anything, the 'forced/voluntary' divide in mobility thinking completely obscures the fact that 'immobility' too might be differentiated with respect to its 'voluntary' or 'involuntary' status, particularly in a world that is increasingly characterised by migration controls (Carling 2002).

Transit migration is an interesting example of how these biased accounts in migration policy play out in newly created concepts, because the idea of 'transit' rests on the above mentioned bias of mobility over immobility, voluntary over forced, and most importantly, legal over illegal. By using the term, there is a danger of further promoting the already biased approach to mobility that currently characterises the design and implementation of the so called 'Global Approach to Migration'. This is a policy approach developed since 2005 by the European Union in partnership with countries bordering it, steered by the European Commission, in an effort to manage and control migratory flows in a coherent and unified manner (Collett 2007). The approach is

characterised by a simplistic and universal explanation of migratory movements (Collyer, Düvel & De Haas 2012), which facilitates their classification into legal and illegal flows, forced and voluntary migrants, and labour and non-labour migrants. As a consequence, the policy initiatives are generally divided into three areas: those geared towards preventing irregular migration through border control; those geared towards fostering regular labour migration; and those designed to increase development opportunities in source countries in order to prevent migration and refugee flows. Typically, in the documents generated by the Global Approach to Migration Initiatives, transit migration is treated in the realm of those measures geared to prevent irregular migration through increased border controls. In line with Turton (2003a:6), I find that the usefulness of concepts depends on what they are used for and whether they enable people in a particular cultural or institutional context to achieve their objectives and satisfy their needs. From a migrants' point of view, the concept of transit migration which is used in the Global Approach to Migration does little to help migrants in their aspirations to migrate or in their hopes for a better life because it is mostly created to justify increasingly restrictive migration policies.

There is another reason why 'transit' is potentially a dangerous concept for policy making. As indicated earlier, only very few researchers and policy makers in Morocco have investigated exactly how and why 'transit' is no longer best described as a 'fractured journey' (Collyer 2010) but becomes more and more a 'fractured stay' when migrants are living for years in the country without actually wanting to. This poses a problem for both policy makers and NGOs in terms of the type of assistance they can offer to migrants in Morocco today and the lobbying options they can adopt in order to press for migrants' rights.

During the entire time I was undertaking fieldwork, for example, I repeatedly came across the contradictions that organisations face when they attempt to frame their interventions with migrants in Morocco explicitly in terms of a 'Rights Based Approach' (RBA). The RBA is a framework often used in the aid world and is characterised by an approach that links the human rights system and its inherent notion of power and struggle with development and relief (Kirkemann Boesen & Martin 2007:9). As a

consequence, project activities should be intrinsically connected to political struggle and change in the long-term, rather than limited to short-term relief activities or charitable assistance to the poor without questioning the underlying divisions of power that produce injustice in the first place. In the case of project work with Sub-Saharan African migrants in Morocco, this would mean recognising their situation of poverty, marginalisation and illegality as man-made injustice as opposed to a natural state of affairs. Consequently, it also means linking migrants' claims to rights to the state's responsibility to uphold them, as states can be seen as the most important duty bearers of protecting the rights of their citizens. However, as long as transit-migrants are labelled as irregular labour migrants and - by extension - as criminals (Willen 2007), it is difficult to argue this effectively before state actors. As migrants are still mostly conceived as *either* 'on the move' or 'settled', rather than 'being stuck', their actual situation of non-citizenship in Morocco is not easily presented as part of the human rights responsibilities of the nation state. Through the lens of these binary conceptions of citizenship and non-citizenship, migrants' human rights protection can only be meaningfully connected to the international community. However, it is often perceived that the international community is only taking responsibility for the protection of migrants' rights when they are effectively depicted as victims, rather than purposeful actors in their own right. Migrants who are 'stuck' in Morocco thus inhabit a human rights limbo and I will argue throughout this thesis that one of the reasons for this is the influence of the 'transit' terminology in current approaches to migration in Morocco.

#### **1.4 Forced immobility**

Moving away from the transit concept requires the construction of a different lens through which to view and analyse migrants' experience. As I have argued above, this is important not only for analytical purposes, but also for more adequate policy making. Therefore, I chose to look at migrants' experience in Morocco from the vantage point of 'forced immobility' rather than 'transit'. As mentioned earlier, concepts can help us to look at aspects of a phenomenon that have been thus far obscured. By talking about the 'forcefully immobilised' rather than 'transiting' migrants, we change

the perspective through which we analyse migration and peoples' choices, and can start to approach migrants' experiences in Morocco from their own perspective. It is the explanatory power of 'forced immobility' and its relation to migrants' rights that justifies its use over the concept of transit here, because it exposes the underlying contradictions in the conventional way of conceptualising mobility and migration, which are evident in much migration policy in Morocco.

The analytical power of 'immobility' has been recognised by a number of migration researchers in recent years (Carling 2002, Lubkemann 2008, Hammer et al. 1997, Faist 2000). Carling (2002) and Lubkemann (2008) both refer to 'involuntary immobility' in a context where an individual has the aspiration to migrate, but is unable to do so in a context of very limited capabilities. Also Hammer et al. (1997) and Faist (2000) contrast the immobility of most people with the mobility of the few who are actually migrating in order to show that the forces that hold people in place are often far more significant than those making them leave. While these efforts are very important, this approach maintains the distinction between the 'non-migrant' as the immobile person and migrants as the mobile, the travellers. This opposition obscures the fact that migrants too can be forcefully immobilised during their migratory journey. Movement and immobility are two interdependent parts of the same coin (Schapendonk 2011). By questioning the connection between the migrant and mobility as self-evident, I hope to disrupt another binary account of mobility and settlement in contemporary theory.

As Turton (2003a) points out, the English word 'involuntary' gives the impression of an act that is done without thinking or without deliberation or as an act over which one has no agency at all. However, being immobilised or 'stuck' is actually not comparable to such a situation. Migrants in Morocco who were inhibited from moving further did not stay there without thinking about their alternatives. In fact, many of the people I encountered had tried to move or were consciously weighing their decisions in this respect. For this reason, I prefer to speak of 'forced immobility', because it allows me to convey that migrants are not moving because they find that they have a lack of feasible alternatives to do so, which they are nevertheless pondering over. Being

'forced' to be immobile is also very different from being 'forced to settle' because the latter suggests some kind of acceptance on the migrants' part to stay in a place of resettlement and make it one's own, even though one did not intend to be there in the first place (Turton 2003a:7). As we will see, this is not the case for migrants in my research.

Conceptualising the 'forcibly immobilised' as a distinct group of people is not possible or desirable, given their heterogeneous legal status and migration history. In addition to that, forced immobility can be experienced as a transitory status and its effects can be felt differently in different places and at different times. Therefore, forced immobility should be seen as being a part of the migratory trajectory of most migrants- not only those that are 'stuck' in Morocco.

The subjective experience of every migrant will not be represented in the concept of forced immobility, but nevertheless, it can still be useful as an ordering devise that distinguishes this condition from 'forced settlement', 'transit' or 'immigration'. In this thesis, I will be using forced immobility as an analytical concept in three very different ways: as a distinctive phase during a migratory process; as a rightless state of being; and as a condition of life. All three aspects may or may not be experienced at any one time or at once by an individual migrant. They are not chronological 'phases' but interrelated aspects of the phenomenon. The thesis is centred particularly upon the ways in which forced immobility is experienced by migrants as a condition and a way of being in the world. In order to explore this, it is first necessary to show when and where forced immobility is created in the Moroccan context and how it converts migrants into rightless beings.

Forced immobility as a distinct phase in a migration process can be analysed by approaching migration from a standpoint of autonomy (Papadopoulos, Stephenson and Tsianos 2008) rather than from the standpoint of a mere structurally conditioned movement over borders and countries. In this context, Hage (2005) talks of migration as essentially a project of 'improving' oneself, of 'moving' existentially as well as physically to 'greener pastures'. For the group of migrants in my study, existential

motivations for migrating need to be taken into consideration when analysing the influence of other 'regulating factors' on migrants' trajectories, such as the state, markets or family and other networks (Alpes 2011). In this thesis, I am concerned with how these multiple factors not only foster but also curtail migratory projects. I will show how regulatory forces and existential considerations actually constantly change and play out differently along the way, leading to stopovers of varying lengths during the trajectory. In every new stopover on their way, migrants have to weigh the price they pay in terms of reputation, status, resources and future possibilities when pursuing their travels. This discussion ties in with a concept of the migratory process in which phases of stopover and ongoing mobility are interdependent rather than conceived of as a linear line from A to B (Schapendonk 2011, Cresswell 2006, Collyer 2010). A focus on processes can help to acknowledge that the regulatory frameworks that shape mobility and immobility are in fact dynamic. Rather than inhibiting migrants' movement altogether, these forces constrain migrants' ability to control their migratory trajectory in certain instances and therefore structure their migratory process in particular ways. What is important in this way of analysing the interplay between mobility and immobility in 'transit' is that it helps us move beyond the binary representation of migrants as either agents or victims, and brings immobility and mobility into a different relation with each other.

Second, I will approach forced immobility as a state of rightless being. As Alpes (2011:23) notes, the state has been largely neglected in migration theory as an effective regulator of migration to the expense of other regulatory instances, such as the market and/or migrant networks. To this, I would add that in the Moroccan case, the state has also been neglected as an effective regulator of migrants' settlement. In connection with this claim, my analysis shows that migration policies in Morocco exemplify the particular sedentary bias in contemporary discourses on rights (Mallkii 1995a). In such a discourse, those who are considered 'settled' are deemed to have rights, but migrants who are 'transiting' are not. As a consequence, migrants in Morocco, who are supposedly 'on the move' (even though they are not moving), are systematically excluded from civic, social, and economic participation through a

particular policy framework that gives them literally no possibility of legalising their stay in the country. As a consequence, Moroccan migration policy discourse on the 'transit figure' can be understood as an excuse (Bredeloup 2012) to convert migrants into rightless beings. The figure of the transit migrant enables governments to uphold the idea that rights and citizenship are tied to nationality and to long-term settlement. But it is also based on a notion of rights that are temporarily restricted and can be given or taken away after a certain period of time, as is evident in the regulation of residency permits. This conceptual link between time, settlement and rights furthermore exempts the Moroccan state from taking any responsibility for the rights of 'transit migrants' on their soil and leads to a situation in which it is almost impossible for migrants to participate actively in society while living there.

The third way of looking at forced immobility is by analysing the specific ways in which it is experienced by migrants themselves as a '*condition*.' Here, I am building on work by Willen (2007) who has analysed migrants' illegality in this way. I start from the premise that migration is a deeply personal life-project that is closely related to processes of identity formation and belonging (Madison 2006) and community building (Hage 2005). I will argue that forced immobility changes migrants' existential outlook on life and leads them to modify their personal values and goals. This has profound consequences for the nature of their migratory project and their relationships with others. In the main part of the thesis I will bring together the ways in which a life without rights and the struggle for changing social status in Morocco creates specific conditions for migrants' lives which influence the way they experience the world, their own identity and their options with respect to how they can position themselves towards the different regulating forces of mobility and settlement. I use these three perspectives of forced immobility as a conceptual framework in order to analyse migration in Morocco. I find that by differentiating between these three levels of analysis, one can describe some of the complex dynamic interaction between migrant's actions and state reactions.



## 1.5 Temporality

Another important conceptual approach used to analyse the situation of migrants in this thesis is temporality. As Cwerner (2001) notes, social theories of time have to date been largely overlooked in migration literature, despite the fact that temporalities, rhythms and time frames are often implicitly present in conventional migration theory. This may be due to the complicated nature of social theories of time and the great diversity of approaches existent within them (Adam 1995). In recent years, however, time and temporality have started to become acknowledged as important for the study of communities more generally (Bastian 2011) and migrant communities in particular (Hage 2011, Cwerner 2001). Social theories of time are also particularly useful for understanding the situation of the Sub-Saharan African migrants I encountered in Morocco. Precisely the fact that time and temporality can be understood, lived and felt in a variety of different ways makes them an important starting point for the arguments presented here. By working out the different and competing time perspectives of migrants, states and markets, it is possible to uncover the friction between migrants' contradictory notions of time in immobility and how they attempt to adapt to changing temporal frames of reference. The thesis thus connects theories on time and temporality to migrants' own understanding of themselves and their existential outlook on life.

Living outside generally accepted categories of the successful migrant who is able to advance his reputation, wealth and community standing through his trajectory, the subjects in this thesis have had to come to terms with their peculiar situation of 'stuckness'. In this respect, I felt that my conversations with migrants displayed above all a life in contradiction. We often talked about how little sense anything made to them. In their dealings with aid organisations, border regimes, the asylum system and the Moroccan state, they frequently complained about the lack of logic in the application of the law, of being able to 'play by the rules' and regularise their stay in Morocco or to continue travelling legally. On the one hand, they often talked about hopelessness and on the other, about the need for continued survival. We also talked about the contradiction between their ideas of a successful life, community, family,

belonging and their proper life in the present, the link to their past and their imagined future.

In many ways, the migrants I met had to grapple with how their moral values, their beliefs in human rights and their identity started to crumble while they were living in 'different times', in which past and future were losing their meaning. A feeling of alienation marked their stories and their actions and reminded me of Camus' (1942) description of the absurd. For him, absurdity was a feeling that one's actions are divorced from the setting in which they occur. According to Camus, absurdity was similar to feeling estranged from home and hope of a predictable future. Absurdity thus implies an estrangement from time and place and can therefore be compared to what it means to feel 'stuck'.

Adam (1991) argues that particular notions of industrial time, where time is money, are generally at the heart of notions about progress and modernity. She goes on to argue that other experiences of time are constantly co-existent with these temporal discourses of modernity and have to be brought into meaningful relationships with them in order to make our contemporary life-courses worthwhile and dignified in our own eyes and those of others. Similar approaches of analysis are also to be found in literature on feminist notions of time, which investigate the dominant and binary discourses in contemporary notions of time and temporality in order to uncover their particular consequences for women's time uses (Davies 1990), political activism (Toronto 2003, Adam 2002) and feeling of life's worth (Gardner 2002).

Dominant western discourse on successful migration also reproduces a certain linear narrative of migrants' time, in which the successful migrant uses his lifetime to accumulate wealth and social capital for a prosperous future (Salad 2004). The migrants I encountered had to come to terms with the fact that this notion of time did not match their own feeling of temporality in Morocco, where their present was not 'moving' into a future, but effectively standing still. This made their time effectively 'useless' – at least in the eyes of migration policy makers- and sometimes also in their own eyes.

## 1.6 Chapter structure

If the people whose experience I describe had followed a linear journey, I would have started with their travels and ended the thesis with their arrival in a country of settlement. However, as this thesis is led by their experience, the chapters explore different dimensions of life in limbo in a circular manner. There is no escaping from forced immobility for the subjects I encountered. The eight chapters of this thesis are therefore not organised in chronological order and do not pretend to present temporally sequential information but rather overlapping aspects of my research subjects' lives in Morocco.

After Chapter 2, which explains the research design and discusses the methodological and ethical issues associated with the research, Chapter 3 focuses on migrants' journeys from their countries of origin to Morocco. This chapter analyses how phases of mobility and immobility are interdependent parts of the complex migration trajectories of my migrant research subjects. It explores the variety of obstacles that migrants encountered during travel towards Morocco, and the ways in which they continued to negotiate their social locations with respect to mobility along the way. Thus, rather than 'transiting' through different places relatively unchanged, the data shows how migrants' stays in various places and the ways in which they travel have a profound impact on themselves and their future migratory project. Following from this, in Chapter 4, I describe how migrants actually arrive in Morocco. The data presented in the chapter situates their life there in a context of extreme political, economic and social marginalisation. I then analyse the migration policy context in Morocco and the increasing involvement of the European Union in this process. By doing this, I show how 'transit' migrants' rightlessness in Morocco has been constructed by states through the introduction of particular national and international migration policies which link mobility and rights in very specific ways.

Chapter 5 changes the perspective and focuses on migrants' image of themselves when stuck in Morocco. It describes the experience of being stuck in transit as an existential dilemma and analyses migrants' effort to resynchronise their temporal frames of reference with those of the external world. Through the stories of migrants I

interviewed, I show how people become gradually disconnected from the past and the future and struggle with a meaningless life in the present. Chapter 6 then shifts the view from how migrants see their own life to how they view each other. The chapter explores the contradictory community relations between migrants in Morocco by looking at moments of reciprocity and mutual help on the one hand, and exploitation on the other. I discuss how migrants' relation to mobility, place and time conditions these dynamics. Chapter 7 is about the diverse strategies migrants use to 'revolt' against the absurd conditions they find themselves in by attempting to leave the country. The description of migrants' activities in view of their departure shows how they employ a variety of waiting strategies that help them re-establish some sense of temporal and spacial order in their lives.

The conclusion wraps up the arguments made in the thesis and attempts to give some tentative answers to the main research question concerning the consequences of 'stuckness' on people's lives in Morocco. In summary, the thesis shows how the current policy mechanisms which limit certain people's mobility through border controls can have particularly negative effects on the life course of individuals. The discussion of migrants' situation in Morocco shows how international migration control policies are actively hampering migrants' and would-be migrants' abilities to design a dignified, self-controlled life plan and to establish productive and mutually supporting relations with others. Such policies foster segregation, marginalisation and exploitation. As such, control policies are doing much more than simply inhibiting movement. They are also inhibiting people's effective settlement and their development as persons.

# Chapter 2: Research Design and Methods

## 2.0 Introduction

This chapter describes the qualitative research strategy used in this study. I start by discussing the rationale for ethnographic research in the study of life in immobility and outline the particularities of the research methodology. I then go on to discuss my specific sampling strategy and choice of ethnographic methods. This leads onto a description of the characteristics of the research participants and the ways in which access was negotiated. I then give a detailed, reflexive account of the research process in which I discuss the particularities of taking my own children to the field. With reference to this, some important ethical considerations are highlighted.

## 2.1 Research design

As explained in the introduction, one of my research aims has been to identify the factors that cause and perpetuate 'immobility' for migrants by approaching this question from their own perspective. I chose an ethnographic research methodology to explore these issues through a range of qualitative methods. I did this in order to understand forced immobility as it was expressed in migrants' everyday life and living conditions through (participant) observation and simultaneously to uncover, through unstructured conversations and interviews, the meanings of immobility and time in migrants' own accounts of the migratory experience. Using documentary analysis of policy documents, NGO pamphlets and newspaper articles, as well as semi-structured interviews with a range of organisations providing social services for migrants in Morocco, I wanted to contrast migrants' interpretations and perspectives with concepts used in the practical application of migration policy and theory.

During the research, it became obvious to me that underlying unequal power structures like gender, class, age and ethnic origin influence migrants' activities, motivations and feelings, and needed to be incorporated into the analysis of mobility and immobility. By analysing migrants' actions and perceptions as motivated by and produced through their particular position within unequal power dynamics, I hope to

link the research to one of the central, yet still unresolved, intellectual puzzles in migration theory, which is the dynamics between individuals' particular migratory strategies and larger, structural influences on mobility and immobility. In this context, I have been inspired by Roitman's (2005) concept of regulatory authorities and Alpes (2011) application of the concept in the context of migration in Africa. Alpes' work in particular is revealing of the ways in which migrants navigate between the regulatory authorities of family, state and market to realise their migratory aspirations in a context of restricted mobility. I have expanded this to the situation of migrants in Morocco to explain how their relation to different regulatory authorities changes during their travels and is, in fact, dynamic. I then attempt to link this to migrants' changing perceptions of their own life course and the existential dilemmas this brings about in their lives (Hage 2009, Madison 2006).

Rather than being planned in detail prior to the research process, this design evolved during fieldwork and was refined along the way. In this sense, this research has been truly exploratory, in that it has not relied on a predefined research hypothesis with regards to migration theories. In this respect, it was ethnography in the anthropological sense of the term:

The anthropologist rarely commences research with a hypothesis to test.

There are few pre/set, neatly honed questions, although there are multiple questions in the fieldworker's head. There are theories, themes, ideas and ethnographic details to discover, examine or dismiss. ...the ethnographer must be *disponible* and open to *objects trouvés* after arriving in the field (Okely 1994:19).

Ethnography allowed me to explore the nature of immobility by relying on migrants' narratives and viewpoints, deconstructing prevailing theories and looking at them from a new perspective. In keeping with Okely's guidance on ethnographic practice, (1994:20), I reworked theoretical abstraction in the face of concrete experience over and over again until finally reaching a conclusion. In the same sense, Layder (1993:70) proposes to recognise the interrelated nature of micro and macro

phenomena in qualitative research designs by combining empirical research and theoretical analysis on different levels of enquiry. In his ‘research map’, Layder distinguishes between five different and interwoven levels of social organisation that can be studied when investigating social problems: The self, situated activity, setting, context and the general dimension of history. Below, adapting his concept, I have inserted a table which describes the different levels of enquiry that this ethnography privileges and how data from different levels is combined in the analysis. While I have concentrated data collection on the levels of situated activity and the self (highlighted in grey), I have related these data to an analysis of the power relations inherent in the wider context of social, political and economic structures.

**Table 1: Research framework**

Research element	Focus	Method
Context	Multiple regulatory frameworks of migration	Theoretical analysis, documentary analysis of policies
Setting	NGOs and service providers, the neighbourhoods, migrant houses and churches	Participant Observation, documentary analysis,
Situated activity	Migrants every day activities	Observation/ Participant observation
Self	Migrants experience of time and existential quests	Interviews

**Source: own adaptation from Layder (1993:70)**

### 2.2 The setting

The fieldwork was carried out in Rabat, Morocco in the summer of 2009 (over a period of six weeks) and the spring and summer of 2010 (over a period of eight weeks). In my fieldwork I have privileged two different settings which represented separate and distinct environments for migrants’ actions and behaviour: I conducted research in migrants’ homes and neighbourhoods, where most of their private and community life took place, and I visited and observed migrants in churches, parks and NGOs where they interacted with other migrants.

I should stress from the outset that my aim was not to analyse the characteristics of these settings, but rather to use them as contexts in which to study migrants' everyday activities and contrast their 'public' and 'private' worlds. The following description of the different settings in which this ethnography took place situates this study in its Moroccan context. At the time I was undertaking my research, most Sub-Saharan African migrants in Morocco were living in Rabat, where I undertook my research. As the country's capital, Rabat has roughly 600,000 inhabitants and is situated only about 50km from Casablanca, the main industrial port in Morocco and the city with the biggest international airport. These cities are connected through a fairly modern railway and a highway (see Figure 1). As well as the Moroccan government, most embassies and international organisations are located in Rabat and there is a strong military and police presence to protect the safety of the royal family who have their main residence here. In comparison to Casablanca and Tanger, Rabat has no industrial port, even though it is a coastal town. It has some industry, notably in the textile, food processing and construction sectors, but much employment is generated through government related administration and civil service. Therefore, unemployment, sub-employment and poverty among the young, unqualified population are very high (Royaume du Maroc, Haut-Commissariat du Plan 2007).<sup>3</sup> The move of the impoverished rural population towards the cities has increased this trend in the past forty years (Abouhane 1995). Simultaneously, Rabat is the home of some of the country's elite and certain families close to the monarchy are politically, socially and economically highly influential through a system of patronage.

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<sup>3</sup> It is estimated that in urban areas of Morocco, around 35% of the population relies on work in the informal sector, most of which is concentrated in business and service sectors. (Haute Commissariat du Plan, 2007, Enquete Nationale sur le secteur informel, 2006-7, Rapport de synthese, p. 39, <http://www.wcp.ma>, accessed 23.03.2011) According to recent official statistics, in the region of Rabat exist approximately 127 food processing industries, 89 textile and leather industries, 234 chemical industries and 119 metal related industries. Together, these sectors generate only 38000 jobs, of which almost two thirds are in the textile industry. The current unemployment rate is officially by 16%, but unofficially estimated to be 25% of the active population. (Royaume du Maroc, Haute Commissariat du Plan, 2009, Annuaire Statistique de la region Rabat Sale Zemmour Zaer, <http://www.wcp.ma>, accessed 23.03.2011)



**Figure 1: Map of Morocco with railway connections**

**Source: Author's own creation based on a map from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Morocco\\_location\\_map.svg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Morocco_location_map.svg) (accessed 13.03.2012)**

Over the past ten years, the King of Morocco Mohammed VI and his government have increasingly invested in modernising the centre of Rabat in order to improve its profile. A modern yacht harbour is being built, as well as a tramway system and a number of important new government buildings. Certain residential areas have become comparable with those of any rich, western, industrialised city: shopping malls, expensive restaurants, nightclubs and villas fill extensive areas in Rabat and testify to the western, luxurious lifestyle of rich, secularised Rabaties and mostly European expatriates. The subsequent increase in real estate prices has accelerated the segregation between 'rich' and 'poor' parts of town. Housing in the centre of Rabat and its main residential areas has become increasingly expensive, so that many middle class Rabaties are now obliged to live in suburbs which were once small villages adjunct to Rabat, like Temara or Khemisset. More and more working class Rabaties also tend to live or work in Sale, the neighbouring city, which is only separated from Rabat by the mouth of the river Bou Regreg (See Figure 2). Sale has



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large suburbs where the majority of local workers, rural migrants and poorer people live. There are also increasingly middle class white collar workers who buy houses in residential areas there, because they are comparatively cheaper than similar housing in the outskirts around Rabat to the other side of the river. From all these areas in the outskirts, Rabat can be reached through collective taxis and buses or by train, but transport is generally time consuming and expensive.

Because of the difficulties connected with transport, many working-class Rabaties who do not own a car still prefer living in areas of town that are relatively close to the centre. Some of these areas developed from shanty towns that were occupied by clandestine settlers at the beginning of the twentieth century and during the time of rural mass exodus towards the cities from the 1970s onwards (Abouhany, 1995). These parts of town have since undergone enormous transformation, but half finished constructions are still seen alongside two or three storey houses. Lively informal markets, small parks and businesses are scattered everywhere and the regions are reasonably well connected to the centre of town through buses and taxis. Urban planning has been largely neglected and much of the construction there is provisional, unplanned and 'home-made'. There are only a limited number of asphalted roads apart from the main 'arteries' of transport, and public infrastructure such as schools, sports grounds and parks are limited. Within Rabat, most of my research has been conducted in two municipalities (or 'communes' in French), which belong to these parts of town (See Figure 2, map of research site, below). These are Yacoub El Mansour and Youssoufia. Within Youssoufia, I have worked extensively in Takadoum, Hay Senai, DjiBlaisy and Douar Doum. In Yacoub El Mansour, my research was concentrated - but not limited to - the areas of Ain Cora, El Quoas, Kamra, G3 and G5. These parts of town have a large informal economy and housing remains quite affordable. They are still mostly inhabited by the Moroccan working class but are also the main areas in which Sub-Saharan African migrants live, even though many of them are also moving to Sale.

Most organisations working for Sub-Saharan African migrants maintain their offices in Rabat. There is a vast array of institutions that migrants can turn to ask for advice,

help and support. These can roughly be divided into four groups: international organisations, international NGOs, national NGOs and diplomatic missions and/or development agencies. As most migrant-focussed services are now operating from the parts of town where migrants live, and police persecution in the centre is very likely, migrants are rarely seen in the city's centre or its residential areas.

One important exception to this tendency is the church. Many Sub-Saharan African migrants from Congo, the Ivory Coast, Ghana, Nigeria and Cameroon are Christian. There is a catholic church and a protestant church in the centre of Rabat dating back to the colonial period. Most migrants travel to one of these churches if they want to attend a service. They are in close vicinity to each other and can accommodate hundreds of people. Both the catholic and protestant churches run an English and a French speaking service on Sundays, events that are frequented mostly by the African, Asian and European Christian communities in Rabat. According to several pastors and priests I encountered in Rabat, most French and English speaking migrants belong to protestant and Pentecostal churches, which I frequently visited during the research. Even though many protestant migrants are beginning to organise Pentecostal church communities in the peripheral areas, Sub-Saharan African nationals - mostly diplomats, students and migrants - still represent the majority among the attendees of francophone services in the protestant church in the centre of the city. Their presence is particularly visible in the gospel choir, which plays an important part in services.<sup>4</sup>

Apart from in migrants' houses, the streets, the church and the waiting rooms of NGOs, I conducted important fieldwork with migrants in several of Rabat's green spaces and football fields. Moroccans and migrants alike use these places frequently to escape the heat or the closeness of small apartments. Parks are often used for exercise or for spending time with children and family. The Hilton Park is particularly

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<sup>4</sup> The English-speaking protestant community is more divided and there is a strong prominence of American religious social workers and missionaries whose rites are becoming dominant in the anglophone service of the protestant city centre church. English speaking migrants from Africa are present here less often and the majority of community members are still predominantly white American or European.

popular with migrants, in part because it offers space for football games and, while near to the upper class residential area of Suissi and Aviation, the park is also relatively close to Youssuffia and Takadoum, where many migrants live. Migrant football teams also play on several other sports grounds in Yacoub el Mansour or Ain Nada, all on the outskirts. Migrants tend to use these places at times when Moroccans are not there, usually very early in the morning.

Within the very restricted areas in which migrants spend the majority of their days, they tend to circulate quite a lot, covering different areas of town. Many migrants walk great distances, sometimes up to 10km, in order to purchase goods, visit friends and contacts, or for employment in the informal sector. It is not unusual for them to walk from Youssoufia to Yacoub El Mansour and back again, which is roughly the distance of 8 -10km one way.

I met most of the migrants I interviewed more than once and in different settings and situations. For this reason, the different settings described above had to be incorporated into the research as a whole in order to attain a feel for the every day of migrant life in Rabat.



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### 2.3 Defining a sample

It is still quite common to find policy makers and researchers alike attempting to create a 'profile' of the typical Sub-Saharan African migrant in Morocco, like Lahlou (2005), who describes them as follows:

*He is ...a Congolese, Nigerian...a Cameroonian...He is between 18 and 30/32 years old...this migrant is a small businessman, a farmer or also unemployed... For the most motivated ones, their transfer to Europe starts one or two weeks after their arrival in Morocco (Lahlou 2005:8, emphasis added)*

This description mirrors how migrants in Morocco are often depicted as mostly young, single, male and unskilled individuals who migrate in the search for work. There is furthermore a tendency to distinguish migrant groups according to their country of origin and the colonial language they use. From a review of existing studies and conversations with aid workers, it appears that Anglophone migrants are considered to be in the majority and, it is estimated, most Anglophone migrants come from Nigeria. Francophone migrants from west and central African countries, such as Congo, Senegal, Mali, Cameroon and the Ivory Coast, are considered next in numerical importance. (Mghari 2008, IOM 2010a, Collyer 2007, Wender 2004).

As mentioned in the introduction, such categorical descriptions of the migrant population were of little use as guidance for a 'sampling frame' in the light of contrasting evidence and/or the great ethical and methodological limitations in survey research on undocumented migrants, asylum seekers and refugees (Van Liempt & Bilger 2009, Temple & Moran 2011). My own review of existing data in Morocco suggests, for example, that the migrant population is composed of a significant number of women and children, therefore contradicting the idea of the 'single male migrant'.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, according to the available research evidence, migrants were

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<sup>5</sup>The total sub-Saharan migrant population in Morocco is estimated to range between 4,500 and 10,000 people, of which women are supposed to represent between 20-30 per cent, that is to say between 1400 and 3000 people (Keynart et al. 2008, Khachani 2008, Mghari 2008, Médecins sans Frontières 2010b). Despite this, the existing socio-economic profiles of transit

staying in Morocco for varying lengths of time, ranging from 2-10 years. In the light of the inconsistency of available data from secondary sources, it was also impossible to establish a quantitative evaluation of the numerous nationalities and ethnicities among migrants in Morocco. Last but not least, separating those 'in transit' from those who were 'stuck' on the basis of the time they had spent in Morocco was not a useful approach because in the migrants' point of view there was no 'cut off point' in terms of length of stay at which they effectively felt stuck. If there was no such thing as a prior, ontological category such as 'transit migrants' or even 'migrants' for that matter, how could I select a sample, even opportunistically, to examine who was affected by policies directed towards people labelled as such? This dilemma of classification and its methodological implications is typical of research on transit migrants (Hess 2012) and in migration research more generally (Bakewell 2008b, Van Liempt & Bilger 2009, O'Connell Davidson 2008).

To overcome this problem, I adopted a subject-centred approach for selecting participants (Van Liempt & Bilger 2009:3) and for understanding the ways in which forced immobility impacted on migrants' life in Morocco. In order to investigate 'immobility' and its relation to discourse on transit, existential questions and migration more closely, my interviewees shared only two characteristics: they had all migrated from a Sub-Saharan African country and none knew when or if they would leave Morocco. This allowed me to stay open to exploration of the commonalities and differences in migrants' lives in Morocco, despite their differences in gender, class,

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migrants in Morocco have been predominantly based on information from male migrants (Barros et al. 2002, Wender 2004, Lahlou 2005, Collyer 2007, Khachani 2008, Mghari 2008). There has been little attention paid to migrants' families and children in research and policy making in Morocco. With regards to children, the Médecins sans Frontières (MSF) census (2010b) found that children represent no more than 9 per cent of the total migrant population in Morocco, which, in absolute numbers, would be equivalent to about 400. However, other aid organizations I interviewed estimated the total number of children to be significantly higher than that. This is also reflected in research by Keynaert et al. (2008) who found that 45 per cent of all women interviewed were living with one child or more in Morocco, whereas this was true for only 30 per cent of all male participants in their survey. This appears to indicate that a considerable proportion of both male and female migrants in Morocco are living there with their children.



ethnicity, language, age or country of origin. It helped me to focus on finding classifying elements in the migrants' own stories, which is certainly more in keeping with my purpose than the use of imposed categories which my respondents would have only partially identified with.

I hoped to engage with the diversity of the Sub-Saharan African migrant community by including men and women, with and without children, from different countries and backgrounds in my study. I interviewed 21 women and 19 men from nine different countries (Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Guinea Conakry, the Ivory Coast, Mali, Niger and Nigeria). Migrants were both Muslim and Christian. Among the migrants I interviewed nine were recognised refugees and 21 undocumented migrants.<sup>6</sup> The participants in my study did not reflect existing socio-economic profiles of Sub-Saharan African migrants in Morocco in terms of being of young age: while 19 of my respondents were under 30 years of age, 21 were between 31-50 years of age. Neither did they square with the image of the 'unskilled' migrant. While most of them did not work in highly skilled professions in their country of origin, all but two men and one woman had completed primary education at least. Ten men and 11 women had attended secondary school and six men and two women had been to university. My sample also departed from the 'typical' Sub-Saharan African migrant image evoked above in terms of length of stay in Morocco. By the end of my field research in 2010, all but five of the 40 migrants had been in Morocco for over a year. I also know that at that time, 18 had been there for two to five years, and 11 had been there for more than five years. The majority of my respondents had family and children either with them or in their home country: nine migrants had no children, ten had one child, seven had two children and 14 had three or more children. Only a quarter of the sample came from English speaking countries.<sup>7</sup> In the tables below, I have given information about the forty respondents with whom I have had long and multiple conversations. I have spoken with and observed many more migrants, albeit not as

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<sup>6</sup> None of the recognised refugees had a residency or a work permit. In this respect they therefore did not distinguish themselves from the undocumented migrants I had met.

<sup>7</sup> These peculiarities were not deliberate choices and are mainly due to the specifics of the research process, which I will come back to at a later stage in the chapter.

intensively or repeatedly; and these informal contacts have also contributed data to the research process.

The forty that appear below all participated in the research project from 2009 until 2010 and in nine cases until 2012. All migrants have been interviewed at least twice, once in 2009 and once in 2010. Eighteen migrants have been interviewed three times and ten have been interviewed more than four times. Apart from interviewing them, I have spent considerable time with the migrants. I followed them while they were going about their daily chores or met them in churches, NGOs or at their work places in the street where they were selling items, begging or waiting for work. I accompanied them to football matches and social gatherings and did participant observation at a summer school with children and women, organised by a Spanish church based association. Once I had left Rabat, I was able to keep in contact with eight migrants via chat, email and Facebook. A regular exchange developed with only four of them, as the majority were not able to use the internet frequently because of the cost or because of their limited familiarity with computers. The names of respondents that appear in this thesis are pseudonyms.

**Table 2: Men interviewed for this study**

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Country of origin</b>	<b>Year of birth</b>	<b>Religion</b>	<b>Marital status</b>	<b>Level of formal education</b>	<b>Number of children</b>	<b>Year of arrival in Morocco</b>
<b>Jean</b>	Cameroon	1982	Protestant	Single	Secondary school	0	2005
<b>Mario</b>	Congo	1982	Protestant	Married	Secondary school	3	2008
<b>Jacques</b>	Congo	1967	Jehovah's Witness	Single	Secondary school	0	2005
<b>Pierre</b>	Congo	1975	Protestant	Single	University	0	2005
<b>Bienvenue</b>	Congo	1965?	Protestant	Married	University	2	2000
<b>Claude</b>	Congo	1960?	Protestant	Married	Secondary school	3	2005
<b>Yann</b>	Congo	1990	Protestant	Single	Secondary school	0	2007
<b>Sebastien</b>	Congo	1973	Catholic	Single	University	0	2005
<b>Sylvester</b>	Ghana	1982	Protestant	Single	No schooling	0	2006
<b>Samuel</b>	Ghana	1985	?	Widower	Secondary school	1	2007
<b>Ibrahim</b>	Guinea Conakry	1992	Muslim	Single	Secondary school	0	2010
<b>Abdoul</b>	Guinea Conakry	1992	Muslim	Single	Secondary school	0	2010
<b>Patrick</b>	Ivory Coast	1965?	Protestant	Married	University	3	1999
<b>Said</b>	Mali	1979	Muslim	Married	University	2	2005
<b>Pastor Clement</b>	Niger	1974?	Protestant	Married	Secondary school	2	?
<b>Tony</b>	Niger	1972?	Muslim	Married	University	3	?
<b>Fred</b>	Nigeria	1980?	Catholic	Married	Elementary school	1	2009
<b>Pastor Moses</b>	Nigeria	1970	Protestant	Single	Secondary school	0	2002
<b>Peter</b>	Nigeria	1970?	Protestant	Married	Secondary school	3	2002

**Table 3: Women interviewed for this study**

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Country of origin</b>	<b>Year of Birth</b>	<b>Religion</b>	<b>Marital status</b>	<b>Level of formal education</b>	<b>Number of Children</b>	<b>Year of arrival in Morocco</b>
<b>Florentine</b>	Cameroon	1985	Protestant	?	?	1	?
<b>Angelique</b>	Cameroon	1978	Protestant	Separated	Secondary school	1	2007
<b>Rita</b>	Cameroon	1960	Protestant	Widowed	Elementary school	4	2010
<b>Amandine</b>	Congo	1965	Protestant	Married	Secondary school	3	1998
<b>Sandrine</b>	Congo	1985	Protestant	Separated	Secondary school	2	2007
<b>Bia</b>	Congo	1972	Protestant	Widowed	Secondary school	2	2002
<b>Maria</b>	Congo	1983	Protestant	Widowed	Secondary school	2	2005
<b>Lise</b>	Congo	1978	Protestant	Married	University	2	2003
<b>Emma</b>	Congo	1966	Protestant	Married	University	5	1998
<b>Nicole</b>	Congo	1980	Protestant	Married	Secondary school	1	2006
<b>Marie Lou</b>	Congo	1970	Protestant	Divorced	Secondary school	3	1998
<b>Fleur</b>	Guinea Conakry	1980	Muslim	Married	University	1	?
<b>Adriane</b>	Ivory Coast	1980	Protestant	Single	University	1	2004
<b>Esther</b>	Ivory Coast	1988	Protestant	Single	Secondary school	1	2008
<b>Touria</b>	Ivory Coast	1978	Catholic	Married	Secondary school	3	2005
<b>Mina</b>	Ivory Coast	1978	Muslim	Married	Secondary school	3	2005
<b>Hawa</b>	Ivory Coast	1977	Muslim	Married	Elementary school	3	2004
<b>Claire</b>	Nigeria	1986	Catholic	Married	Elementary school	1	2009
<b>Blessing</b>	Nigeria	1980	Muslim	Married	Elementary school	3	?
<b>Cristal</b>	Nigeria	1985	Protestant	?	?	1	?
	Central African Republic	1984	Protestant	Married	Secondary school	3	2008

## **2.4 Interviews with organisations**

I conducted interviews with a number of NGOs who provided social services to the migrants I had been in contact with. I chose them on the basis of two criteria: the popularity and significance of their services for the migrants I had met and their involvement in the practical implementation of migration policy in Morocco. The final sample was the result of a prior, informal mapping exercise with some migrant friends and members of the NGO community and included international and national NGOs, international organisations and the catholic and protestant church. I should stress that the organisations I interviewed were primarily chosen for their prominence in the daily lives of the migrants I have been in contact with. This is because they contributed to establishing the context of these lives and daily living conditions. On this basis I interviewed on repeated occasions, in an unstructured manner, members of seven NGOs (including two church-based organisations), two international organisations and one local research institute.

In two of these organisations, I not only conducted interviews but also carried out participant observation over several weeks. For ethical reasons, I have decided not to disclose in this thesis the names of the organisations I worked with or those of their members. The law in Morocco foresees measures against those who help irregular migrants to cross borders (Royaume du Maroc 2003, Article 51 of Law 02-03). NGOs - particularly those working with irregular migrants - generally have no legal basis from which to justify their activities in Morocco and constantly fear state persecution or legal problems. In addition, many international organisations working in the social sector have no explicit legal authorisation to work in Morocco at all, because they are generally not granted a legal status as recognised charity organisations. Christian churches and their activities are only legal in so far as their activities are exclusively directed towards the international Christian community in Morocco. Moreover, they have to restrict their activities to those explicitly agreed upon in a formal convention that exists between Christian churches and the Moroccan state. As a result, organisations whose migrant work is perceived to counter state objectives could face arbitrary closure of their offices and the expulsion of their expatriate staff.

Consequently, migrants who use the services of or collaborate with these organisations would be endangered. The critical analysis of Moroccan state policies and their effects, which are presented in this thesis, relies in part on data gathered with the help of these organisations. Therefore, it was vital to protect their anonymity and that of their staff, as well as that of the migrants served by them.

An exception to this are the names of international organisations which I included in my research and some of whose members I was able to talk to on both formal and informal occasions. These are the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). The former is responsible for the screening and determination process of asylum seekers in Morocco as well as for assuring their protection in line with the Geneva Convention. The latter runs a voluntary return programme for irregular migrants and refused asylum seekers. Both organisations have legally recognised status and clear mandates for their activities with the migrant population in Morocco, which are acknowledged by the Moroccan government.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, as many of my interactions with members in these organisations were informal in nature and because these members do not necessarily always comply with the official policy put forward by the organisations they are working for, I have referred to them anonymously in order to protect them.

The most consistent and long-term work with migrants was carried out by the two international NGOs I interviewed, which have been working with migrants since 2000 and 2002, respectively. Since the beginning of their activities, both have been particularly focused on facilitating access to healthcare and basic necessities. They have also been the first organisations to give migrants advice and to provide psychological counselling. Both organisations have acted on numerous occasions to mediate between migrants and the UNHCR or IOM, as well as between migrants, the

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<sup>8</sup> Even though Rabat is home of many more United Nations agencies, like the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), these institutions were rarely actively involved with Sub-saharan African migrants in Morocco while I was undertaking my research.

judiciary and the police. One of the two organisations has maintained a drop-in centre in Rabat since 2006, where migrants are directed towards the different services offered by the organisation and others. The centre had developed a great range of activities aimed towards mostly undocumented migrants, including general and legal advice, healthcare and medication, social assistance, micro-credit, and psychological counselling. It was the only institution in Rabat that offered educational activities for undocumented migrant children of pre-school and school age, as well as professional training courses for adolescents and adults. The centre also ran a popular women's group, several language training courses and a range of cultural activities for young people.

I conducted observation in the reception room of the drop-in centre, where migrants were frequently waiting for their appointments or a group meeting. In both organisations, I maintained close relations with some migrant volunteer workers who acted as mediators between the organisation and the migrant community. On some occasions, as gatekeepers they were able to facilitate my contact with members of different migrant communities and they provided useful information about the workings of migrant community structures. Furthermore, I had the opportunity to accompany social workers on numerous house visits, school visits and project monitoring activities, as well as to interview Moroccan and international staff. A third international NGO I incorporated into my research was working on maternal health issues from 2007 to 2009 and was one of the few organisations that directed its programme to both vulnerable Moroccan residents and African migrants with children who lived in the same deprived neighbourhoods. I spent considerable time in their waiting room where migrant women were waiting for an appointment. I also had the chance to accompany their social workers on house visits. Through their activities, I was able to get to know the specific situation of migrant women with children in Rabat.

The protestant church community in Rabat runs an independent charity that provides financial support activities for Christian migrants and assists extremely vulnerable persons with essential items as well as emergency housing. In 2010, I worked with the charity as a voluntary advisor for four weeks in the context of a small business project

for migrants.<sup>9</sup> I also collaborated with a Spanish-based catholic organisation that advocates for migrants' rights and provides regular social support for migrants in Rabat, Casablanca, Ceuta and Andalusia. I attended and actively participated in the two subsequent years of 2009 and 2010 in their summer schools for migrant women with children in Rabat. There, I conducted interviews and observation while working two weeks each year in the crèche for migrant children.

Since roughly 2006, Moroccan NGOs have also started to act as service providers for the benefit of African migrants. Most of these organisations had been doing work for the benefit of the local poor for many years and were well established in the areas of town where migrants live. After funding from European embassies and International Organisations became available for asylum seekers and refugees in Morocco, many of them started to use the opportunity to get involved in the issue. I contacted one of them who had become particularly influential, hosting a yearly cultural African Festival in Rabat that had become an important event. Before getting involved in migration related issues, the organisation worked nationwide for the benefit of unemployed Moroccan youth in the suburbs, mainly by promoting cultural and social activities. They first started to provide professional training for Sub-Saharan African refugees as an official service provider financed by UNHCR, and slowly extended their activities towards other, undocumented Sub-Saharan African migrants as well, mostly with their own funding. In its cultural centre in the middle of a densely populated migrant-neighbourhood in Rabat, the organisation maintains social and cultural activities for both Moroccan and African migrants and aims to foster understanding and solidarity between local residents and migrants. I conducted observation and interviews on their premises and received insights into the social dynamics of racism, poverty and violence among Sub-Saharan African migrants and Moroccan youth in the suburbs.

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<sup>9</sup> During the time I was undertaking this research in 2010, members of the organisation experienced serious persecution by Moroccan authorities and the organisation had to temporarily suspend its activities. The business programme consisted of the elaboration, funding and putting into practice of business plans for small economic enterprises. The project provided only a very limited amount of business funding (up to 200 Euros) and migrants were not supposed to pay back a loan. Instead, they were urged to reinvest the money they received to set up the business again later. The programme did not comply with conventional micro-credit project procedures, rules and objectives.



These visits also allowed me to understand the difficult legal and political stance local organisations experienced within the management of undocumented migration in Morocco. Last but not least, I contacted a small local advocacy network, composed of activists, academics and international supporters, which was one of the few organisations in Morocco pursuing an explicitly legal approach to migrants' rights by focusing on the implementation and interpretation of national and international migrants' rights law. The organisation provided legal advice to migrants and conducted campaigns and studies to document the situation of migrants' rights in Morocco. I interviewed several of the members of the network repeatedly and received information and updates on the political and legal situation in Morocco through them.

## **2.5 Negotiating access**

Often, I relied on NGO workers who were migrants themselves to gain access to potential respondents. I contacted some migrants I knew personally from my former work in Morocco. Some of them participated themselves and others suggested friends to take part in the study. Through my participant observation at the women and children's summer school I was also able to recruit a considerable number of respondents. Sometimes, I approached migrants directly, mostly when I saw them working or begging in the street and after Sunday church service. It did happen a few times that migrants who had seen me chatting with their friends or acquaintances approached me directly. These diverse ways of negotiating access helped me to come into contact with individuals from different nationalities, religious and socio-economic backgrounds. The guarantee of anonymity was crucial in access negotiations, as was the promise not to take any photographs. Furthermore, most migrants were uncomfortable with the idea of being tape-recorded. Some people wanted to see an official letter from my university about the research project, but the majority were satisfied with my explanations about the project or with the references I could provide from NGO workers vouching for my integrity and professionalism. They were all interested in knowing why I had chosen this topic and how exactly their story could be of any interest to me. They all wanted to know what I was going to do specifically to help them if they participated in my study and I tried to explain that I could at least try

to describe their reality so that policy makers and NGOs better understood how they lived in Morocco and what their main problems were.

My contacts with charities, international organisations and other institutions were primarily established through networking with former colleagues and friends in Morocco. Many of the decision-makers in these organisations knew me and my work personally and therefore trusted me. Furthermore, some of them explicitly supported me because they believed that the ethnographic nature of the research would lead to urgently needed perspectives on transit migrants' lives in Morocco.

## **2.6 Reflexive Account of the Research process**

In keeping with many critical anthropologists and feminist researchers before me (Stancey 1988, Abu-Lughod 1990, Van Tilburg 1998, Tripp 2002, Flores 1998) I have been very aware of the impact of my particular research process and identity on the type of data I actually found, the way I interpreted it and the conclusions I have drawn, as well as the way I contextualised and framed the field experience (Caplan 1993). In short, my particular way of doing ethnographic research shaped the outcome of that research in quite significant ways.

In my case, doing ethnography has been distinctively marked by my identity as a white, European woman in my late thirties, and also by the fact that I took my children with me while I was doing fieldwork and was pregnant before and during trips to Morocco. In summer 2009, when I was starting my fieldwork, my daughter Maya was three and I was pregnant with my second daughter Anaïs, who arrived in October 2009, just two months after my first fieldwork trip had ended. In the spring and summer of 2010, Maya was four and Anaïs six months old when they accompanied me on my second extended field trip to Morocco. The rhythms and organisation of analysis and the write up of my thesis were strongly conditioned by my parallel occupation as a mother in the two subsequent years. It affected not only the time I had at my disposal, but also the way I thought about my data, once my time in the 'field' had ended. In what follows, I will explain how my children's presence has shaped and influenced this project and my particular take on the questions I chose to answer. I do

this for several reasons. First, because I consider that by making the subjective, personal part of my research visible, I actually increase its 'objectivity' as I am able to situate it in the particular context from which its truths are generated to be understood (Stancey 1988, Harding 1987). Second, I find that the question of children is particularly illustrative of key issues that are at the heart of this research: namely the difficulty of categorising and thereby fixing identities and positioning of oneself and others and the subsequent problems this brings about for the conceptualisation and interpretation of reality (Abu-Lughod 1990, Cupples & Kindon 2003).

#### *2.6.1 Doing fieldwork with children*

I travelled to Morocco in the summer 2009 to undertake an initial pilot study, interviewing migrants and policy makers in Rabat. Even though I had lived and worked in Morocco before and knew many relevant institutional actors as well as some migrants personally, I was not at all clear about the political situation at the time and the recent developments in the migrant community. Apart from an appreciation of the political climate in Morocco, an important objective of the trip was to re-establish personal contact with organisations and migrants, because access negotiations were difficult over the telephone or via mail, given the threats to security that both NGOs and migrants were experiencing periodically. As I was seven months pregnant at the time, it was important to make progress in my fieldwork before going on maternity leave. I planned to interview NGOs' policy makers and, if possible, some migrants in order to have some preliminary data which would allow me to refine my research methods and do more interviews in a second trip to Morocco at a later stage.

I travelled together with my three-year-old daughter and planned to stay in Morocco for six to eight weeks. I was very lucky to be able to stay in my friend's house in Rabat while she was on holiday with her family. In addition, Maya spent her mornings at her old nursery school, which she had attended a year earlier when we were still living in Rabat. Despite these arrangements, I was aware that going on fieldwork with a three year old daughter and pregnant was a logistical and emotional challenge. Having only limited childcare at my disposal, I had to combine meeting my daughter's needs with my fieldwork schedules and handle the limits that pregnancy put on my physical

abilities. As a consequence, my daughter accompanied me to many interviews and visits to migrant houses. Additionally, I began to arrange meetings with interviewees in ways that enabled me to combine them with my daily chores. Thus, I met people in the market to do shopping together or organised trips to the park together with migrant mothers who also had children to look after.

This had an impact on the way in which I conducted interviews and observation. Instead of being guided by migrants' activities for the selection of interview and observation locations, my own activities as a mother played a crucial role in the choices I made about interview techniques and places for observation. However, my role as mother turned out to be more advantageous than I expected because our similar routines as child carers enabled me to participate in moments of female migrants' daily lives more naturally. Necessarily, this implied a certain bias in my 'sampling' because it was easier to conduct interviews or observations with other women (or men) who had children with them when my own daughter accompanied me to interviews: there was always someone for her to play with and the environment was generally 'child friendly'. In order to maintain a level of diversity among my respondents, I learned that it was better to arrange certain interviews at times when I was able to go alone, because the places I went to were not necessarily comfortable or safe for my children.<sup>10</sup>

My pregnancy and subsequent experiences with the Moroccan health system heightened my interest in an NGO that had just recently started a maternal health programme for pregnant migrant mothers in Rabat. The organisation operated in a part of town that was in almost the opposite direction to the suburb in which I was living, so a trip to get there could easily take an hour in buses with no air conditioning and very hard plastic seats. I started to get a very real feel for what it meant to travel through Rabat with children, or pregnant, from a migrants' point of view. I was able to conduct observation in the organisation's waiting room, simply by joining other pregnant mothers waiting their turn to be attended to there. While chatting to some of

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<sup>10</sup> This was the case when I had to go to parts of town that were located very far from my house, required lengthy journeys or were organised in places that I considered less safe.

them, I would ask them to participate in the study and to consent to being interviewed. This opened up a whole new perspective, as it is normally quite difficult to contact young female migrants, particularly those with young children, because they tend not to frequent NGOs or churches, have less time for interviews and do not leave their houses so often. Through mostly this NGO and some church contacts, I managed to undertake 15 interviews with migrants during the summer of 2009.

As indicated earlier on in the chapter, I also did some participant observation at a church-run summer school for migrant mothers with children. I worked in the crèche set up by volunteer migrant mothers for the women attending workshops. Even though I would have preferred to volunteer in the workshops, in order to be closer to the women, I was assigned to do work in the crèche, probably because I was the mother of a small child and pregnant and therefore considered to be 'an expert' in that field. My attempts to stress my academic interest as oppose to my role as mother were futile. For the members of the organisation and the migrants themselves, I was a volunteering mother and no longer an academic; in this way, I was put on the same level as everybody else working in the crèche.

The crèche normally ran from 9am to 12 noon, a time during which my older daughter went to her own nursery. Later in the afternoon, around 5 or 6pm, when the heat had ceased to be too fierce, I usually set out again, with my daughter, to undertake some interviews or visit some migrants in their houses, usually until 8pm when it was getting time to go home. I soon realised that the fact of participating in specific activities for migrants had positive consequences for the rapport I was able to establish with them. Having time in the crèche allowed me to understand aspects of women's struggles with regards to child education and care in Morocco and made me think about gendered experiences in forced immobility. The work with the international volunteers and their church-related affiliations allowed me to gain insights into the special relationships that often develop between migrants and NGO workers and the perceptions of each other that are created and shaped by both parties through these interactions. Moreover, the fact that I had 'helped', that I had 'got my hands dirty' despite my pregnancy or maybe because of it, was generally regarded positively by

both migrants and NGO workers. They felt that I made a *physical* effort to see and *feel* things from their point of view. I could be trusted because I had made this effort despite my pregnancy. I also undertook interviews with most NGOs working with migrants in Rabat and was able to arrange contacts for more participant observation for the next year, after my maternity leave.

### *2.6.2 Letting go of too much planning*

During this time it became clear to me that formal interviews, even if only semi-structured, were difficult to conduct. I found that most of the really interesting material I gathered was that which came spontaneously, as a result of unstructured conversations and visits to people's houses. In instances in which I had arranged formal interviews with migrants through NGOs, for example, the first thirty minutes or so were often 'wasted' because migrants would answer most questions about their story almost automatically with what seemed to be predetermined answers which were remarkably similar to each other. I soon found out that this had greatly to do with their suspicion about interviews in general, having been interviewed regularly by NGO workers, government officials and international organisations (Shepherd, 2006). Some had interview 'fatigue': they had basically constructed a discourse, a story, used by almost all of them with slight variations that best helped them to benefit from services and to get access to help and support. Later I realised that this in itself turned out to be an important aspect of my thesis, as it showed me how migrants tried to use the dominant discourse on mobility and ideas of 'forced' and 'voluntary' migration. Only after clarifying my intentions, engaging in more in-depth conversations and often making several repeat visits did they start to tell me about other aspects of their lives which were often in complete contradiction to what they had first told me. This was one of the reasons why I decided to conduct ethnography with open-ended, unstructured interviews, relying strongly on observation and repeated interactions with a limited number of migrants. My children were again a very interesting facilitator for these unstructured meetings and conversations, because they made some elements of interview situations uncontrollable for me, and for my respondent. We both had to let go of any preconceived scripts, in order to manage the improvised situations that

often occurred when my daughter started to intervene unexpectedly. Maya's desire to play, or to be part of the conversation, often led either to very relaxed or to emotional moments, in which both the migrants and myself opened up without really thinking about it.

What started as a 'pilot' gradually became an independent part of the fieldwork process: it was already forming part of the ethnography as a stand-alone section of my data-collection process. This insight then structured the subsequent plans for my research strategy. I decided to repeat my visit to Morocco after maternity leave in order to interview the same group of migrants a second time, if possible recruiting some into the sample in order to get a more diverse picture of different nationalities, genders, and ages. I thought that it would be interesting to see how their situation and stories evolved over the course of months and years. This was also necessary because my giving birth interrupted the fieldwork anyway. However, like so many of my respondents' decisions with regards to their migratory trajectory, I still think that all these factors were not enough to determine the evolving design either as a conscious choice or an imposed condition.

Soon after my maternity leave ended in April 2010, I set out to Morocco again, this time with my six-month-old baby Anais. My older daughter Maya came to join me some weeks later. Now I was doing fieldwork with two children. I re-visited all the migrants I had seen the first time, except for two people who had gone missing. I contacted 25 more migrants and interviewed them on several occasions. This led me to 40 interviewees in total. On this occasion, I allowed more time for observation and visits to local churches and other meeting places. I spent considerable time visiting migrants in their homes, thus discovering parts of the city I had never seen before. In many instances I took the baby with me. This proved to be mostly unproblematic, and was particularly fun when I visited women who had been pregnant at the same time as me.

The aspect of family life with children started to creep into my data without my having planned it, as I was becoming more and more aware of the living conditions of migrant

women with small children. I carried out two more weeks of participant observation in the summer school, again in the crèche, and people recognised me from the year before. This time, however, I took my six-month-old baby with me and my four-year-old daughter also came on occasion to join us. The fact that I took my children with me to the sparsely equipped classroom in which we had established the crèche impressed migrants enormously. Two migrants told me that they had expected me, a relatively rich, white European, to leave my children at home in the care of a childminder in order not to expose them to the heat and difficult conditions of the crèche. Above all, they were surprised to see me trust them with the care of my children. This was mostly due to the fact that some women had had unpleasant experiences as domestic servants in Morocco, when the local employer had refused to entrust them with childcare because of their skin colour and instead restricted them to doing heavy physical cleaning work. As a result, I got a lot of childcare advice and wisdom passed on to me, which was intended to facilitate my mothering tasks in Morocco. I was informed about the various ways to carry children around on the back, how to make nappies myself, how to treat illnesses with herbs and teas and also how to encourage children to start walking as early as possible. The topics of these conversations illustrated the difficulties of child rearing for migrants in Morocco.

After this two month visit, I had established deep relationships with some of the migrants. They had developed trust that I was not just some researcher who comes and leaves, and that I had a genuine interest in their lives. In some cases, we exchanged telephone numbers, and others stayed in contact via online chat with me, or SMS messages when I returned home. Taking my children to the field has clearly influenced the type of people I encountered, the type of conversations we had, the power relationships in the field, and finally the conclusions I was able to draw. In particular, it enabled me to enter a 'women's world', in that I have had privileged access to other women with children, a group with which most researchers have found it difficult to establish rapport. On the other hand, it may also have shaped the type of conversations and contacts I have had with men in the sense that they included frequent references to family, children, ancestors and relationships. This was a



process I could only partially control, so, in contrast to some feminist writers (Bell et. al, 1993) I would argue that it is not always a conscious and controllable strategy of research. The way I was perceived primarily as 'pregnant' or as a 'mother' and only secondly as a 'researcher' was not always of my own making. In fact, it was to do with simple physical facts that I could not hide, such as an ever-growing belly or a four-year-old hanging on my skirt while I conducted interviews. Nevertheless, I found that this unexpected lack of control over the research process (and over my own life to some extent), is in itself precisely what I have learned to accept and live with, and probably even learned to appreciate as a necessary part of the research story and of life itself. If I was only partly 'in charge' of my life, how could I continue to believe that the migrants I interviewed were completely in control of their migration project, particularly when they had children with them?

### *2.6.3 Professionalism and personal experience*

Let me turn now to another important point that emerged regarding my epistemological approach to research on migrants in Morocco. This is the obvious difficulty of classification and categorisation in migration research. It is at the root of this thesis and it corresponds strangely with difficulties I experienced as I attempted to establish the boundaries of my own conflicting identities as researcher and mother while I was in Morocco, and how I worked around this.

While working in Morocco, I struggled enormously with feelings of failure, because I was concerned that my role as mother interfered negatively with my 'professional, academic' research (Flores 1998, Abu-Lugod 1990). Like other academics who had taken their children to the field before me, I was aware that I could have done so much more had I not taken them (Dreher 1987, Florez 1998). I had the constant feeling of having failed to gather enough data, of having not stayed long enough, of having not talked to the right people or not at the right moment, mostly because of my need to care for my children while researching. I also felt at times that I failed to be creative enough to overcome these constraints satisfactorily (Dreher 1987, Florez 1998, Tripp 2002). Even though the feeling of inadequacy may be typical to anthropological accounts of fieldwork in general, independent of the gender of the researcher

(Jackson 1990: 12), I think that in my case, there was a very feminine aspect to my experience. Tripp (2002:809) has argued that the challenge of being a mother and a researcher at the same time is basically that fieldwork is an all-consuming experience. The work never really ends and requires to some extent a total immersion in another society. Taking care of small children can require the same kind of intense commitment because the work is continuous and requires total immersion in a child's world. Paradoxically then, the two roles are in certain ways incompatible, but in my case at least they were nevertheless indivisible. I have shown above, however, that *because of their indivisibility in practice, my children had actually made my research happen*. While they were certainly incompatible with a certain 'professional, academic' standard of ethnographic research that I had envisioned, they were very compatible with a different type of ethnographic research that actually did lead to results, albeit different results to those I had planned for at the outset. I practiced living among others through my children, without having really intended to do so. In this sense, my research turned out to be similar to what could be called a 'feminist ethnography', because it generated its data from the perspective of my own experience and it used this experience as a significant indicator of the reality against which hypotheses were tested (Harding 1987:7).

This taught me a valuable lesson about how difficult it is to distinguish between professional and personal realms in research practice and that it may even be unnecessary to maintain these differences when looking for solutions to the dilemmas these distinctions generate in the field. Furthermore, I found that the difficulties I experienced while attempting rather unsuccessfully to maintain boundaries between my identities as researcher and mother, correspond in peculiar ways to the difficulty of classification and categorisation in migration research that is at the root of this thesis. I finally understood the relevance of feminist researchers' claims that we 'work from fragmented selves and we must work together as different selves who only partially intersect' (Abu-Lagoud, 1990:25). Similar to my difficulty in finding out what a transit migrant really looked like, I came to understand that I sometimes did not look like a researcher to the migrants I interviewed. I realised that in my interviews, moments of

conversation with the same person continuously changed in dynamic. The same conversation would in one instance be taking place between two mothers, in the next between a researcher and a refugee, and then between a white, rich person and a poor black person.

I see this complexity as an enriching way of looking at the data this research has generated. It leaves open the possibilities of seeing the participants in this research as people, who have conflicting identities and a range of possibilities for developing them, according to circumstances, like myself. This complexity did not undermine the research process, but rendered it all the more obvious that all research is located within the structural constraints of the moment and our personal lives, which we need to acknowledge and to describe adequately in order to ensure any knowledge claims we make are useful and valid within their particular context.

## **2.7 Data recording and analysis, and the interpretation of embodied knowledge**

Much of my data came from unstructured conversations, from observations during other activities, such as child minding, assisting people in carrying shopping or while sitting on buses. For this reason it was often technically impossible to record these conversations with a tape recorder or by writing them down while or shortly after they occurred. Apart from that, I refrained from taking photos or recording conversations when migrants explicitly asked me not to do so, which they frequently did. In many instances, even though migrants had consented to being recorded or to notes being taken, the recording process influenced our rapport negatively. I therefore simply stopped recording or taking notes in the presence of informants altogether. I also never took photographs, not even of the areas I visited. However, I did attempt to write down notes from memory as soon as possible after I had ended a fieldwork session. Often, this started with scrap notes while I was sitting on the bus on my way home, or while I was waiting for a taxi. Afterwards, I would convert these into detailed field notes. This process took place mostly in the evenings, at home, and directly onto the computer. For the most part, I wrote in the language the conversation had been held in, French, English or Spanish, because this made it was easier for me to remember phrases and sections of talk. Sometimes, I also wrote down my notes by hand in

exercise books that I had bought for the purpose. These research journals normally included notes other than those covering the conversations and observations I had made during interviews. In general, they contained thoughts, images and sometimes drawings of the places I had visited. They also contained my impressions and emotions as I remembered them.

Despite all these efforts, I constantly felt that I never had enough time to write everything I had experienced or seen. I had made a lot of 'head notes', about things that I have never written down but that had stayed with me (Ottenberg 1990: 139). In Okely's (2008) terms, there was a lot of 'embodied' knowledge that I had experienced through fieldwork and yet was unable to put into written form.

After fieldwork, the material found in notebooks, in transcripts and even in contemporary written sources is only a guide and trigger. The anthropologist writer draws also on the totality of the experience, parts of which may not, cannot, be cerebrally written down at the time. It is recorded in memory, body and all the senses. Ideas and themes have worked through the whole being throughout the experience of fieldwork. They have gestated in dreams and the subconscious in both sleep and in waking hours, away from the field at the anthropologists desk in libraries and in dialogue with the people on return visits (Okely, 2008:21).

Photographs, music, smells and tastes can also gradually be incorporated in the process of analysis because they revive hidden memories. Often, these sensations are only accessible through remembering situations and moments in the field. Gardner (2002:41) argues that:

If narratives are to be understood as social processes... then we must pay as much attention to the form and contexts in which they are produced as to their content.

I started to look at my memories of the field and my embodied knowledge as important vehicles that gave form and context to the narratives I had written down in my field

notes. The analysis of this seemingly chaotic mass of unstructured data was not a straightforward process. According to Okely (1994), writing and analysis comprise a movement between the tangible and the intangible, between the cerebral and the sensual, between the visible and the invisible. Interpretation moves from evidence to ideas and theory and back again. Ideas may emerge from only the most intangible link with recorded notes. They arise in part as a response to other theories and ideas, long after fieldwork has ended. As such, the combined analysis of conventional field notes and 'embodied' knowledge in the elaboration of themes and concepts proved to be a difficult exercise that did not follow clearly discernible rules.

Through the use of Layder's (1993) research map, described in the beginning of this chapter, I started to order my ethnographic data by relating it on the one hand to the macro, structural theories and the 'grounded theory' that emerges from the data and on the other hand to my own, autobiographical experience of fieldwork. Through these different sets of data I started to see how themes corresponded to different levels of analysis: I was firmly gathering data on migrants' self perception and their social interaction, but simultaneously, I connected these data to the ways in which migrants were seen and made to appear in migration theory and policy.

Because of my particular experience in the field, I soon decided that I had to analyse the differences in data coming from women and men, as I felt that gender had a bearing on the way in which migrants lived in Morocco. I was 'searching' for empirical evidence in my notes, and could not always find it. However, I did *remember* feeling and living the different ways in which women organised their daily lives, having participated in some of it with my own children. For example, I remembered my own feeling of being only partly in charge of the research process because of being conditioned by my children's presence and then began to see how the children's presence in my informants' lives also impacted on the ways in which they were able to negotiate their changing social location and positioning towards mobility.

## 2.8 Ethical considerations

Doing ethnography with undocumented migrants and other vulnerable persons can lead to many ethical dilemmas, only some of which have been highlighted in the existing literature (Maziva 2013, Van Liempt & Bilger 2009, Temple & Moran 2009, O'Connell Davidson 2008a). As was to be expected, I have struggled with issues of anonymity, informed consent, minimising harm and the use and interpretation of data, as well as issues related to manipulation. Saint-Exupery's (1984:55) statement that one becomes forever responsible for what one has tamed, became a particularly difficult issue for me in this respect. I was constantly questioning up to what point I was responsible for the migrants I had encountered (and in many cases befriended) and what this responsibility really entailed.

Like many feminists and critical anthropologists or geographers before me, I am convinced that at the heart of these ethical problems lies the fundamentally important question of rapport between researcher and researched that is charged with power differences (Stancey 1988, Caplan 1993, Van Liempt & Bilger 2009). In this sense, I think that for me, one of the greatest challenges to ethically acceptable behaviour was to accept and incorporate the limits stemming from an inherently unequal power relationship between researcher and researched. This is an issue that is difficult to address through existing ethical guidelines and checklists, which were not designed for the particular ethical dilemmas ethnographers typically face (Murphy & Dingwall 2007). This is because these procedures underestimate the power inequalities existing between researcher and researched in qualitative studies. Furthermore, they only partially attend to the fact that ethical problems are sometimes only visible long after the actual research relationship ends and other, more intimate relationships continue (O'Connell Davidson 2008a, Stancey 1988). Despite this, I did attempt to comply with the usual ethical guidelines as best I could, given the particular circumstances of my research participants. For example, I asked all interviewees at our first meeting if they agreed to participate in the research after explaining what the research was about and what it entailed. I did not rely on written consent forms for the following reasons. On the one hand, it was likely that many of my respondents would

not read French or English very well and might feel embarrassed to admit that. Secondly, because of their irregular status, I knew that they preferred not to produce written evidence about themselves.

To reassure my participants about the authenticity of my claims, I provided credentials in different forms. For the majority of people who did not speak English and/or did not write and read French very well, I had asked two migrant social workers who worked in two international NGOs to vouch for me. I had explained to these migrants in detail what I was going to do and why, where the findings would be published and in what form. I knew that these migrants were fairly well-known and respected in the migrant and NGO communities and often acted as gatekeepers for both. As they had known me for about three years, they were able to act as my referees. Migrants could ask them about me and the research project in order to obtain a second opinion from someone they trusted. For more computer-literate people, I provided the hyperlink to my university home page in which they could read my University of Nottingham postgraduate research profile. Many were very satisfied with that information, as it showed to them that I was really from an English university. I was therefore fairly confident that my interviewees gave informed consent in all instances in relation to their participation.

I also adapted some methodological aspects of my research as a result of research participants' reluctance to consent. This included foregoing the tape recording of conversations and taking written notes in migrants' presence, taking photos or any other audio-visual material on research settings or migrants. However, I started to doubt slightly that my strategy was completely satisfactory after one of my key informants took the opportunity to confess to me after we had known each other for over a year:

Y.: I didn't actually want to talk to you at first, you see. But I accepted because you are Amelie's friend. And Amelie is my friend and I trust her. .... and then, when we had the first conversation, I was not happy afterwards. I felt that you had stolen something from me that I would

never be able to get back again. ...and I regretted that I had talked to you, I had said too much, too many personal things. But then you wrote me this email for Christmas and I was no longer afraid. I knew that you were interested in my life. That felt good

Me: But are you still ok with me knowing what I know? Would you like me better not to mention it in my research?

Y: No, it is not that. You know it now, anyway. It has been said, so I cannot change that now. It just happened. You cannot control it in the moment. But afterwards, I thought: Why did I tell her all these private things that I cannot even tell my brother? And it feels a bit spooky. Because I don't know you, you are not my sister.

Me: What am I then?

Y: Now, you have become a bit of my sister, if you want it or not. You are my white step sister now. You cannot pretend you don't know me any longer! (laughs)

This episode exemplified two things for me. First, that informed consent at the outset does not mean that one will not want to withdraw later on (O'Connell Davidson, 2008a). Second, it highlights the danger of overlooking the vulnerability of research participants and the effect this has on their apparently informed consent. Sociological research guidelines, like those of the British Sociological Association (BSA) from 2004 for example, recognise that eliciting fully informed consent is particularly difficult in cases where research participants are vulnerable and highlights the need for researchers to take into account the legal and ethical complexities that are involved in those circumstances before planning the research. Undocumented migrants clearly fall into the category of particularly vulnerable research participants and therefore the example illustrates how difficult it is to be sure about the informed consent they can or cannot give to the participation in ethnographic research.



More importantly, I felt that it was not a question of consent that was at the heart of my informant's unease. For him, the ethical question was my *responsibility* towards him as a person (Madziva 2012). He made it sound as if by implicating me in his personal life and secrets, I had entered a domain in which I was responsible for him, whether I wanted to be or not. He had become part of my personal life too and was no longer reducible to a simple number in my study. In a way, I felt that he was turning the question of consent upside down; he was asking me to *consent* to take responsibility for our relationship in exchange for him consenting to talk to me. Also, he asked me to become a 'different person': he wanted me to become his sister instead of the 'researcher' I had been when we first knew each other. This, of course, defies all positivist research ethics, which advocate for detachment, respect, and, most importantly, emotional boundaries. However, how is it ethically acceptable to deny him this emotional return, as his consent is tied up with it? And is it possible to maintain my 'identity' as researcher if I am also becoming his 'sister'? Do I give up my 'power' if I consent to be his 'sister', because I consent to have obligations towards him?

Other migrants have repeatedly asked me to fulfil a sort of 'patronage' role for them, by clearly acknowledging and using our unequal power to assist them with access to mobility and economic resources. Thus, I became instrumental in shipping of goods from Europe to Morocco that were difficult for them to access by other means, and facilitating contacts between migrants in Morocco and Spain. I consented to do this as a kind of 'exchange' relationship, in which I agreed to take responsibility, to 'care' for the migrant and his or her needs in the best way I could. Similar issues were experienced by Madziva (2010b) in her research with Zimbabwean asylum seekers in England. The expectance of patronage can be a heavy burden. From a researcher's point of view, it is perhaps inevitable to accept obligations towards one's vulnerable research subject if one is attempting to minimise power inequalities inherent in a research relationship. However, this is particularly difficult if the obligations mean that one is compelled to disclose personal details such as home phone numbers and contacts, thus entering into long-term relationships of patronage and sponsorship.

While it is already difficult to manage these types of relationships with research subjects that one feels close to (Stancey 1988, O'Connell Davidson 2008a), it is particularly challenging in cases where no real personal affinity exists. I very often did not feel close to the people I interviewed, nor did I want to disclose anything about my life to them or vouch for them, lie for them or support their endeavours.

Rather than helping to resolve unequal power relationships, I sometimes had the feeling that closer relationships actually accentuated the fact that I was in a privileged position in the 'friendship-patronage-relationship'. This was because usually, the more they knew me and the closer we got, the more migrants started to request my help as their legitimate patron. Instead of regarding these dilemmas as insurmountable ethical impediments to qualitative research, I find that they simply point to the human nature of these research relationships and the question of their authenticity. Using qualitative research methods with vulnerable subjects might make these unequal power relationships more visible than with other types of research method, but nevertheless those inequalities are always there. Ethnography forces researchers to learn about our research participants and their own ethical frameworks. Hopefully this also teaches us something about who we are, how we are seen by others and how we want to work with vulnerable populations.

There are no efficient ethical checklists that could fully cover the difficult interplay between the different ethical expectations of both subjects and researchers. However, the skills required to listen and to be attentive, and the ability to question ourselves on ethical assumptions that are all too easily taken for granted, can be learned and trained. As such, they should be basic skills required of any social scientist (Murphy & Dingwall 2007). Taking responsibility for one's research subjects definitely requires more than compliance with any given ethical guidelines. It involves engaging with and managing very personal relationships in the field. In my particular case, it meant not only acknowledging migrants' vulnerability, but also accepting my own privilege because, in contrast to the migrants I interviewed, I had access to a range of different sources of information, as well as the right to move or to stay. Furthermore, I possessed the economic and social standing necessary to retain the perspective from

which I conducted my research. In short, I had the ability, albeit limited, to influence ideas, policies and practices on micro and macro levels regarding the lives of migrants with the use of the particular viewpoints I represented. Ethically, it is thus important as a researcher to accept and use this privilege in order to document what a loss of voice actually means for the lived experience of undocumented migrants. Adhering to ethical checklists is not enough to achieve this, but it can be done through a reflective and critical engagement with data and research participants.

## **2.9 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have described the research design and process of this ethnographic study. While not free from problems and ethical dilemmas, I argue that ethnographic research on the life of undocumented, vulnerable migrants offers important and often undervalued insights into the life-worlds of particularly vulnerable members of society. In struggling to make these people's voices heard, however, researchers may face methodological and ethical issues that are ultimately resolved by personal choices. Qualitative research, like parenting, can be an all-encompassing experience that goes far beyond a purely professional relationship to the research subject. In my particular case, it required an acknowledgement of the interrelated nature of private and public, personal and professional, subjective and objective. In line with the main objectives of my research, my methodological choices included a questioning of binary divisions between concepts and their value for useful explanations. This also required a different attitude to planning and a heightened awareness for flexibility and change during the research process. Such a methodology resists assessment through ethical checklists but can nevertheless be ethically sound and useful for both researcher and researched when accompanied by a reflexive attitude.

# Chapter 3: Migrants' journeys to Morocco

## 3.0 Introduction

In this chapter I will look at the reasons why people migrated to Morocco and the ways in which their journeys evolved by relying on migrants' own accounts of their travels. I will analyse both men's and women's journeys, indicating significant similarities and differences within them. I contend that this helps to analyse migration, its causes, and migrants' journeys from a standpoint that goes beyond a mere economic perspective on human mobility. By reviewing Sub-Saharan African migrants' conditions of departure and the variety of regulatory authorities (market, state and family) that structure their movement I will show how aspirations and capabilities to migrate are produced and reproduced not only at the point of departure, but also along the way. The particularly long journeys I describe significantly shape the experience of migration and mark migrants' gendered identities in a way that the ordinary everyday movements of people do not.

I conclude that on their way to Morocco, the status of migrants can shift from legal to illegal, forced to voluntary or trafficked to smuggled, and the amount of control they have over these processes changes with the places they travel to and the time they spend there. During the process, destinations change and aspirations need to be adapted to the new social reality of community relations and regulatory forces. The extent to which migrants are able make these adaptations determines to a large extent their success in moving further or getting stuck. However, structural forces, such as gender, condition their abilities to do so and inhibit them from becoming who and what they want. From such an analysis a question arises about both the political and conceptual usefulness of defining migrants in Morocco in static and fixed categories, such as 'transiting' individuals, illegal migrants, refugees or 'trafficked victims'. Migrants slip in and out of these categories and can often occupy more than one at once, without this having significant impact on their migration abilities and goals.

### **3.1 Migration: From economic push and pull factors to existential quest**

As I mentioned in the introduction, economic push and pull models of migration (Lee 1969) are often at the root of research and descriptions of Sub-Saharan African 'transit' migrants in Morocco. Accordingly, migrants are imagined as rational individuals, calculating the risks involved in illegal travel in light of the expectations of high economic returns as successful labour migrants in the country of destination (Chiswick 2008). In policy documents, research and the media, Sub-Saharan African migrants appear to fit the classical description of the male labour migrant, who is determined to reach Europe in search of work (De Haas 2007). As I have indicated in previous chapters, firstly there is considerable doubt as to how far Sub-Saharan African migrants in Morocco can meaningfully be described as labour migrants, and secondly, gender and family relations are far more diverse and complicated in Morocco than implied by the image of the single, male migrant.

The problem with economic perspectives of the migrant is not only that they may be misleading, but also that they usually serve to justify containment policies that are designed to do two things. On the one hand, they are geared towards heightening the cost of migration to impede movement and, on the other hand, they serve to regulate migrants' settlement in host countries by linking their access to human rights to citizenship. This approach to migration management usually results in increased border controls and a politics of migration status that differentiates migrants' access to rights and protection in host countries. In a recent book on border closures and migration movements in Africa, Streiff-Fenart and Segatti (2011:x) explain how politics of border enforcement are usually accompanied by intensive political efforts aimed at legitimising and rationalising these. In order to do this, parameters are necessary to define migration as either desirable or undesirable and to make migration projects appear legitimate or else a criminal act of trespassing. One way to do this is to classify migrants into 'legal' or 'illegal' migrants, into forced or voluntary movers or to separate those who are 'trafficked' from those who are 'smuggled'. It is in this sense that migration theory has a great influence on what counts as migration and what does not,

what is considered to cause it, and on how migrants are defined and classified into either legitimate or illegitimate movers.

Neo-classical push and pull theories of migration have thus provided the basis to distinguish between the regular labour migrant who is coming as a guest worker to benefit the local economy, and the irregular worker, who comes in the hope of reaping social benefits and therefore 'exploits' the local tax payer. Anderson (2012) goes even further and shows how states are able to construct migrants as illegitimate trespassers based on their supposed condition of poverty but *also* based on their perceived political status. In such a discourse, the right to mobility is usually linked to the notion of the 'good citizen' who is politically, socially and economically integrated into society through rules which link the individual in a particular relationship to the state and the market. By contrast, the irregular migrant is a 'non-citizen', because he cannot fulfil the criteria that would make him eligible for participating in state, market and families in a similar and desirable way. From such a political and social perspective on human mobility, it follows that wealthy tourists, students and businessmen are generally free to move from country to country, while migrants in search of political asylum, protection or work are controlled and persecuted, because they are seen as a political and economic burden for the host society. Bakewell (2008a) makes a similar argument when he reminds us that migrants from economically developing countries are even considered to be a sign of a dysfunctional economy in their home countries and an indicator of underdevelopment. In this capacity, they are representing the 'underdeveloped selves' that have to be kept at bay in order to maintain the 'developed' status of the industrialised nation. The press and policy makers alike have used the construction of the European 'myth of invasion' (De Haas 2007) by migrants from the global south to depict 'transit migrants' in Morocco.

What is problematic with this way of looking at migration is that it analyses migration from the point of view of states, rather than that of migrants themselves. Second, far from being a simple ordering device, migrant categories can have profound consequences for migrants. Streiff-Fenart and Segatti (2011) show, for example, how recent containment policies aimed at regulating immigration flows toward Europe have

profoundly altered the dynamics of migration in Africa. The contributions in their book show that the impact of these policies is apparent in the redefinition of the routes, itineraries, and actors of migration. Furthermore, this affects migrants' identities and the perceptions of migrants in the societies through which they transit and the communities that they have left behind.

### *3.1.1 Migration as existential quest*

In this chapter I will contrast the state's view of the migration process with a description of migrants' journeys from their own perspectives. This lets us appreciate migrants' complicated relationship to mobility and settlement and how their changing migration status and control over their trajectory is mediated by state policies, but also by the market and a diversity of migrant networks. To start with, I look at migrants as 'adventurers' for whom migration is essentially an existential quest rather than a mere economic endeavour. I agree with Hage (2005:469) that in contemporary migration politics and theory, the significance of movement in migrants' lives is not considered important in order to define them as migrants. Coming from a mobility perspective, Schapendonk (2011) argues, for example, that neo-classical migration theory has resulted in a general tendency in migration research to focus on departure and settlement at the expense of travel. Transnational scholars too have critiqued economically oriented theories for neglecting migrants' continuing relations with home countries and the fact that migrants tend to travel back and forth between home and host countries (Glick Schiller et al. 1992). Because of this, some have accused researchers of migration of 'methodological nationalism' when they restrict the analysis of migrants' citizenship status to their social, economic, political and cultural relations with host countries (Wimmer & Glick Schiller 2003).

However, recent research by authors like Hage (2005), Chu (2010) and Alpes (2011) highlights that the structural position of an individual in countries of origin is particularly critical in shaping the ways in which movement across borders is becoming a significant and important event in peoples' lives, outweighing all possible setbacks and risks. Rather than being a mere means to cross borders, migration can be meaningfully understood as a movement that helps people to 'go places', in the sense

of being a means to individual development, which cannot be realised in the place they are in, and they therefore choose to pursue elsewhere. Hage argues in this context that migrants usually do not link their right and desire to mobility to their social or citizenship status. Instead, he states that mobility is often conceived as a means to increase social and personal freedom and possibilities:

We do not engage in existential mobility in order to experience physical mobility. The contrary is true: we engage in the kind of physical mobility that defines us as migrants because we feel another geographical space is a better launching pad for our existential selves (Hage, 2005:470).

For Hage (2005), this is what distinguishes migrants' travel from tourists' journeys. It follows that in order to feel migration as a significant event in one's life it must involve a sense of being uprooted from things that one is familiar with and a sense of being out of place. This sense of being out of place could well be defined as being displaced from one's social location. Pessar and Mahler (2003: 816) define social location as a persons' position within interconnected power hierarchies created through historical, political, economic, geographic, kinship-based and other socially stratifying factors. The idea of social location is helpful to understand how migrants' existential motives interact with other regulating factors in creating mobility and immobility in different places and times. I agree with Hage (2005: 471) that taking into account this relationship between existential and physical movement allows us to better explain different kinds of mobility rather than equating the migration experience of the 'totally at-home-having-fun tourist' and the travel of the 'fragile, dislocated and hesitant refugee.' It also allows us to go beyond the binary representation of the tourist as 'good citizen' and the irregular immigrant as 'benefit scrounger'. By reconstructing the understandings migrants have about their trajectories in the remainder of this chapter, I attempt to outline the tensions and contradictions between aspirations for migration and detention, moving and settling, and overlapping migrant categories, which migration policies seek to distinguish and demarcate.



### 3.2 The Adventurers

For migrants in Morocco, migration is a significant, existential movement through which they hope to shift their social location. My interviewees never considered themselves as 'transit migrants' but frequently referred to themselves as 'adventurers' instead.<sup>11</sup> For the adventurers, migration is like a rite of passage that must be overcome in order to become a more complete individual, someone the community can be proud of, like the adolescent child that can face important challenges and tests in life once he has passed his 'rite of passage'. Like a rite of passage, migration is necessary for survival, because it involves becoming uprooted from things one is no longer suited to.<sup>12</sup> That migrants consider themselves as adventurers illustrates that they are in a liminal situation already in their countries of origin, which separates their social existence from the dignity that they hope to reach through migration (Streiff-Fenart and Segatti 2011).

Jean, a young man from Cameroon who became one of my key informants, described himself as 'adventurer' to me. According to his story, he had no visible economic or political reasons to leave his parents' home. He grew up in a very strict household in Yaoundé, not very rich, but neither poor, as he told me. All in all, he considered that he lived a fairly comfortable life and was able to attend a good school. But while his older brother and sister were excellent students (his brother now holds a PhD and has a good position at a research institute, while his sister is working and has a family), Jean was rather mediocre in his results. His father, a military man, and his mother, a business woman, were worried about his future. When he turned 18, he knew that he did not want to go to university and dreamt of a career in acting, an option not approved of by his family. He felt like an outsider in the family, because he had not

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<sup>11</sup> This has equally been noted by Schapendonk (2011), Escoffier (2006) and Pian (2009).

<sup>12</sup> According to the work of Pian (2009), Bredeloup (1994) and Alpes (2011) similar terms for migration exist in a variety of African countries. 'Bush falling', for example, is used in some parts of Cameroun. According to Alpes (2011), this term refers back to tribal practices of 'hunting in the wilderness' in which members of tribes go out fighting and surviving in 'bush', in order to come back as stronger and better individuals and leaders, usually equipped with 'trophies' like money or other status symbols.

been as successful as his older siblings and did not want to follow similar paths, but felt that he had to prove that he could become someone by his own means. This became the primary reason for him to leave the country. He told me that he did not plan his journey very much at all. One day, after a dispute with his father, he took the little money he had, and without uttering a single word to anyone, he took a bus and left for Chad. His example illustrates that existential reasons to migrate are not always dependent on economic conditions in the country of departure, but rather are based on one's own perception of one's social location with respect to possibilities and choices open to one's life. Both women and men referred to migration as 'aller en aventure' (Pian 2009, Alpes 2011, Escoffier 2006), but clearly with gendered undertones. Lise, a woman in her late twenties from Congo is a good example of this.

Like Jean, Lise came from a middle class household, and both her sister and aunt were French residents, living in Paris. Because of this, her family counted on frequent remittances from them and Lise knew a lot about life in Europe, particularly in France. Despite holding a good job in customer relations for a Belgian firm, she wanted to see the world and 'amuse herself', as she told me. Her family was very much against her leaving the country, so she made the preparations secretly and only told her brother in Kinshasa and her sister in France about her migration project. She told me:

They didn't understand why. They couldn't see a valid reason. There were no money problems, my life was OK. They thought that if I was to go, I should be waiting to marry someone abroad. Because of my family, I could have married someone well established, some Cameroonian abroad, in France, maybe. True. But I wanted to go, see the world, do something different. I did not want to wait for a man to come and get me.

Jean and Lise both migrated in the hope of finding a place where they could be free from the family constraints that prevented them from pursuing their own wishes and goals for a future they had freely chosen.

### **3.3 The adventure and its relation to economic and political reasons for departure**

At this point, it is worthwhile pointing out that only of the four migrants I interviewed talked about their migration as an existential question in similar terms to Jean and Lise. The majority described their primary motivations to leave as a mixture of economic and political motives in which a desire for 'adventure' was just a part of other, complex decisions. Similar to Pian (2009) I found that the refugees and asylum seekers I encountered were adamant in distinguishing themselves from 'adventurers', because they did not choose to leave primarily in order to improve their social status but because they feared for their lives. However, even refugees generally acknowledge that they are 'in the adventure' when they are referring to their travels through Africa. This indicates that existential motives can exist alongside others, even in cases of forced migration. The migrants' description of the adventure complicates the idea of a clear-cut difference between 'forced' and 'voluntary' migration, which policy makers usually refer to.

I got the impression from interviews that migrants' decision to leave their home countries often came at a moment when something unexpected had happened and disrupted their lives. In fact, migration appeared to be the response to some profound uprootedness. The migration project resembled a coping strategy that helped them to deal with existential shocks. Angelique from Cameroon is a good example of a migrant who had very mixed motives for leaving, which could be described as both 'forced' and 'voluntary', but who preferred nevertheless to give me the adventure-story reason for leaving. According to her description, Angelique also comes from a fairly middle class background:

I had a good job, an apartment, a husband, a little daughter...everything was fine. But then, the business where I worked got broken into, they stole everything and killed the boss, so I got laid off. Then, a bit later, my husband left me, just from one day to the next, I think he was sick and tired of the economic difficulties. I guess he went to Gambia for work. I don't know, I never heard from him again. So I was sitting there on my

own, with my daughter to look after. It was very hard. I started to get angry at my husband because I thought: He just leaves me here to deal with everything. So I thought, I can do the same thing he can, if he can go on the adventure, I can as well! I had heard that people were going to Spain and picked oranges there. I thought: I am strong, I am young, I am not going to stay here, hands crossed and lament myself. And this is how I decided to leave my daughter with my mother and come to Spain.

In Angelique's case, migration was her solution for recuperating or maintaining a certain status as mother, employee and wife, which she had lost when her husband left her and when she lost her job. In her and other accounts I heard, the 'adventure-line' was used as a rhetorical means to give their story a more 'heroic' or exciting turn and to make it more of a deliberate choice than a 'forced' act of desperation. By turning migration into an adventure, migrants regained control over their decision, at least while talking about it. Furthermore, the adventure-reasoning made migration look like a legitimate choice and a good alternative in the face of otherwise daunting perspectives for their future lives. I found that women's motivations in particular to migrate together with their husband and/or children was often related to their fear of losing their status as mother and wife if they had stayed behind alone or fear of political persecution related to their partner's political activities (see table 4 below).

**Table 4: Women's accounts of reasons for leaving**

Important events in female migrants' accounts that influenced their decision to leave their country of origin	Number of cases
- Follow husband in order not to be left behind	9
- Violent attacks on home or possessions	8
- Separation or death of partner/husband	6
- Partner's loss of job	6
- Political persecution	3
- Death of family members	3
- Wish to increase business success	3
- Lack of choices regarding one's career and lifestyle or that of one's children	3

By contrast, in male migrants' accounts, migration was often narrated as a strategy to become someone important in public life, someone to stand out in the community as a respectable individual who was contributing to the reputation of his family and kin. They felt that achieving this status would have been impossible had they stayed. An illustration of this point is the fact that in eight cases of male migrants with whom I talked about their departure, the decision to leave coincided with moments in which men had lost business ventures, jobs or other opportunities to make money (see table 5). Tables 4 and 5 (below) are an attempt to illustrate the diversity of events that have triggered migrants' decisions to leave and which emerged during my interviews with migrants. Often, several events and reasons were combined in their accounts and not all of them wished to talk about them.

**Table 5: Men's accounts of reasons for leaving**

Important events in male migrants' accounts that influenced their decision to leave their country of origin	Number of cases
- Lack of choices regarding one's career and lifestyle	8
- Political persecution	8
- Loss of job/income	8
- Financial obligations towards family members	5
- Family problems	3
- Accumulation of debt	4
- Violent attacks on home or possessions	4
- Death of family members	3
- Violent conflict with neighbours over land access	3
- Conflict with business partner over money issues	2

Often, migrants' accounts revealed that there was not just one clear reason to leave but that the decision was taken in response to a variety of factors and events (see also Schapendonk 2011, Escoffier 2006, Collyer 2010). So rather than representing simply an economic move, in these accounts migration was legitimised by migrants as a desire to modify, maintain or attain a certain 'social location'. As Pessar and Mahler (2003) imply, social status or self-worth is often also intrinsically interwoven with economic means or political power. Therefore, existential motives for migration should not be viewed separately from economic or political ones, which are very often also

present or even the primary motives. The point I want to make, however, is that it is often the more existential aspirations for migration that give the migratory project its legitimacy from migrants' own viewpoints. In their view, they are not seeking money or freedom simply for the sake of it, but in order to improve themselves as a person or, by extension, bequeath their families and communities the opportunity for improvement. In some conversations, like that with Angelique, it became clear to me that 'going into the adventure', not the fact of actually arriving somewhere, was also a way of re-establishing themselves as worthwhile community members. Despite the difficulties, risks and uprootedness which migration involved, it was considered as a 'courageous act of determination' and better than 'staying put', doing nothing. The challenge of border crossing in a world of increasing mobility controls gives a heroic and social dimension to mobility, and as such the category of the adventurer is distinct from that of the labour migrant or the trafficked victim, for whom migration is thought to be motivated by desperation or mere economic calculations (Steiff-Fenart & Segatti 2001:x).

### **3.4 When existential reasons develop during the journey**

Existential motivations for migration also develop during the migratory project and are not always clear at the outset. Pierre's story is a good example of a case in which even a 'forced' exit from his country later turned into a very self-induced search for personal growth that resulted in his conversion from a refugee into an illegal migrant.

Pierre had to leave Congo due to his activities as a student activist at university. He first succeeded in getting through to Benin where he successfully claimed refugee status. He was very disorientated at first, and tried rather awkwardly to survive through a variety of odd jobs, until he finally started to play in a band together with some friends, mostly to make some extra money. Congolese musicians have a positive reputation in many parts of Africa and are often sought after for their particular style of music. This opened up a new world for him. He told me:

You know, I am a very timid person, really. I do not talk much. But this singing there in front of the audience, that really helped me to become

more outgoing. I started to approach people, I was able to negotiate stuff. I was wearing fashionable clothes. I started to have a lot of friends from everywhere. I learned English because I started talking to people... I don't know, music just suddenly became this very important thing for me, for my whole life. I cannot be without music ever since. And then I thought, I must make something with this, I want to do more with life than just sitting here and grow old. I want to BE a musician.

This became Pierre's main reason to migrate further, because Benin simply became too small for a successful career in music. These examples about the mixture of existential, economic and political motivations to travel demonstrate a point that Papadoupoulos and Tsianos (2007:35) make convincingly by suggesting that migrants' identities are actually constantly in the making, and they are reconfigured by the spaces and places they are travelling through and the interactions they have in these places.

Migration is not the evacuation of a place and the occupation of a different one, it is the making and remaking of one's own life on the scenery of the world. World-making. You cannot measure migration in changes of position or location, but in the increase in inclusiveness and the amplitude of its intensities. Even if migration starts sometimes as a form of dislocation (forced by poverty, patriarchal exploitation, war, famine), its target is not relocation but the active transformation of social space (Papadoupoulos & Tsianos 2007:35).

Taking 'adventure' as a starting point is revealing in how far migration is lived as a negative or positive experience by migrants, in how far it is conceived as a voluntary or a forced strategy, and why it is perceived as the best option available despite the risks it involves.

### **3.5 The long road to becoming a successful migrant**

Contrary to transit explanations of migration, migration projects do not always follow carefully considered predetermined plans. For the adventurers, migration is not limited



to a fixed destination, but rather open to opportunities that are developing during the journey (Schapendonk 2011:100).

Of the 40 migrants I have interviewed, only 23 left their country of origin with the clear aim of 'going to Europe'. Some of these, however, were women and men who followed their brother, husband or friend in order not to be left behind and did not have a clear idea of where they were going. Ten of the remaining migrants were forced migrants and the remaining seven were heading to other destinations, such as Libya or Mali. However, all of them ended up in Morocco after their initial plans for effective settlement did not work out.

**Table 6: Migrants' original destinations differentiated by gender**

<b>Original Destination</b>	<b>Europe</b>	<b>Other destinations</b>	<b>Did not know</b>
Male migrants (19)	12	3	4
Female Migrants (21)	11	4	6

**Table 7: Changes in destinations differentiated by gender**

<b>Change of desired destination during travels</b>	<b>Never</b>	<b>1 time</b>	<b>2 times</b>	<b>3 or more times</b>
Male migrants (19)	10	3	4	2
Female migrants (21)	12	5	4	

The 23 migrants who clearly wanted to go to Europe had rather vague ideas of the countries they wanted to travel to and why, where they were located on a map and how they would get there. For them, supporting findings by Kastner (2010), Alpes



(2011) and Schapendonk (2011), 'Europe' stood for an indefinite place where life was better, pastures greener, and money to be found.

These examples contradict the idea that people who end up in Morocco did so because they had planned from the start to go there. They also contradict the idea that migrants' direction of transit is always towards economically developed countries. For many, the desire to reach Europe only became stronger during the journey and after the realisation that other options were not feasible. In a way, some migrants appeared to see it as a 'last chance' to escape poverty and exclusion or to be successful in life. It was the 'last thing' on the hierarchy of a large number of countries they had been travelling through without finding what they were looking for: a decent way to live. Europe was not a clearly defined destination, but some unspecified goal that would signal the end of their migratory trajectory, the end of the search for a better life. The reasons why migrants cannot have clear ideas about where they will eventually settle is not only related to their limited mobility options but also to their ability to make the available avenues for migration work for them.

### *3.5.1 The long road to paradise*

Aspirations to migrate do not square neatly with capabilities to do so, leaving a great part of the population in developing countries relegated to a mass of would-be-migrants in forced immobility, as the works of Alpes (2011), Chu (2010), Carling (2002), and Hammer et al. (1997) demonstrate. However, it would be wrong to conclude that the outcome of states' efforts to restrict migrants' capabilities to move in Africa is resulting in a decrease in the desire to migrate. Rather, the migrants' journeys described here demonstrate that the increasing restrictions for legal migration in Africa lead above all to migrants' taking longer and more risky journeys. Most of the migrants I encountered had travelled for between six months and a year over land before finally reaching Morocco. Five had spent between three and seven years to get there.

It was evident from migrants' travel accounts that they had dismissed the possibility of migrating legally to Europe (or elsewhere) or of travelling via aeroplane. Their inability to do so was related to increasing migratory controls in developed nations, combined

with the legal and financial difficulties of accessing passports, visas and aeroplane tickets (Alpes 2011:80). Furthermore, some of the migrants I interviewed, like Jean and Lise, migrated against the explicit will of their families from whom they had received no financial or political support in planning their migratory project. As Alpes (2011) shows in her study on Cameroonian would-be-migrants, however, family connections, money and institutional support are often instrumental for ensuring success in visa and passport applications. Despite these constraints, the migrants I encountered did find a way out of their countries of origin, often aware of the risks involved, but unsure about the time the journey would take. Jacques' story exemplifies how changing migratory regimes in the past 15 years have had a tangible impact on personal migration histories. However, they by no means deterred him from continuing to be mobile.

In 1992, Jacques flew by plane from Congo to Germany. At that time he was able to access a valid passport and a tourist visa without any great problems. When he arrived at Munich airport, he filed for asylum. He stayed there for over five years before he was deported back when his claim was rejected. Once back in Congo, he set up various successful businesses with the money he had saved while working in Germany and became rather well-off. At that time, he told me, he was not thinking of migrating again. However, due to the civil war that broke out soon after he arrived, he lost all his assets in an assault on his property. Chased away from his business and house, he found himself left with nothing and had to leave the country again. This time, however, he was unable to attain a passport or a visa to Germany and had no money for an airfare. This is how he finally opted for taking the land route instead. After spending two years in Chad and several months in Nigeria, he finally travelled through the desert to Morocco where he was still waiting for a possibility to reach Germany when I met him. Jacques told me that he had never expected the trajectory to be so long. He initially thought he would be able to travel within a matter of weeks.

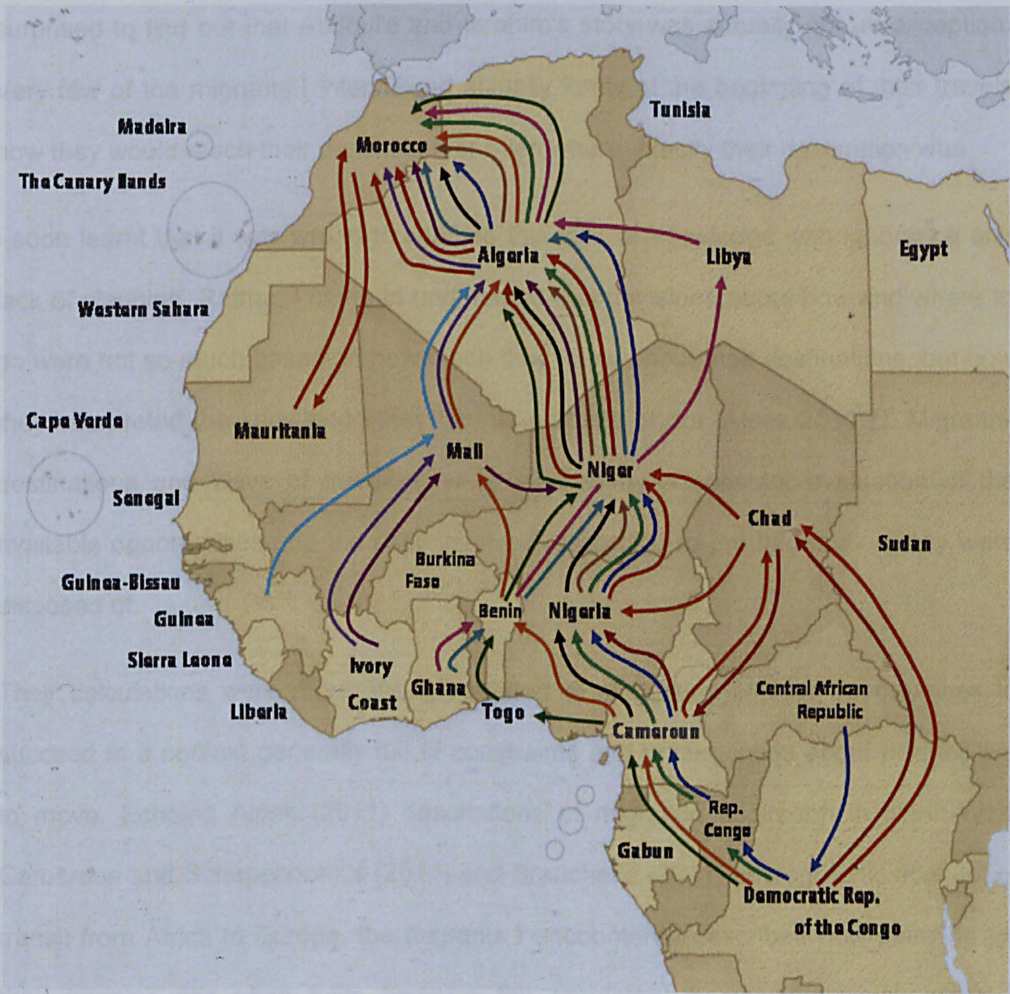
Lise, mentioned earlier on, was the only other person I met who, like Jacques, had decided to take the land route only after previous migration attempts via aeroplane had failed. She was deported from Paris airport where she had arrived directly from Congo, but without a valid passport. After her unsuccessful attempt to reach Europe, Lise had lost her job and all her savings. Eventually, her 'plan B' emerged when her family finally helped her to go by bus to Cameroon and live with an aunt there to try to build a new life. Having spent some time there without seeing any possibilities for a better future, Lise decided to pack her things and travel further, determined to reach Europe on her own.

Only five of the migrants I encountered had actually been able to fly to Morocco directly from their home countries. The others had all had travelled over land through a variety of countries before reaching Morocco. Many migrants from Congo came via land through Cameroon, Benin, Mali, Niger, Algeria, entering Morocco through Oujda. Others from Cameroon, Mali, Ivory Coast, Guinea Conakry and Nigeria used similar routes through the Saharan desert (see map 3). Almost all of them spent long periods of time in different countries before moving on.

It is interesting to question why, despite the increasingly difficult conditions for migration and ever more restrictive regimes, the migrants I encountered were able to migrate. In the following sections, I will attempt to describe how migrants move in a context of chasing high aspirations with limited capacity to do so. Other researchers have documented these migratory strategies of travel with little resources in Africa (Bazonzi 2008, Van Hear 2004, Khachani 2008, Collyer 2007, Pian 2009, Escoffier 2006). My point, however, is to show how plans for further migration were refined, changed or dismissed while migrants were living and travelling through different places. I argue that these fractured journeys (Collyer 2010) actually influenced the ways in which they made sense of their migration trajectory. The fractured nature of their journey forced them to find justifications for the ways in which their possibilities for mobility were modified and their motivations adapted to the reality surrounding them.

In particular, as they gradually lost control of the forces that govern movement and settlement, their motivations, their legal status and their migratory project changed. In this way, the person beginning the journey is not the same person during the journey or at its finish. Migrants' perceptions of themselves, the legal categories they are ascribed to, and their journey routes all alter during the process.

**Figure 3: Map of diversity of routes taken by my research participants**



Note: One colour in the map represents a route, but not the number of people I interviewed who took this road.

### 3.6 Moving through the barriers: The regulatory authorities that structure migrants' moves and stays

Ibrahim and Abdoul had arrived in Rabat six months before I first met them on the street in Takadoum. They had just turned 18 and were childhood friends who had migrated together from the same village in order to try their luck to play as

professionals in one of Morocco's football clubs. When I asked them about how they actually planned their trip, the two started laughing:

We had no idea, really. We thought that there was a big asphalted highway that would lead from Guinea straight through the desert to Morocco!

At first, I could not understand this seeming naiveté and lack of planning. I was surprised to find out that Abdoul's and Ibrahim's story was actually not an exception. Very few of the migrants I interviewed actually knew at the beginning of their travels how they would reach their destination or even where exactly their destination was.

I soon learnt that it was wrong to confuse this lack of knowledge with ignorance and lack of planning. Rather, I came to understand that decisions about how and where to go were not so much based on how much they knew about their destinations, but how they interpreted the knowledge they had as credible or not (Alpes 2011:7). Migrants' destinations and ways of travelling were marked by a constant evaluation of the available opportunities and the risks involved, according to the information they were disposed of.

Their calculations were more strongly related to evaluation of their opportunities to succeed in a context generally full of constraints and uncertainties about possibilities to move. Echoing Alpes (2011) descriptions of migration aspiration in North-West Cameroon and Schapendonk's (2011) and Branchet's (2011) ethnographic account of transit from Africa to Europe, the migrants I encountered described how planning for their journey was often futile because the regulatory frameworks which make it possible to leave and to settle do not follow clearly discernible rules. Instead, it is a matter of luck and one's position within networks that most often determine where one is finally travelling to and by which means. As a side effect of these dynamics, migrants' journeys stretched out into infinite lengths.

Building on the work of Alpes (2011:211) and Roitman (2005), I contend that multiple regulatory frameworks shape trajectories and migrant flows as well as migrants'



particular migratory strategies. The state, the market, family and migrant networks are all implicated in the modification of plans, destinations and forms of travel. The migrant experiences I describe here illustrate that these regulatory frameworks do not only play out at the outset of the migratory project or in the country of destination, but are omnipresent throughout the journey. In what follows, I will give a few examples of how the state uses the production of papers to exert control over migrants' movements, and how this is experienced as an uncontrollable challenge for migrants during their trajectory.

### *3.6.1 The state and production of papers*

Visa regulations within Africa are a case in point. Many West African nationals who are members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)<sup>13</sup> are visa exempt from travel into neighbouring countries. By contrast, Congolese and Cameroonians, for example, do need visas to enter ECOWAS countries. Apart from Senegalese, Malians, Ivory Coast and Nigerian nationals, almost all other African nationals need visas to enter Morocco legally. This in itself determined the fact that some migrants travelled legally for part of their journey but without documents on another.

Often, migrants did not know about the particular visa restrictions in the countries they were travelling through. As visas can normally only be solicited in the country of origin, it is difficult to continue regular travel if one is already on the way. Furthermore, visas are only possible to obtain if one is able to produce a valid passport. While it appears that it should be easy to apply for a passport if one is citizen of a state, in reality, this is not always the case, at least not for the migrants I encountered. Apart from the obvious problems that refugees face with regards to travel documents, passports can be also a difficult issue for 'normal' migrants. Peter from Nigeria told me about his particular problems:

When I left, I had a passport, a real good Nigerian passport. Cost me a lot of money. You see, you have to bribe people, because otherwise you

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<sup>13</sup> ECOWAS is composed of 15 states: Benin, Burkina, Cabo Verde, Ivory Coast, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo

wait forever to get one. But then, when I came to Niger, I was told that I needed a Malian passport to cross over the border to Algeria because I didn't have a visa in mine. But as I was already in Niger, I couldn't go back. So, the people offered me to take my passport in exchange for a Malian one. But in Algeria, the police got me and they said it was a false passport, and this is why they put me in prison.

For Peter, the fact that his Malian passport was 'false' and 'irregular' made little sense, considering that he had acquired his own, 'legal' passport by bribing an official. For him, both visas and passports were requirements that were obtainable through payment so the distinction between what was regular and irregular travel in terms of documents became blurred. Papers were regulated by access to resources and people, and not so much through laws and regulations.

Pierre, who I mentioned earlier on, actually received refugee status upon his arrival in Benin. However, when he decided to travel further to Morocco, he had to do so irregularly, because his status did not allow him to travel unauthorised. When he arrived in Morocco and attempted to renew his asylum claim on the basis of his prior status in Benin, he was told by good willing advisors not to do so. Instead, he was advised to lie and pretend that he had never actually had a status at all and that this was his first asylum claim. Using this strategy, Pierre was eventually granted refugee status. Had he been honest about his prior status in Benin, it is most likely that he would not have been recognised in Morocco as a refugee. I met three other refugees in the same situation as Pierre, two of whom had not been able to claim asylum in Morocco a second time because they had admitted to having attained asylum status in a different African country.

Needless to say that while Pierre could actually refer back to some traumatic event in his life that made his migratory project seem 'legitimate' to the state in Benin and in Morocco, other migrants, such as Jean and Lise, were not able to construct themselves as 'legitimate' migrants in the same way. They were, and remained for most parts of their journey, illegal trespassers in the eyes of the law. The ways in

which refugee status was accorded to some and not to others was a mystery to most migrants I met. They did not understand why certain life stories were deemed to accord refugee status while others were rendered illegitimate. In a conversation about this, Marlene and Bia were talking about the senselessness of these categories. Marlene was saying:

Look at us, we are both from Congo, we are both in a similar situation: small children, no husband. Poverty. Difficult life. And yet, Bia has refugee status because she has seen the war. I am from a region where there were no bullets, but there was hunger. So I am a refugee of hunger. That should be counted as refugee as well.

Yann, who had been granted refugee status in Morocco explained to me:

They didn't really ask me anything. I mean, I only explained such a tiny little bit of what I went through. Actually, I could save 90% of my life story and sell it to other migrants. On the ground of what I have experienced, there could be at least seven refugees recognised for status (laughs).

### *3.6.2 The market: Public transport, bribes and money*

It is not only the papers of visas and passports and migration status that are framing mobility and directions of travel. Other papers, such as tickets for public transport, are also a problem which impact not only the time people spend in places but also how and where they are able to travel. In certain parts of their journey, like in Niger, means of transport are scarce and expensive. This is sometimes because there is limited access to suitable roads for motor vehicles, because minefields from former armed conflicts in the area make journeys dangerous and complicated, or both. (Branchet 2011). As migrants often have no clear idea about where to go and which alternatives exist, they often rely on drivers and local knowledge. There are many instances in which bribes must be paid to police officials, drivers, border officials, informants and others. Jean told me that this actually characterised his passage through Niger:



Once you get into Niger, everyone is corrupt. The taxi drivers, the bus drivers, everyone. Even the public bus company is corrupt. They work together with the police. So you pay a lot of money to get to the Algerian border. They have just made a business out of the people that want to travel to Algeria.

The example mentioned above show that the criteria by which illegal and legal movement is defined by states and other regulatory agencies in the market, are subject to changing political priorities (Anderson forthcoming) and often even states are implicated in fraud while policing them (Alpes 2011). This makes it particularly difficult for migrants to decipher and understand the rules attached to movement and settlement during their journey through Africa. In fact, this insight stands awkwardly in opposition to the view that migrants are travelling 'illegally' towards Morocco because it challenges the basis upon which legally and illegal movements are produced by states and markets, rather than by migrants themselves.

### *3.6.3 Families, friends and other mediators*

In such circumstances, migrants often need recourse to connections, mediators or friends and family who provide them with the right information, money or contacts in order to access the necessary 'papers' or resources for the next leg of their journey (Alpes 2011, Schapendonk 2011, Collyer 2007, Escoffier 2006, Grillo 2007, Riccio 2001). But families, brokers and smuggling networks can also create their own regulations for onward travel, which can lead to changes in direction and to a loss of control over the journey. Often, migrants have to ask for help from others in order to find their way and continue their journey. Friendships grow and travel companions are found in these extreme circumstances. After Jean arrived in Chad by bus from Cameroon, he was very lucky to fall into the hands of a particularly nice individual who marked his entire journey thereafter, as he told me:

When I arrived in Chad I did not know what to do. I went to a hotel and asked the owner where I could go and get a bus to Niger or Algeria. He laughed at me and told me that I had to go back to Nigeria and from there

to Niger, that there was no direct connection to Niger from Ndjamena. I was quite depressed. At the bus station, I met this Nigerian student, a girl, who was going to University in Ndjamena. She was going back to see her parents in Nigeria and she told me simply to come with her to her parents' home! I went with her and stayed in her house for 6 weeks. Then, she accompanied me to Kano and from there, I took the bus to Niger. I will never forget her. I have lost her number, I cannot contact her anymore... but she was such a kind person. I have never, never met anyone like her again. Who knows where I would have ended up without her?

Jean was aware that this particular encounter was in fact very significant and saved him from the kind of trouble many other migrants go through when arriving in foreign places without knowledge of the future travel possibilities.

Eleven of the women I encountered travelled with male companions who were either their husbands or 'travel husbands' (Kastner 2010, Alpes 2011), at least some parts of the way. According to their accounts, this provided them with the necessary protection and help they needed in order to keep on moving. While I would not say that these women necessarily always felt better protected or helped if they travelled accompanied, it did *legitimise* their travelling in their own eyes. For example, in five cases, the women explained to me that their husband could not protect them from being attacked or burgled along the way. Four women also told me that they had to pay for the majority of the trip with their own money. In all cases, it appeared that it was usually their husband/travel companion who made the decisions about where and when they were leaving for the next destination and arranged the onward trip. But despite this lack of autonomy, it felt to me that by adopting the role of the female in need of protection, women could justify their need for male company and support. Paradoxically, this also helped them to maintain and/or increase their social status, and therefore maintain a certain control over their migratory trajectory as a socially acceptable strategy (Alpes 2011). It often meant, however, that women who travelled

in this way did not make a choice as to where they wanted to travel to, but rather followed their husband or companion.

Families are important in facilitating access to papers and connections in another way. In Lise's case, it was her sister in France who sponsored her first (failed) air-trip to Paris and her aunt in Cameroon who determined her first destination when travelling over land the second time. Most of the migrants I knew were dependent on some kind of remittances from their family members during their time in Morocco or while they were travelling in order to be able to continue their journey.<sup>14</sup> Family members, however, are not always beneficial and trustworthy individuals who help migrants to succeed; they also can shape migratory trajectories in unexpected ways. In two cases I witnessed, for example, family members were involved in deceit and exploitation. Two young men from Guinea who were friends of Ibrahim and Abdoul (mentioned earlier), had been promised a football contract in a professional team in exchange for a fee by a family member who was already in Morocco. One of the young boys went first to Mauritania to work as a domestic servant for an entire year to get the money together before embarking on his trip to Morocco. However, when they arrived in the country, the contract never materialised and the family member had vanished with their money.

#### 3.6.4 *Ghettos*

More often than not, however, it is not strangers or family members that migrants have to rely on but fellow migrants they encounter on the way. This is increasingly the case the further away they are moving from their own countries of origin. In general, migrants have to submit to the rules of intermediaries who help them to access travel documents, find work or shelter and pay for these services and not all of them have the best interest of migrants in mind when they offer their services to them (Schapendonk 2011, Escoffier 2006, Branchet 2011). Silvester, a migrant from Ghana, put it even more bluntly:

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<sup>14</sup> This is also corroborated by other research (Collyer 2007, Branchet 2011, Schapendonk 2011, Pian 2009).

When you travel, you pay. You pay all the time, for every little thing you can't do yourself. And there are many things you cannot do yourself. You need help from other people. That's the way it is. So you pay or you stay!

Many migrants I talked to had to count on 'migrant ghettos' during their journeys at some point or another in order to get help and information. These groups normally include fellow migrants that are also "on the road" and organise further legs of the journey, provide accommodation for new arrivals and help them in the quest for work. They are, however, not always best understood as supportive or altruistic structures for compatriots in a foreign land. Instead, in ghettos migrants often exploit migrants. Jene (2010), who I met in Morocco, describes these networks in his autobiographical account of his trip from Cameroon to Chad:

He crossed the frontier between Cameroon and Chad on his motorbike, without any controls. The strangers appeared little welcoming to him. Nevertheless, he managed to find a place where some other compatriots were renting rooms. He was guided to a bar where two women ask him to choose between the Congolese ghetto and a room to rent. Alain had never heard of a "ghetto" and was perplexed. He thought of a structured organisation, planned by the embassy to welcome the nationals. Therefore, he accepts to be brought there. He find himself in a shed behind the bar and sees six men, without shirt, smoking cigarettes. One of them welcomes him: Don't be afraid, I am the boss here, welcome in Chad. Which city do you come from? You will pay me 2000 franc to stay here some time, this is what we call the Right of the ghetto. How does your country do? Your roads, are they now asphalted? ...I don't know a lot about this damn country any longer. ... Ah, you are travelling to Europe! Well, if you have the money, we will provide you the necessary papers. You will arrive in Libya and you can work there some months.

The rest depends on you. You can then continue to Italy or you return to your country with your money (Jene 2010: 57)<sup>15</sup>

### **3.7 Losing control in the desert**

While the previous sections have attempted to show how migrants retain certain control over their migration trajectories and their dealings with the different regulatory forces that shape them, the further they travel away from support networks such as families and friends, the more they lose control over the forces which structure their mobility.

Many of my interviewees found that the relative control they had over the timing and type of their migratory strategy diminished as they travelled through the Sahara from Niger, over Algeria to Morocco. Most migrants lose complete control over where they end up when they place themselves in the hands of smugglers. This is in part because travel through the desert is the only existing means to reach Morocco or Libya by land. The non-existence of public transport infrastructure and the fact that migration controls in Algeria and Libya have been tightening since 2005 make independent travel almost impossible (Branchet 2011). In this context, Jean continues to tell me about his trip from Niger to Algeria:

Half of the trip I didn't even know where I was, because I was just put into cars and from there to a house and the next day I was told I had to pay again and was brought to a different place and from there again somewhere else... I thought we had crossed the border to Algeria but soon found out that I was still in Niger.

My interview data suggests that migrants experience most difficulties in their migratory project in the desert, as this part of the journey is heavily controlled by smuggling rings and is therefore expensive and very strictly organised according to very male dominated power hierarchies in which single women migrants are particularly vulnerable and subordinated to male control. Migrants pay middlemen who then guide them to migrant houses in different towns in the desert, where they have to wait (often

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<sup>15</sup> My translation from the French original text

crammed together in small rooms) until they can continue the journey or where they have to work until they can pay for the next part of the journey (Branchet 2011, Schapendonk 2011, Escoffier 2006). Even Lise who until then had been able to migrate relatively autonomously because of financial support from home, recalls traumatic experiences of being stuck in a desert town, without any money to continue the journey and forced to provide sexual services to the smugglers she was dependent upon:

You just want to get away from all these men,... they are everywhere, they sleep in the same room, they eat from the same plate, ....So you do whatever to get away from there. So you pay with what you have got, with your body, anything. You clean their mess. You do things you would never imagine yourself to be doing elsewhere.

Research has documented how women and children are often sexually abused or forced to work in order to pay for the next part of the trip (Keynaert et al., 2008). Often, they engage in prostitution in order to make the necessary money to continue the trip through the desert (Noel 2007, Keynaert et al. 2008, Kastner 2010). This is particularly likely if they are travelling alone, or are separated from their male travel companions.

Jules and Sara, a couple from Central African Republic also recall that they tried to avoid separation from each other and their child at all costs, because they knew that a frequent strategy employed by smugglers was to extort money from couples and single women travelling with children in this way. Almost all migrants I talked to evoke their trip through the desert as the most horrible migratory experience. Many migrants I encountered were so traumatised by the memories of it that they did not want to talk about it.

### **3.8 Trafficking, smuggling and regulatory authorities**

According to the international treaties<sup>16</sup> and most international policy documents, the practices described above would probably be considered as both smuggling and

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<sup>16</sup> These are the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organized

trafficking. According to these definitions, people who are forced against their will to cross borders and who are coerced to work in exploitative conditions in the destination country are considered to be trafficked and those who wilfully and voluntarily establish a commercial transaction with others in order to be brought by irregular means into a country are supposed to have been smuggled in (Gallagher 2002). One could therefore affirm that while they are in the desert, all migrants, irrespective of their prior trajectories, their gender or their class, and their former migratory status, are converted into 'victims of trafficking' because for the most part, they do not know where they are, where they are going or how to get there. Equally, all of them could qualify as being smuggled, because they pay for their transport, their passports and their guides in order to reach the other end of the border. However, the processes I have described above and by which the migrants I encountered had to move around, display a complicated interplay between moments of 'forced' and 'voluntary' movements as well as 'legal' and 'illegal' stays and crossings. It is therefore difficult to establish an exact cut-off point in which legal migration ends, trafficking starts or smuggling begins. It is also difficult to pinpoint with clarity which actors are effectively 'legalising' which types of movement and vice versa. It is difficult to say at which point 'illegality' actually begins.

Contrary to the assumptions conventional trafficking discourse tends towards, it is not only migrant ghettos and smuggling networks that are responsible for inhumane and exploitative conditions in the desert and migrants' irregular forms of movement. According to the accounts I heard, the Algerian police had a great deal to contribute as well. Again Jean's story in the desert is illustrative of the ways in which state security forces can become implicated in human smuggling.

One day, when we were on the truck, the chief told us to get down, to start walking. We all had to get off the truck and had to start walking. He told us, you just go, the town is 14km away, you just walk along this road.

And we walked. We had almost no water left. It was getting dark. And

then, of course, the Algerian police got us. They pillaged everything, they took everything we had, they even took our passports and they raped the women. They took us to prison. I stayed there for six weeks. I remember that I got my last money from selling a pair of jeans that I had left to one of the guards. When I got out, they deported us back to another town in the desert. Really far away, there was nothing. No possibility to get work or transport back. I had to stay there six months until I was able to reunite the necessary money to travel back to Maghnia with one of the trucks that supplied the military with food.

The fact that Jean was eventually able to continue his trip through the help of military related transport on a truck that took him back to a place where he could reunite with smuggler networks, is a striking example of the ways in which 'legal' and 'illegal' is a matter of legal and normative conventions. Alpes (2011:138) is right to point out that the ways in which states establish legitimate and illegitimate types of mediation for documents is productive of the very notion of the state and the law. It creates a narrative of legality that implies that 'the law' is guaranteed to be transparent and fair and thus by extension supposedly unmediated and external to monetary logic. That the law is not always universally applicable, transparent and fair, but indeed arbitrary and place and time dependent is exemplified by the fact that the extent to which migrants are forced to rely on mediation outside state institutions to access papers, money, work or transport is actually dependent on the places they are travelling through. So while it appears that in certain places the structural impediments to legal migration are extremely high, there are other spaces and places in which migrants are able to access the necessary means for mobility – even through state mediated institutions. To get credible information about how to work around and with existing rules and regulatory authorities was therefore key for the migrants I encountered. This turned out to be the major challenge for many, not only in the moment of departure but during the whole trajectory.

When migrants reach Morocco having travelled through the desert in such conditions, they are usually not the same people they were when they set out in their countries of



origin. All of the migrants I talked to said that they had lost all their money during the journey, were often in a bad physical state and generally frightened and exhausted. Women had often been physically abused and separated from their travel companions. Ten people have told me that they witnessed friends or family members and children dying along the way. At this point, their 'adventure' becomes a nightmare and they are more than aware of the overwhelming forces of migration control. In all travel accounts I received from migrants, the desert route was described as a turning point in their experience of migration and a moment in which they were fearful for their lives. The desert had converted them all into destitute and vulnerable individuals with few options concerning their future migration project.

### **3.9 Changing destinations – changing social location**

In this section I want to dwell on the importance of immobility during migrants' trajectories. Rather than settlement, moments of immobility were used by migrants to orientate their social location in relation to their opportunities for movement. The constant change of destination also reflects migrants' constant struggle to adapt to the regulatory authorities that structure successful movement and stay.

Mirroring the ways in which the state, the market and social networks legally and normatively construct migrants on the basis of how and why they move, the figure of the citizen is a political and legal construct, based around how and why people settle and participate in a particular community (Anderson 2012). As migrants or citizens, people's ability to take part in a society is therefore dependent on a range of political, legal, economic and also social factors that determine one's social location with regards to movement and settlement. Roitman (2005) and Hibou (1999) show, for example, how in Africa, through the fragile position of the state, informal networks and economies are gaining increasing importance as regulatory authorities for citizenship. However, Roitman (2005) in particular argues that these alternative regulatory authorities are not replacing the state in questions of citizenship. Rather, they are working alongside it, perpetuating often exploitative relationships and hierarchies, which perform to impede some people's ability to access citizenship altogether (Roitman 2005). Migrants are exposed to these unequal power relationships, which

inhibit them settling in the places they are travelling through as rightful citizens, on their way through different countries.

Almost all the migrants I encountered in Morocco had tried to find a place to build lives in one or more of the countries they had travelled through. Sebastien is a good example of a person whose trajectory is marked by a constant search for a place to settle. He attempted several times to find a suitable 'social location' within the hierarchies of power that he encountered in the countries he travelled to, without success. A chemistry graduate who originally fled Congo after being politically persecuted, Sebastien first tried to establish himself in Cameroon. He managed to get a residency permit for a year, but later was unable to renew it. It was difficult for him to find a satisfactory job under these circumstances. He therefore decided to move to Nigeria where he stayed for two years, making whiskey without a licence. He used his chemistry skills to make high quality alcohol and earned a reasonable salary from it. While he was in Nigeria, he learnt English and made considerable efforts to get a job in the chemical industry because he considered staying in Nigeria for good. Everything was going fine until a group of competitors in the whiskey business threatened to denounce him at the immigration office for irregular stay and brewing without a licence. As they had the necessary contacts to do this while he did not, he felt compelled to travel further. He told me:

You know, if I had known people in Nigeria who could have protected me, maybe I would have stayed. But I knew that with these people, the whiskey people, it was better not to mess with. I had no chance. They were influential people, they had connections.

Even for people like Sebastien, who is relatively well-educated, skilful and without dependents, migration towards Morocco became the only feasible alternative after several failed attempts to become a 'rightful citizen' elsewhere. It is easy to imagine that people like Bia who travelled with her two children from Congo where she had been raped and victimised by combatants, are far less likely to overcome the barriers to citizenship:

I don't even remember all the countries I have been travelling through. I did not stay anywhere for long, because there was nowhere to stay. Most of the time, I have been thinking of surviving. Simply surviving. I did not go to see the UNHCR, I did not even know what the UNHCR was. I was just trying to make it to the next day.

Unlike Sebastien but in common with many of the other women I met in Morocco, Bia could not count on formal qualifications or skills that could have facilitated her entry into a comfortable life in another African country. Instead, she told me that for the most part she was dependent on financial support from male travel companions and work in prostitution. Sebastien and Bia had no access to the vital informal networks that dominate life and survival strategies in so many parts of Africa today (Roitman 2005, Hibou 2004). Both were outsiders in countries in which neither the state nor other 'institutions' protect and cater for the rights of vulnerable people or migrants at all.

While some migrants are able to use their role as 'foreigner', 'woman' or 'worker' to fit into the receiving society, in many circumstances, by doing so, they are relegated to marginal extraterritorial spaces in these countries, from which they can only escape through onward migration. These spaces are largely the by-product of tightening migration control policies that on the one hand regulate migration status, and, on the other, heighten the power of other, non-state regulatory authorities of settlement when migrants cannot access migration status (Streiff-Fenart & Segatti 2011). The problem of finding a decent way to live in other African countries is not only connected to the lack of economic opportunities but also to the limited control migrants have over the regulatory authorities which structure citizenship.

### **3.10 Conclusion: What makes a 'transit migrant'?**

In this chapter I have attempted to understand why the migrants I encountered in Morocco persisted in migrating despite their limited capacities to do so. The examples I have given show that migrants' motivations to leave their country are often linked with a desire to change their social status, and cannot be reduced to simple economic

or political push factors. It is therefore misleading to describe Sub-Saharan African migrants in Morocco as labour migrants with the desire to reach the European Union.

Furthermore, the data in this chapter has shown that migrants do not conceive of their travels as illegitimate or criminal acts of trespassing. They neither conceive of themselves necessarily as 'trafficked victims' or 'smuggled' beings. Instead, migrants talk about their travels in ways that demonstrate that the regulatory authorities which shape migration opportunities are in fact multiple (Alpes 2011). State institutions sometimes overlap and compete with informal economic agents such as migration brokers, smuggling networks and friends and family ties in the regulation of migrants' trajectories and ways of travelling. All of them shape the different mechanisms through which migration becomes possible and is made a 'legitimate' form of travel. Migrants have to navigate their ways through these diverse legal, economic and social boundaries to movement and settlement. As migration controls have become increasingly severe in Africa and Europe in the last two decades, it is increasingly necessary for migrants to depend on informal networks, either social or economic, to access papers, travel permits, money and protection during their journey. These networks or informal regulatory authorities, as they may well be called, are omnipresent in Africa in a variety of realms of life and have come to increasingly define people's livelihoods. This is in part the consequence of an increasing decline of state power due to privatisation and conflict in many countries in Africa (Hibou 2004, Roitman 2005). Migrants therefore do not question such regulatory authorities as legitimate or illegitimate but rather perceive them as facts of life and part of their daily reality (Alpes 2011).

According to their social location, their gender and their class, migrants have more or less control over these processes and use different strategies to overcome possible barriers to mobility and settlement. But migrants' abilities and opportunities to migrate (Carling 2002) are changing during their trajectory, and are in fact, dynamic. Both migrants' social location with respect to mobility as well as the opportunities they have to realise their aspirations are shaped by the configuration of power relations between different regulatory authorities in places and over time (Massey 1999). Therefore, for

many migrants it is necessary to spend increasingly longer periods of time in different countries in order to finance and organise the next leg of the journey or to compensate for their limited access to social relations and networks that could mediate access to mobility for them.

In places where state regulation is absent, and informal economic systems prevail, not only is migration difficult but long-term settlement is too. The cases of the migrants I have shown here demonstrate how many attempt to stay in countries along the way only to discover that their dream of a better life can not be fulfilled because the rules and norms of citizenship and state protections did not apply for them. Onward mobility becomes a necessity rather than a choice, and settlement is no longer a rational or logical option. Europe as a destination is therefore seen more as a last resort than a clearly envisioned goal for most of the migrants I encountered. Shapendonk (2011:112) is right to argue that both temporal and spacial aspects of migrants' trajectories determine moving aspirations and capabilities, and contradict the idea of migration as a single shift from origin to destination.

For this reason also, I agree with Collyer (2010) that it is easy to mistake the motivations of migrants engaged in 'fragmented journeys', as he calls them, if only the most recent stage of their trajectory is considered. In order to be able to understand the actions of these migrants and their attitude towards life in Morocco and their aspirations for the future, one must include those aspects that defined them in the past and still resonate with them in the present (Emirbayer & Mische 1998). The reasons for their current situation can only be understood by a longer-term perspective of the previous stages of their journey. In short, answering the question: Who are the migrants in Morocco? requires drawing out a spacial-temporal link between migrants' situation in Morocco and their particular journey to arrive there.

In neo-classical migration theory, the migratory trajectory is often understood as a linear process from A to B, characterised by a relatively short and time-limited 'phase' of travelling and a definite period of 'settlement' in the new, host country. Often, this also entails a view of migration as a 'modernizing process' (Senay 2009), in which a

one-way movement ends with settlement, leaving behind 'underdeveloped selves' in order to become 'better ones'. In this discourse, the migrant becomes the signifier of a particular conceptualisation of mobility: the individualised subject laboriously calculating the cost-benefit ratio of his/her trip and then starting an itinerary with fixed points of departure and arrival (Papadopoulos & Tsianos 2007). This view on migration is also implicit in neoliberal descriptions of globalisation as 'time-space compression' (Harvey 1989), in which mobility is usually depicted as unfettered and as an increasingly universal feature of the 'modern' world we live in. According to these views, access to mobility is not mediated by power differentials, but governed by individual interests and needs and generally open to everyone, notwithstanding their social position. This is the 'modern man'. The fragmented journeys of the migrants in question here complicate this picture. They suggest that migration might be better understood as a dynamic journey, which is virtually continual over a lifetime. In the process, migrants change who they are, what they are and who they want to be but also where they want to go. Also, crucially, they move in and out of the statist categories that are used to classify different groups of migrants as either legal or illegal, voluntary or forced, trafficked or smuggled.

Furthermore, the examples I have given indicate that this journey is not the same for everyone and instead of making people richer, happier and more powerful, it can also render them powerless and dependent upon others. Papadopoulos and Tsianos (2007) add to this that migrants are also simultaneously changing the environment around them through and during the migration process.

Migration is like big waves, they never appear precisely where they are expected, their arrival can never be predicted exactly, but they always come, they have a magnitude to reorder the whole given geography of a seashore, the sandbanks, the seabed, the maritime animals and plants, the rocks, the beach. (Papadopoulos & Tsianos 2007:3)

An acknowledgement of this remaking of motivations, identities and the structural environment around them, challenges the usefulness of reified and static migration

categories for controlling, regulating and channelling individual people's movements and settlement through state policies. It questions the use of time as 'eternal' in migrant categories such as illegal/legal, forced/voluntary, trafficked/smuggled because people are constantly shifting statuses. Furthermore, people can occupy more than one category at a time, when they are, for example, both smuggled and seeking asylum. They are also often categorised differently in different places, when a recognised refugee in Burundi becomes an irregular migrant as soon as he/she arrives in Morocco. Therefore, inherent in the use of these kinds of classifications is a certain violence and objectification which stems from the desire to fix and pin down what is actually fluid and profoundly human.

By the time migrants reach Morocco they are no longer at the same point at which they departed. Their expectations of being able to become someone through migration are still not realised. They are still searching but now they have lost the relative control they once had over their journey. After their journey through the desert migration has become a negative experience for most of them. However, as the next chapter will explain in more detail, this is just the starting point of a long period of forced immobility in which they are effectively stuck in a country against their will.

# **Chapter 4: Migrants in Morocco - The policy context of forced immobility**

## **4.0 Introduction**

While the previous chapter analysed how migrants navigate more or less successfully the multiple obstacles to mobility on their way to Europe and change who they are in the process, in this chapter, I demonstrate how migrants become increasingly unable to confront the particular powerful state mechanisms of migration control once they arrive in Morocco. This process leads to a situation in which they become effectively 'non-persons' before the law and are forced to live in the big cities, mostly in marginal positions in relation to the Moroccan host population.

The chapter focuses on the factors that led to such a situation by analysing policy developments in the European Union and Morocco in recent years. In order to do this, I introduce some of the European Union's legislative efforts, which convert Sub-Saharan African migrants into irregular and economic migrants and show how this situation is used by policy makers to justify containment policies inside and outside the Moroccan territory. From there, I move on to analyse the local consequences of these international policy measures. I concentrate on describing how migrants are left in a sort of legal limbo in Morocco, from where they have no place from which to claim rights but are vulnerable to potential persecution by both state and non-state actors. I compare the situation to that of Agamben's (1998) analysis of the state of exception. The conclusion discusses how the situation in Morocco distinguishes itself from migrants' previous stays in other African countries by its consistent and effective control of migrants by the state, which inhibits migrants from either moving on, or settling there.

## **4.1 Arriving in Morocco**

As suggested in the previous chapter, apart from five migrants who arrived by plane, all the other migrants I encountered had entered Morocco by land via the Saharan desert and the officially closed Moroccan-Algerian border, close to Oujda, a Moroccan



costal town on the Mediterranean sea<sup>17</sup> (See Figure 1 in Chapter 2). Upon arrival in Oujda, migrants are usually temporarily housed in 'tranquilos', half abandoned houses, and in improvised camps in the vicinity of Oujda, as well as in the University campus (Schapendonk 2011). From there, they gradually attempt to make their way to Rabat or Casablanca.

In 1999, when I first came into contact with the migration issue, migrants waited in the camps around Oujda or in similar hiding places in the forests around Ceuta, Melilla and Tanger for relatively short periods until they secured a place on one of the 'pateras'<sup>18</sup> that departed from different points at the northern Moroccan coast to the Spanish mainland. Alternatively, they tried to enter the Spanish enclaves of Melilla and Ceuta from the Moroccan mainland by hiding in trucks and other vehicles that crossed the land border to these towns (Wender 2004, Kastner 2010, Collyer 2007).

This situation changed in subsequent years, when increased border controls in the Strait of Gibraltar and on the Melilla and Ceuta borders made it more difficult to cross to the Spanish mainland and migrants had to wait for ever longer periods for an opportunity to arise. At the same time, Moroccan police were increasingly persecuting migrants in the camps. Police would often enter the camps to destroy migrants' tents and belongings (Jene 2010). As a consequence of the longer 'waits' and difficult living conditions in the camps, migrants started to move towards the cities of Rabat and Casablanca where they could retain a certain anonymity and protect themselves more easily from police persecution. Furthermore, these cities provide some, albeit precarious, work opportunities within their large, informal economies. Additionally, in Rabat and Casablanca, migrants could count on informal migrant networks, churches and mosques, NGOs, and international organisations such as the UNHCR or IOM, as well as embassies and consulates for help and assistance. The migrants I

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<sup>17</sup> The borders between Morocco and Algeria have been officially closed since 1994 when the Moroccan government took a unilateral decision to close the border following terrorist attacks in Marrakech, which, according to the Moroccan government, had been perpetrated by the Algerian secret services.

<sup>18</sup> Patera is an originally spanish word for the small fisherboats or zodiacs that bring migrants over the Strait of Gibraltar to the Spanish mainland. It is used all over Morocco to refer to boats that transport migrants.

encountered told me that, when they arrived in Oujda, they soon realised that it was almost impossible to continue directly towards Spain. Jean told me:

You know, when I arrived in Oujda, I was totally broke. I had spent every single bit of my money, and there was no possibility to work in the camps. I didn't have the money I needed to pay for the trip to Spain. I knew it would take me a time to get that money and everybody who is in the camps knows that. You only stay if you have someone who sponsors you to leave immediately.

Most migrants I encountered were in a similar situation to Jean. When they arrived, they were exhausted, without resources and generally just happy to have survived the desert. Most of them had experienced violent encounters with bandits, Algerian soldiers or police in the desert and were afraid to be attacked again. The conditions for children in the camps are particularly difficult and according to information I gained from an international medical organisation that operates in the camps, respiratory diseases and diarrhoea are frequent and particularly affected women and small children. Apart from seeking help from this organisation, there is no possibility for migrants to access health services. For all these reasons, migrants make their way to the cities as soon as they are able to do so. When I started my fieldwork in 2009, NGOs estimated that in Rabat alone there lived between 3000 and 8000 Sub-Saharan African migrants and in Casablanca another 1000-3000, whereas in the camps around Oujda, Tanger, Ceuta and Melilla there were between 200-500 migrants. The camps had effectively become temporary hubs, where only those who either had already secured a place on a boat or else were attempting to cross by their own means (by swimming to Ceuta or by crossing with false papers) would stay.

From Oujda, migrants travel individually, either by bus, train or auto stop. But even moving on public transport can be a difficult business. While the migrant I mentioned in the introduction freely used buses and other public transport, in recent years, migrants' phenotype prevented Sub-Saharan African migrants from using public transport due to the fear of being apprehended and put into prison. The director of one

medical organisation working with migrants in Oujda told me about the difficulties they can face when moving from one place to another in Morocco:

When the migrants arrive in Morocco, they need to take the train or the bus to get to Rabat or Fez where they get into contact with people that can help them to find a place to stay. Well, when you arrive in Oujda at the station, there is always lots of police controls now. There is no way a Sub-Saharan African can take a train there or board a bus. Every time we have to take one with us to a hospital or if we send our mediator, we have to accompany them. As a black person, you are immediately put into prison. You have to walk to get out of town. They do not want them to move to the cities. They want to keep them there.

Because of this and their desperate economic situation, some migrants have told me that they walked to Rabat, a distance of over 500km. Some also attempted to cover some part of the distance by waiting outside the train stations and jumping on the already moving trains, clinging to them from the outside in order not to be apprehended by train inspectors. Médecins sans Frontières (MSF 2005) has documented how migrants are often severely injured when falling off trains and I myself have met two migrants whose legs had been amputated after they fell off the train because train inspectors forced them to let go of the bars they were hanging onto.

#### **4.2 Shifting power relations in regulatory authorities**

As already indicated in the introduction, all of my interviewees were undocumented migrants in Morocco by the time I met them. I include in this number the nine recognised refugees amongst them, because while they had UNHCR status, they had not been recognised by the Moroccan government as refugees. They had no right to work in Morocco and no legal residence permit. While this situation may be similar to that experienced by migrants in other African countries during their travels, people were adamant that the situation in Morocco was different. Pierre explained to me the difference between Morocco and other countries he had been travelling through:

Yes, the problem with work and papers, you have everywhere. But here, there is so much violence. There is violence between migrants, there is violence between migrants and Moroccans. And there is the police. Too much violence. And work is so difficult to get. In Algeria, for example, you get work a lot easier.

It is interesting that migrants generally accepted that the situation in Morocco was difficult, but that they also tended to acknowledge that they were less exposed to police persecution than in Algeria. Sandrine from Congo, for example, explained to me:

In Algeria, I even was able to get work as a domestic sometimes. Here in Morocco I can't. Nobody takes Blacks. Also medication was easier. It is a lot less expensive over there to buy medication. But the police is fierce over there. If they get you, you better pray. They rape the women, they take your money. Also, they are everywhere. Here, if you stay calm, if you don't make trouble, they leave you alone. You just don't have to go close to the borders, you just make sure you do not move a lot around the country. You have to stay put. Then, you are fine.

At first sight, this appears to be a contradiction. On the one hand, police inhibit people from moving to the cities or living in the camps, but on the other hand they do not constitute a persistent threat to migrants once they are in the cities. However, a closer look at the situation reveals a certain logic. As I will demonstrate in the remainder of the chapter, the strategy of 'city confinement' enables the Moroccan state to retain control over migrants' movements, and in fact 'cages' them by curtailing their capacity to either move or settle. In the following sections, I will investigate how this situation developed over the last decade. It is related to Morocco's particular migration policy and the European Union's involvement, which create a slightly different situation to those of other African countries migrants have travelled through on their way to Morocco. In order to do this, I will rely on Alpes (2011:212) approach to illustrate how

interactions and frictions between different actors help to explain how the cost of migration is produced.

Alpes' (2011) argument is that states use different strategies in trying to monopolise and thus legitimise state authority over migration control. To do so, state authorities need to distinguish themselves from other authorities. In migration management, they do so by constructing artificial boundaries between legitimate and illegitimate powers of states, market and families in controlling and facilitating migration. So states construct certain forms of migration as 'smuggling' or 'trafficking' while others are considered legitimate. As we have seen in the previous chapter, Alpes (2011) is right to point out that in reality, these boundaries do not hold true because states are often involved in monetary transactions that are geared to legitimise migration, for example by charging visa fees. At the same time, brokers and family relations can be involved in facilitating access to legitimate travel documents or by giving the correct information about how to travel according to the law. So while they are not self evidently distinguishable spheres or realities, these boundaries and the migrant categories they create serve the function of asserting state power. This approach is fruitful in explaining the particular policies of the European Union concerning migration management in Morocco and how these have influenced the government of Morocco to establish laws and mechanisms to distinguish between legal and illegal forms of migration.

However, the analysis of Moroccan policy towards migrants in Morocco will further reveal that the Moroccan state has actually gone a step further in asserting its power over migrants' settlement by *blurring* the boundaries between legitimate and illegitimate forms of migration. The concept of 'transit migration' has played a particular role in these constructions, because it allows policy makers to create migrants as rightless beings in a no-man's land, who are neither authorised to move on, nor to settle in Morocco. I argue that in this way, the Moroccan state is able to control migrants even more and assert its sovereignty over its subjects. The notion of 'transit' has been used by the government to resist clearly defining the boundaries between staying and leaving. This confusing situation of being in between citizen and

migrant on the move allows the state to rely on arbitrary interpretation of whose responsibility it is to safeguard 'transit migrants' human rights.

#### **4.3 Moroccan and European Union Policy in the field of transit migration**

To set up this argument, I will give a general overview of the most important policy measures to affect the migration context in Morocco over the past decade. In particular, this will help to explain how the emergence of Sub-Saharan African migrants on Southern European borders has triggered the development of a specific migration approach by both the European Union and its partner, the government of Morocco, an approach that has shaped the situation of Sub-Saharan African migrants in Morocco. This 'new' Global Approach to Migration is characterised by two key components which have a longer policy history in the region: the first set of measures has a preventative aim and focuses on eliminating the perceived causes of migration in African countries through increased development cooperation and trade agreements. The second set of measures is grouped around more short-term objectives relating to the control of migration in European countries. This is achieved on the one hand through specific 'mobility packages' which establish the rules for legal migration and settlement, and on the other hand through increased measures to combat 'trafficking' and 'smuggling' in human beings (Collett 2007). As both a sending and receiving country, Morocco has been affected by both sets of measures, although each targets different group of migrants. While preventative measures target primarily Moroccan nationals, the control measures have in recent years mostly centred on Sub-Saharan African migrants' entry into EU territory.

What will become evident in my analysis is that over the last decade or so resources dedicated to the prevention of migration of Moroccan nationals have been often conditioned and made dependent upon the Moroccan governments' acceptance of controlling Sub-Saharan African migrants' entry into the EU. Preventative measures targeting the causes of migration in sending countries (such as aid cooperation, foreign direct investment and trade agreements) thus function as highly effective bargaining chips in attempts to delegate migration control to third party countries (Gabrielli 2011:9). In this sense, it is true that control of entry is still the most important

rationale of EU migration policies in Morocco today, and this has not significantly changed since the Global Approach to Migration has come into being (Collett 2007).

#### *4.3.1 The start of EU migration policy concerning Moroccan migrants*

Before the 1990s, neither Morocco or the European Union had a coherent immigration policy with reference to Sub-Saharan African migrants, or for that matter, Moroccan would-be migrants. As in in other African countries, Sub-Saharan African migrants were not acknowledged as a particular policy concern. As a consequence, they were relatively free to move or stay in the country without any clearly defined administrative procedures. Baptiste, a Congolese migrant who worked as a volunteer at the summer school, gave me his own viewpoint on the policy situation in the 1990s. He had migrated to Spain in the mid-nineties and since then acquired Spanish citizenship:

Before, everything was different. You could freely travel through the country, go to Melilla or Tanger and then step over the frontier. It was easy. There were no real controls or anything. I mean, you needed to be a bit intelligent. But, apart from that: You just stepped over the border, like that. Nobody really cared about that. Look at the circus they are making now!

Moroccan citizens who wished to migrate or who had already migrated to Europe were generally not considered in any specific policy measures concerning illegal migration either. But since Italy and Spain introduced visa requirements for Moroccan citizens in 1990 and 1991 respectively, Moroccans had to resort increasingly to irregular means to enter Europe and the majority of them attempted this by crossing the 14km Strait of Gibraltar that separates Spain from Morocco in small fishing boats or zodiacs.

The first significant policy measures between the European Union and Morocco concerning this state of affairs dates to the beginning of the 1990s in relation to the Moroccan-European partnership treaty<sup>19</sup>. At this time, EU migration policy towards Morocco was primarily directed to prevent the irregular migration of Moroccan nationals (De Haas 2007, Belgendouz 2009, European Commission 1998). Generally

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<sup>19</sup> Signed in 1996

speaking, migration policy becomes visible in the partnership treaty through the inclusion of two types of measures: on the one hand are those that are designed to prevent unwanted migration and on the other those designed to promote wanted migration. In the first category we usually find measures to combat illegal migration and trafficking and in the second, everything related to the recruitment of labour migrants. Refugee and asylum protection is a third element of migration policy but is relegated to a marginal part of the European partnership treaty (Collyer 2010). In this context, it is interesting to note that the term 'burden sharing' is used in connection with refugee management, which clarifies that this type of migration is usually referred to as unwanted. Even though the treaty with Morocco makes explicit references to the instauration of mechanisms for enhanced legal labour migration of Moroccan nationals to the EU, these measures have generally not crystallised into concrete programmes. Over the past decade, most of the policy tools that have achieved concrete realisation have been used to *prevent* legal and illegal immigration (Papadoupoulou Kourkoulou 2008). In this sense, migration policy has focused since its beginnings in Morocco almost exclusively on preventing migration and delegitimising it, rather than promoting it or creating channels to make it easier. To that end, migrants were classified as either illegitimate migrants who were imagined as illegal or trafficked or 'legitimate' migrants who were refugees and labour migrants. However, the latter two categories were largely ignored in policy measures, making 'legitimate' migration a contingency, rather than the general axis of policy making.

From around 2000 onwards, the irregular migration dynamics from Morocco towards the European mainland began to change (Belgendouz 2009). At that time, the number of African migrants intercepted at Spanish borders began to increase from year to year, while the number of Moroccan nationals decreased. The instance of Sub-Saharan African boat people from Morocco started to provoke particularly strong policy reactions from both Spain and the European Union, despite the relatively small numbers these migrants represented among the total number of irregular migrants in Spain (Azkona 2011) and within Morocco (De Haas 2007). The measures implemented during the next decade all suggested that migrants from Sub-Saharan



Africa needed to be deported, criminalised or persecuted by the police, rather than integrated as worthy citizens into host communities, protected or assisted by the state. A particularly powerful example of this approach is the creation of the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union (FRONTEX) by EU member states. FRONTEX was created as an independent body tasked with operational coordination in the field of border security among member states (European Commission 2004, Council Regulation 2007/2004). The organisation played a particularly important role in European migration policy developments because it operationalised the intention to convert border control in the Mediterranean region into a policy priority (Collyer 2010, Belgendouz 2009). FRONTEX (2012) maintains that it primarily assists member states' governments in maximising efficiency and cost effectiveness in deportations while also ensuring respect for the fundamental rights and human dignity of returnees. However, whether it has really helped to diminish fatalities in crossings by irregular migrants or indeed diminish the number of crossings attempted is disputed. Instead, there is evidence to suggest that FRONTEX has contributed to the change of routes. Whereas before 2005, most migrants attempted to cross the Strait of Gibraltar, in later years the increasingly used the much longer and more dangerous sea routes from Mauritania and the Western Sahara to the Canary Islands. This not only increased the costs of the journey for migrants, but also the risks involved in leaving Morocco as this route involves overland travel in particularly dangerous regions that are conflict prone (Carling 2007).

#### *4.3.2 The migration-development nexus*

From 1996 to 2006, the EU's financial support for Morocco's economic transition towards a possible European membership in the future was mainly implemented and financed through the MEDA (Mésures d'Accompagnement or Accompanying Measures) programme, which aimed to increase competitiveness by developing the private sector and promoting good governance. According to the EU, the programme focused primarily on the implementation of the Association Agreement aimed at boosting jobs and growth and reducing poverty (European Commission 2012).

However, significant funds from the MEDA program also targeted the stated goal of immigration reduction. Of the total MEDA aid budget of 426 million Euros for 2000-2006, 115 million Euros (27 percent) are being spent to 'break out of the circle of weak growth, unemployment, poverty, and migration' through support for the control of illegal immigration and rural development programs.<sup>20</sup> In this sense, MEDA has been one of the first policy instruments in Morocco that links migration control to the funding of socio-economic development initiatives in sending countries (Papadoupoulou-Kourkoula 2008, Collyer 2010, Belgendouz 2009).

Bilateral development aid from Spain, Italy and some other EU countries also started to become an incentive for the Moroccan government to take on a more active role in preventing the migration of its own nationals.<sup>21</sup> The Moroccan government signed a repatriation agreement with Spain in 2004, which committed Morocco to readmit Moroccan migrants once they had been apprehended in Spain. However, according to Azkona (2011) the conclusion of this agreement had been severely conditioned by Spain's concession of financial aid to Morocco.<sup>22</sup>

Parallel to these developments, the new policy instrument EUROMED replaced MEDA from 2007 onwards. It sets the framework for cooperation between Morocco and the European Union and incorporates activities relating to fostering the links of migration and development, fighting illegal migration and trafficking, as well as promoting the asylum policies and the protection of stateless persons in Morocco. But again, the

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<sup>20</sup> In particular, the funds target the northern provinces of Morocco, which were seen as a primary source of poverty, drugs, human smuggling and illegal migration (De Haas 2006).

<sup>21</sup> For example, Morocco collaborated with Spain in joint naval patrols in return for \$390 million in aid (De Haas 2006).

<sup>22</sup> Azkona (2011) documents how Spain's bilateral aid to Africa starts to become increasingly conditioned by migratory concerns around 2005 with the development of "plan Africa". Through "plan Africa", the amount of financial aid that Spain directs to numerous West-African countries identified as the countries of origin of migrants in Morocco has increased significantly. However, this has also gone hand in hand with the conclusion of repatriation agreements with African states and measures designed to deter migration. Primarily, these measures consist of the development of migratory legislation and increased controls and capacity building measures for security forces. Azkona (2011) points out that these measures were virtually never accompanied by juridical or practical guarantees by African states to ensure migrants' human rights would be respected.

budget distribution confirms that most weight has been put on border enforcement and migration control, rather than the promotion of legal migration. European funds channelled through the programme increasingly finance the capacity building of Moroccan coast guards and other security forces with the aim of detecting and deporting irregular migrants (Papadoupoulou Kourkoula 2008, Collyer 2010).

#### *4.3.3 The Global Approach to Migration emerges*

In October 2005, due to the increasing difficulties Sub-Saharan African migrants faced in leaving Morocco or staying there legally, the situation came to a turning point, when hundreds of migrants attempted to climb the barbed wire fences in Ceuta and Melilla in a desperate attempt to cross the borders collectively (Goldschmidt 2006, Schapendonk 2011). This event had severe policy implications for both migrants and governments. On the one hand, there had been unprecedented levels of violence employed by Moroccan police and military forces against irregular migrants (MSF 2005, Jene 2010). There is also evidence that migrants had been simply 'banned' from the territory to 'dissuade' them from returning. Amnesty International (2006), for example, has documented mass deportations of migrants into the Algerian desert and to the southern provinces in the desert of Morocco during this time. On the other hand, the events triggered the development of the first draft of the Global Approach to Migration in December 2005 by the European Commission and its rapid implementation (Collyer 2010). Sub-Saharan African migrants' actions in Ceuta and Melilla can therefore be said to have significantly shaped European migratory policies.

With the Global Approach to Migration there appears a clear distinction between a former 'dual' migration approach, which was characterised by bilateral agreements between Morocco and European countries, and the later multilateral migration approach which attempted to unify policy responses to migration across the EU and beyond (Pinyol 2008). The Global Approach to Migration emerges through three policy initiatives between European and African states that developed in subsequent years

(Collyer 2010).<sup>23</sup> All of these initiatives involved a great number of sending nations in Africa, so called 'transit countries' in the Maghreb and 'destination countries' in Europe in the policy process. The policy documents explicitly combine measures to control 'transit' migration with an emphasis on the promotion of legal migration through labour migration and an increase in development cooperation to provide jobs and opportunities for potential migrants at home. Implicitly, however, all three policy processes are primarily geared to *prevent* migration all together. Papadoupoulou Kourkoula (2008) argues that EU involvement in migration policy of Non-European states should be interpreted positively as a measure of capacity building for governmental institutions in Africa, as well as a sign for the promotion of legal migration channels and increased socio-economic development. However, it is doubtful if this has been effectively put into practice in the Moroccan case.

In the last five years since the beginning of the international policy processes, neither the Moroccan state nor the European Union made significant progress in promoting legal migration channels from Africa to Europe (Papadoupoulou Kourkoula 2008, Collyer 2010). Neither is there any serious policy initiative from either the Moroccan, Spanish or European side that promotes legal migration from Sub-Saharan Africa to Morocco. This is exemplified in the 'mobility packages' that are being designed as a follow up measure to the Global Migration approach. The mobility packages are an ensemble of measures designed to foster legal migration from African states to the European Union. There are no mobility packages between African countries and Morocco. The fact that refugee policies have never been strong on the international agenda in these meetings either is another case in point in this context. There is evidence to suggest that there are large numbers of potential asylum seekers in Morocco who choose not to file a claim or do not know how to do so (Collyer 2010, Wender 2004). It was not until 2004 that the EU recommended the implementation of

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<sup>23</sup> These are the Euro-African process on Migration and Development since 2006 (the Rabat process), the policy initiative relative of migration in the framework of the meetings between European Union and African Union since 2006 (the Tripoli Process) and the discussions in the context of the high level meetings between states belonging to the Euro-Mediterranean partnership (Former Barcelona process). The first of them, the Rabat process, was hosted by the Moroccan government in a clear sign of acknowledgement of the 'gravity' of the problem of irregular migration in the region (Papadoupoulou-Kourkoula 2008).

an asylum system, which has still not come into being. However, international pressure finally led to Morocco assigning legal representation to the UNHCR in 2007. Since then, the UNHCR has been in charge of Morocco's determination processes for refugees (Van der Klaauw 2007).

Analysing migration policy development in Morocco, Belgendouz (2009) and others (Wender 2004, GADEM 2009b, Collyer 2010, Gabrielli 2011) therefore correctly argue that transit migration has been used primarily to describe a social, humanitarian and security problem when migrants attempt to access otherwise closed borders through land or sea routes that seem little controlled and protected. In this way, 'transit countries', such as Morocco, were 'born' by the EU as a means to justify the need for increased border control in Africa and tighter migration regimes in these countries in order to allow for the implementation of European immigration policies. Gabrielli (2011:4) is right to argue that in practice, the extra-territorialisation of migration control in transit areas has tended to displace the Euro-African migration border even further south in the African continent, and has aimed to transfer the responsibility of migration control to African states.

#### **4.4 The very local consequences of global migration policies for migrants in Morocco**

In order to understand the effects of European migration policy on migrants' lives in Morocco, it is vital to go beyond the policies themselves and focus on their implementation in so called 'transit' states outside the European Union. This is important because sovereign states like Morocco are not under the juridical and political authority of the EU, even though the latter is effectively implicated in the migration policy design (Azkona 2011, Gabrielli 2011). In short, implementation of policy is not necessarily the same as policy design and raises questions about who has the political responsibility for the rights and duties of the migrants affected by these policies.

This brings to the forefront of policy discourse a range of human rights issues for migrants, which are worth focusing on. In this section, I will explore the particular ways

in which border enforcement policies have been played out in the Moroccan territory and have affected migrants' lives there. It will become evident that the indetermination of the transit migrant category has had significant consequences for African migrants in Morocco.

As a requisite to the effective persecution and prevention of illegal migration towards the European Union, the Moroccan government was asked to create a legal framework that would help to anchor the basis for 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate' migration firmly in Moroccan laws. Morocco's new immigration law 02-03, which was approved in November 2003, can be seen in this light (Belgendouz 2009, GADEM 2009b). The law was a response to a perceived problem by European nations, that of 'irregular migration' on Moroccan soil. Transit and irregular migration came to be used interchangeably in this context.

Until November 2003, Morocco's legislation regarding immigration was restricted to a handful of Dahirs (Royal Decrees) from the time of the Spanish and French protectorate, dating from 1934-49 (GADEM 2009b). In 2003 the new law abrogated all Dahirs from the colonial period and replaced them with new regulations. However, the content of the new regulations was not necessarily adapted to the specifics of Moroccan migratory reality and its political and economic context. Belgendouz (2009) has found, for example, that the content of the law has been substantially based on contemporary French immigration law - in places it is an exact copy of it. In addition to the hasty development of its content, the government of Morocco did not invest great efforts in the mechanisms necessary for the correct implementation of the law. Procedures and institutions in charge of the regulation of migration status stayed vague and there remain no efficient systems for determining refugees and asylum seekers (Van der Klaauw 2007). These circumstances contributed to the blurring of the categories of legitimate and illegitimate migrants and allowed the government to leave the question of 'legitimate migration' open to arbitrary procedures. In what follows, I will explain how this situation leads to migrants' rightlessness and inability to access social services, migration status, jobs and civil rights.

#### *4.4.1 Legitimate reasons to settle?*

According to the law 02-03 (and the very similar French migration laws upon which the law 02-03 is based), foreigners who arrive in Morocco with valid tourist visas can only obtain a residency permit if they have the financial resources to sustain themselves and can demonstrate this through bank statements, if they have a work contract in the country or if they are full-time students there. This means in practice that legitimacy for residency is determined by the 'type' of work and money that migrants have: residency must be related to formal economic structures.

It is a paradox that these precise formal economic structures are almost absent in the country as a whole and only partially accessible to the majority of Moroccan citizens. Many Moroccans do not have a bank account in their name and a great proportion works in the informal sector. Nevertheless, their citizenship status is not based on this fact. Similarly, the migrants I encountered were sustaining themselves financially for years in Morocco through remittances or jobs in the informal sector, but none of them had been able to obtain a residency card or a bank account in their name, nor did they knew anyone in their circles who had been able to do so. Apart from that, none of the migrants I talked to had been able to get a formal work contract. So in fact, the requisites for being a 'legal migrant' and therefore, a 'rightful citizen' with possibilities for settlement are almost impossible to fulfil in a country like Morocco, even for people born in the country.

Furthermore, according to the new law, there are no clear 'legitimate' reasons for one's stay in Morocco apart from formal labour migration, study or diplomatic activities. Family reunification, for example, is not a clearly defined area of Moroccan immigration law. This in turn makes it more difficult for women and children to gain residency status when they come to Morocco together with their partners and are economically dependent upon them. Even the refugee determination process is not linked to any right for work or residency permits in Morocco. Until today, refugees in Morocco who have been issued with a Refugee card by the UNHCR are not automatically issued with a residency permit by Moroccan authorities. The Moroccan government simply does not recognise any obligations towards refugees who have

been determined as such by the UNHCR on its soil. Pierre, who I introduced in the preceding chapter, told me that in his eyes, refugee status was effectively useless:

You know, having this card here from the UNHCR is only symbolical. It has no real value because you cannot do anything with it. You cannot work, you get no financial support, you cannot travel, you have no passport. So it's not really anything at all.

#### *4.4.2 The temporary aspect of 'legitimate migration'*

But there is also a temporary element to 'legality' in Morocco. As indicated above, apart from the text of the law, there are no accompanying texts or decrees that would guide its development and application in practice. Currently, there are no clearly defined processes for applying for residency permits and there are no specialised institutional structures to deal with these demands. In fact, application of the law is still being delegated primarily to the police. In a review of relevant documentation regarding residency claims of Sub-Saharan African migrants, GADEM (2009b) has shown the prevalence of arbitrary procedures which do not clarify how migrants can actually access papers in Morocco. Similar problems arise in the field of asylum petitions. Morocco does not have its own asylum policy and refugees must submit their applications to the UNHCR in Rabat even though there have been serious efforts by the UNHCR and the EU to delegate refugee management to the Moroccan government over the past five years or so (Van der Klaauw 2007, Collyer 2010).

That the law is unclear and ill-defined can dramatically lengthen the time taken to decide refugees' status, to award residence permits and to deport. Even voluntary return programmes, such as the one operated by IOM are affected by the unwillingness of the Moroccan government to establish clear procedures regarding migrants' documentation. At times it is even difficult for the IOM to attain an authorisation to leave from the Moroccan authorities, a so-called '*laissez-aller*'. This document is required in the context of the voluntary return programme that this organisation has been running for several years now, because it sets the legal basis upon which migrants are free to leave Morocco and re-enter their country of origin. A



'laissez-aller' is generally issued in collaboration with the Moroccan Ministry of the Interior and the Embassy of the country of origin. However, often, the procedures to obtain it are opaque. One collaborator of the Voluntary Return Programme told me:

We call them up and ask them for the laissez-aller. They say yes, it will be ready tomorrow. And then, you are waiting there with the migrant, ticket in hand at the airport, and the laissez aller is not coming through. Has happened many times. It drives us crazy. Well, they just have to be replaced by someone else when that happens.

These examples mean not only that migration is not controlled, but also, that people are left in 'limbo' out of time and status for considerable periods of time. In contrast to migration policy in Europe, in Morocco, time is not used to restrict people's length of stay through the issuing of temporary work permits or the requirement for frequent renewal of permits and identification cards; in Morocco, the non-application of the law creates for migrants a time out of the ordinary, in which anything could happen. The strict clock-time control of migrants by authorities that characterises many of European countries' migration policies is thus transformed into a timeless wait that resists any predictability or planning in migrants' lives. This appears to be a deliberate policy rather than an accidental development because it allows the government to take no responsibility at all for migrants, who are thus converted into citizens of a no-man's land, in which rights and duties become meaningless.

#### *4.4.3 The importance of papers*

Since migration status has been regulated through the new law it has become *more difficult* to access services or employment. My interviews revealed that companies and institutions were reluctant to offer work to individuals on tourist visas or to irregular migrants, whereas before the introduction of the law, this was not the case.<sup>24</sup> While

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<sup>24</sup> I have been told by migrants and NGO workers that the only sub-Saharan African migrants who had a legal and valid contract were working as telephone operators for international companies in Rabat and Casablanca and almost all of them had a student visa (either forged or real). NGO workers I talked to told me that since the introduction of the law, it was more and more difficult to convince potential employers to accept migrant workers - even for short-term internships.

the former Dahirs had regulated immigration status, at least on paper, the fact that there are actual controls to police these new regulations makes it more risky for individuals, companies and institutions *not* to acknowledge immigration status, particularly if they are already in partial infringement of the law through the informal nature of their activities. Yann explained this to me:

I have tried to get jobs, a lot of times. But the shop owners, the workshop owners, what have you, they were all not interested, they do not want to get into trouble, they do not want to expose themselves having a black person in their workshop and offering a chance to their envious neighbour to get the mkadem<sup>25</sup> onto their backs.

In a country like Morocco, in which a large number of the population is employed in the informal sector, it might appear that 'papers' are not important at all. This, however, is seriously dependent on who needs papers and for what. While some people may be able to use their influence to make alternative regulatory authorities work for them, poor people are less able to do so and succumb to the regulatory authority of the state, particularly if the state - or members of its bureaucratic institutions - have the necessary resources to police infringements of the law or can use their authority to threaten others with police persecution. In this context, I would like to give the example of Nadia, my Moroccan childminder. I am grateful to her for underscoring that the issue of papers and legal status are not only a problem migrants struggle with but one that also affects Moroccan citizens. This is an inherent feature of the hierarchical power and government structures within Moroccan society.

Nadia explained to me that in order to renew her identity card, she needed an attestation from the local mkadem, to testify her residency in the house where she had been living for the last three years. This person was not willing to grant her the attestation without a considerable payment, a payment Nadia refused to make

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<sup>25</sup> The mkadem is linked to the Ministry of the Interior on the level of the 'arrondissement' or quarter of town. Mkadems are appointed by the Caid and one of their functions is to update resident registers. The mkadem can also denounce infringements of the law to the ministry of the interior if he is aware of them, such as tax fraud or other administrative and penal impeachments of the law.

because she considered it abusive and unlawful. The mediation of her brother, a local police officer, did not prove to be of help in the matter. As a consequence, Nadia has been unable to register her new employment in order to continue with her pension contributions and is without health insurance coverage, as she needs her identity card in order to legalise this. This situation has been ongoing for two years and Nadia is considering moving to a different part of town in which she would be able to get a certificate from the local mkadem without further problems.

#### *4. 4.4 The primacy of state authority over other regulative authorities*

Like Nadia, migrants without papers are very vulnerable to abuses of power by state officials, bureaucrats and Moroccans. The lack of definition in the new legislation and the vague definitions of procedures and responsibilities have also increased the opportunities for state officials' to abuse their power in relation to migrants. This has been exacerbated by a growth in international funding for migration control, which has increased the resources of police and other security personnel.

Migrants suffer particularly from discrimination and abuse because they have few resources with which to protect themselves from it. This is true because they cannot make alternative regulatory authorities, like the market or families, work for them to compensate for the lack of state protection. While Nadia may measure her forces with the local mkadem through her family contacts in the local police or else through the payment of some 'baksheesh' (bribe), most migrants I encountered had fewer opportunities to do so.

Migrants have frequent dealings with mkadems because good relations with them are often a prerequisite of protection from the police or aggression and exploitation at the hands of local residents. Again, it is the particular resources individual migrants can count upon that determine the extent to which they are able to work and live without further interference from state authorities. Silvester, for example, explained to me that since the local mkadem has come to his stand to get his and his family's shoes repaired for free, he has never experienced any significant problems with the police or other Moroccan residents concerning his activities as street shoemaker without a

licence. In fact, he feels in a certain way protected since gaining the mkadem's appreciation. Abdoul and Ibrahim, by contrast, who only work a few hundred metres away repairing shoes, are constantly abused by local youths. They have to accept very low prices and often change location when chased away by local shopkeepers or the police. The mkadem never appeared actively on the scene, but neither does he interfere in the harassment taking place.

Apart from the evident problems with local authorities, papers also play a vital role in accessing vital social services such as health and education. Without papers, migrants have no access to the Moroccan health system and children cannot be enrolled in state schools. Despite the efforts of several NGOs, this situation has not significantly changed in the last 10 years and migrants' access to healthcare and education is still largely dependent on the mediation of international organisations and NGOs who often have to negotiate migrants' access to schools and hospitals on a case-by-case basis. The Moroccan government and its institutions have until now successfully resisted the need to formalise migrants' access to these services through the law and this is even true of formally recognised refugees. While a range of informal agreements with state institutions had been reached in a variety of areas regarding migrants' access to services, none of the organisations I contacted have been able to conclude written agreements about the admission of migrants to hospitals, schools or in relation to other state services. Every contract and agreement was negotiated orally.

As Nadia's story shows, legal documentation is necessary for a variety of important transactions in Morocco, such as the receiving of remittances, the sending and receiving of mail, renting of premises and houses or the opening of bank accounts. While many of these transactions are not important if one is only passing through, they become more vital the longer one stays in a country. One way of circumventing problems is to 'hire' documents, either from African students (Goldsmidt 2002), African legal residents and diplomats, or from locals (Pian 2009, Schapendonk, 2011). Some migrants I encountered paid Moroccans or legally residing African students, to receive money remittances in Western Union in their names, and even in order to put savings

into Moroccan bank accounts. These practices can make migrants particularly vulnerable and dependent upon others (Pian 2009) and influence the types of relationships they have with Moroccans or other migrants, by relegating them to a patron-client relationship. Being without papers, migrants cannot denounce any deceitful or exploitative practices by third parties in fear of being deported themselves. Some of the migrants I talked to received regular remittances from either their family in Europe or from family and friends in their home countries, which helped them to navigate around the restrictions imposed by the state in finding jobs and accessing to documents. However, others had already used up all their families' resources or were not lucky enough to count on families and friends abroad. For many, this situation appeared to have worsened in recent years, during which migrants' friends in southern Europe were also facing increasingly economic problems. Silvester, for example, told me:

Me? I don't get any money from home, I am the one who is supposed to send them some! My father is old, he has not much land. But I have a friend in Italy and one in Spain, I got to know them when I was working in Libya. They kept on sending me some money whenever they could. But now, one of them just got married and he has less money now. And the other one told me that life is hard in Spain. A baguette can cost you more than a Euro! So he is sending very little. Very little.

#### **4.5 Lack of protection against abuse**

The above shows how the existing legislation regarding migrants fosters irregularity rather than protecting them from it. In doing so, it establishes the basis for migrants' economic exploitation and/or dependence upon both state and non-state actors for access to social services, housing and legal protection. Migrants live mostly in poor working class areas of town in which unemployment and social conflict are high. I have also learnt that xenophobia and racism are rampant and can, at times, result in violent attacks against migrants. I myself have witnessed how migrants are spat at,

called names or made fun of in the street and other public places.<sup>26</sup> In conversations with migrant mediators who work for several international organisations and the church I was told that these incidents were exceptional and that migrants were regularly victims of armed assault and attacks.<sup>27</sup>

Mario, one of the migrants from Congo who I met, was cut severely by two young men with a machete in the street. This incident happened when Mario was on his way home. A Barcelona football match had just finished and crowds of Moroccans were in the small cafes and bars in the streets. People were disappointed about Barcelona losing, and it was clear that the two young lads were looking for a fight to let off some steam. One of the men stopped Mario while the other started to attack him without further notice, cutting him severely on the head and in the face. Although the street was full of people at the time Mario was attacked, nobody came to his rescue or agreed to transport him to a hospital. He did not dare to call the police but was finally attended to by MSF medical staff after another migrant made a call. This situation is the direct result of the ambivalent status of police in Moroccan society. In general, police and military are feared tremendously by migrants and Moroccans alike. One member of an NGO working with migrants told me in this context:

If you are irregular in Morocco, we recommend that you do not go near a police commissariat or a military base if you can prevent it, because you

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<sup>26</sup> I do not want to give the impression that all Moroccans are hateful against migrants. On the contrary, there is a lot of solidarity and collaboration between them (Alioua, 2005). However, racism is a non negligible fact of migrants' lives in Morocco. That this is structural, rather than localised, is evidenced by the treatment of migration by the Moroccan press. One local newspaper described migrants as black locusts invading the country (Belgendouz 2009, Goldschmidt 2006). According to Hicham Barakka from the Organisation ABCDS, there has been a recent article in no. 1643 of the journal *Al Massae* from 5<sup>th</sup> of January 2012, entitled 'Des bataillons des migrants clandestines propagent le SIDA dans les rues du Maroc' (Bataillons of illegal migrants spread SIDA in Moroccan streets), in which migrant women have been accused of spreading sexual diseases and SIDA out of vengeance by continuing to prostitute themselves with Moroccans despite their illness (<http://www.asdhom.org/?p=622>, accessed on 12.05.2012). In the suburbs where migrants usually live, Moroccans refer to them prerogatively as 'dog eaters', as the first rural migrants to Rabat were called when they arrived in the same suburbs in the 1960s. Shockingly, I found a video on YouTube, entitled "dog-eaters", in which migrants were grilling a dog in a camp in the wood. This video was most probably made by Nigerian migrants, likely allusion to the name they had been given by the Moroccan population. (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W5iZN0LDavU&feature=related>, accessed 12.05.2012)

<sup>27</sup> This was also evident in a survey published by MSF (2010)

risk being put into prison immediately, without possibilities for legal advice, translation or else. Even Moroccans know that police is the worst thing that can happen to you. Policemen are corrupt, they do not care, their actions are unpredictable. So you can imagine how many migrants go to denounce it when they have been raped, burgled, or cheated upon?

No one. You have to find your own support networks to protect yourself.

According to information I was able to collect from NGO workers and migrants themselves, raids in migrant neighbourhoods are very common in the big cities like Rabat and Casablanca. Due to Morocco's agreement to assist the EU in the fight against illegal migration, police action against smugglers and traffickers is an important aspect of the government's efforts to demonstrate its commitment to achieve targets and deliver on outcomes (Gabrielli 2011).

Some NGO workers and migrants I talked to suspected that the police in Rabat knew exactly how many migrants live in the city and where. What makes this theory very plausible and convincing is the fact that local *Mkadem*s are certainly able to provide the police with very detailed information on actual migrant numbers, houses and landlords in their neighbourhoods. Otherwise, it is difficult to explain how the police are able to organise raids in such a strategic manner, targeting the exact places where migrants live. Migrants' possessions are often destroyed during these raids and they are frequently brutalised and injured. In these instances, the police have inevitably broken the law by arresting legally recognised refugees, or pregnant women, and women with children even though they are protected by the law 02-03. (MSF 2005, GADEM 2009b). That violence employed by Moroccan security forces against migrants is not exceptional has been extensively documented by MSF (2005, 2010) and other organisations (Wender 2004).

And yet, it appears that the police are organising these raids strategically and not systematically. It is also illustrative of how the Moroccan police are handling the issue of deportations. Although there have been instances in which migrants have been deported back to their countries of origin by the police or the military (Collyer 2009,

GADEM 2009b, Kastner 2010), this practice is not routine. It is more common that Moroccan officials conduct migrants to the border, which in practice means that they are left in no-man's land at the Algerian Border. The borders between Algeria and Morocco are officially closed, so deportations there are strictly speaking illegal. However, once deported into the desert, migrants have literally no other choice than to make their way back to Oujda, the border town with Morocco, because in Algeria, they are often victims of criminal gangs or the Algerian police who detain them as illegal border crossers. So rather than 'getting rid' of migrants, these practices only serve to 'punish them' and to remind them of their marginal status in society.

When I discussed the issue of migrants and police persecution with Nadia, she offered her own explanation of the situation, arguing that the ways in which police treated migrants was not in any way different from the treatment of the Moroccan population. Nadia reminded me of the practice of police surveillance and repression of the civilian population under Hassan II, the former King:

You know, under Hassan II, people were never told what was right and what was wrong, what was legal according to the law and what was illegal. He was clever, you see. He did not say anything at all and left everything open to interpretation. In this way, everything was potentially a crime, everything was potentially illegal, everything was potentially punishable. You could never know. Nobody would ever tell a joke in a public place because you never knew if it could have been considered an insult to the monarchy, for example! And you know how much people love to tell jokes here. I tell you, people were terrified. You did not need the police to go after people anymore. Only knowing that they *could* come after you, people were so afraid, they didn't even dared to piss next to a tree in the street.

While Nadia was under the impression that times had changed since then and that Hassan's son, Mohammed V was doing things differently, she was not so sure if this was also true for those considered 'non-citizens' and 'non-Muslims'. I found this view



of the state as an arbitrary and authoritative judge over the law in the 'migrant question' was widespread among Moroccan friends, workers in international organisations and the church.<sup>28</sup>

#### **4.6 Conclusion: When transit becomes a state of rightlessness**

During a round table discussion about the situation of refugees, organised by Fondation Orient-Occident (2007:19) which brought together a range of institutions as well as government representatives, a female representative of a refugee organisation in Morocco summarised the way she experienced her stay in Morocco: 'Here, our rights are tread upon, this is like a free prison.'<sup>29</sup> This image vividly depicts the idea of 'forced immobility' as a condition of rightlessness.

The short policy review in this chapter has shown how the link between immobility and being without rights in Morocco is shaped through a rights discourse which legitimises particular meanings of mobility and settlement while delegitimising others (Cresswell 2006). In such a discourse only those who fulfil certain obligations towards the state or the market are granted mobility and settlement rights. Generally, these are individuals with work contracts or capital investments in the country and who are in possession of a valid passport and/or visa. In such a construction of rights, their access is not universal, but instead linked to their particular position in the market or towards the state.

Instead of making mobility from Africa to Europe more easily accessible for the great majority of African people, the measures of migration management put forward by the European Union and its member states have actually worked in the direction of limiting

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<sup>28</sup> In this context, I should note that the church in particular was subject to an increased campaign of persecution during 2009 and 2010 when mostly protestant churches were accused of procedelism and over 100 christian workers were expelled from the country (TELQUEL, no. 432 from 11 to 17 July 2009), among them two of the church leaders involved with the protestant migrant NGO I was in contact with. Some of the church community members (both catholic and protestant) I talked to considered this to be a strategic move by the government to 'remind' the church of its vulnerable status in Morocco. Rather than having anything to do with proceletism, they suspected that there were other, political reasons that drove the government to this move. One of the possible reasons some church members speculated about was the church's involvement in supporting activities for irregular Sub-Saharan African migrants in Morocco.

<sup>29</sup> Ici, nos droits sont bafues, c'est sort d'un prison libre

migration options from Africa to Europe. Furthermore, this has contributed to a situation in which integration and settlement for migrants in Morocco becomes almost impossible and instead provides a basis for the Moroccan state to legitimately persecute and control migrants on their soil. By inhibiting the creation of clear rules and procedures that would help to determine 'legal' migration status, the Moroccan state has successfully retained power over the determination of 'legal' and 'illegal' forms of migration. The 'legal limbo' in which migrants find themselves is an effective means by which the state retains regulatory authority over migrants' lives.

The transit discourse has been vital in this context because migrants are positioned in an ambiguous and changing relationship to the state they are 'transiting through'. By constructing migrants as 'in transit', policy makers establish new power relationships in which migrants' lose out when it comes to mobility options and living conditions. The migrants are 'moulded' to the needs of policy makers as illegal, and above all temporary, residents who can be legitimately persecuted and controlled on the one hand, and on the other, are not considered the responsibility of the state which consequently has no duty to protect them whilst they are residing in Morocco. Migrants are particularly vulnerable in such a situation, because their ability to make other regulatory authorities work for them in order to access services and mobility are severely hampered. Family networks are far away and they have limited access to money and the market. Furthermore, the increasing police control of migrant networks, social movements and churches in Morocco makes the creation of alternative support networks difficult and risky. Finally, because of the powerful legal mechanism of 'irregular migration status' which dominates international migration policy, migrant's own diplomatic representations in Rabat are rarely able or willing to protect them and are actually more likely to treat them as illegal criminals, rather than rightful citizens of the state. Neither does the international community accept any responsibility to safeguard migrants' human rights on Moroccan soil on the grounds of their illegal status.

This situation of effective rightlessness, in which migrants are unable to claim a legitimate right to leave Morocco or to settle there, recalls the situation of the stateless

as described by Arendt (1958). Arendt uncovers in her analysis of stateless persons after World War II how universal human rights are in effect worth nothing if one has been negated effective government protection through the national laws applicable in the country of refuge. She highlights the double standards by which nation states actually determine through citizenship laws what human rights are worth in practice at any given place and time, while claiming their universal and indivisible nature in theory (Bowring 2011:191). Even though migrants in Morocco are generally not stateless in the legal sense of the term because they retain formal citizenship of their country of origin,<sup>30</sup> they are nevertheless deprived of their rights in a way similar to the group of stateless people referred to by Arendt. According to Arendt (1958:294) rightlessness entails the loss of home, or 'a distinct place in the world' where one is judged by one's actions and opinions and secondly, 'the loss of government protection and legal standing'. This critical stance regarding the applicability of international human rights theory is still useful for the analysis of the human rights of migrants in Morocco.

In effect, so called 'transit migrants' in Morocco have lost both international and national government protection and legal standing. Their participation in society is very limited because of their irregular migration status and mostly because of the impossibility of *becoming* legal migrants once they are in Morocco. This also hampers their participation in the societies in their countries of origin, because their lack of status inhibits them from, for example, sending and receiving remittances, travelling there and back, and communicating frequently with family and friends back home. It also makes it difficult to set up business ventures involving Morocco and other countries. Furthermore, the legal vacuum created through a lack of effective regulations and procedures increases migrants' risk of being exploited by others without the possibility of seeking protection from the state. In this sense, migrants are converted into rightless 'prisoners' in a no-man's land.

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<sup>30</sup> Some of the asylum-seekers and recognised refugees in Morocco could be compared to de facto stateless persons, because while they are recognised as refugees and asylum-seekers by the UNHCR, they are not granted citizenship rights in Morocco. They are therefore no longer able to claim the legal protection of any state.

This condition of rightlessness also resembles what Agamben (1998) describes in his book 'Homo Sacer'. Agamben goes further than Arendt in his analysis of state sovereignty. He uses a juridical term from archaic Roman law, 'Homo Sacer', to describe an individual who, in response to a grave trespass, is cast out of the city and criminalised. Accordingly, 'Homo Sacer' can be killed without punishment and yet is not formally banned from the community because he no longer has any worth within it. In De la Duranfaye's (2009: 206) terms, the person is removed from the continuum of social activity and communal legislation: the only rule that still applies to him or her is the one that irrevocably casts him/her out of the communal sphere. By applying the figure of Homo Sacer to the inmates of a concentration camp, Agamben (1998) depicts the inhabitants of the camp as those deemed to have no claim on the nation but paradoxically are brought even more firmly under its control by virtue of their exclusion from its laws. Agamben describes them as living a life in a state of exception, as the law is no longer applicable to them, although they are still subdued by state power. They are subdued to the sovereign precisely because they have been stripped of rights and citizenship without having been banned. They are living a status of abjection, of in-between-places, neither within the system nor outside of it. In this sense, they are left with what Agamben terms their 'bare life,' which is one of pure survival and outside of any meaningful political and community action. His theory has been used frequently by critical migration theorists to describe the zones of exclusion in which asylum seekers, refugees and other migrants find themselves in many different parts of the world, due to increasingly restrictive migration legislations and policies (Mountz 2011, Maziva 2010b, Pratt 2005, Lee 2010). By applying his work to the workings of the modern sovereign state and its dehumanising facets to the question of migration, these researchers have shown a way to bring the state back into migration theory where its role was often downplayed in the past (Alpes 2011).

As the previous chapter demonstrates, the state is undoubtedly an important actor in migration management in Morocco and therefore requires serious attention, particularly when analysing the human rights situation of migrants. It is in this respect that I find Agamben's framework of analysis useful to uncover the hidden logic behind

migrants' rightlessness as politically produced through state politics. Nevertheless, it is also important to acknowledge that 'bringing the state back in' alone cannot satisfactorily answer the question about what 'bare life' actually means for migrants and whether it is experienced equally by each individual. In part because he grants too much importance to the role of the state and the law, Agamben's 'Homo saucer' concept has been rightly criticised for depicting humans as undifferentiated individuals, subdued to the will of the state, depoliticised and dissocialised (Gundogdu 2006:15, Mountz 2011). Mountz (2011:8) argues, for example, that Agamben's theory on zones of exception leave the universal figure, an undifferentiated, gender blind, unspecified body always paradoxically outside of the law. The continuous logic of sovereignty in Agamben's analysis of bare life, whose final consequence is the loss of humanity altogether with no possibility to change the course of events, is difficult to accept (Gundogdu 2006:15-16).

In this sense, I find that it is not sufficient to examine the role of the state on migrants' life in Morocco, because this does not capture the manifold ways in which migrants experience life in immobility and without rights. It is necessary to go further in the analysis of state power and to trace the different ways in which migrants face up to these conditions in order to understand how these affect their feelings of belonging, their relation to others and their differentiated struggles to overcome their state. It is here that the differentiated aspects of life in immobility come to the fore. Particularly important in this context are the ways in which time and place are experienced differently by migrants and influence their actions and strategies of reaction to state policies. This is what I will turn to in subsequent chapters.

# Chapter 5: Facing the absurd

## 5.0 Introduction

After having described in the previous chapter migrants' political, economic and social conditions of non-citizenship, in this chapter, I want to analyse migrants' own perceptions of 'being stuck' in Morocco. In so doing, I will provide a glimpse of how living in limbo becomes a way of 'being in the world' and represents a fundamental break with previous values, beliefs and feelings of belonging.

The majority of my informants had been in Morocco for a long time and I draw on their perceptions in this chapter. Of all migrants I interviewed in 2010, only five had arrived a year or less than a year earlier. Nine had stayed between two and four years, arriving after 2006. Fifteen migrants, however, had arrived before the events of Ceuta and Melilla in 2005. They had stayed in Morocco between five to eight years and two people had already spent 12 years in Morocco.<sup>31</sup>

Most of the migrants I encountered had never imagined staying in the country for long.<sup>32</sup> Life in Morocco was really not what they had expected, particularly after they became undocumented migrants and realised that their status made it extremely difficult for them to lead a decent life and/ or fulfil their professional ambitions. They also voiced the fact that they had never imagined facing discrimination and persecution would be as isolating as it turned out to be.

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<sup>31</sup> This is on average significantly longer than figures provided by a census taken by MSF (2010) of 623 migrants, of whom 64% had been in Morocco between 1-5 years, 27% less than a year and 9% over 5 years. In a similar census, undertaken by CISP (2007), the average length of stay in Morocco was 4-12 years for 24% of all informants, and 1-3 years for 65.5% of all informants. Only 10.5% had stayed in Morocco less than a year at the time of the survey. Regardless these differences, the above figures suggest that there is a tendency towards increasingly longer stays in Morocco.

<sup>32</sup> The exception to this where those migrants who came initially to Morocco for some particular reason. For example, Ibrahim and Abdoul, who wanted to play professional football, or Fouganna from the Ivory Coast, who came as an international student, but overstayed her visa after realising that the political situation in her home country made it unsafe for her to return there. In quite another case, Jessica, who came initially just for a business trip to Morocco stayed longer than expected when she fell pregnant by a Moroccan lover who then left her.

While the existential feeling of 'being stuck' can be a trigger for contemplating migration as indicated in chapter three, Hage (2005: 474) is right to argue that the real drama of 'being stuck' is when one becomes 'stuck' having left one's country of origin. He points out that the trauma of migration sets in when one realises that one has ended up being stuck in the host country too, in unfamiliar, rather than familiar surroundings. This is exactly the situation of the migrants I interviewed in Morocco.

In the following pages, I intend to link migrants' feeling of 'being stuck' and their long stays in Morocco to their perspective on time. In so doing, I give a description of the processes whereby migrants must alter their perspective on their own present, past and future in forced immobility. 'Being stuck' in Morocco marks a period in their lives in which they start to rethink their relation to life, death and belonging.

I begin from the premise that our experience of time is shaped by our social, economic and political environment and the social and cultural practices we draw on to engage with different time perspectives (Adam 1994). From this follows the notion that time is not experienced equally by everyone and is dependent on one's social position within unequal structures of power. In order to highlight the changed experience of migrants' time, I will draw particularly on the different accounts of women and men with respect to how they experience time in the present and the past and how they imagine their futures. This is followed by a discussion of liminal times and migrants' connection to the feeling of absurdity, a term borrowed from the French writer Albert Camus (1991)..

The chapter concludes that the tension between migrants' inability to move further on, return or settle in Morocco is intrinsically linked to their perspective on time and makes their lives in Morocco seem meaningless. Despite this - and perhaps because of it - migrants continue to see mobility as the only way of making life worthwhile. However, in such absurd conditions, migration changes its meaning. Whereas before the 'adventurer' was in part responsible for his/her fate and distinguished by his/her ability to manipulate or influence differing regulatory authorities, now, failed attempts to do so, equate to personal failure. Migration becomes a battle and no longer an adventure.

### 5.1 An introductory note about time

Adam (2004, 1994) powerfully demonstrates how in our contemporary world, quests for the commodification and control of time as clock-time are pervasive in life and culture. Adam recognises that in societies structured to the time of clocks and calendars, we can only escape time's pervasive hold to a very limited extent (1994:107). As shown in Chapter four, it is clear that migrants' lives in Morocco are also dependent on and structured by the time-restrictions applied to visas, asylum petitions and even on their perceived temporary stay in Morocco as 'transit migrants' who cannot exchange their time against money on the market by seeking formal employment. In effect, rather than benefiting from the structuring forces of clock-time, migrants are forcefully excluded from society by it. Their time is made useless. Adam (1994:101) suggests that:

(...) only when the human creation of calendar and clock time was recognised as the only time, that time became a receptacle to be filled, a resource to be used and allocated, and a commodity to be sold and exchanged on the labour market. Only with the conceptualisation of the created time as time does it become necessary to ground our understanding of social time in the relations of power.

She adds:

The question of who controls the time of whom can only be posed after time has become conceptualised as something we can use, allocate, spend or fill (1994:120).

Adam insists that, rather than *being* time, these perspectives on time coexist with other, much older human interactions with time, aiming not so much to control time but to transcend it. By this she means particular cultural practices that aim to make time stand still through the repetition of cyclical rituals, like annual celebrations, rhythmical activities and repetition. Acts of remembering and worship of the dead are means to respond to finitude by making us live forever through the coming generations. Adam concludes:



It is the search for transcendence, immortality and the eternal in the face of transience, finitude and change that moves the human spirit to its greatest achievement. The awareness of finitude, the conscious search for transcendence, and the construction of immutability need therefore to be conceptualized as culturally coeval (2004:100).

Migrants' confrontation with time as clock time in Morocco interacts with their own conception of time in relation to transcendence and immortality. 'Being stuck' is thus experienced as living in liminal times where one is neither part of processes that structure time as clock time, nor embedded in times of transcendence which would make life meaningful.

## **5.2 Wasting time – Survival in the present**

It is useful to analyse migrants' relation to time by starting with migrants' perception of their present. A starting point for this analysis is migrants' constant struggle to survive in the cities in search for work, as their daily routines are often dominated by the search for money and a desire to commodify their time in order to be part of society. In what follows, I will describe the gendered aspects of this struggle to survive in more detail in order to carve out how life in immobility alters migrants' own view of themselves.

### *5.2.1 For a man, time is money*

All of the migrants I was in contact with were adamant about the fact that they did not like being in Morocco. I was intrigued to find out why this was so, given that I imagined that they had seen and lived in worse conditions while travelling across so many different countries. What was it that made them reject being in Morocco so much? A first clue came when I asked Fred from Nigeria about this. He replied:

I don't like it, because I am wasting my talent here.

This comment surprised me a little, because he had told me before that he worked painting cars and in the clothes business, selling jeans and second hand clothes. I also knew that he left school after 6<sup>th</sup> grade and was clearly what could be called an

'unskilled' worker. So the way he used the word 'talent' could hardly be understood in relation to his professional qualifications or his work experience. To get behind its meaning, I asked him what he thought he would be doing when he got to Europe in order to use his talent. Fred, rather impatient by now about my apparent naïveté, tried to explain to me that he did not care about what kind of job he would be doing, as long as it enabled him to make money. He needed money to have a house, a car and good clothes. He clarified that he does not want to be rich, but simply able to live a good life and work and get paid enough to live decently. Then, he explained to me why this was not possible in Morocco:

You see, Moroccans are strange because they rather prefer people to beg than giving them jobs. That is not normal. This is why I don't like it here. I have tried, but they don't give me jobs, even though I really am a good worker and I am strong.

To put Fred's answer into context, it is important to clarify that not all migrants have to go begging in Morocco in order to survive. The ones I encountered also worked - sometimes even two or three jobs simultaneously. However, their jobs were extremely precarious. Male migrants in particular rely on work in the informal sector, mostly in construction, but also in occupations such as house guardian, car washer or as helpers on market places, for example. Usually, their jobs are characterised by physical effort, demand extreme subordination or comprise of tasks that are dangerous either physically or because they are related to illegal activities. Mario explained these problems in relation to his last job:

First, I worked in a bakery, lifting sacks of flour. I gave that up because it hurt my back. You see, my health is all I got. Then, I got a job with some Moroccans to drive a truck with goods from Tanger to Casablanca. Always at night, I don't know what they were transporting, I didn't ask, obviously. I had to park the van outside the city, in some kind of forest where some Moroccan driver took over and they distributed the goods into smaller cars. You know, I think they tried to avoid taxes. But I better

don't think about it too much. It was still better than carrying 50kg of cement up four floors on a building site the whole day.

Migrants frequently complained to me that they were usually underpaid, particularly in comparison to their Moroccan neighbours. In construction work, a day's wages for Moroccan labourers ranges between 80-150 dirhams<sup>33</sup>, whereas a migrant worker is lucky to get 50-60 dirhams for similar jobs. These types of jobs are usually unstable. Like many Moroccans in similar situations, migrants rely on daily wage labour. In order to find such work, migrants usually direct themselves to particular collection places that are well known throughout the city. In the morning, both migrants and Moroccans gather there to wait until drivers in vans turn up, shout out the number of people they need and load them onto the truck. In the evening, they are usually brought back to where they were picked up. The unpredictability of the work conditions were summed up by Abdoul from Guinea who told me:

Oh you never know where they take you. It could be anywhere in the outskirts, once they have taken me down to Marrakech to a building site and I had to stay there for three days (Marrakech is about 200km away). You don't even know what they will pay and if they pay you. It's completely random. Sometimes you are lucky, sometimes you are not.

While migrants shun such difficult, unstable and humiliating work, they nevertheless accept it in times of extreme necessity. All the male migrants I interviewed, independent of their educational background, had done construction work, for example, at one point or another. However, they preferred not to talk about it too much. Marco, for example, told me that working on construction sites was not an option for him because of the health risks involved. To my surprise, I met him one morning queuing in Takadoum at one of the corners where local construction owners would hire daily labourers, together with a bunch of other migrant men I had met before. He was sheepishly looking at his feet when he saw me pass and first tried to get away unperceived. When I approached him he told me that he was 'just trying his

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<sup>33</sup> 11 dirhams (dh) equate to approximately 1€ at the time of the research, so 80-150dh are between 7 and 14€ a day and 50 dh are approximately 4€ a day.

luck for the day'. I frequently saw migrants I knew in the queues in the early morning hours when I was waiting for the bus and they always attempted to not be noticed by me on these occasions.

One alternative to these unpopular activities is to set up informal businesses and other independent entrepreneurial activities. Hairdressing, cobbling, sewing, selling food stuffs or African goods, and the reselling of cheap Moroccan textiles to friends or family in Europe are just some of these activities.<sup>34</sup> Begging is a frequent occupation for many of the migrants I encountered during my fieldwork. Pickerel (2011), who has documented a range of entrepreneurial activities undertaken by migrants in Morocco, rightly concludes that their profitability and success is severely hampered by a number of factors but most importantly, violence and police interference, illegal taxing by authorities and local residents, lack of capital and the inaccessibility of suitable places to sell to and attract clientele.<sup>35</sup> In contrast to Pickerel's analysis, I contend that these activities are not an expression of migrants' entrepreneurial creativity but rather an expression of their helplessness and lack of alternatives. All the migrants I conversed with who undertook independent work were adamant that it was not covering their living expenses and that they were relying on additional outside help to make ends meet, either through remittances from outside or through dependence on charities. This is underscored by the fact that - apart from two migrants - none of the businesses I witnessed survived a long time and migrants frequently had to change their income activities and tactics.

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<sup>34</sup> Morocco has a thriving textile industry and produces clothes for many European brands, mostly in sewing factories and sweatshops located in Tanger, Casablanca and Rabat. Some of the sweatshop-produced clothes can be purchased for little money on the black market and migrants often attempt to send clothes to friends in Europe via the normal post so that they can then resell them there for profit. However, these business ventures are hampered by the fact that customs controls for parcels are very strict and do not allow migrants to send more than three or four pieces of clothing at any one time.

<sup>35</sup> In this context, I have witnessed that migrants in Rabat and Casablanca are actually competing in these occupations with many unemployed Moroccans who are trying to make their living through similar means. Therefore, it is extremely difficult for migrants not only to find work or to recruit clients but also to secure a workplace in the street (if one is selling there or begging), as frequently, the most strategically placed locations are already taken and violent conflicts about who is able to use them are common.

Even Fred had attempted to set up a business by buying and selling textiles made in Morocco back in Nigeria. However, because of the legal restrictions on the amount of goods that can be sent to Nigeria tax free, and Fred's lack of capital or business partners in Nigeria, this was a short-lived project. When I met Fred again after several weeks of trying to reach him over his phone without success, he apologised: 'I was in Marrakech on business.' I was glad for him and congratulated him on having found a job. I later found out from his wife that he had taken a begging trip to Marrakech in order not be recognised by neighbours or migrant friends in Rabat.

In light of this information, it is understandable that Fred thinks he is 'wasting his talent'. He means his ability to work going unused. In a literal sense, Fred means that he is wasting his potential to make money by staying in Morocco. He is confident that he could make money, using his body and mind, if he were just in the right place. He is convinced that he is needed somewhere. He cannot understand how it is possible to be unable to put yourself to use to gain money if you are healthy and strong. For him, being in Morocco is a waste of his life, time and energy, because migration was supposed to put his work power to better use in order to obtain financial security for his old age and consolidate the future of his children. He knows that the time he has to make money and work is running out, because every year without working is a year lost (see also Ahmad 2008).

When I talked with Jean about his perception of being a failure in life because of not having been able to use his youth to make money abroad, my intention was to help him restore his sense of self worth by pointing out that he had achieved extraordinary things by having the courage to leave, overcoming all the obstacles in his way and surviving in Morocco the way he did. I stressed that few people were actually able to do what he had done and that this in itself was a great achievement, which made him an outstanding, courageous young man. However, he just shook his head while listening to me:

You don't understand. In Africa, it doesn't matter what you *tell* people.

Your experiences, your stories, what you know, all that doesn't count.

You have to *show* them that you *are* someone. You have to have a car, good clothes, material things, you know. *That* is what counts. Like that you *are* someone in your community. You will be respected. The rest is not important.

Apart from their inability to work, Jean and Fred's comments demonstrate how they faced a contradiction between their idea of a migrant's purpose in life as material success and the reality they were living in forced immobility. In particular, this feeling of being trapped in a present of joblessness and poverty has a profound impact on male migrants' relation to their own identity as successful providers for the family and public figures in the community. Their idea of a present filled with hard work as a means to gather money in order to be viewed in the future as successful migrants by those back in their home country is slowly eroded while they are living in Morocco. At this point, it might be important to clarify that the male migrants I interviewed did not aspire to work 'as much as they could' but 'to gain as much money as they could'. They had no need to fill their time but to make it valuable in monetary terms. In this way, their quest 'to become a man' is strongly related to their ability to commodify their time, which for them is essentially what 'development' and 'modernity' is all about (Adam 2006, Schweizer 2008). Their present in Morocco represents a wasted life in a literal no-man's land where they no longer identify with social markers like wealth and work, which would make them 'real men' in a modern world, in which time equals money.

### 5. 2.2 *Being a Woman*

Whereas men - at least from their own perspective - lose their 'manliness' by losing financial independence and monetary power, women (particularly those with children) referred to a process of losing their status as women and successful mothers, wives and home-makers while trying to survive in the present. Like the men, the women I talked to resented working outside the home in Morocco because it involved a degradation of their status. However, compared to the men, women had far fewer options available for finding paid employment in Morocco. According to their accounts, they were generally rejected as domestics because of their phenotype or, if employed,

treated like slaves.<sup>36</sup> Most women I encountered therefore concentrated on ethnic businesses, such as selling African foot products, hair dressing and tailoring in the main for other Sub-Saharan African migrants. Only two women I met worked for Moroccan employers in the local market, sorting out vegetables.

Women generally did not look for jobs and money in the same way as men did. Even though most of the women I encountered had worked outside the home in some way or another in their countries of origin (mostly doing business, sewing or sometimes as employees and civil servants), they indicated to me in various ways that what made them women was not this work but rather their roles as wives or mothers. This was also why problems of being separated from their husbands or male companions - or abandoned by them financially - was one of the major concerns women expressed. Often, they voiced concern over the abnormality of providing for their male companions, or husbands back home, rather than the other way round. It should be noted here that the women I interviewed had almost exclusively travelled together with a male companion and/or had children to care for. For them, their primary problem remained how to provide for their own children and for themselves in Morocco, rather than thinking about providing for others back home.<sup>37</sup> For the women I talked to, this was tightly linked to the idea of having lost their status as women.

Nicole, for example, a woman from Congo, had travelled to Morocco when she was eight months pregnant. She had planned to cross over the border to Spain on a ferry, using her sister's French passport and give birth in Europe, so as to secure citizenship and then bring over her husband later. Even before the ferry left the harbour of

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<sup>36</sup> During the 19<sup>th</sup> century and up into the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, black slaves and soldiers from sub-Saharan Africa were commonly found in south-west Morocco and signified status for their 'owners.' Black and white people rarely married or mixed, as black people were generally conferred an inferior status (Ennaji 1994:108). The term 'azi' (which means black and slave) is still used frequently to refer to black African migrants in the streets, and it is not uncommon to find Moroccans display a feeling of superiority towards black people (Pian 2009). This is particularly so in relation to black domestic workers, whether male or female, Moroccan or foreign.

<sup>37</sup> I only encountered two cases in which women had left one or several children in their country of origin and in the care of family. Three others had sent their children unaccompanied over the border to Spain and France. In these cases, women were very concerned about their financial responsibilities towards these children and their inability to comply with their roles as mothers.

Tanger, she was intercepted by Spanish coast guards and returned to the mainland. Since then, she had been stuck in Morocco with her husband still in Congo. By the time I met her, her child was four years old. She was presented to me by church employees as a 'successful entrepreneur' who had managed to keep a small business of dried fish and homemade peanut butter afloat thanks to an injection of funding from a church-based organisation. Nicole was popular in the church community, and when she sold her products on Sundays in front of the church, she literally sold out every time. I accompanied her on many errands during the week: we went to the fish market in Sale, bought peanuts on the market in Takadoum, recovered second-hand glass containers from the recycling people down the road and delivered her products to clients all over Rabat. Nicole was an extremely busy woman. Apart from that, she looked after her small son and even had to support her younger (adult) brother, who also stayed in Rabat.

Of all the migrants I met, Nicole was the one who had the most carefully maintained dwelling in Youssoufia. She owned a television, good kitchen utensils and had exclusive use of a large roof terrace where she produced the fish and peanut butter. She even managed to send her child to a private run Moroccan nursery, rather than putting him in the crèche run by one of the international charities, which many other Congolese pre-school children attend for free. In all accounts, it appeared that 'she had made it' as far as one could make it in Morocco. When I confronted her with this idea, she became quite incredulous:

This is what you think? That I am a respectable person here in the community? That I can be proud of what I have achieved?

She shook her head.

You know, in Congo I have *never had to do* this kind of work. Never. I was spoiled. I did not even have to do my own washing. My husband brought the money home. Here, even my husband in Congo wants me to send him money even though I have nothing! My brother is scrounging on me! This is the world upside down!



It was not that Nicole resented having to provide for everyone else. It was more that she had hoped that migration would make her life easier, not more difficult, with respect to work. She felt that, as a woman, she should not to be doing all this, she should be the one being looked after.

Apart from the women who were living with their husbands in Morocco, others had either a husband or boyfriend abroad or were living with some other migrants in Morocco. Only six of the women I interviewed lived with the father of their children, while the 13 others were single mothers or had a husband or boyfriend abroad. The nine women I encountered who had no boyfriend or husband at the time I knew them were particularly resentful about men in general. They voiced their disappointment about the short-lived relationships or the inability of their husbands and boyfriends to maintain them 'as it was due' and about men's failure to assume their financial and moral responsibilities.

Sandrine, for example, once shared with me her disappointing experience with men. Widowed with a small daughter, she married again while still in Congo. This new husband repeatedly insisted that she should join him on his trip to Morocco, together with her daughter. Just after arriving in Morocco, she became pregnant with his child, because the family believed that her pregnancy would help her to avoid deportation once she and her older daughter arrived in Spain. The idea was that her husband would join her later. However, she found out imminent to her departure that her husband had sexually abused her older daughter and decided to leave him, despite the fact that she would lose his financial support in securing a place on the boat and would have to raise her two children alone. She told me:

I am through with men. This was it. No more men. Instead of looking after you, they use you, for their own interest. There is no more advantage to being with someone when you live here. On the contrary, it's all only sacrifice, sacrifice, for their sake. What do you gain from marriage here I ask you? Nothing. The men you find here, they do not look for *real women*. They look for prostitutes.

That men considered other women migrants as prostitutes was actually not too far removed from reality. When I enquired about Ghanaian women in Morocco, Silvester was adamant:

There are no Ghanaian girls in Morocco, only the ones that come to study here. Ghanaian women do not travel like this. The ones you find are all Nigerian and they all have been working in their countries beforehand.<sup>38</sup>

Migrant women were often aware of their own need to transgress their own normative frames of references when it came to their relationships to men, because of the needs of circumstance. This was put plainly to me while observing a discussion between Lise and her husband concerning promiscuity. From earlier conversations, I knew that Lise was quite actively involved in prostitution before meeting her Congolese husband in Rabat, some years before. But now, she was living a respectable life as a housewife in a relatively comfortable flat, still close to the rest of the Congolese community. Thanks to the generous remittances she and her family received from her husband's family in Europe, they were finally able to escape poverty. During a visit with my baby daughter to her place after she had given birth herself, Lise's husband came in upset. He told us that he had seen one of Lise's friends on the street flirting with one of his friends. He was upset about this, claiming that she was behaving badly, letting herself go and being 'easy.' He accused her of trying to get into a relationship with his friends in order to gain financial benefits. Lise defended her friend by saying:

What is the problem here? OK, if we would be in Congo now, I would agree with you. It is not right. But we are not in Congo. Everyone here has to find their way out of this. You know that you cannot compare this to Congo. You cannot judge her like that. Who are you to tell her what to do or what not to do? Have you lived a life without sin since you came

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<sup>38</sup> In referring to 'working' he means prostitution. I am not sure about the actual number of female Ghanaen migrants in Rabat and I have never met one myself. Nevertheless, I was told by other migrants that there were a limited number of Ghanaen women in town, however nobody was able to confirm the prostitution hypothesis to me. Pian (2009: 57) notes that Ghanaen migrants in Morocco are indeed to be found in prostitution networks. Herself, Carling (2005), and Kastner (2010) have documented the dynamics of prostitution among Nigerian women in Morocco.

here? And anyway, the saying goes that men are like hospital beds,... they receive anyone. So if she is doing this, it is because men allow women to do it.

In the examples I have given, men were unable to commodify their labour power and their 'time' while women were forced to do so, which created a situation in which otherwise unacceptable behaviour was sometimes tolerated and excused as being necessary in exceptional times and places. This also meant that both men and women struggled with the contradictions between these situations and the definitions they used to value a man or woman as 'respectable'.

This had implications for relationships and the prospects of family life for both men and women. It contradicted their ideas of the 'right time' for marriage and children and distorted the culturally accepted rhythms of the life cycle. Apart from Lise, most other migrants I knew who lived in a family with husband and children had married in their country of origin or had a husband abroad. In the three cases I witnessed in which Congolese females had found a husband in Morocco, the men were able to either count on constant remittances from family in Europe or had refugee status in Morocco. None of the single, male migrants married in Morocco while I knew them. Silvester made it clear to me why for him marriage in Morocco was not an option:

There are no women to marry here in Morocco. As I told you, there are no real Ghanaian women here. When I am in Spain I will look for a wife and children. I will bring over a wife from Ghana. It is not good to get married before one is earning money. Women eat the money up and you are left with nothing. I will never get to Europe like that!

However, when I asked Yann if he could consider marrying someone from a different country, he told me:

I don't really care what country, colour or age the person is. It is important that you connect with each other, I think. But this is difficult here, to find

someone to connect with, because everyone is only thinking about money and interest. Where there is only interest, love cannot grow.

These examples illustrate how the constant struggle for survival in the present seriously affects men and women's ideas about themselves and others. It distorts views they held about a prescribed life in the past. Their failure to participate in the timescapes of industrial time (Adam 2004), in which success as a person is dominated by one's ability to commodify time, control it and use it, also altered their view of their value as persons and affected the relationships between themselves.

### **5.3 Turning round**

As indicated earlier, some of the migrants I knew worked two or three jobs simultaneously, or else changed jobs frequently according to seasons or opportunities for business (Pickerill 2011). Migrants also frequently had to change their places of residence when unable to pay rent or because of police persecution. During the three years of my research, most migrants I interviewed changed their residence at least twice, and I know that at least five did so more often.

Between periods of random and restless activity, migrants can go days and sometimes weeks without finding any employment at all, and without earning any money. They often have to ask their relatives to send them remittances or ask friends and other migrants to help them out, often without knowing when the much needed remittances will arrive. It is often the case that migrants spend days on end without doing anything at all, while their minds are racing about what they *could be* doing and what they *could become*. Jean, from Cameroon, who I mentioned earlier, finally agreed to describe his daily routine to me and the meaninglessness he felt was clearly evident when he said:

Well, I am getting up, I wait to see if I feel like getting dressed, then normally I go out, just walk around and maybe see some friends, watch television, see if there's something up, go back home, ask someone for some money, buy some food, eat, have a nap in the afternoon, and in the

evening go out again, maybe go to the cyber<sup>39</sup> if I have the money...I don't know. It's always the same. Nothing interesting, very boring. Nothing important to mention there. If there is no work, there is nothing. Just you and nothing.

It appeared to me that migrants' lives in the present are marked by a continuous tension between doing nothing and constantly racing about trying to find a temporary job for survival, a new house to live in, some food for the children. In such an unpredictable environment there is no possibility to rest and relax, even (and particularly) in moments of boredom and inactivity. In this context it is possible to understand migrants' frequent remarks about their difficulties sleeping, finding 'rest' and sitting down and relaxing or simply letting their minds wander. Some confessed to me that they felt constantly tense, 'on the run'. Yann described his sleepless nights to me:

I just could not go to sleep. I tried everything. And when I finally got to sleep, I had these dreams. Really, really bad dreams. So I woke up again. I started to take pills. But they made me drowsy during the day. I kind of liked that for a while, because you just don't care anymore...you finally rest. But of course, that could not go on like that. So I went to see the psychologist in Caritas. And it is getting better now. When I cannot sleep I try to think of something nice. I try to concentrate and relax. It is getting better. But I never sleep more than 5 or 6 hours.

This constant tension between boredom and restlessness was voiced by migrants independent of their gender. Migrants I spoke with explained often that they felt as if they were starting from the same point of departure every day, even though they were trying to change their situation. They felt as if there was no real evolution. Instead, migrants' entire energy went into fighting to maintain the status quo, to make the necessary money to pay the rent, get food, and buy a bottle of butane gas for the cooking. The mind is preoccupied with survival, there is no space for creativity or

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<sup>39</sup> Internet Cafe

projects. This becomes a way of life. Many therefore consider that they are 'losing time', 'wasting time', 'turning round' - in an exhausting and eternal present from which there is no escape. These expressions were recurring and frequent in migrants' accounts of their daily routines. Angelique expressed it like this:

You feel like a rat in a wheel. Running, and running and running and using all your force, just to spin around, not getting anywhere. I want to go back home or finally get to Spain, just anything else than staying here.

I found that this situation made migrants feel that they no longer had any control over the 'system' and over the forces that mark social status, because they no longer had any control over their own 'time'. Yann, the young refugee from Congo, expressed this feeling to me by talking about the unpredictability of his daily life:

Y: You know, sometimes, I get up in the morning, and my little brother asks me: what are you going to do today? And I say: I don't know. And at that moment, I really don't know. Most often, there is no reason to get up even. But then, it can happen that the telephone starts to ring, like today, for example, and I go and accompany my Moroccan boss to do some errands, and after that, I receive your phone call and we meet up and without wanting it, the whole day just falls into place, without me doing anything. And my brother says: You always say you don't do anything and then you are always away!

Me: But that is a good thing, isn't it? It's good to be able to do things.

Y: Yes and no. Because it is not me who is deciding what I am doing, it is usually other people. It is never me who says: let's do this or that today. I can never do that. I can never plan anything.

In such situations, migrants' former visions of migration as an adventure finally begin to crumble, because they no longer 'control' the adventure at all. At this point in their trajectory, it becomes obvious that instead, their story of migration is becoming a different story: adventure is slowly replaced by boredom, the feeling of being part of

the flow of life is replaced by the feeling of being outside time and place while being controlled by outside forces that govern their movement and stay. They feel overwhelmed and betrayed by a reality they cannot understand because they have no place within it.

#### **5.4 Losing the past**

As well as the feeling of being trapped in the present, migrants also have difficulties connecting the present meaningfully to their own past. It appears that when living in limbo, the past can be felt as useless, or as a lost part of one's life. Adam (2006:65) points out that the present is not only defined by past and future, but defines them as well. In other words, it is the present that gives meaning to the way we perceive and talk about the past and the future. With reference to George Herbert Mead, Adam (2006:66) explains that humans' relationship to time is interactively and subjectively constituted. By this she means that the way in which past and future are preserved, evoked and selected is open to change.

However, the migrants I interviewed often found it difficult to make their past meaningful in the present they were living. Some of the migrants I interviewed expressed this in relation to how their abilities, skills or experience were no longer relevant in Morocco. They felt they had lost their past in this way, along with all the effort or sacrifices they had made to achieve the status they had held. This both affected their relations to their past and added to the feeling of living a useless present. However, it was experienced differently among the men and the women with whom I was in contact.

##### *5.4.1 When the past is no longer relevant to the present*

It is not only the present that is difficult to make sense of. The migrants I met gave accounts of difficult relationships with both their past lives and with family members they had still living in their countries of origin. These were constant issues that affected their present lives. In the case of Sebastien, the chemistry graduate I mentioned earlier, it was his inability to put his skills to use and to be recognised as part of his country's intellectual elite that meant for him that his past was going to

waste, his former life being annulled as irrelevant in the present. Sebastien had been presented to me by an NGO worker as an example of a successful migrant who managed to run his own candle production business. Instead of concentrating on how he had achieved this, however, Sebastien chose to give me a very detailed account of his childhood and youth, in order that I should understand why this for him meant little.

He went to great lengths to point out the sacrifices and obstacles he had faced in order to attend university despite having achieved excellent results in school, and how he finally gained a chemistry degree after years of study and hard work. It was of great importance to him to stress that he gained all his qualifications through merit, not because of his family's resources or contacts. He then went on to explain that after several years of staying intermittently in Nigeria and Cameroon, he arrived in Morocco where he hoped to finally secure a decent job in accordance with his educational background. However, having received an offer for a research post at the University of Meknes, he failed to obtain a work permit because he was unable to present a formal university diploma or his publications and research data from scientific projects in Congo. Following many unsuccessful administrative negotiations between universities, ministries and diplomats from both Morocco and Congo, he finally lost the offer of the post. The UNHCR also rejected his claim for asylum and he was left with no status, no work permit and - worse of all according to him - no real prospect of a promising future for an educated individual like him. As a result, Sebastien suffered for a long time from clinical depression. He told me that he felt as if his whole life was going to waste and he had lost the energy to start all over again. He told me that the feeling that overwhelmed him was one of impotence, of helplessness, of injustice:

You think to yourself: Why me? What have I done to deserve this? I have tried to do everything the right way.

Sebastien was particularly angry and disappointed by the ways in which his quest for a job and asylum seeker status were not considered as legitimate, despite his promising past as both a brilliant student and a political refugee. In light of this, his current 'success' in building up his business was meaningless to him.



In another case, Claude, a refugee from Congo, who had been granted asylum in Chad where he had stayed for several years with his wife and children, decided to come to Morocco when he was no longer granted any subsidies and had difficulties making ends meet. Upon arrival in Morocco, his claim for asylum was rejected because he had left Chad unauthorised and could not accredit his former refugee status. Every time I saw him, he showed me a folder of newspaper clippings covering refugee protests in Chad that he had participated in. He held on to this stack of papers like it was a case full of money. He believed that he had played by the rules. He had documented evidence of his past. He could not accept that his past had become useless in the eyes of the international organisations, NGOs and the Moroccan government, who would not believe his story despite the written evidence he produced. His past - both on paper and lived - had become useless. Not being able to have your paper-past recognised, despite being able to document it, was perceived by more than one of the migrants I had encountered as a particularly perverse form of deceit, because it appeared to contradict the very rules of 'paper-past importance' that state regulatory authorities had drawn up in making migration legitimate.

#### *5.4.2 When the present has no meaning for the past*

Claude's life story is interesting in another respect. After living in Chad became unviable, Claude decided to migrate further north, while his wife and children went back to Congo to live with one of his sisters-in-law. As a former military official, Claude had lost all his assets and land in Congo and feared persecution if he returned. Following years of separation, his family and particularly his adult children were hardly in contact with him and refused to speak to him over the phone. He told me that they were angry with him because he was eluding his financial responsibility to support them with the cost for their university education. He felt guilty about having failed them as a father. Being over 50, Claude was one of the oldest migrants I met in Morocco. When asked what he would do differently now if he could start his life all over again, he made a very surprising confession:

Perhaps I would have spent more time with my family and my children. I would have made a greater effort. Because now, they do not need me anymore. They have forgotten about me. I am old now and I have no one.

This feeling of having lost one's role as a parent, son, wife or husband and therefore having lost a crucial link with the past that identifies individual migrants as part of a community arose in a number of interviews. Chatting about Silvester's brother's recent marriage back in Ghana, I asked him if he was happy for him:

Well, I am happy. But I am also sad. Because he is there, he is married, he will have children, I still have no wife, no children. He is going to take my place because I am not there.

Silvester and Claude referred to having lost their place because they had not 'marked' their presence socially through financial means or other forms of contact that would have enabled them to uphold the obligations and reciprocal ties that defined their relationships with communities back home (Lubkeman 2011). It is important to note that it was not so much economic necessity that prompted family members back home to cut off ties (as in Claude's case), but more often migrants' incapacity to comply with social obligations.

Lise, who I mentioned earlier, received a telephone call from her mother in Congo while I was with her in her house because one of her aunts had died and the family was organising the funeral celebration. Her mother expected her to contribute to this financially. Lise told me that her mother counted on frequent remittances from her sister in France and was a successful business woman herself.

It is not that she needs the money. She can pay for this herself. But it makes her look bad in the eyes of the others that I am not sending anything. It looks as if I don't care about my family any longer, you see? But you cannot explain to them how we are living here, they don't understand the situation at all. For them, everything outside Congo is paradise and the money is growing on trees. Also, they don't know that it

is difficult to send money from here. I cannot send Dirhams to Congo, for example. My mother does not understand that you cannot send Euros or Dollars over from here.<sup>40</sup>

Apart from not being able to comply with social obligations, migrants also voiced concern about having become a burden, rather than an asset to their families. Women with children in their charge often mentioned this as one of the reasons for not returning home. Blessing told me (pointing at her three children):

I cannot go back like this, with nothing to pay for the rice and only three more mouths to fill. No, I cannot go back like this.

Esther was particularly wary of returning home with a mixed race child:

I cannot do this to my family, you know. People look down on you if you have a child like this. I can only come back if I am able to go with a lot of money. A lot of money.

For all these reasons people were adamant that they could not return to their countries of origin. The migrants I knew who had enquired about returning voluntarily through the IOM programme, for example, told me that their main reticence to do so was related to the fact that this option did not offer sufficient economic and political security to build a new life in their home country.<sup>41</sup> Jean told me in an internet chat, when I asked him if he would consider going back to Cameroon with the IOM:

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<sup>40</sup> The Moroccan currency, the dirham, cannot be exported and even Moroccans have a legal limit on foreign currency exchange unless they have an international foreign currency account at a Moroccan bank, something that is difficult to access. Undocumented migrants cannot exchange money officially at the bank and have to do so on the black market, which is costly, risky and dangerous. Sending foreign currency to another country through private money transfer businesses is illegal.

<sup>41</sup> The programme for voluntary return run by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) has been organised in collaboration with different European governments (Germany, UK, Belgium, Spain, Italy, Norway, Netherlands and Switzerland) and the European Union and its activities are coordinated between the Moroccan government and African home countries. From 2005 until February 2010, 2831 irregular migrants have returned through the IOM to 29 different African home countries. Only 1818 of them have been provided with financial aid of 485€ to start an economic activity upon return. Most economic activities concern informal business ventures (IOM 2010). The evaluation of the reinsertion projects undertaken in 2009

As it is now, I prefer to die here. If I go back to Cameroon, I only go the day I can be autonomous over there.

Jean feared the social stigma of the returned adventurer who would be considered a social failure for not having become a successful migrant abroad. As Alpes (2011) has shown in her work on returned Cameroonian migrants, their families and friends often claim laziness, stupidity and bad luck as the main reasons migrants are deported. Therefore, returning home with nothing is perceived by others and the migrants themselves as a personal failure, rather than a problem related to migration controls (Noel 2006). Additionally, Jean and Esther's need to be 'autonomous' was connected to their realisation that they had evolved differently from their friends and family back home. Jean told me that he often chatted with former classmates:

They are all married now, some have kids. They have a job. What would I do if I went back there? I am no longer one of them. I am too different now. It would be difficult for me.

Esther also shared her perception of being different to her former friends when I asked her if she stayed in regular contact:

Me? No, I do not contact much. You know, I don't really know what to say, because they don't know what I have been through, they have such a different life. But they would not understand what I am doing here, my life is different.

The fact of knowing that life in their countries of origin goes on without them marks migrants' perception of their past as unrelated to their lived present. While they were standing still, even their past was evolving. Being disconnected from their past in this way has strong personal implications for migrants. Ties to family and friends become more superficial or distant and in cases this can lead to an identity crisis in which

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states that all migrants whose projects have been visited consider that the financial means provided by the IOM for their economic project are not sufficient to guarantee its sustainability (IOM 2009: 9).

migrants are no longer sure about their former values about migration, the group they belong to or where their roots are. This loss of 'belonging' to a community suggests a link between time and belonging. The cases discussed above indicate that the ways in which people develop connections to others is dependent not only on place but also on time lived together and apart. The next section will show that a loss of community can have clear consequences for the ways in which people are able to envision their future.

### **5.5 Losing the future**

In a situation in which past and present have become meaningless, migrants also have increasing difficulties in focusing on a brighter future. While migrants were usually still filled with the conviction of a better life for themselves elsewhere when they started their migration trajectory, this certainty was slowly eroded the longer they stayed in Morocco. This was often related to a growing awareness of their own life course running in a different direction from the one they had dreamed of. Often, this appeared clearly in conversations with migrants about family and children. In one of my many internet chats with Jean, after three years of knowing him, I asked him what he was doing and he replied:

Me ? Nothing much, just life that passes and passes. No wife, no children, no future. It's rubbish.

I was surprised to hear this from him as I had always seen in him as a bit of a womaniser, constantly partying and surrounded by friends. Actually, when I first met him, he told me that having a family was the least important thing to him at that moment. When I asked him three years later if he wanted to have children he answered:

Everyone would like that, this is to a great extent our objective on this earth. Multiply the world. But I don't get there despite my age, if you have no children, you will disappear like you have never come to the world.

Similar themes were often echoed in conversations with other single migrants without children or family. The longer migrants stayed in Morocco, and the older they became, the more they realised that the possibility of having a family in the way they understood it was slowly growing more remote. This issue was predominantly evident in conversations with young, unmarried migrant men, as most women and older men I interviewed actually had children either with them or back in their home countries. Women related the thoughts of the future directly to their offspring, albeit in different ways. Sandrine showed me her two children and said:

Look at them, I mean, what will become of them? The years are passing. And we are still here in this Morocco. They will get older, they need to go to a good school. They need to get jobs. ...I do not know what to do about this, honestly. I wanted a future for them. There is no future for them. Not here and not there (back in Congo).

For mothers, the fact that their children would not have a job or a house was important as they saw their offspring as the extension of husbands, brothers and other male members of the family who would look after them in old age. If children were living in poverty it meant that their mothers would die in poverty too. This is how, in some women's eyes, a better future was directly related to the degree to which they were able to provide a bright future for their own children.

As noted in the beginning of this chapter, one of the culturally normative time frames at the basis of much of our temporality perspective is our desire to 'transcend' time through a variety of cultural practices. Often, these are based on repetition of rituals or traditions in an effort to revive the past in the present and into the future. Adam (2002, 2004) has argued that in this way, the finitude of our lives is symbolically extended and transcended and we are capable of living eternally. She notes that in many societies, remembering and marking a presence are important aspects of community life and are promoted through a variety of cultural practices, such as cyclical recurring festivities in the community, or rituals for the dead. Lubkeman (2011) has argued that African migrants often compensate for their physical absence in these community

activities of remembrance through the sending of remittances. For him, migrants are marking their place in the future symbolically through financial contributions to the community back home. However, when migrants live in forced immobility for a long period of time, their relation to the future and future generations is slowly altered: they no longer see their meaningful contribution to the circle of life. In this sense, their ability to transcend time through their children is disrupted. This, however, is a vital human desire, which is linked to our sense of existence. Having lost this transcendence, some migrants lose part of their existential reason for being in the world.

### **5.6 Facing the absurd**

After our long chat about the difficulty of finding a wife and having children, Jean ended the internet chat with: 'I am frankly lost in hopelessness'. In many conversations I had with migrants, a feeling of alienation marked their stories and a contention that nothing any longer made sense. Almost all of them had experienced periods of deep depression and a sense of personal failure because of it. In conversations with representatives from two of the main international NGOs working with migrants in Morocco, both organisations stressed the importance of mental health problems among the migrant population as one of their major health concerns in recent years.<sup>42</sup> Migration no longer appeared as an adventure which would help them become better individuals and enable them to return to their home country one day. Instead it had converted them into a shadow of themselves. The link between existential mobility and physical mobility was broken.

If migration was no longer a road to change, there was no other road to change possible. The only thing that was left was death. Yann shared with me a text he had written on his view on life that illustrates this feeling of senselessness..

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<sup>42</sup> I have not been able to provide official figures from either organisation to prove this point because the both interviewees' observations were based on internal data which is not published yet. However, both assured me that cases of depression, anxiety attacks and sleep problems were frequent pathologies which they had also observed among the migrant population. While they related them in great part also to traumatic events happened during their trip to Morocco or in their home country, both were positive about the fact that living conditions in Morocco contributed greatly to the development of these disorders.

## A man's life

Man's only happiness is to eat, drink and enjoy the results of their hard-working. Human beings work hard on this earth, but what does this bring? One generation passes and another generation is born and the world is still there; the sun rises, the sun sets, what existed still exists; there is nothing new any day that can make us say: 'look here's something new'. This has always been the case for a long time, a long time before us, though we forget what has happened in the past, just as the next generation will also forget what happened after us. Seeing all the evil that man has made on this earth, he must give what he has to another who has done nothing. Every day we suffer and try hard to get what we want; we do not even rest at night!

I hate life, I hate all that we have achieved on this earth, all the evil that I have done to this earth. I will happily leave the benefits to he who will take my place...

His words illustrate his consciousness of the senseless and never changing conditions that bind the past, the present and the future in the same, unjust and always returning cycle of life from which there is no escape. Yann's words also describe his consciousness of death. The everlasting present creates a situation in which migrants perceive their life as standing still, while that of others, their family and friends is constantly going on, towards death. They know that even though their time is standing still, their life is also finite and eventually will lead to death. This creates a situation in which time is 'endured' until death, the inevitable end (Schweizer 2008). Enduring time equals suffering time, because it is just time, without being filled with any meaningful project that could give back sense to life.

Even though Yann is a man, I have had conversations with women echoing similar feelings about the uselessness of life and the appreciation of inevitable death. However, women were sometimes able to mitigate the situation by focusing on the present and on the responsibility they had towards their children, towards life. Emma



for example, told me that her husband was still in psychological care because he had difficulties coming to terms with the situation of not being anyone. She believed that she was coping better because:

Women always have to be stronger because they have to be there for the children, life has to go on, you cannot just sit down and cry. That doesn't put food on the table.

She admitted to me, however, that she also had difficult times. She told me about her last two pregnancies.

I was so unhappy about the fourth pregnancy, always crying because I was worried about how we were going to manage with another child now. I suffered a lot. And, just after I had stopped breastfeeding, I fell pregnant again! But this time, I swore to myself that I was not going to get depressed, that I was going to live my life because I had only one. And it was important to live every day of it. And this has been the change in my mind, I think and it makes things easier to live with, it really does. I concentrate on now, not on tomorrow. And going to church has helped me a lot too (....) You would not believe it, but I am very happy with my five children now. I mean, I am still suffering, but I am at peace with myself.

Not everyone was able to concentrate on the present in the same way Emma did, in order to get some sense back from life. This was particularly so because some migrants started losing faith in spiritual guidance as a way to endure the present day. Some of the migrants told me how they lost faith in God or changed their religious orientation during a period in which they doubted life and its sense. Pierre and Sandrine actually converted to Islam after they had felt betrayed by God in one of their unsuccessful migration attempts, but soon after recovered their Christian faith. Three Muslim migrants confessed to me that they had been disappointed by their faith upon learning that Morocco, as a Muslim country, was in no way hospitable and welcoming to them. They started to mistrust the Muslim community as a whole after they had

experienced racism and indifference in the mosques. But rather than loss of faith altogether, it is its reorientation and reconsideration which I uncovered repeatedly in migrants' stories. Of the forty migrants I encountered only five told me that they no longer believed in God at all. The majority were spiritual in some way or another, even though many of them had passed a crisis of faith in the past. After his denial of faith, Silvester finally joined a Pentecostal church in Morocco. Sandrine and Pierre reconverted from Islam to Christianity again and three of the Muslims I knew who had lost faith in their community, nevertheless continued to pray at home rather than at the mosque.

I interpret this as a consequence of their confrontation with the absurd. Albert Camus (1991:5) describes the feeling of absurdity of life as follows:

A world that can be explained even with bad reasons is a familiar world. But, on the other hand, in a universe suddenly divested of illusions and lights, man feels an alien, a stranger. His exile is without remedy since he is deprived of the memory of a lost home or the hope of a promised land. This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, is properly the feeling of absurdity.

In his essay *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Camus (1942) describes the absurd as a world that is unexplainable through reason or religion. For Camus, accepting the absurd means accepting that there is no higher force that should guide our lives on this earth nor scientific laws or ideologies that could explain its mysteries. In many of the conversations I had with migrants, their life in Morocco resembled an absurd world, in which their prior belief in the systems and values that guided migration, or even in God were at least temporarily suspended and out of place. It could not be made sense of. As the adventure of migration slowly loses its sense, so do the rules that until now accompanied it and the belief in their own person.

## **5.7 Conclusion**

As my contact with migrants evolved, I realised they fall into limbo not only because they felt in-between places, but also because they were living 'in-between' times: Their

future was uncertain, their present was preoccupied with immediate survival and their past had little meaning in their present situation. Cwerner (2001) has theorised about migrants' changing perspective of time in an exploration of the 'times of migration', as he calls them. In his theoretical approach on time he describes migrants lives through a series of existential processes or transitional life-stages that are interlocked without any clear linear succession of events. Among these, liminal times is perhaps the feeling that best matches the experiences described by the migrants in my research who had stayed in Morocco for years. Cwerner (2001:27-28) says about liminal times:

Liminality is not only about transition. Its fundamental ambivalence creates a time "out of the ordinary" when anything can happen. The old rules do not apply, while the new ones are still to be internalised. In this situation, many immigrants can endure living circumstances that would not be envisaged were they living in their own country or had they settled in the host society.

I find that migrants' changing perspectives on past present and future correspond to this description of 'liminal times'. Old values and ideas lose their meaning while new ones are not yet to be found. When the present no longer links meaningfully to a past and a future and when the past and future no longer coherently help to explain a life in the present, migrants are living desynchronised lives, which affect their own constructions of themselves as adventurers and their potential to transform their lives and those of their families, creating a better future for themselves and other generations.

In such a situation, migrants also perceive a fundamental contradiction between the eternal, unchanging and ongoing time of the world and humans' contradictory quest for improvement and betterment despite the world's eternal structures of injustice and fear. The possibilities of what one could become slowly diminish, there is a limit to the infinite possibilities that were previously open, and the most basic references to what it means to be someone, like having a family, are severely undermined. In such a circumstance, it is difficult to contribute to any meaningful community life, to engage in

activities, to be in any way a socially active person. Forced immobility creates marginality and dislocation.

Camus (1942) argues that the awareness of one's own death makes life the only thing worth living, rather than believing and trusting in an after-life. The awareness and consciousness of death leads to the acceptance that the present is the only thing controllable in the hands of humans. As life after death cannot be known, nor influenced, suicide is not an option to escape the absurdity of life, because it gives into death and annihilates life. Camus believed that the only way of conquering death is by living one's life to the fullest while abandoning any hope for improvement. He termed this 'revolting against the absurd'.

His perspective on life and death is particularly illustrative of migrants' perspective on life in liminal times. Madziva (2010b) shows in her analysis of Zimbabwean asylum seekers in the UK, how the sense of life and death is reconsidered when both migration and settlement are becoming a negative experience and similar to social death. Migrants in Morocco also experience their liminal times as a time in-between life and death, in which everything is reduced to life in the present. In contrast to Madziva's case, however, migrants in Morocco are still hoping to escape their situation through onward movement. Their ways of confronting their absurd situation seem contradictory to the idea of revolt without hope, because while they are forced to preoccupy themselves with the immediate present, most of them hold on to a belief in the future in order to reaffirm the worth of their existence. I see their behaviour as a constant moving in and out of hopelessness and acceptance of the status quo.

In the following chapter, I will concentrate on how the constant desire to create new futures elsewhere while attempting to make the immediate present liveable plays out in the relations that migrants have with each other in forced immobility. I will show how migrants' lives in the present and their particular perspectives on past and future mark the ambivalent relations they maintain with each other.

# Chapter 6: Migrant communities in Morocco

## 6.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I indicated how migrants lose their sense of belonging and identity through their altered relation to time. In this chapter, I want to focus on migrants' interaction with community structures in Morocco, in order to demonstrate how forced immobility also alters their relationship to place. The data presented here shows that migrants' social relations in forced immobility are on the one hand a site for recuperating identity and social significance, but on the other hand also position some of them in relationships of dependence and exploitation. These contradictory relationships to 'place making' are at the roots of migrants' desire to keep on moving, and inhibit them also from becoming 'rooted' transnationally. This insight questions the usefulness of describing migrant community structures in 'transit' either negatively as exploitative trafficking networks (Crisp 1999) or overly positively as social capital (Evergeti & Zontini 2006). Instead, I argue that a deeper look at migrant community relations in forced immobility helps us to appreciate the complicated nature of reciprocity, solidarity and mutual dependence among the migrant community in Morocco and the weight these factors wield in informing migrants' self worth and personhood. Such an analysis could have important repercussions for changing priorities in community projects with migrants in Morocco.

As indicated in chapter two, my initial interest in this subject was not to study migrant communities per se, but to look at how individual migrants experienced life in immobility. Despite this, during fieldwork it became obvious to me that migrants' relations with other migrants constituted an important aspect of their daily lives and shaped their experience of forced immobility and their own personhood. I decided to include an analysis of migrants' community relations here in order to demonstrate the link between the individual's way of conceiving his/her life and the way he/she is perceived and evaluated by other migrants. Nevertheless, I am aware that the perspective on community life represented here is shaped by the methodological

limitations of my research process and does not constitute an exhaustive analysis of the diversity of migrants' community experiences in Morocco.

The following chapter is based on my interactions with two community structures in Morocco: One with a Pentecostal Nigerian church community and the other with Cameroonian, Congolese and Ivory Coast migrant 'governments.' As already touched upon in chapter two, governments are the name given by migrants to the kind of migrant community networks operating in Morocco, which are mainly defined by nationality. I have chosen these structures because of their importance in the lives of the migrants included in my study: almost all of them had participated in a religious community in Morocco and had dealings with their respective migrant government at some point or other. The chapter begins with a brief review of the meaning of community in migration literature and its relation to the specific case in Morocco. This is followed by an analysis of the power divisions within migrant community networks in Morocco and a detailed ethnographic description of their activities. This leads me to a detailed discussion on the economy of morals at work between migrants in Morocco and the inequalities thereof.

### **6.1 What is community?**

There is a growing literature on migrant communities in contemporary migration studies and as a consequence a variety of definitions of migrant communities exist. I am referring to community networks here as dynamic structures that involve social relations between the members of a group. Migrant communities are formed through networks of people that can span over different places and times. Thus, I am defining community and networks both in temporal and spatial terms. I prefer the term 'community networks' rather than using solely 'community' or 'networks', because this combination stresses the interdependence of both concepts. This definition is consistent with research by transnational scholars of migration, who emphasise that migrant communities often function across national boundaries of home and host

countries and across several generations of migrants (Glick Schiller et al. 1992, Portes et al. 1999, Bauböck & Faist 2010).<sup>43</sup>

Hage (2005) has argued that migrant communities constitute a point of attachment, they can be a nourishing source for individuals. For him, migrant community networks reaffirm a person's roots or help to construct a social identity that is related to the context or place in which one lives *and* the one left behind. The importance of migrants' mobility for maintaining social relations across different nations is often stressed by scholars of diaspora and transnationalism (Glick Schiller et al. 1992, Blauböck & Faist 2010). The fact that migrants in Morocco are unable to move is therefore an important aspect when analysing migrants' community structures because it makes it more difficult for them to be transnationally active. I argue that because of the impossibility of maintaining social relations across national borders, migrant communities in Morocco become a substitute for the 'nourishing source of attachment' that social relations with families, neighbours and friends in the home country usually represent.

It could be argued that social relations are precisely those aspects of migrant community networks in Morocco that are often brittle and fragile in a situation of imminent movement and constant reconfiguration of groups. As migratory networks, they might be better seen as a form of organisation used by people on the move, defining a field of potential social, emotional and physical mobility for their members (Hage 2005, Schapendonk 2011, Tarrius 2002). As such, they may represent a 'network of roads', rather than a 'network of roots'. The existing research on 'transiting' migrants' communities in Morocco has taken up this view and primarily investigated communities' functions as migratory networks (Escoffier 2006, Collyer 2007, Pian 2009, Schapendonk 2011). Escoffier (2006) therefore talks about them as 'itinerant communities.'

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<sup>43</sup> Transnational research on second generation migrants has also gathered new insights into the connection of communities with time and space. Research in this field has shown, for example, that several generations of family members are socially linked with each other over different countries and therefore connect past, present and future as well as different localities through social relations of care (Zontini 2007).

Perhaps also because of this, certain community structures have received greater attention than others in research. Migrant governments in Morocco, for example, are commonly described in contemporary literature as 'the' community networks; in their analysis of the governments' activities most researchers focus on those which are directly or indirectly related to the organisation of onward travel out of Morocco (Pian 2009, Schapendonk 2011, Alioua 2005, Escoffier 2006). In these accounts, it appears that migrant governments do *nothing but* help fellow migrants to cross the border to Spain. The data presented in this chapter provides a complementary view on migrant governments which goes beyond their role as 'roads' and analyses them as important actors in providing migrants with social and cultural 'roots' in a no-man's land.

While the activities of migrant governments have been analysed in the context of their role as facilitators for organising onward movement to the 'European mainland, migrants' religious communities have received scarce attention. Apart from the general acknowledgement of migrants' deep religiosity, implicit in the ethnographic work of Escoffier (2006), Schapendonk (2011), Pian (2009) and Alioua (2005), there is no detailed analysis of religious communities and their activities in Morocco. Johnson et al. (2010) find that even though religion is an important signifier of meaning, it is not often taken into consideration when investigating migrants' sociality pattern. According to my research in Morocco, Pentecostal migrant church communities are of growing importance as community structures. This is particularly true for the English-speaking migrant communities, in this case most often Nigerian migrants. Pastors and ministers are sought out by both social workers and migrant organisations to act as gatekeepers for negotiating access to hard-to-reach groups of the migrant community - for example women and children. So while religious communities play an increasingly vital part for migrants as a source of attachment, they are rarely acknowledged as doing so in the existing literature on migration in Morocco.

My analysis highlights the interdependent nature of religious networks and other community networks with *both* acting as facilitators of onward movement and stay-particularly against a backdrop of forced immobility. Despite the relative absence of transnational elements in the community activities of the migrants I encountered,



community relations can adequately be described as a site of continuing struggle to 'create a place' in both Morocco and abroad. Like Dahinden (2010:51), I find that aspects of locality in mobility, or mobility in locality have not been sufficiently theorised in research on migrant communities. In order to become mobile, it is necessary for migrants to develop some local ties and to be embedded in specific localities, and this can only happen over time and according to the social position one is in with respect to others in a given place (Massey 1993). Adding to the work of Dahinden (2010) and Massey (1999), I therefore maintain that not only the social and economic contexts, but also the time one stays in a place plays a significant role in how far locality can be constructed through communities.

I also highlight how unequal power relations and social differences impact on the ways in which community networks function. In some of the literature on migrant communities in Morocco, these are described as based on a sense of otherness in relation to the environment migrants cross. Alioua (2005), Branchet (2011), Collyer (2006), Escoffier (2006) and Pian (2009) all emphasise the role of solidarity in community structures as a strategy of survival in otherwise isolating and marginalising conditions. Without wishing to invalidate this analysis, I want to highlight that community network relations between migrants are not always best analysed by looking at the similarities between their members. On the contrary, it is useful to analyse how members are linked together in relations of difference and sometimes also in relations of dependence.

I argue that the difficult contexts of forced immobility and the long duration of unwanted stay can actually heighten differences between members of migrant communities rather than strengthen their similarities. This may also lead to exploitation and deceit among migrants, as well as to heightened interdependence, support and solidarity. Such an analysis complicates the conceptual link that is often made between 'forced' migrants and 'exploitation' through smuggling networks. It is often implicit in policy documents and media reports on 'transit' migrants, that migrants have exclusively exploitative and dependent relations with smugglers and 'traffickers' (Mavris 2002, Migration News 1995). On the contrary, migrant community groups such

as the church are often treated as solidarity structures and as such their leaders are sought out by aid organisations as gatekeepers for initiating contact with the community. This was invariably evident in conversations I had with NGO professionals. Such binary representations of community structures conceal the complicated power relations evident in the social relations between migrants in forced immobility. They do not take sufficient account of the fact that the same people are often involved in relations that are simultaneously exploitative and supportive.

## **6.2 Characteristics of migrant community networks: Unequal divisions of power and spaces of social agency**

In contemporary migration literature, communities are often defined through similarities between members, such as ethnic or family ties, or common interests (Evergeti & Zontini 2006). Accordingly, people's solidarity structures are explained through shared values or interests. This is also an argument made in the literature of migrant community structures in Morocco, where migrants' relations with each other are explained above all on the basis of their shared wish to migrate further (Alioua 2005, Escoffier 2006).

In the two community structures I observed, a shared ethnicity and the experience of migration were both crucial aspects through which community groups identified their members. However, according to the data I was able to gather, social differences between people rather than equality, structure migrants' community relations in Morocco. This was particularly true because of the existence of very authoritative and hierarchical structures of leadership inherent within them. Despite these inequalities, my data suggests that social relations were a vital aspect of making migrants human again and represented a shared ethics across divisions of power. In common with research findings by Johnson et al. (2010), I found that despite existing relations of dependence and power, migrants were able to express a certain social agency through their community activities - at least some of the time.

### 6.2.1 *Pastor Moses and the Pentecostal church*

My first example is based on observation and interviews in a Nigerian Pentecostal church community in Rabat.<sup>44</sup> The church was run by Pastor Moses and a group of his collaborators. They had hired an old, traditionally built two-storey house in the middle of one of the Takadoum's poorest neighbourhoods. I had been introduced to Pastor Moses by Silvester from Ghana, who frequented the church regularly. Silvester had chosen the church despite the fact that he was the only Ghanaian attending the service. When I asked Silvester why he had chosen to frequent the church despite his being Ghanaian, he told me that he felt he could identify with the church members because he could still speak pidgin with the Nigerians. He also told me that there was no similar church community only for Ghanaians and that he did not feel like going to one of the francophone Pentecostal churches because of problems with language. When I asked Moses about the fact that most of the church members were Nigerian, he answered that he was open to all nationalities, but that mostly Nigerians would be coming because they knew the rituals and the songs, understood English and were neighbours who could trust each other. He added:

I prefer them being Nigerian, to be honest. Because they know pidgin and I know where they come from. It is better to stick to people from your country, because you cannot know about the rest.

Here, the importance of ethnicity, based on nationality as a prerequisite for community membership was made clear. Pastor Moses clearly distinguished migrants according to their origin. The mere experience of migration, and even their religious orientation

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<sup>44</sup> As I have indicated in both the introduction and methods chapter, a range of Pentecostal churches have emerged in Rabat and Casablanca during the past decade. These churches are run by migrant ministers and services take place in rented houses and apartments in the neighbourhoods where most migrants live. Most churches are almost exclusively frequented by members of the same nationality, and I have been told about the existence of several Nigerian, Cameroonian, Congolese, Ivory Coast, and Guinean churches in town. The most extensive number of Pentecostal churches were apparently maintained by the Nigerian migrant community and the church I visited regularly in Takadoum was one of them. At this point, it is important to note that the Nigerian members of the church came from a variety of ethnic groups. There were some migrants from the Beni and others from the Ibo tribe and beyond this, there were further distinctions and language divisions. Everyone used communicated in Pidgin English with each other.

was subordinated to their nationality in order to qualify for membership in the church. Moses invited me to attend a service one Sunday and I had arranged with Silvester to meet up beforehand so that he could guide me to the place. When we arrived, there were at least 60 people crammed in 50 square meters, over three rooms. Women and children in the audience outnumbered men by far, but there were no female ministers. The place for the ministers was elevated and distinguishable by flowers, comfortable chairs and carefully selected decorations. The 'ordinary' churchgoers were seated in plastic seats. On several occasions, Pastor Moses felt the need to make his position of authority clear to me.

When, for instance, I wanted to approach Pastor Moses at the altar to thank him personally for his kindness in allowing me to be part of the ceremony, Silvester's unease made me reconsider. I had broken the rules; I had infringed Moses' authority by walking up to him directly. When I asked for a personal interview, he smiled but did not answer and made it appear as if he had not really acknowledged me. Days later, he called me up and informed me that he was willing to be interviewed. When I arrived at the place of the interview, Moses and a group of six Nigerian men sitting in a circle around a table and before a television, welcomed me. The whole atmosphere was a demonstration of authority and pride. I had to convince them of the necessity of my research. I was talking to leaders, and I was expected to make clear to them that I knew this. Moses wanted me to know that he was someone to be taken into consideration, someone with the ability to direct the course of events. In subsequent meetings, our relations relaxed considerably. Pastor Moses actually invited me several times to his home over the years I did fieldwork. With time, he relaxed in my presence, particularly in intimate meetings when a very reduced number of collaborators were present. Because of this behaviour, I came to believe that in acting out a hierarchical relationship to me, Moses was making a public statement that was vital in order for him to maintain his role as a church leader in the eyes of the community.

I also noticed that particular rules and rituals were an important part of the services and served to establish unity and difference among members. Moments of prayer, preaching and singing altered in particular sequences (see Figure 4). Song and music

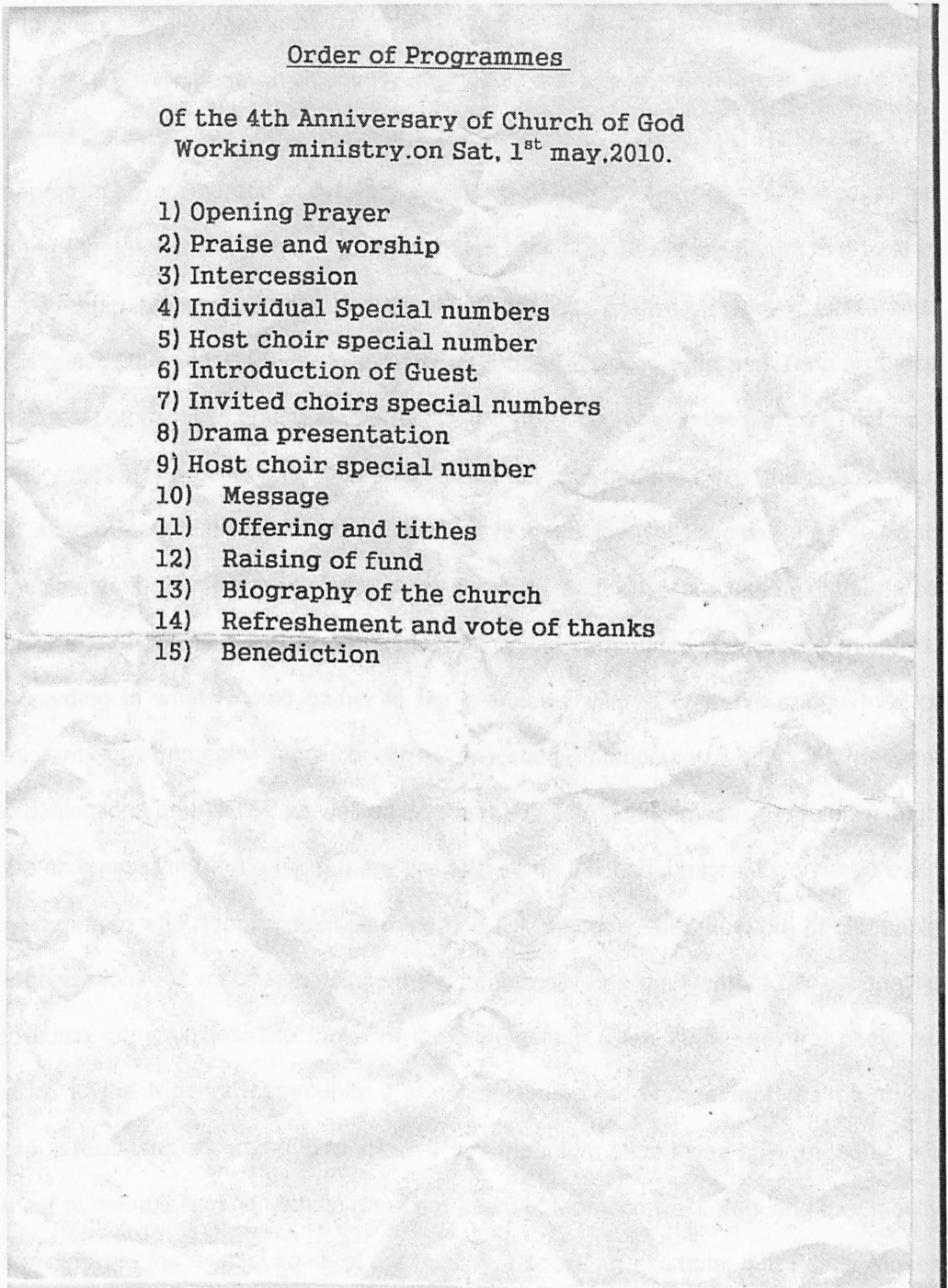
took a particularly important place in the ceremony. At a second occasion when I was present, during which the third anniversary of the church was celebrated, 'special guests' had been invited. They were composed of a group of other Pentecostal pastors from neighbouring churches in the area, all Nigerian, who were lined up in their best finery and sat in comfy chairs at the front of the altar. It was an atmosphere of celebration and occasion. By the time we were sitting in the church, it was almost noon, and inside the church the temperature had risen to around 45 degrees Celsius. There were no windows, only some ventilation slots and two old electric fans. Despite this, women appeared in ballroom dresses and men were wearing carefully ironed long-sleeved shirts, blazers, ties, gold chains and bulky watches. The clothing gave the whole situation a solemn touch. The church was a special place, that gave members the feeling of being part of a common whole, thus enabling them to distinguish themselves from everyone else. It was like a festive club event. I got the impression that rituals like dress codes, seating orders and ceremonial activities were vital for the functioning of the church community because they helped to construct the church as a special place. As a member of that community one could feel 'special' - and thus the church became an important point of refuge in a world in which migrants were treated as outcasts.

However, this 'special place' was also highly socially stratified. While anyone could be a member, not all members were equal and there was a clear hierarchy of command. The pastor and his collaborators maintained authority over the other members, women ranking on the lowest scale. As an example of this, during the entire time I knew the ministers and their collaborators, it was impossible for me to establish contacts with female members of the church. There were a restricted number of women active in the church structures, but Moses was not happy for me to talk to them. 'Some other time' he would say every time I asked.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> I actually did interview some of the women in the end because they were attending the migrant summer school where I did participant observation. I am sure that Pastor Moses knew about this because one of the women I interviewed told me that he enquired about my conversations with her some days after the interview. In doing so, he clearly signalled that he

Figure 4: Programme of church anniversary



#### 6.2.2 A Trip to Angelique's new home: Migrant government structures

My impression of authority, ethnicity and gender relations in migrant religious communities was further extended in my encounters with members of migrant

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expected to be kept informed. He wanted to make clear that not everyone was free to speak with me without asking him first.

governments. These structures are also called 'parliaments', 'ghettos' or 'communities' and are generally organised by nationality. Almost all nationalities are represented through a government, which usually designates one or several chairmen as its leader (Alioua 2005, Collyer 2007, Escoffier 2006, Pian 2009, Jene 2010). These structures appear to have emerged at the very beginning of migrants' arrival in Morocco, at the end of the 1990s and beginning of 2000, and resemble similar structures that exist in many other African countries through which migrants pass on their way to Morocco (Escoffier 2006, Jene 2010). In the forests around Oujda, Ceuta and Tangier, these national communities emerged to organise the life of migrants in the camps of different nationalities. However, when migrants started to move into the cities, the organisation of migrant communities started to take shape there too. In the cities they serve to mediate conflicts between different migrant groups and with Moroccan neighbourhood groups, and act as a sort of para-legal and social community services for migrants. According to what I could gather in my interviews with NGO workers, chairmen of migrant governments have become important interlocutors with international organisations and NGOs as well as with a range of African embassies. Even though the chairmen tend to be men, there are also some influential migrant women in each government who adopt mediation roles and link migrants with the work of charitable organisations, as mobilisers. While there is normally one government per nationality, in some communities, like those of the Senegalese (Pian 2009), several chairmen exist. In the Nigerian community it is not uncommon to find several chairmen who group Nigerians according to ethnicity. From the information I was able to gather, the most numerous Nigerian ethnic groups present in Morocco were Beni and Ibo, mostly coming from the animist south of the country. I know, for example, that Pastor Moses was in close contact with leaders of several Nigerian governments- but particularly those of the Beni groups.

While migrants talked about their frequent dealings with 'migrant governments' on a range of occasions, I never sought out direct contact with the chairmen, except for the Cameroonian group, and that happened almost by accident. One day, when I was heading to an interview with Angelique, one of my informants from the Cameroonian

community, she guided me to the chairman's house. We had agreed to meet in her home, so I was quite surprised to end up in an area of town where new apartment blocks were being built. Angelique explained to me that she now was living at the chairman's place, after having lost her job as a community worker in one of the NGOs working with migrants. The chairman lived in a new apartment block in a resettlement area for former slum inhabitants. It was a modern apartment, very unlike the shabby residences most migrants were living in. There was even an internet connection, a computer and a fully equipped kitchen. Several people were present in the two-bedroom flat, which had been converted, using a handmade separation, into a three-bedroom flat. The apartment was more than full: mattresses were lying everywhere, there were people coming and going at every minute.

I was invited for a drink and then Angelique left me alone in the room, pretending to have a conversation with another woman in another room. Here, I was supposed to wait for the chairman, who asked to greet me first. I could hear him in animated conversation behind the separation. I got the point: He was busy. I was not his priority. I had to wait. When we finally met, we learnt that we had met some years before at one of the nongovernmental organisations, long before I started my fieldwork. I had interviewed him then as a representative of the Cameroonian migrants. He then enquired about the nature of my research. The conversation was, above all, a demonstration of power and an investigation into my real motivations. As with Moses, he let me know that he had been informed about my interviewing Cameroonians of 'his' community. He also informed me about his activities in several migrant rights organisations, mentioning people of influence in international organisations in the process. He even said that he had written a book about his migrant experiences, which he recommended consulting for useful information. This introduction served to make me aware of his position in the community as a wealthy, connected, intelligent and - above all - important figure of authority.

When I asked him why he was sharing his apartment with so many people, he said that he felt obliged to help fellow Cameroonians in their difficult situation. He told me that he would be willing to help in my research if it was going to contribute to a better



life for all of them. All in all, he wished to emphasise that in his role as chairman, he had to use his authority to protect and help his community. When Angelique reappeared after a while on the scene, the chairman spoke and she was silent. We continued our interview when she accompanied me back to the bus station a mile away. The chairman had promised her that he would use his contacts to get her a job as a domestic in one of the diplomat households so that she would be able to live autonomously again.

He is a good man, you see, he has connections to the Cameroonian embassy, and he got a residency permit, he has written a book. He knows how to speak, you see. This is how he really helps people. If it were not for him, I would be on the street right now.

I have described my encounter with the chairman as an example of how the migrant government structures of authority were similar to those found in the ghettos migrants experience during their travels to Morocco (Escoffier 2006, Schapendonk 2011, Jene 2010). As in other locations on their trajectory, migrant chairmen act as connection men in Morocco: they actually can help migrants to access contacts, jobs or other services and they can protect them from problems with other migrants or local authorities. In order to maintain a credible role as chairmen, however, it is vital to demonstrate the power and ability to help others: chairmen have to work hard to maintain their position as 'big men' in the migrant community, as people who can make things and people move (Alpes 2011). This necessarily means that they must physically evidence their power: for the chairman I described above, inviting people to live in his houses for free and representing their interests before non-governmental organisations was an effective way to do this.

### *6.2.3 Victims or agents?*

A closer look at the structural characteristics of both the Pentecostal church and migrant governments reveals the ways structures of authority and membership are constructed. These mirror migrants' social structures of community life and family relations in their homelands, but equally resemble the organisation of mobility

networks during their travels. Ethnicity and authoritative leadership remain important characteristics of community life at home as well as abroad, but are adapted to the migratory context. For example, I noticed that Nigerians identified with each other above all on the basis of their nationality and not primarily through tribal membership or ancestry as is common in Nigeria (Abah & Okwori 2005). Additionally, among migrants from different countries, nationality became an important ethnic signifier that enabled them to distinguish between themselves. This was particularly true because their nationality also implied differential treatment by the state and international organisations.<sup>46</sup> National stereotypes were used by migrants themselves in order to defend their particular role in the migrant community: Congolese migrants often referred to themselves as politically persecuted, educated intellectuals who deserved a preferential status as refugees (Goldschmidt 2006). Cameroonians were proud of their good relations with their diplomatic representatives and their ability to organise their communities. Meanwhile, Ghanaian migrants emphasised that in contrast to Nigerians, they had a reputation for being hardworking. Gender relations in migrant communities were marked by the fact that women usually adopted the role of 'protected' individuals. In this respect, they seemed to replicate the relations they experienced during their migratory project and (often) in their countries of origin. As I indicated in chapter three, seeking protection through men is a recurring feature of women's journeys to Morocco.

I argue that these practices help migrants to feel rooted and secure in a situation of profound displacement by re-establishing borders and social categories known to them from the past (Turton 2004). This does not mean, however, that these social differences are egalitarian. As we have seen in relation to gender, migrant women are mostly absent from influential roles in both the church and the migrant government. In fact, they are almost excluded from participating in any relevant decision making

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<sup>46</sup> In conversations with Nigerians this issue was frequently alluded to. Apparently, Nigerians were particularly persecuted by the Moroccan police because they were considered to be involved in the violent organisation of human trafficking networks. According to my informants, Nigerians and other Anglophone migrants had greater difficulties in accessing social and legal assistance through charity organisations as these were mostly francophone organisations that could only communicate minimally with them in English.

processes and yet, they benefit from their position as 'protected individuals.' Nationality is not only a signifier of ethnicity but in certain situations, it can determine community membership or differential treatment by other migrants. In this respect, while migrants community activities were clearly marked by relations of dependence and hierarchy, it would be wrong to dismiss them as spaces that reinforce migrants' image as 'culturally impoverished docile bodies' (Johnson et al. 2010: 219) who are living a 'bare life' (Agamben 1998) without rights and obligations. On the contrary, within these spaces of difference, migrants are able to exert a certain degree of social agency by identifying with other members of the same group. In the next section, I will deepen this argument by looking more closely at the activities of migrants' community networks.

### **6.3 Activities of community networks: Self esteem, protection and onward migration**

The following sections analyse the activities of migrant communities from a standpoint of sociability and 'place making' and as a means for organising onward movement. I show how these aspects of migrants' relations are actually difficult to separate out in practice. They form part of a complicated whole of relations which mirrors the particularly difficult conditions for sociability in situations of 'stuckness' in forced immobility. So, it is not easy to determine how far communities act primarily as agents of movement or settlement in Morocco. The interdependent nature of activities for movement and settlement are precisely what help migrants to regain a sense of control of one's life in their situation of forced immobility.

#### ***6.3.1 The church anniversary and other services***

Let me return to Pastor Moses and my participation at the celebrations for the church anniversary in order to describe the different types of services the church was offering. There was a mix of activities to consolidate belonging, self-esteem and protection of the weak. At the same time, the church actually acted as an important facilitator for onward migration.

Firstly, it struck me that, despite the apparent hierarchical organisation and the strong authoritative structures on display, the services offered were structured in very participatory ways. Individual church members were asked to read the bible or to sing in front of the audience and lead the rhythm. In contrast to the 'collaborators' and pastors, they were stood up off their seats and received clear indications about when to intervene and in which form. There were also 'dancers' who jumped up in front of the audience to perform while others were singing. At the end of the ceremony, people were asked to write on a piece of paper their hope for the future. These were read out loudly in front of the audience and subsequently, a communal prayer was organised in order to make the dreams come true.

When talking to Moses about the participation of church members in the service, he explained why, for him, this type of activity was a vital part of 'the social glue which held the church community together. He told me that in his view, this was one of the things that distinguished his church from the more established churches in town. He said:

You see, these people, they come here because they are in despair. They feel depressed. They do not think they are worth anything. At the big church in town, no one really lets you participate. You sit down, you sing when all sing, you listen, but you are not asked to contribute. Making people contribute gives them back a sense of worth. They feel they can do something - even if it is only singing in front of others. They feel that others are listening to them again. It makes them feel good.

Other important group activities of the church included weekly meetings for bible study, choir practice and Sunday school for children. According to Moses, the choir was particularly popular among female migrants. At the church anniversary celebrations, different gospel choirs from other Pentecostal churches performed for the audiences, looking professional in matching outfits, especially made for the performances. The great importance of this for people in the church was later

confirmed to me by one of the woman who sang in the choir, who I bumped into at the migrant summer school.<sup>47</sup>

I like going there on Sundays, you should come! You forget the suffering, you dance and sing for a while and when you get back home, life is good.

Until Monday!

While I was attending the church anniversary party, food was prepared for every participant. This included huge amounts of rice and some chicken, juice and popcorn. It was a demonstration of abundance and happiness. Everyone was provided for and everything was for free - the church was offering to the needy. The communal sharing of the meal was redolent of living in a 'big family' and celebrating together. All these activities were clearly helping migrants to reconstruct social bonds to other migrants and to feel 'emplaced' again, at least spiritually and socially, in a community of equals.

In the meantime, I was witnessing people going up and down the stairs to the second floor of the three-storey building in which the church was housed in order to get the food for everyone. Silvester told me that a number of Nigerians, mostly women and children, were housed there by the church. They were also the ones who had been preparing the meal for the occasion. According to Pastor Moses' version of circumstances, these were individuals who could not afford to rent out a place, were ill or otherwise in need of protection. The church covered their expenses and needs until they were able to find a way to sustain themselves autonomously. Pastor Moses also told me that the church had plans to establish a crèche for some of the most vulnerable children in the community but had not yet been able to put them into practice. Pierre, my Congolese friend, was of a different opinion, however:

It is not exactly like that, you see. I think the people who are living there are those that are waiting to leave. They wait for the connection man to take them to Oujda, to get on the boat. They are the ones that have paid

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<sup>47</sup> The summer school for women and children was organised every year by one of the charity organisations in Rabat and aimed to provide women with a chance to learn income-generating activities and give children the chance to participate in leisure activities. I conducted participant observation there.

already for the place on the patera. Maybe there are some who are really in a bad state, one thing does not exclude the other. But you can never know. Of course Pastor Moses, he gets a benefit from hosting them. He receives percentages on the price. Otherwise he would not house them. He is looking for his own interest...

In this example, the mix between community functions as 'travel agent' and also as a source of attachment is particularly evident. It is difficult to establish up to what point either Pierre or Pastor Moses were giving the most accurate explanation for women's and children's presence in the upstairs flat. It is very likely that both of them were telling the truth.

### *6.3.2 Football, illness and finding the road*

This interdependence of activities that on the one hand are geared to protect people and form a sense of community and on the other hand generate possibilities for future movement is also evident in migrant governments but in different forms. In what follows, I give some examples of similar dynamics in migrant governments, particularly in relation to the organisation of cultural activities.

Apart from going to church, Silvester was an active football player. He would go every Friday to train with other Ghanaians in the outskirts of Rabat at six o'clock in the morning. On one occasion, I accompanied him to his training. The team was composed of Ghanaians only. Silvester had participated in a number of tournaments between different 'national' teams in the migrant community over the years. I had heard of many other Congolese and Cameroonian and Ivorian Coast migrants doing this as well. Many had participated in these activities and remembered them fondly. Jacques from Congo told me his particular memories:

We play music and everyone comes to cheer their team. If you are in the team, you feel great. When you score, the hell is loose. It's real fun! But you have to train hard to get into the team, man. They don't take everyone.

I was told that migrant governments were organising the tournaments. When I said to Pierre that I liked the idea of getting people together and cheering them up, and therefore helping to restore their self-worth and making them feel like they were important in some way, he just shrugged his shoulders.

You know, it's just another way of putting a little thing on the side, you see. Nothing is for free.

I learnt that football had a price. The 'event management' of the tournaments was also a business opportunity for government members. Participation in the event was 'taxed' by the government of each 'country'. But it was not only the chairmen who benefited financially from these activities. Sandrine from Congo told me, for example, that she always made a bit of extra money selling food and snacks to guests and players at the tournament. In this way, tournaments became a cultural activity with economic undertones for a range of different people in the migrant community.

Apart from tournaments, I learnt that migrant governments were providing a lot of services to the community that were generally highly valued by its members. Chairmen were organising collections for the sick among community members and also intervened in cases of violent conflict between different migrant communities. In some cases, community government also protected migrants from aggression from Moroccan gangs and groups. Patrick told me about a case he had witnessed himself. While we were walking through a migrant neighbourhood, Patrick pointed out to me a young man who stood in a middle of a group of migrants, dressed in fashionable clothes and sunglasses.

See him? Cameroonian. See all the girls at his side? See how smart he is? Well, he is in the money forging business. Makes dollars. They sell them to Moroccans. But I tell you, it is a risky business. One day, they got him. The Moroccans found out that he had sold them fake money. So they came after him. He could only escape because the Cameroonians protected him and helped him to get out of the city and hide for a while. Others are not so lucky and they end up in prison, or they get killed even.

But this one, he is ok, he has the connections, I guess. Look he is back here now, looking smart. He is not fearing anyone.

In some instances, community networks were helping migrants to access remittances from abroad or else to send back remittances to their home countries. However, the management of these activities was heavily controlled by the chairman and a few of his closest collaborators, who often demanded taxes in return for these services. Pian (2009) has documented similar dynamics in the case of the Senegalese migrant community in Rabat and Casablanca. Escoffier (2006: 119) documents that these types of services are also offered through pastors and Pentecostal church communities.

In interviews with migrants I was told that, like the Pentecostal church's structures, structures in governments were based on the idea of creating the possibility to leave for their leaders and other migrants, or, at least, to provide them with additional financial resources to do so. Finances made from the protection of vulnerable individuals and cultural activities were used in part to finance the leaders' chances of reaching Europe. Aside from this, it should be noted that chairmen and leaders were also involved less disingenuously with migrant organisations in Morocco, collaborating with western NGOs in efforts to improve living conditions for migrants. The Cameroonian chairman I met was the founder of one particularly active organisation which campaigned for migrants' rights and collaborated with numerous international networks of human rights organisations. Chairmen of different nationalities were also involved in protests in 2010, which consisted of several days of sit-ins in front of the UNHCR to campaign for resettlement of recognised refugees. The protests ended with the violent intervention of Moroccan authorities and the incarceration of several migrant leaders.

### *6.3.3 Routes or roots- Time or place?*

As indicated at the beginning of this chapter, existing literature on migrants' relations with one another in Morocco places much emphasis on their activities relating to onward migration (Pian 2009, Escoffier 2006, Collyer 2007). While I have shown that



this is at the heart of many activities, I have also shown that equally, mutual support, recreational activities and protection of the weak are important aspects of community life. For this reason it is reductionist to analyse migrant communities in Morocco with reference to itinerant communities, because such a denomination underestimates migrant communities' importance as place-makers in a highly hostile environment. Schapendonk (2011) and Dahinden (2010) see locality production and quests for mobility in a functional relationship to mobility and space, arguing that locally-embedded social relations are needed for facilitating migrants' onward mobility and vice versa. I find that the interdependent nature of both place making and mobility strategies in community relations can also be interpreted with reference to time-controlling strategies. Bastian (2011) and Cwerner (2001) for example, have pointed out that community life is vital in establishing people's temporal frames of reference. I also find that migrants' community activities help them to bring back order in otherwise de-chronised lives. Constructing a place by relying on past identity signifiers and cultural practices is a way of connecting with the past and making it meaningful to the present. The quest for onward mobility connects the present life meaningfully to a future elsewhere. In this way, time is reconstructed in a meaningful sequence of events in which the community plays a vital part. However, the ways in which migrants are able to participate in community activities are determined by migrants' changing social positions in hierarchies of power. The higher a position migrants achieve within migrant community structures over time, the more they are able to benefit from community participation. This illustrates that even within community relations everything takes its time and nothing is predetermined from the start. The passing of time in immobility is given a new and more optimistic meaning.

#### **6.4 Money and morals in a context of displacement**

In previous sections, I have shown how community structures and activities are important for migrants' sense of social agency and personhood while being, simultaneously, clearly marked by unequal power divisions. In what follows, I would like to focus on the role of the context of displacement on migrants' community relations. I will explore this issue by focusing on the role of money in migrants'

relations with one another. I found that financial exchanges and price regulations are important sites for power struggles between migrants.

My data suggest that the particularly hostile environment in which these money exchanges function restrict people's ability to shift their social position with regards to others. This further determines how and if they are able to invest in sociability or movement. In short, my analysis of money exchanges between migrants shows that in an environment of forced immobility, social differences between migrants tend to be enhanced through community life, rather than reduced. This validates the view that context can play a significant role in the nature of social capital available through networks and the ways in which people are able or unable to benefit from community engagement (Anthias 2007).

#### *6.4.1 The importance of money in forced immobility*

At first, I was quite unsettled by the importance of money accorded to almost every kind of social relation migrants were engaged in, both with respect to Pentecostal churches and to governments. This was also echoed in conversations with migrants, particularly when talking with them about friendship. Pierre, for example, would categorically reply on questions about his friends:

Here in Morocco, everything is about money and interest, there is no friendship.

He was no exception and I frequently received similar comments from other informants and in other contexts. Nevertheless, whenever they were asked to talk about them, migrants would generally discuss the positive aspects of migrant communities. They would talk about how people helped each other financially in times of need. What struck me most was that deceit and fraud were frequent in migrants' experiences with migrant community authorities, but often justified as 'part of the game.' This was particularly so in relation to mediation for passages to Europe and failed attempts to cross the border. In my conversations with migrants, they would often refer to the difficult environment in Morocco as the reason or the excuse for the customarily abusive relationships that evolved between chairmen or community

leaders and new arrivals. Pierre explained to me why poverty and the need for money make migrant 'governments' in Morocco particularly, so violent:

You know, these networks, they exist also in Algeria and in Benin and in Nigeria, they are everywhere. But in Morocco, it is a bit different. Life is very hard in Morocco, so you know, there is a lot of violence between the communities. If you get into their way when they want to cross, or you make problems there where they have a business, that can get serious. That is the difference between the communities in Morocco and elsewhere: there is a lot of violence, because there is so much misery. There are lots of Nigerians. You do not mess with Nigerians, they are very organised. For example, if me, say, a Congolese, I would like to marry a Nigerian girl, well the Nigerians they would come and ask the Congolese chairmen to pay them a bride price. And they negotiate and I would have to pay the Nigerians. But the woman herself, she would never see a single dirham. They take it all for themselves! It's not right. But this is what happens in Morocco.

Silvester also told me about his experiences with connection men who had promised to arrange the crossing:

I came here and I had to work hard, first to pay the people in the forest so that I could stay there with the Ghanaian group. You pay and they get you a tent and a blanket and stuff. It was like a hostel. Then I had the money together to try and cross again. The person who was going to arrange everything was a friend of mine. I knew him from Nigeria. We go a long way back. He was organising these trips now and he promised me a place on the boat. I gave him all my money. And when I arrived at the beach, all the people had left and he had left also, with my money. And I had to start all over again! You see, I knew this man, he was my friend and he took everything I had - but I am not angry with him. I think, he just tried to save himself. This Morocco does this to people. Life's very hard

here. You know that you take risks if you give your money to people like that, so you cannot blame him for doing the obvious.

The contradictory relations between community members, their leaders and financial exchanges were not solely related to travel arrangements and migrant governments. The contradictions were also omnipresent in church activities. I first realised this while I was participating in the church anniversary party. At the end of the ceremony, Pastor Moses made a call for donations. People were called out loud by their name and the donations they gave to the church were shown to all. The donations included money as well as food items. Five litre canisters of oil, sugar, telephone credit cards and money were deposited in front of Pastor Moses in a constant stream of donations. Moses' marketing skills were impressive. Collaborators had produced little handmade anniversary ribbons for people to put on their clothes, to mark their membership to the church. I was urged to take one too – and pay for it. Money donations were publicly displayed for everyone to see. There was no fixed price for the ribbon. But while I found the whole event coercive, migrants tended to give voluntarily and without remorse. Silvester, for example, appeared with one kilogram of sugar, five kilograms of rice and a huge bottle of oil in front of the altar and returned to his seat with a big smile on his face. Contrary to resenting this, it appeared that migrants were gaining social prestige in front of the other members of the church congregation for having donated publicly. Some days later, however, I learned of a different side to 'church donations.' When I told Silvester that I had been at Moses' house again, he enquired:

Did he ask you for money? Did he?

I asked why he thought so and he answered:

Be careful with these Nigerians, they are only looking for the road. They are all looking for money.

I asked him directly: 'You don't like Pastor Moses much, do you?' Silvester replied:

'I like him alright. But I don't go there because of Pastor Moses, I go there because of God. Like all of them, Pastor Moses is just there to make money to leave. Be careful about him, that is all I am saying.'

In conversations with other migrants I learnt more about Silvester's comment. It was explained to me that church donations were not only used to pay the rent for the church premises or the needs of particularly vulnerable individuals at the church, but also in order to pay a 'salary' for the pastors and collaborators. What's more, it was apparently common knowledge that pastors were in contact with those community members in the migrant governments who organised the trips in boats to the Spanish coast or had access to false papers. Not only did pastors recruit future passengers for the boats, but the donations they collected also paid for their own trips later on. This was also why the number of apprentices and collaborators in the church was great. Each time a pastor left he was replaced by a collaborator who would take up his place. Similar practices have been documented by Pian (2009) with reference to the Senegalese community in Rabat. It is important to acknowledge at this point that the migrants I talked to about this considered donations to the church community as justified in order to maintain both the role of the church as functioning community space and also as a trustworthy vehicle for onward movement. However, migrants were often wary as to how far the donations were used for this aim rather than the personal enrichment of their community leaders.

I learnt quickly that rather than being built on a nostalgic notion of solidarity, it appeared that chairmen's and ministers' activities as well as migrants' relations with community structures in Morocco were, above all, regulated by power and very particular norms of reciprocity (Roitman 2005, Pian 2009, Escoffier 2006). In the next section I would like to give examples of how pricing regulations, power and social differences regulate migrants' relations with one another and are an important way of structuring and ordering social identity and social status. This serves as a first step to understand better the context in which deceit and fraud become possible and/or necessary and are actually perceived as such by migrants.

#### *6.4.2 Regulation of price and the principles of reciprocity*

When I asked Pierre why certain people in the community received help from the church or from migrant governments while others had to pay, he shrugged his shoulders:

I don't know. I mean, if you have no family, you have no husband, you have children, if you cannot work and you are ill, then people help you. It is like that. And then the list goes round and everyone tried to contribute.

Social position is not only relevant in determining who receives protection, but also in structuring the 'price' of leaving Morocco. Silvester had tried to leave the country several times but could not give me the exact prices for a place on the boat:

It is not like that, it depends on who you know, who the person is who organises the trip for you, you see. And it depends on who *you* are. If they see that you have money, you pay more.

In general, however, there was great silence and secrecy about the mechanisms through which 'just and unjust prices' were established. This silence is also evident in other research accounts on migrants in Morocco (Pian 2009, Escoffier 2006) and migration broker practices in Cameroon (Alpes 2011). Like Roitman (2005) and Alpes (2011), it became clear to me that the 'just price' people were willing to pay for a given service was decided as a result of negotiations and a belief in an authority that established confidence in the true price by accounting for one's social location within the community. The practices of negotiating the price and deferral of its payment appeared to account for social differences and differences were predominantly established through the way migrants could present themselves to the authorities and the extent to which authorities could maintain their legitimacy.

Roitman (2005) argues that just price is established on the basis of one's social responsibilities in the community. She bases her argument on research in Northern Cameroon, where the 'price which suits you' is based on one's social position and the responsibilities one assumes in the community. As an example, she explains how a

bucket of tomatoes is always exchanged for the same price, but the number of tomatoes in the bucket changes with the client. The heads of households with children generally buy more tomatoes for the same price than those who have no family or no other social responsibilities. Roitman's ideas about how a 'just price' is established are helpful in understanding migrants' practices of negotiating prices for community services. Like Roitman (2005), I found that in general heads of family with children in Morocco - men or women - felt that their 'prices' had to be adjusted to their social position and responsibility within the community.

While Roitman refers primarily to social responsibility as a pricing mechanism, I find that in the case of Morocco, migrants' relation to time is also important in establishing a 'just price.' I will show this in relation to how death and birth were used by migrants as effective pricing mechanisms for onward migration. According to my information, it was common for community governments to become heavily involved in bearing the costs of burials and even repatriations of migrants who had died in Rabat. When a migrant from Cameroon died in the hospital having been assisted by Caritas (who had arranged medical care for him) the Cameroonian community took complete care of the burial costs and negotiated with the embassy to repatriate the body back to Cameroon. Jacques from Congo confirmed that this is also a frequent practice in the Congolese community. Pointing out a photo on his wall, he told me:

You see this man, he was a friend of mine. He died on the patera. We got word from the people in Oujda and we tried to contact his family back home. That was difficult. We had to call a lot of people all over the place, back in Mali, everywhere. We tried to find out the name of someone from his family. Finally, we found someone in Cameroon who contacted his sister in Congo. We collected money and then we tried to get it to his family.

The migrant's 'failure' to reach Spain was regarded as the community's responsibility: his failure to reach his goal in order to be remembered as a successful migrant by future generations also symbolised the community's failure as a whole to be in sync

with the future. The price of the migrant's death was born by the whole community in an effort to re-establish the dead migrant's dignity and memory as a successful person within his (home) community.

In a similar way, birth also appeared to be an important factor in the regulation of price. This was particularly evident in the accounts of women with children and their dealings with community governments and churches. As I have outlined above, it was common for churches to house women with small children on their premises for free or for chairmen to put people up in their houses or 'ghettos' without payment (see also Pian 2009 with reference to the Senegalese Community). But children could also play a role in the pricing of onward trajectories. For example, Bia, from Congo, told me how she hoped to get on a patera this year together with her two children. When I asked her how she was going to afford the journey for herself and her two children she replied:

You know, I have been here for a long time. I know a lot of people here. I am alone, I have two kids to support. I cannot stay here because I have no one to look after me and I have no good health. So they will make me a price.

She meant that her social position would be a consideration when the price she was able to pay for her trip was negotiated. It was not only that she had children (whose fate represented the image of a common future for all), but also the fact that she had stayed a long time that lowered the price to pay - in her view. These examples demonstrate that one's status within community structures is produced and reproduced according to the duration of one's stay, to the kind of social relations one is embedded in and to the relation to time an individual represents. The relations of reciprocity and the pricing of services that an individual is able to receive from the community are tied up with it.

#### *6.4.3 Deceit, un-sanctioned wealth and the powers of context*

Roitman (2005) argues that in addition to 'protecting' and differentiating between individuals, pricing mechanisms can also provide the justification for legitimate and



illegitimate ways of appropriating and accumulating wealth. She terms this 'sanctioned' and 'unsanctioned wealth.' Through the authoritative structures of chairmen and churches, those who gain from transactions are able to project themselves as 'just' and therefore 'good' authorities. Their wealth is sanctioned as legitimate. For these reasons also, the image chairmen and ministers are able to maintain as 'strong leaders' is vital for functioning communities. Another example of my conversations with church leaders serves to illustrate this. Pastor Moses said to me that leaders must have charisma and therefore needed to be trained carefully:

Moses: You see, in order to be a good pastor, you have to know how to talk. Make them listen. Make them believe in you.

Me: Don't you think it is more important that they believe in the bible and in God?

Moses: Yes, but you have to guide them. You are their leader. They look for a strong person. You need to be strong. So they forget their weakness.

Becoming a 'strong leader' took a lot of time and dedication and was treated as a serious job by most of the ministers I encountered during the various bible meetings I attended. At the same time, leaders had the power to demand services and donations, which placed them in a privileged position with respect to both staying and moving. In the same way in which migrants' inferior social position made them eligible for debt deferral or price reduction, migrant chairmen and pastors alike had to build their position of authority in order to legitimate their claim to profit and preferential treatment. As Pian (2009) demonstrates in the case of Senegal, migrants' positions of authority were strongly related to the extent to which they were able to fulfil their obligations of protection, making people feel united, and creating opportunities for them to leave the country.

Given this context, it is understandable that chairmen become strongly involved with organisations that fight for the rights of migrants. It is also understandable that they

take a genuine interest in operating as mediators between migrants and international organisations or NGOs, as this is a means to facilitate migrants' life in forced immobility. This might also be why community church activities are of such vital importance for Pastor Moses. By making sure that the choir is successful, bible study groups are functioning, and vulnerable people are housed and put in contact with those organising transportation to Spain, Pastor Moses is actually asserting his authority as a 'big man', who helps people leave and protects those who must stay (Alpes, 2011).

Roitman (2005) argues that context can have a strong impact on the ways in which people are able to justify their 'wealth' before others as legitimate or not. In particular, she refers to the current context of modern Africa, in which debt economies have disrupted the social equilibrium between political and 'economic authorities' responsibilities towards their citizens and the citizen's duty to pay taxes for their protection. Through international debt agreements, government officials in Africa are able to amass enormous amounts of wealth without improving the long-term living conditions of the vast majority of the population. At the same time, pecuniary exchange becomes linked to Western ideas of equality of exchange value. In such an environment, she argues, the logic of 'just price' loses its meaning and increasingly a logic of money exchange prevails, which fails to take account of social difference and inequality. As a result, elites are able to enrich themselves on the basis of their authority as leaders without in turn taking responsibility for the fate of the socially disadvantaged. This tendency has triggered sections of the socially disadvantaged groups of society to justify otherwise immoral behaviour and deceit as 'determined by context.' Roitman uses this argument to describe the moral perceptions and actions of Chad Basin road bandits who consider their criminal activities as a legitimate means of recovering lost wealth stolen from them by corrupt leaders. In this way, deceit becomes part and parcel of a new logic of power and exchange, in which government authorities, the market and the citizen are intrinsically connected.

In a similar vein, Pian (2009) shows in her analysis of Senegalese migrant networks in Morocco, that the increasing state control and persecution has disrupted mechanisms

of the establishment of 'just wealth' for migrant chairmen and pastors. As opportunities to make people leave become scarcer, and mechanisms of protection are increasingly flawed through the effects of new migrant legislation and increased police control, migrant chairmen and pastors lose their authority as 'travel agents.' At the same time, in such an environment of isolation, their authority as protectors of some kind of social and cultural capital increases. In such a situation, the mechanisms for the establishment of 'just price' for both community services and onward travel are often undermined by chairmen and pastors' own need for onward movement and/or successful settlement (which in turn underscores their authority as leaders).

In the cases I have outlined above, migrant chairmen, connection men and even pastors use their authority to accumulate 'unsanctioned wealth.' However, these practices are often understood by other migrants as an effect of the particularly difficult living conditions migrants find themselves in. What the migrant accounts indicate is that unsanctioned wealth is particularly condemned if it is accumulated through the authorities of migrant community networks because these are supposed to be in a position of power within the community, which comes with a moral obligation to protect the weak.

## **6.5 Conclusion**

By focusing on the example of one Pentecostal church and migrants' relations with national communities, I have shown the ambivalent relationships migrants develop with one another. While communities help migrants to maintain the hope of onward movement by promising to provide opportunities to do so, they also make the present more liveable by creating an environment of belonging and identification with like-minded individuals, predominantly based on connecting with rituals and ethnic and national markers of their past. I have tried to show that the different functions that communities serve are in fact interdependent and should not be analysed separately. This leads me to reject them as 'itinerant communities' (Escoffier 2006) or trafficking networks. Therefore, they are better seen as networks of 'roots' and 'roads.' I will not negate the fragile basis upon which 'roots' and 'roads' are based. It is important to recognise that the context of forced immobility conditions the extent to which migrant

communities serve to 'create a sense of place' for migrants in Morocco as well as 'roads' for future mobility. The context of rightlessness and marginality also makes migrants 'roads' so much more important than 'roots' in the hierarchy of functions that communities display.

My findings suggest that contexts, place and time have an impact on the social relations that can be created among migrants. Common pasts among migrants in Morocco are reconstructed on the basis of shared ideas of ethnicity, gender roles and moral values concerning virtuous and transgressive behaviour that often has its beginnings in the countries of origin. The reproduction of these shared 'roots' then serves as a community 'glue' in order to create a sense of place and a certain sociality in the present. It is therefore not surprising that gender, ethnicity and relations of reciprocity recurrently structure relations and practices in community life. A shared desire to create a future far away from Morocco also has an impact on migrants' relations with one another and the importance of community activities geared to promote onward movement.

Turton (2004:12) borrows from Appadurai (1996) the distinction between 'neighbourhood' and 'locality' to argue for a contextual nature of the sense of place that humans develop through different kinds of interaction. He argues that the extent to which one develops a sense of place through one's participation in community life is dependent on one's ability to maintain it against various kinds of odds - particularly outside pressures from other communities. While community activities help people to identify themselves as local subjects and as actors who properly belong to a community of kin, he stresses that the work of locality production is, always and everywhere, a constant struggle to keep at bay an endemic sense of instability in social life. Turton (2004:56) postulates that communities are 'context-generative social formations', producing organised power over places and settings. However, he also acknowledges that some communities have greater power over place-making than others: In particular, he argues that the most powerful context-generative social formation that any neighbourhood is likely to encounter is the nation state. Borrowing from Turton's analysis, I would suggest that migrant communities are context-

generative social formations, which are creating a place in the world for the migrants they are composed of. As such, they represent a form of cultural capital upon which migrants can act socially and create something like 'roots' in a hostile world. However, this 'locality production' is heavily limited by the marginality that migrants must contend with in Morocco and by the time they are staying there. Bauman (1998) has referred to this situation as located existence in marginality.

As I have shown throughout this chapter, financial transactions heavily structure migrant community relations in Morocco and are implicated in a variety of both 'place-making' and 'mobility creation' activities. In contrast to those who analyse these community activities in relation to smuggling, trafficking and extortion, I have attempted to analyse monetary exchanges in communities from a different angle, namely that of economies of morality (Lubkeman, 2011). In contrast to the term moral economies, in which the emphasis tends to be on how social concerns mitigate rationality in economic transactions, Lubkeman (2011:7) uses the term 'economies of morality' to describe (monetary or other) transactions in primarily socially-assigned moral value. In his analysis of remittances practices among African migrants, he finds that in particular contexts monetary transactions between migrants and non-migrants may seek to legitimise the performance of sociality through material means, rather than being an expression of material considerations which are shaped by concerns with the moral terms of sociality (Lubkeman 2011:11). His analysis allows us to move away from money's primary significance as a means of rational, economic exchange in migrants' relations with each other and to highlight its importance as a catalyst for social acts and the formation of unequal power relations.

Lubkeman (2011) and Roitman (2005) both start from the premise that all sociality is both morally prescribed and morally prescribing. Both authors argue that there are generally rules in social groups about what constitutes virtuous behaviour and transgression, so as to be able to distinguish the legitimacy of actions on the one hand and the need for sanctions on the other. By investigating how prices are established in contemporary Cameroon, Roitman (2005), for example, makes an argument about how global relations of capitalism and the workings of the nation state in Africa

actually influence the moral codes of communities, so as to establish new rules for transgression and socially sanctioned behaviour. In her analysis, moral economies sometimes convert into economies of morals when the monetary logic of equality in exchange begins to prevail in community relations marked by social difference. Lubkeman (2011) and Carling (2008) use a similar argument by contrasting the particular socio-cultural and economic contexts of migrants and non-migrants and the remittances practices of the former in order to explain differences and similarities in the social value assigned to monetary transactions by both migrants and non-migrants.

In the course of this chapter, I have built on these arguments to explain how external economic and political contexts actually change the moral prescriptions of adequate social behaviour in migrant community networks in Morocco. This can create situations in which inequality between migrants is no longer acknowledged as a relevant factor in determining what is right or wrong, and deceit is perceived no longer as an exception but more and more as the defining characteristic of social relations with other migrants. It appears that for migrants, the moral economies of social relations in forced immobility actually convert into merely fiscal economies when migrant authorities attempt to use their status and power to further their chances of onward migration, rather than to increase their reputation and social standing amongst migrants.

A consideration of the particular context in which social relations are created in forced immobility also avoids the tendency to categorise migrant community networks too simplistically either as social capital or as trafficking networks. The above has shown that community networks in Morocco enable migrants to become socially active and, to a certain extent, agents of their own lives. They are therefore a lot more than simple exploitative structures that need to be 'criminalised' and destroyed, as is sometimes argued by those who wish end human trafficking. However, it is important to acknowledge that community relations can also lead to differentiation, fragmentation and exclusion and should therefore not be celebrated overly optimistically as social capital (Evergeti & Zontini 2006:1029). The power relations in migrant communities in

Morocco are marked by male-dominated hierarchies in which women are often relegated to the role of victims who seek out protection, while opportunities for movement and status are reserved for men. This shows that networks and how they are used are neither gender, nor class neutral and depend instead on one's social position in them (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994). These contradictory aspects of community networks sometimes cause migrants to have difficulty identifying with the communities and to experience a form of 'existential homelessness' (Madison 2006), in which they no longer feel they belong to anywhere, anyone or anything. In times of self-doubt and depression, communities help migrants to find security, self-esteem and identity through participation in community structures. However, this does not mean that individuals can be what they want to be. They are conditioned by the rules and social structures that guide community networks and it is very difficult for them to change their place within them.

# Chapter 7: Waiting for Zion

## 7.0 Introduction

Chapter five of this thesis has shown how migrants are becoming slowly disembedded from dominant time perspectives while living in Morocco, and chapter six showed how forced immobility influences their relationships with each other. Both chapters describe how migrants' idea about their own self-worth and their ability to shift their social location in relation to others is conditioned by the peculiar times and tempos they are living and the spaces and places they are occupying in forced immobility. This chapter will build on these previous insights by looking at people's strategies to leave the country. By describing the process followed by migrants' waiting for departure, I will examine the connection between time and social agency.

Hage (2009) has argued that waiting emphasises a dimension of life where the problem of our agency comes to the forefront. While waiting can be analysed as a lack of agency, it is also possible to look at it as an exercise of agency, because it emphasises the choice *not* to act in a pre-described way. In this case, it is akin to resistance (Lakha 2009). In this respect, why people wait and for whom is a political question. Referring to the work of Bourdieu, Hage (2009:2) adds:

There is a politics around what waiting entails. And there is a politics around how to wait and how to organise waiting into a social system. Waiting can, for example, define class and status relations in the very obvious sense of "who waits for whom" which also means: who has the power to make their time appear more valuable than somebody else's time?

By focusing on the politics of waiting, it is possible to analyse migrants' behaviour in forced immobility as a form of social action. Waiting for departure forms the basis of a variety of strategies to construct new pasts, presents and futures and an emplacement 'elsewhere.' The data presented in this chapter shows that migrants' opportunities for leaving or staying are shaped by their capabilities to influence the forces of mobility on the one hand and luck on the other. Capabilities and luck, however, are both difficult to



control in situations of extreme marginality. Therefore, rather than planning for departure, migrants have to wait for unpredictable opportunities to arise. Waiting like this can therefore be seen as an act of choice to create a new future within very limiting constraints for action in the present. In the conclusion of this chapter, I contrast this perspective on unpredictable futures with contemporary ideas about time and modernity in order to show why migrants waiting for departure create such an uncomfortable situation for migration policy makers.

### **7.1 What migrants are waiting for and how waiting feels**

Most of the migrants I encountered were constantly thinking about possible migration opportunities out of Morocco. Of the migrants I encountered, only six men and six women had attempted one or more times to either get to Europe or to another African country unsuccessfully. And yet, everyone I talked to remained adamant about their plans to leave Morocco as soon as possible. Everyone had some kind of plan ready to recount for me. These ranged from attempts for resettlement for recognised refugees, through the purchase of papers or the buying of 'patera tickets' to 'cyber marriage'<sup>48</sup> or reunion with family members who had already secured citizenship rights in a European country. The list of possibilities seemed never ending. Nevertheless, almost nobody ever moved. Of the 40 migrants I encountered, only two successfully reached Europe in the four years I knew them.<sup>49</sup>

In some of the work on migrants in Morocco, life in transit is described as 'waiting' (Schapendonk 2011:156, Papadoupoulou Kourkoula, 2008: 86, Pian 2009, Timara 2011:203). In these accounts, authors link waiting inherently to departure. While Schapendonk conceptualises waiting as the longing for movement (Schapendonk

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<sup>48</sup> Cyber-marriage is a term given by migrants to finding a suitable partner abroad through the internet. In the cases I witnessed, it was considered possible to acquire a visa through marriage with a European or American citizen. The practice was common among both women and men. Mostly, contacts are sought through social network programmes or other contact pages that do not require the payment of membership fees. This practice is not limited to Morocco but also frequently takes place in other African countries (Alpes 2011).

<sup>49</sup> This is also evidenced through data collected by other institutions. For example, the International Organisation for Migration (2010) stated that of a total of 2831 migrants who received assistance through its voluntary return programme between 2005 and 2010, 6% had attempted to reach Spain more than five times, and 45% had attempted between one and five times.

2011: 256), Papadoupoulou Kourkoula (2008:86) compares it to a wish for settlement somewhere else. My own research with migrants confirms both aspects of waiting. None of the 40 migrants I talked to had given up the hope of eventually leaving Morocco for good. Only three people told me explicitly that they would even consider staying there if they found a decent way to live. But even these individuals were 'waiting' for this to happen. As the previous chapters have shown, the migrants' lives were defined by waiting for the opportunity to leave the country and set up home somewhere else.

Their desire to leave Morocco is indicative of their urge to be able to become a person again. While they were waiting to escape their situation in order to be someone else, they were never exactly sure if it would happen or what form their escape would take. They did not know what they would become and where they would end up but they knew that something had to change, someday. So actually, migrants were not only waiting to leave, but also hoping to recuperate a social status, an identity. In effect, they were waiting to be incorporated into the flow of time once again. In this context, it is no coincidence that in most of the church services I attended, the book of Isaiah was such a prominent component of preaching. The bible extracts about how God's people were lead out of exile and back to Zion, meaning Jerusalem, after Yahweh had conquered the gods of Babylon, as depicted in the prophecy of Isaiah (40:3-5, 40:9-31) were frequently cited. This narrative echoes the migrants' urge to escape the forces of evil, their wish to finally return to Zion, an ideal place, where freedom and peace reigns far away from Morocco. As already alluded to in chapter three, in these imaginings physical mobility is intrinsically intertwined with more existential mobility.

#### *7.1.1 What waiting does to people: suffering*

In order to understand migrants' constant efforts to leave and their reluctance to settle, it is useful to analyse in more detail what the experience *did* to them as persons and to their outlook on life. Migrants usually were not indifferent to waiting - and this did not only concern waiting for departure, but more often than not waiting for services in Morocco. Often, complaints were raised in our conversations about the useless hours they had spent waiting for a paper, medication, social support, or something else.

Adam (1994:124) points out that in this context waiting for some future benefit is only gratifying if those future rewards are reasonably certain and to some degree under a person's control. She adds that these conditions are rarely found among those who live in poverty. According to her analysis, only those with economic security can value this kind of waiting for deferred gratification, because they have a trusting relationship to a future in which the rules of capital and credit apply. The migrants I encountered, in contrast, felt waiting was degrading because from their perspective of necessity in the immediate present, only the powerless wait (Schweitzer 2008:4).

Migrants did not want to be waiting for settlement because this was a constant reminder of how little control they had over their lives. And yet they endured waiting for departure as this was the only possibility they had of claiming back the right for a future in a different place. Even though the possibility for departure was as uncertain as that of settlement, waiting for *departure* was a way not to succumb to the idea of a lost life. In this respect, waiting was a positive force that helped migrants to continue living because it was a means of recuperating a past, a present and a future.

In order to understand this contradictory relationship to waiting, I use Dwyer's (2009:21) distinction between situational and existential waiting to analyse migrants' different experiences. Dwyer refers to 'situational waiting' as a situation in which one is waiting for a specific person or event to arrive. In situational waiting, the person is sure about how and when waiting will end. Waiting for a bus or a train to attend a meeting are examples of such situational waiting. In other words, situational waiting is fully embedded in time and place. At first sight, migrants' lives seem full of examples of – supposedly – situational waiting. Asylum seekers are waiting to be recognised as refugees; refugees are waiting to be resettled. Migrants are waiting for money to be sent to them, or for a job to pay the rent. Often, I accompanied migrants while they were waiting in NGO waiting rooms to receive medical attention or social support, or when they were queuing for a daily construction job in Takkadoum. However, even in these instances, waiting slipped out of their control: Maybe today there were no jobs? Maybe today the doctor would not arrive at the charity health service or the pharmacy would no longer accept the medication vouchers from the charity? Maybe resettlement

would never happen? In chapter four, I explored the various ways in which the Moroccan government prolonged asylum and residence permit applications into infinite lengths through the non-definition of procedures. In such a context, waiting for refugee status became anything but situational waiting, because the person waiting had no control about when or if the desired object would arrive. This uncertainty about waiting was extended to almost every sphere of the migrants' lives so that even the simplest events became impossible to plan for. This notion is captured in the quote by Yann, in chapter five, in which he explained to me how the fact of not knowing what was going to happen the next day made it impossible for him to organise his days in advance.

In these instances, situational waiting becomes a different kind of waiting, which Dwyer (2009:21) calls existential waiting and Schweitzer (2008) calls endurance. Migrants were enduring the duration of their own lives, rather than time that could be measured by clock time. Dwyer (2009: 21) defines existential waiting as

(...) seemingly removed from time or rather, from the meanings - linear and repetitive, yet endlessly consuming, consumed and irreversible - accorded to time in conventional Western settings.

This kind of waiting is difficult to bear because it separates people's ideas about themselves from the actions they are able to control. It is therefore akin to suffering, which, in contrast to pain, extends beyond the bounds of mere bodily sensation so as to encompass our entire experience of personhood in body, mind and spirit (Wilkinson 2004:21). Wilkinson (2004) demonstrates that human suffering is experienced in its strongest form through the everyday language and social practices that people are forced to live by in the aftermath of painful events, and which make the brutal facts of affliction most violating. He argues that social suffering may be read as detailing the multiple ways in which people come to be regarded by others and to experience themselves as superfluous and that the most intense experiences of suffering are reported to take place in the dynamics of social relationships that may all too readily be perceived as 'banal' (Wilkinson 2004:93-95).

In migrants' accounts, waiting reminds them continuously of the violence of everyday life they have to endure in a context in which they are left as non-persons and which is perceived by others as banal and unimportant. They are just waiting. I found this particularly evident in the ways in which migrants would greet me when we met, or also in opening statements in chats over the internet. On my asking: 'How are you?' A frequent response was 'I am here', rather than 'I am fine'. Sometimes, they would even leave out the personal pronoun for their own person all together: 'Here, suffering.' Rarely would migrants acknowledge a specific state of mind or existence, other than indicating in the greeting that they were 'merely existing' and 'fighting.'

Dwyer (2009:21) acknowledges that the distinction between situational and existential waiting is itself artificial.

There is no fixed line that separates situational and existential waiting.

There is, instead, a personally experienced and context-dependent, threshold.

However, the distinction between the two types of waiting is helpful in understanding why migrants in Morocco seek an end to waiting through the waiting for departure, and will not give up waiting even though this means a life of suffering and endurance.

## **7.2 Waiting is not settlement**

In what follows, I would like to give an example of how migrants experience existential waiting in relation to the possibility of leaving. What I want to show is that existential waiting for departure is not dependent upon one's apparent economic and social 'rootedness' but rather relates to a profound desire to shift one's status and role in relation to others and with respect to the future. The present is just a vehicle for the future, it is not really lived for its own sake. One is waiting for futures - even the most irrational and insecure futures.

### *7.2.1 Silvester's attempts to leave*

By the time I knew him, Silvester had spent almost four years in Morocco, working as a cobbler in Youssoufia, where he also lived. As previously noted in chapters five and

six, Silvester was in many respects a lot more 'established' than other migrants I had met. Unlike many of his other Sub-Saharan African migrant colleagues in the area, he was making reasonably good money, enjoyed a great number of clients and had privileged relationships with the local mkadem and the local police who came to get their shoes repaired at his stand. Unlike other migrants I knew, he was friendly with his Moroccan neighbours and spoke Arabic. He even shared tools and clients with a Moroccan cobbler down the street and was able to store his belongings in the Moroccan businesses next to his stand on the road. One could say he appeared 'integrated' into Moroccan society. He was in a rather privileged position, compared to Abdoul and Ibrahim, the two football boys I mentioned in chapter three, who were camping with their cobbler utensils two blocks down the road from him, but were constantly harassed and made little money. What was also particular about Silvester was that his day was packed with work and leisure activities. He had strict opening times, from nine in the morning to seven in the evening. He only rested on Fridays and Sundays. On Mondays, he went to bible study after work. On Friday, he played football and afterwards went to a particular neighbourhood where he could buy supplies for his business. On Saturday, he did his shopping in the local market and cleaned the house. On Sunday, he went to church. Silvester had no need to go and ask NGOs for help. He rarely ever did. Referring to healthcare provided through charities, he argued:

These people, they make you wait the whole day, for a prescription. It's like begging. I don't like it.

He appeared not to be waiting for anyone or anything; he was in charge of his time. In fact, one could have thought that he was settled. And yet, Silvester was waiting in a far more profound way. His longing to leave Morocco was evident in every conversation we had. He told me that he had spent at least 5000 Euros so far on his diverse attempts to cross the Mediterranean ocean by boat and that he was still determined to get there one day. Once, in Libya, he was forced to return when the boat motor had a problem. A second time, in Morocco, he almost drowned when the boat capsized. He could not swim and survived by hanging on to a piece of wood until

he was rescued by a Moroccan fisher boat that guided all surviving migrants back to the shore. He and four Bangladeshis were the only survivors.

You know, they could swim, these Asians. All the Blacks died. I just survived because God helped me. I saw all these dead people floating around me...and all this money. One person had lost his money, it was falling out of his pockets, but he was dead. It was swimming around in the water, around me...Euros. I didn't pick them. Can you imagine? I just let it go down with the waves, because I was busy holding on to this wood.

Silvester told me that he had lost faith in God a long time ago, but after this event, he started believing again and became a 'newborn' Christian. He told me that in the sea, he had experienced a feeling of his whole life passing in front of his eyes like a film. And he instantly knew that this was a religious experience. Right after he came back to Rabat, he joined Pastor Moses' church.

I had been smoking and drinking a lot before that, you know. I never prayed. I didn't really achieve anything. I was not in a good shape, to tell the truth. Now, God has found me. And I have found him. And since then, everything is getting better. See, this is why I am all right now. I am doing OK now. HE is looking after me.

Silvester had spent all the money he had saved during the seven years he had been working abroad as well as quite a lot of money from friends that had made it to Europe in the meantime. I asked him if it would not have been wiser to invest all this money in a piece of land in Ghana and whether he sometimes thought about this, and about what he could have done with all that money. I also asked him if he had ever thought of simply staying, making a life in Morocco, saving up more money and then professionalising his business. After some reflection his answer came quickly:

When you are going, you are not thinking about it like that. You are only thinking about how much you need for the next time. I need another 800 for the next time. I have to go. I am OK now. God has been good to me. I

am not hungry. I have found God in Morocco. But it is not enough, I am just a little happy. I need to be more happy.

Silvester attempted to explain to me that, despite believing he had been able to control his time, this was not what he wanted for his future. He wanted more. He was not satisfied. He wanted to be a different person. But his continuous setbacks in achieving this made his life difficult to support. When waiting becomes a condition as in Silvester's case, it alters people's perception of time and their own position within it. Schweitzer (2008:4) argues:

Although time is supposed to function like a door or a hall through which we pass unaware, in waiting, the door jams and the hall is endless. The hour does not pass. The line does not move. Time must suddenly be endured rather than traversed, felt rather than thought. In waiting, time is slow and thick. Waiting is more than merely an inconvenient delay. It is more than a matter of time.

Schweitzer (2008) and Cash (2009) both argue that as such a condition, existential waiting is unbearable. Silvester's turning to drinking and cigarettes demonstrates this. But he knew he was letting himself go. He 'didn't achieve anything.' Religion was Silvester's way of enduring suffering and existential waiting. By finding God, he was able to give sense to this seemingly uncontrollable way in which the world 'worked'. The belief that fate is in God's hand made him confident that he would try again to cross, despite the risks.

#### *7.2.2 Following rhythms, believing in God- but not feeling settled*

Silvester's case also shows that the unbearable side of existential waiting can be broken up by activity, by rules and rhythms. Silvester was able to 'kill' waiting by focusing on his daily life, on his routines and his present day. He also 'killed waiting' by concentrating on life in the present. In truth, the fact that he was actively busy, not waiting physically for anything, was just a vehicle for enduring time. It is for this reason that his situation could not be compared to settlement.



At this point I should say that migrants often mentioned to me their need to break up time by following rhythms, daily routines and fixed schedules in order to preserve their mental health. For three of the migrants I knew sport was an important way of doing this. Ann for example, had joined a gym in the neighbourhood and went religiously every week at the same time. Jacques went jogging every day in the early morning hours, and Silvester, Abdoul and Ibrahim used any spare time they had to go and play football. Yann told me that sometimes, when he was feeling depressed, he did so much sport that he became sick with exhaustion afterwards.

When I did an evaluation of an international organisation's project activities for migrants in 2008, it turned out that the weekly women's group they had organised was valued as far more important by women than other services. It allowed them to leave the house, see other people, and provided a fixed appointment to keep every week, to punctuate time. For some migrants, like Emma and Silvester, for example, religion was a way to keep suffering at bay. Due to a strong belief in God, they were able to adapt to the unbearable condition of waiting that characterised their lives. As I noted in chapters two and six, Sub-Saharan African migrants represent the majority of church goers in both the protestant and catholic churches in town. I also mentioned in the previous chapter the importance of Pentecostal churches for migrants' community building and self esteem. However, it is also religion's importance as a remedy against suffering that makes migrants turn to it or - for those who had already been religious in the past - to reinforce their faith in God.

In reference to migrants' long stays in forced immobility, Schapendonk (2001:167) denies that they are actually settled because indicators like the attachment to the social environment, or even the time period spent there, do not necessarily mean that the person in question is less likely to be waiting for departure. The examples I have given consolidate this argument. The long duration of their stay and their ability to become included into social networks or receive migration status, does not necessarily diminish migrants' desire to leave the country. This is above all related to the fact that in such conceptualisation of settlement, the existential waiting for a better life is not

acknowledged as a driver for people's decisions or aspirations for migration or - for that matter - a deterrent to their effective settlement.

### 7.3 Waiting for others

Hage (2009) and Adam (1994) are right to point out that how one is waiting is not only dependent on the person who waits, but also on the context or the person who one is waiting for. Adam (1994) argues that making people wait may not only signify the importance of the one, but also signal the disregard for the other. According to Adam, waiting time serves to validate and legitimise existing power relations when it is transformed into a resource. By making people wait, the power of the person, the service, or his or her status is maintained and enhanced. It is in this way that waiting is intimately bound up with social status and power, and can be understood as a ritualised expression of asymmetrical social relations. For Adam, power may be linked to the immunity from waiting through the possession of such resources as money, influence or expertise. Alternatively, it may be associated with who determines waiting for whom, the right to impose waiting, and the duty to wait (Adam, 1994:123-125). In the following example, I illustrate how Pierre attempts to overcome the imbalanced power relations in waiting for others. The example illustrates how he tries to modify his social status with regards to the institutions and individuals with the power to make people wait.

When Pierre arrived in Morocco, he waited for a long time for his asylum claim to come through. After a failed attempt to cross via patera, conversion to Islam, and reconversion into Christianity, he was picked up by a pastor in Rabat and worked with him as a volunteer in a small organisation giving social aid to migrants in the city. He soon gained a reputation for being a hardworker and a friendly and trustworthy individual. When a well-renowned international organisation was looking for an *agent de proximité*<sup>50</sup>, the pastor recommended him and thus got him a job with a regular

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<sup>50</sup> Community worker in French. Most international aid organisations rely on sub-Saharan African migrants as community workers to do outreach work with migrant groups in the cities. This facilitates access to hard-to-reach groups among them.

salary and decent living conditions. During this time, Pierre also finally became recognised as a refugee by the UNHCR.

Pierre now had a salary. He was also becoming an important personality in a variety of institutional networks. He was a musician at the protestant church in Rabat and participated in the choir. This brought him into contact with Sub-Saharan African students and diplomats who frequented the church. He was also in contact with his Congolese community and in his function as community worker with international organisations became a vital contact person for both chairmen and other international organisations. As part of his work, he had to interact with a range of different chairmen from different national migrant groups in order to negotiate migrants' access to health services provided by the organisation he worked for. Because of this, he also maintained privileged relations with the UNHCR which recognised him as an important link with the refugee community. As a member of an international NGO, he was invited to some of their meetings and helped other migrants in their asylum petitions.

Despite his relatively privileged position, Pierre had not given up his dream of Europe. On the contrary, he was actively using every minute of his free time to plan his way out of the country. He frequently told me that he was searching the internet for possibilities of a job abroad, or else a work placement. Once, he even got an offer for a volunteer post from a charity in the United States. However, as a refugee, he was not allowed to leave the country and had difficulties applying for visas. At first, Pierre could not understand this. He asked me frequently:

Why do they not grant me a visa, if I am now a legally recognised migrant? I am a refugee, I have UNHCR protection! Why can I not go where they want me?

That legal status and rights to mobility were not necessarily compatible was difficult for him to conceive. Despite his setback, Pierre persisted in searching the internet for other opportunities. Due to his musical activities and his advocacy for other migrants, he managed to get an invitation to participate in an international cultural festival organised by a well-known student organisation in Germany. He was invited to give a

talk as a representative of Sub-Saharan African refugees in Morocco and perform his songs, which talked about their situation. Apart from a letter of invitation, Pierre had received a plane ticket in his name. With this, Pierre went to see the UNHCR, hoping to get support from them to acquire a German tourist visa in order to take part in the event.

Pierre told me he knew that many refugees, particularly community leaders who had campaigned for refugee rights had been 'resettled' in Europe this way: he told me that friends had been sponsored by the UNHCR to participate in international events and then simply overstayed their visas. He expected a similar 'collaboration' from the UNHCR because of his privileged position within the system of international aid in Morocco. To his surprise, the visa did not come through but it was unclear whether this was related to the actions of the German consulate or the UNHCR. Pierre, however, was particularly bitter about the UNHCR:

You know me, I have been really a service to the community. I have been helping people. The other refugees they sent to conferences had been making trouble, they were all involved in some campaign about resettlement. I have never participated in any of that. I never disturbed anyone. And what do they do? They make them leave because they want to get rid of the troublemakers. And the others, like me, who do not kick up any fuss, they don't help them. I find this is not fair at all.

When I was suggesting to him that the German consulate could also be responsible for the situation he was in, Pierre did not agree. For him, the main person to blame was the head of the UNHCR, who he personally knew from church. In his anger, he designed a collage depicting his naked body inside a dollar bill, surrounded by snippets from the invitation letter and the ticket he had received. He entitled the collage with the name of the head of the UNHCR. It clearly expressed his feeling of being no longer a person, just a nameless, unspecified commodity in relation to mobility (see figure 5). His 'exchange value' appeared worthless to international

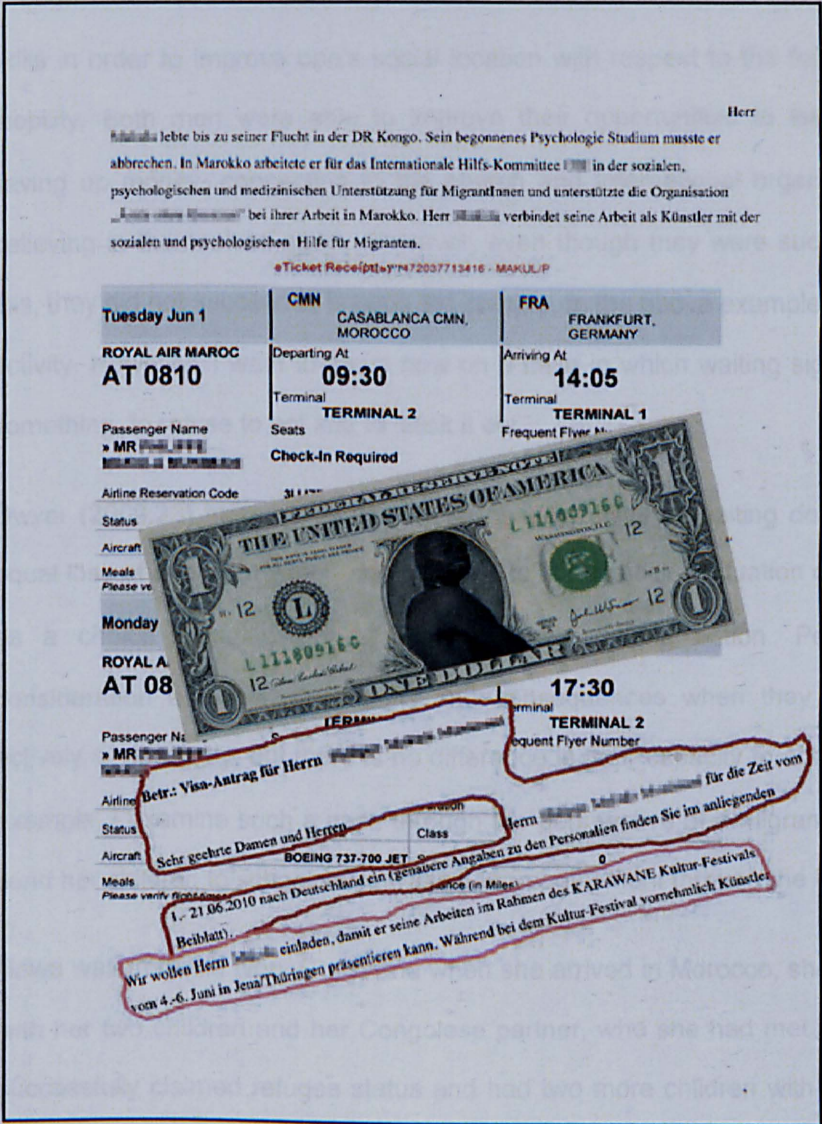
organisations. When he posted this collage on his Facebook page, the following exchange with a Rastafarian friend ensued:

Friend: Pierre onna babylon train trekking to Zion. X5. Jeh show your mercy.

Pierre: Thanks man, we are all in the same battle

In the Rastafarian movement, Zion stands for a utopia of unity, peace and freedom, as opposed to Babylon, the oppressive, exploitative system of the western world and a place of evil. Again, it refers to the archetypes of the king of Zion and the king of Babylon who are depicted in the prophecy of Isaiah, in the Old Testament. Pierre's story shows how he attempts to shift his social location in relation to the forces of movement. However, for him, these are not only determined by laws and rules but also constructed by particularly powerful people and networks, who are able to bend the rules to fit them to the particular necessities of people wanting to move. He is not waiting for the rules to change, but actually for people to make rules work for him. Instead of passively waiting for this to happen though, he made active attempts to facilitate it: he searched for a valid reason to be invited to a festival abroad, he organised his plane fare to be paid and an invitation letter to be issued. This is what he alludes to when he refers to his 'battle.' Through this perspective, his wait for people to make decisions is actually more accurately framed as a battle, and makes clear why migrants refer to their life in Morocco as 'continuing to fight.'

Figure 5: Pierre's hand-made collage with snippets from an air plane ticket and the invitation letter from the German Student Organisation



The content of the original word document has been modified to guarantee anonymity

#### **7.4 Who is waiting for whom? Waiting by choosing not to do something**

Silvester and Pierre both demonstrate that existential waiting is not easily defined through victimhood and passivity. On the contrary, it is also an opportunity to apply skills in order to improve one's social location with respect to the forces that govern mobility. Both men were able to improve their opportunities to leave by working, saving up money, connecting to the church and international organisations and by believing in themselves again. However, even though they were successful in doing this, they did not succeed in leaving the country. In the above examples, waiting oozes activity. However, I want to focus now on a case in which waiting signified not doing something, to refuse to act and to 'stick it out.'

Dwyer (2009:23) has argued that those passive ways of waiting do not necessarily equal loss of agency. Rather, choosing not to act, to stick a situation out, can be seen as a choice standing on equal footing with taking action. People take into consideration a frame of contexts and consequences when they choose to wait actively or passively, but there is no difference in their capacity to act. In the following example, I examine such a case through the perspective of a migrant who refused to send her children to school while waiting for resettlement through the UNHCR.

Hawa was from the Ivory Coast and when she arrived in Morocco, she did so together with her two children and her Congolese partner, who she had met on the way. She successfully claimed refugee status and had two more children with her partner. He, however, did not get status and finally left her. When I was talking to Hawa, her two children frequented the only crèche for migrant children that had been set up by an international NGO in Rabat. One of Hawa's children was six years old and about to start school. In 2009, the NGO decided for the first time that migrant children who reached school age had to be enrolled in one of the public schools, rather than continuing informal education in their centre. Firstly, this was because the organisation did not feel it had the capacity to provide quality education according to the Moroccan school curriculum at primary education level, and secondly, it considered that it was the responsibility of the state to take children of school age into the state structures. Hawa's daughter was one of around 10 undocumented and refugee migrant children

who had been referred by the NGO and the UNHCR to local public schools, following informal negotiations with the ministry for Education. For the NGO, this was a success, because it meant that the state was responding for once to some of the NGO claims regarding the provision of basic services for migrants. However, Hawa did not see it the same way.

I am not going to send this child to this school. It is no good. They treat the children badly there, you see. They throw stones at them. They don't help them because they are black. And they speak only Arabic. This is no use to me. I want them to go to a French school.

Hawa's opinion squared with those of other migrants I interviewed during the evaluation I conducted for the above mentioned NGO in 2008. In this evaluation, the organisation wanted to find out parents' opinions about their plan to send migrant children to state schools in the future, rather than continuing with the informal education at their social centre in Rabat.

In connection with this, it is also worthwhile to quote here an extract of a conference report on the life of refugees in Morocco, organised by Foundation Orient Occident in collaboration with representatives of the migrant community, the UNHCR, Moroccan state institutions, academics and various non governmental organisations in Rabat. In the concluding statement of the conference, one of the recommendations reads as follows:

To find an urgent solution for refugee children's education. In a perspective of shared responsibility, the inscription of the children in international European Schools in Morocco should be envisaged.

(Foundation Orient Occident, 2007:35)<sup>51</sup>

Even though this recommendation does not say anything about who would be responsible for implementing and financing such a solution, it is surprising to find it so explicitly set out in a published document. This is because there are very few official

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<sup>51</sup> My translation from the original French text.



statements made by any policy maker regarding education of migrant children in Morocco. After I had a chance to see the quality of Moroccan public schools myself, I understood this recommendation even better.

In June 2010, I had the chance to talk to Congolese migrant Sandrine and her daughter Aisha who had been included in the group of children enrolled in public schools in Rabat through the UNHCR and the aforementioned NGO. I also accompanied a social worker from the NGO on a supervision visit to the class where Aisha had now been for almost a whole school year. The teacher struggled to keep around 40 children attentive in a classroom with very few educational resources. Among the children were several with special educational needs which the teacher could not attend to properly. According to her, there were many children whose family backgrounds was disruptive and who suffered from attention problems. She told the NGO worker that she had tried her best to give Aisha some special tasks to help her with the language but that she was unable to dedicate the necessary time to her needs in the light of the overwhelming difficulties she faced teaching such a large and diverse group of children. Aisha herself told me that she liked school but that she had no real friends there and preferred to play with the other Sub-Saharan African children in the neighbourhood. She also told me that she found homework difficult because she did not understand the language very well. I witnessed Aisha being excluded by the other children during playtime on the school yard. Despite these difficulties, Aisha attended school regularly. This was an exception, because from the teacher's and the social worker's accounts it transpired that during the school year, six of the school's ten migrant children attended irregularly.

Aisha's persistence at school was largely the result of her mother's efforts to make her go there. After strong initial reluctance, Sandrine was one of the few migrant women who went to great lengths to make her child succeed at school. However, she still had mixed feelings about this, particularly when comparing the progress of her daughter with that of other Congolese children in the neighbourhood, who were educated in a

French speaking private school through the financial assistance offered by an international aid organisation.<sup>52</sup>

The other children, they speak really good French now. They know lots of things, and their parents can help them with the homework, because it is all in French. But I cannot help Aisha with anything, you see, because it is all in Arabic. I sent her to do her homework with the landlady and her son. But still, I feel the children don't learn anything at that school. Aisha could do so much better than that.

Sandrine told me that she had long thought about not sending Aisha to school but then decided to go through with it because:

She needs to know how to read and write. She needs to learn maths and all that. And I cannot afford to put her somewhere else. But I rather preferred her to go to a different place.

Hawa and Sandrine both resented the putting their children into Moroccan schools because it equalled 'settlement' and confirmed their inferior status as poor migrants. Both women told me that they did not think that the NGO schooling policy was correct, because it did not take into consideration the special needs of their children and it completely ignored their hope of a future in Europe. Sandrine told me:

I don't understand why they are doing this. Because, you see, we are not wanting to be here. All the Europeans, for example, they don't put their children to Moroccan schools either. Why? Well you know why. Because they are not going to stay here. So why do we have to put them there? We are not one of them.

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<sup>52</sup>This organisation had been running a scholarship programme for migrant children, which enabled them to attend private, French-speaking schools in Rabat. In 2010, this organisation stopped giving out new bursaries and only continued to finance those children who had already been beneficiaries in earlier years. In my conversations with one of the managers, it transpired that this had been done in agreement with other charities' new policies to foster the enrolment of migrant children in state schools.

In comparison to Hawa, Sandrine's hopes to reach Europe were dim. Unlike Hawa, she had no resettlement options because she was not a recognised refugee. She therefore felt that she had no other choice but to accept the option she was given and send Aisha to a local school even though she resented it. Hawa was still adamant in her hope to be resettled into a European country. Because of this, she decided not to send her child to school at all in the following school year. The NGO tried several times to convince her, all in vain. The child stayed at home and Hawa justified her decision to me by saying:

I am waiting for that, you know. They will resettle me. People who know computers have told me that they resettle women with children. So this is me. I just have to be patient.

Hawa's example shows that, rather than passivity, waiting can also be understood as an *active* choice *not* to act in the face of adverse conditions (Dwyer 2009, Lakha 2009). In such a situation, it is not the capacity to act which is marking passivity, but the choice not to do so. Resisting settlement (in Morocco) in relation to schooling and other social services can be a technique used by migrants to highlight to governments or NGOs their need for resettlement in European countries, or their demands for migrant-specific services (like private schools), in which their needs could be met and their rights fulfilled. In this respect, it is worthwhile acknowledging the difference between Sandrine and Hawa's positions. Sandrine gave in to the schooling policy only because she considered that she was not in a condition to pressure institutions through non-action in the same way Hawa did. Sandrine did not have refugee status. She was aware that her daughter had only been included in the schooling programme because of the particular mediation of the NGO. Many other children of undocumented migrants did not have the 'luck' of being offered a place at a public school at all. In this respect, choosing not to act is related to Hawa's apparent superior capacity to act, derived from her particular migration status.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Although Hawa was a recognised refugee, it is doubtful whether she would ever have qualified for resettlement. According to what I could find out in informal interviews with

## 7.5 When one cannot stop waiting

Early in 2011, Pierre called me from the CETI<sup>54</sup> in Ceuta, the Spanish enclave on the Moroccan coast, which he had reached by *swimming* there. He did not tell even his closest friends about his plans and almost died in the attempt. When we talked, he assured me that he left without the help of any network or contacts. The trigger for his decision was related to the fact that soon after the incident with the German Visa, Pierre had also lost his job at the international NGO. As a consequence, all of a sudden, Pierre had lost his networks and his economic stability. In this situation, his opportunities to leave became more remote with every day he stayed in Morocco. He told me that he just felt that he could not wait any longer for a better future because his possibilities for active waiting were exhausted. He said he made the decision to swim when he realised that his fate depended on God and luck alone.

As I said in the beginning, Pierre was actually an exceptional case because of the forty migrants I interviewed only two left Morocco during the four years I knew them. Although it is generally assumed that migrants will eventually cross, taking the risky trip by boat, for the majority this is increasingly not the case and the assumption neglects to take account of the power of waiting.

Duklevska Schubert (2009:117) argues that waiting is actually very difficult to end, once one has been waiting for too long. In her study on bachelors waiting to get married in Macedonia, respondents demonstrated a certain objectification of that which is 'external' or 'beyond one's control.' Duklevska Schubert draws particular attention to the fact that men who had married long after the culturally legitimate age to do so, still displayed behaviour characteristics of 'bachelors', such as extensive drinking sprees and partying. Despite their new responsibilities as fathers, husbands and sons-in-law, they would still continue to frequent bars with friends and drink

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members of the UNHCR and NGOs, resettlement is NOT the preferred policy solution for refugees in Morocco. Instead, efforts by the UNHCR are concentrated on facilitating better conditions for their settlement in Morocco. Nevertheless, in her own perception, Hawa thought that refugee status gave her particular advantages in relation to resettlement.

<sup>54</sup> Centro de Estancia Temporal de Inmigrantes (means Center for Migrants' Temporary Stay) is the institution where migrants are kept after having been intercepted by Spanish border police upon entering Ceuta irregularly.

extensively - even though they received very negative reactions from the family because of this. Duklevska Schubert concludes that these long periods of waiting for a bride had an impact on men's heightening of their own sensory perceptions – being attuned to one's own needs, wants and desires and indulgence of the body as the only fields within the bounds of individual agency (Duklevska Schubert, 2009:115). In effect, the research shows that waiting can become an excuse to take action to change one's attitude to life or to take responsibility for one's future. Her example shows how waiting may indeed serve some people as an excuse to depend upon others or to stop conforming to the rules of sociality.

Paraphrasing Duklevska Schubert (2009:118), I contend that waiting can make people reconsider what it is that makes them a person beyond being a migrant. Applying her conclusions to the case of Sub-Saharan African migrants in Morocco, I find that prolonged waiting for departure can certainly intensify the consciousness of being 'a failed migrant', or of being caught up in a spiral of 'useless trying.' Once one identifies with this image, it is more and more difficult to actually plan for departure, to change the course of life, to take risks or to start anew. This is especially the case when migrants start to indulge in their conditions of either 'victims' or 'villains'. This was particularly evident in my interviews with migrants who had never been able to even attempt to leave the country and who had never really been in a position to access money through a stable job like Silvester, a privileged position in networks like Pierre, or status as recognised refugee like Hawa.

Sandrine, for example, had been in Morocco for three years at the time of the research. Although she talked about leaving, she had never actually made a real attempt to do so. When I asked her once if we would meet in the next year, she replied:

Of course we will! Where do you want me to go? I will be here. Probably for eternity.

Sandrine spent her time attempting to get services from all the different NGOs in town she could possibly sign up to. I frequently saw her in different NGOs when I was visiting. Everyone knew her.

You know, when I am down, I go round Terre des Hommes or Caritas, and I tell them and cry a little. They listen, you see. The other migrants, I cannot talk to them, everyone has their own problems.

Sandrine used her condition as victim frequently in our conversations. There was always a certain blaming of others for her situation, a need to justify her right for services, attention and support. On one occasion, when she was told that she was to contribute a small amount of money for receiving diapers and second-hand children's clothes from one of the organisations she was hoping to receive social assistance from, she angrily told me:

All these NGOs, they get money from their states to help us. They get funding for us. So they should give us the money. Why do I have to pay for the diapers? It is not my fault that I am here. They have to give them to me for free.

Jean had actually given up on trying to leave at all. He told me during a chat:

It is useless. I have thought about it. I will never have enough money to leave. I have no family in Europe, I have no connections. It is going to be impossible.

At the same time, Jean was adamant about the fact that he was never going to go back to Cameroon. As indicated in chapter five, he would frequently reply to questions of return: 'I rather die here.' Jean actually had turned down several training opportunities and job placements which someone in one of the social organisations had tried to organise for him to take part in. He had lost his job as a community worker with an international NGO because of his lack of engagement with the work and his constant womanising. To me, he justified his lack of enthusiasm at work with the fact that he was bored of everything. By the end of my research, I found out that Jean had

started to commit petty crime. He was also involved in some money forging activities. In general, he always took particular care of his appearance, being well dressed and displaying expensive looking watches and sunglasses. He was involved in a variety of conflicts with other members of the Cameroonian community around issues of deceit and fraud, but on the other hand, had gained a certain status. Despite this, he was certainly not a happy man and often declared to me that he had no friends and that he had tried to kill himself several times.

This indulgence in either victimhood or being a villain is an expression of migrants' inability to stop waiting for departure. Being unable to leave or to stay, they are caught up in a life of waiting in which victimhood or marginality are used to justify their paralysis. The victim-villain card is often looked down upon as the excuse of the weak and powerless by other migrants but it is also viewed with unease by international aid organisations who have to deal with these victim-villain images on frequent occasions. That migrants represent themselves to international aid organisations as victims or villains, rather than as active social agents, can create a difficult ethical terrain. Those institutions wish to frame their social assistance in terms of human rights and political struggle in which migrants become actively involved in order to defend their interests. The victim/villain constructs are contrary to this. Migrant 'victims' and 'villains' can also defy the image of the 'transit' migrant who enthusiastically organises his onward trip and who is generally future orientated.

#### **7.6 Conclusion: Nobody wants to wait - migration policies in Morocco and time**

In our capitalist society, time is money (Adam 1994, 2004) and the ultimate goal of development and progress is the utmost control of clock time. This is called efficiency. The longer it takes to complete a task, the more expensive it is to produce the end product. In such a context, the cost of one's waiting experience is calculated not just in money, but also in frustration, anger and other stresses (Schweitzer 2008). For this reason, people generally do not want to wait. In such modern times, it is assumed that people who do not wait are in control of their time. They are masters of it. The fact that people have to wait then, is generally understood as a sign of a disfunctioning

economy or the technologies and institutions charged with 'getting things done' (Hage 2009).

In a commentary to Daumier's drawing 'Un wagon de troisième classe', which depicts the expressionless faces of people travelling in a third class department of a train, Schweitzer (2008: 6) argues that passive waiting:

is still generally assigned to the poor and powerless so as to ritualistically reinforce social and political demarcations and that their wait has almost always meant never. The poor will always be with us, the poor will always wait. Their time is not money. Daumier's passengers don't travel. They just wait to arrive.

When applying this argument to migration policies in Morocco, there are striking parallels to be found. The concept of transit migration does not acknowledge migrants as 'waiting subjects.' Instead, it prefers to see them as 'moving' people, determined to reach their goal, in charge of their time. Maintaining such a discourse hides the fact of possible dysfunction in the regulation of migrants' mobilities. It helps us to ignore that increasing control and repression of migration actually imply human costs of frustration, anger and stress for those who are excluded from the benefits of citizenship and legal mobility options.

The waiting for departure is thus not acknowledged by either international organisations, NGOs or governments. When migrants' waiting is acknowledged by institutions it normally refers to an idea of situational waiting for services and papers. In these cases, however, waiting is mostly explained in terms of migrants' position as victims and justified on the basis of their marginalised status in society. This is why those recognised as worthy of assistance are those imagined as particularly vulnerable, like women, children or refugees.

Schweitzer quotes French philosopher Simone Weil as saying that waiting must be relearned as a form of attention because imagining time as money, or else as useless and powerlessness, the significance and content of time itself is lost (Schweitzer



2008:2-4). By looking at migrants' wait for departure as an existential type of waiting, one can draw attention to the fact that time is not experienced equally for everyone and that waiting for uncertain futures implies suffering. The stories of migrants' strategies to move on in time and place show how their social and existential forms of waiting are forcing us to challenge economic notions of time as clock time. The duration of immobility in 'transit' is only meaningful if the experience of marginality and the struggle to overcome it are taken into consideration.

The indignities of waiting in a culture of the instant, of flows, are also the discomforts of being out of sync with modernity. In this respect, Bastian 's work (2011b) points to the fact that the linear constructions of time which are at the roots of current notions of modernity are actually something that, in reality, only the privileged, liberal subject has access to. She refers back to the work of Greenhouse (1996) who argues that the non- idealised body generally does not experience time as linear. In the same way in which the idea of 'modern man' is an idealised notion in liberal thought, so is his relation to linear time an ideal construct. Paying attention to waiting may indeed serve to highlight that 'modernity' is a thing not accessible to all, and that this stratified access is a prerequisite for its existence. In this respect, Massey (1993:61) argues in her theory called 'power geometry of space' that immobility for some is usually connected and dependent upon the mobility of others. Paraphrasing her argument in the context of time, one could add that the unprecedented speed of travel possible for some people implies waiting for departure for a large number of others.

# Chapter 8: Conclusion

## 8.0 Introduction

The main aim of this thesis has been to document and describe the life of a group of migrants who had been stuck in Morocco for many years in order to shed light on what forced immobility has actually done to them as persons. In particular, the thesis attempted to uncover how migrants' life in Morocco affected their sense of self and their prospects for the future.

The description of migrants' personal experiences has been framed against academic and policy discourses which are centred around notions of transit migration. As I argued in the introduction, transit migration is based on a variety of concepts which have been criticised frequently for their dichotomist usage in general migration theory and policy making. The most notorious among them are certainly mobility versus immobility (Schapendonk 2011), illegal versus legal (Alpes 2011, Willen 2010), forced versus voluntary migration (Turton 2003a, Bakewell 2008b, Malkki 1995b) but also place versus time (Cwerner 2001, Harvey 1989).

In transit discourse, mobility has preference over immobility and illegal over legal forms of migration. As a consequence, transit migrants are imagined as 'mobile' and on the move rather than as 'stuck.' This is reflected in the concentration of state efforts in strengthening border enforcement in 'transit countries' in order to contain migrants' predicted movement further north. As indicated in chapter 3, this stems from a rather reductionist view of 'the migrant' as a rational, economic animal, who migrates primarily to maximise his profit and economic possibilities by moving towards the economically more developed European mainland. The overwhelming concern with mobility at the expense of immobility is also evident in the little interest states devote to the development of coherent asylum and settlement policies for migrants in transit countries. Thus, illegality of migrants is actually reinforced and created by the state itself when legal options to migrate or settle are become close to non-existent. By concentrating policy efforts on borders, illegality and movement, the transit discourse

also favours place over time because it neglects to acknowledge national and international states' responsibility for the long duration of migrants' legal, economic and political limbo in transit countries. I have linked these biases in transit thinking to a certain neo-liberal, economic approach to migration theory, in which the economic interests of markets overshadow other parameters of analysis in migrants' behaviour and state reactions.

Through a critical assessment of migration in Morocco from a perspective of forced immobility and temporality, this study has contributed to the literature that challenges some of these biases in contemporary migration theory and highlights fundamental contradictions between the concepts, norms and rationalities evident in much of contemporary migration policy and the lived experience of migrants. It is particularly the idea of migration as a linear process through time and space that underlies the policies of border control and exclusion of migrants. Like the travel plans of tourists, migrants' trajectories are often imagined to be linear trajectories from A to B. They are supposedly limited in time and rationally calculated moves (Chiswick 2008). However, migrants' own perspectives on time and place in Morocco contrast sharply with this view. As I have attempted to show throughout the thesis, these simplistic ways of conceptualising the migration process of Sub-Saharan African 'transit migrants' do not square with the complicated relation to life and migration which the migrants I encountered described to me. Sadly, they also tend to have negative consequences for migrants affected by them and – contrary of policy makers' stated objectives – they do little to protect migrants' human rights. If anything, they help states to effectively monopolize the regulatory authorities that structure mobility and settlement.

The situation of Sub-Saharan African migrants in Morocco can be compared meaningfully to similar situations throughout the world in which migrants are either forced to stay where they are without being able to leave at all (Chu 2010, Carling 2002, Alpes 2011) or to those 'stuck' in the middle of their journey. (Branchet 2011, Schapendonk 2011, Streiff-Fenart & Segatti 2011). In effect, this phenomenon appears to be occurring more and more frequently and to be proportionally related to the growing importance of border controls and the social, political and economic

restrictions to migrants' effective participation in the societies they are migrating to or coming from.

In this respect, the findings of this thesis respond to key issues and problems in migration literature more generally. In what follows, I will therefore revisit some of the most important findings and relate them more broadly to academic scholarship on migration and policy developments in Morocco and to the European Union. My aim is to use my findings specifically to critique those components of the transit discourse that are also recurring elements in other areas of contemporary migration theory. I wish to disrupt the binary representations at the root of these components of migration theory and to uncover the interdependencies of opposing aspects of the same phenomenon by looking at them from a different perspective. First, I challenge the representations of migrants as primarily economic agents by looking at the existential motives of migration. Then, I discuss the nature of the interplay between structural and individual factors of migration by focusing on the migratory process rather than on the economic, political and social contexts in host and home countries. A consideration of new ways of conceptualising migrants' community networks by looking at their role as 'place-makers' will follow. I then go on to examine ideas about settlement and movement through a lens of temporality. Finally, I will discuss the difficulty of an approach to migration that focuses on 'globalising policies.' By looking at the localised effects of 'global' policies, I hope to show how, as a social problem involving humans with different interests and states which struggle to maintain their sovereign power, it is difficult to argue for internationally applicable political standards to migration management if they are not intrinsically connected to an internationally shared responsibility to safeguard the human rights of migrants.

### **8.1 From statist migrant categories to a reconsideration of universal human rights**

The first important conclusion I wish to draw refers to the use of migration categories as obstacles to migrants' access to state protection and human rights. It is my contention that the use of migration categories such as legal or illegal migrants, forced or voluntary migrants, temporary or long-term residents do not help us to analytically

understand the complicated nature of human migration (Turton 2003b) and can even lead to policy irrelevant research (Bakewell 2008b). The data in this thesis has demonstrated how migrants slip in and out of different migration categories during their trajectory and according to the places they are travelling to. They are sometimes illegal migrants, then asylum seekers, refugees and trafficked victims - and sometimes even several categories at once. Rather than being a static given, migrants' migration statuses shift in time and place (Schuster 2005a). Furthermore, the stories in chapter three and four illustrate that the criteria by which people are designated a particular migration status in different places depended on a variety of economic, administrative and political factors, many of which are time and place dependent and outside people's control.

More importantly though, the thesis has shown that the bureaucratic construction of migrants' *non-status* can be a tool used deliberately by the state to justify migrants' exclusion from access to basic services, work and residency rights. The Moroccan state has achieved this by making it almost impossible for unauthorised migrants to legalise their stay once they have arrived on Moroccan soil. By extension, this non-citizenship status is used as the justification for the state's refusal to take responsibility for protecting the human rights of those migrants.

Interestingly, the state is able to do this by relying on the notion of 'transit', which presumes migrants exist in Morocco as a-temporal and moving subjects who are not attached to place. This reasoning mirrors policy debates on 'traveller-gypsies' and other, seemingly mobile people in the UK and elsewhere (Okely 1983). Livelihood strategies that have been based on intermittent access to land, like nomadism, for example, have historically almost always been treated with suspicion by policy makers practically everywhere in the world (Drakkakis Smith 2007). And likewise, the label 'nomadism' has been used in the past in a variety of instances to restrict people's access to land rights. Drakkakis Smith (2007) argues for example, that nomadism became a term attached to traveller-gypsies as a means of underlining a non-attachment to space, land and place, irrespective of the fact that some families own land and many families have been born in or reported to a single geographical location

for generations. Similarly, the example of migration policy in Morocco demonstrates that states' responsibilities and people's claim to mobility and settlement rights are first and foremost evaluated against their 'attachment to place' and this is in the most part explained in terms of their degree of economic participation in society and less so on ideas about cultural or social forms of attachment.

Like the notion of the state of exception in Agamben's *Homo Sacer* (1998), the state uses the transit category as a pretext for exerting its sovereign control over migrants and suspending human rights law (Bredeloup 2012). This policy of in-determination excludes migrants while binding them even more strongly to state power in a form of abjection. Migration status (or rather the lack thereof) is therefore not a neutral category, but a highly political construct that serves the interests of states, rather than that of migrants. I have shown throughout this thesis that the effect of *non-status* policies is devastating for migrants. They produce a form of displacement that is not only spacial, but also existential, political and social in nature. This is because denying people a status is linked to denying them a political identity, so that their rights are worth nothing. In this respect, the situation of transit migrants is similar to those stateless persons that Arendt (1958) describes in her work. Like Arendt, I find that the practice of stripping people of legal status uncovers the contradictions of the liberal human rights regime in migration policies, which simultaneously insists on the universality of rights and at the same time defends the nation-states' right to maintain its borders in order to safeguard the rights of its citizens. This leads to an unsolvable dilemma in which citizenship rights acquire a status that is worth more than universal human rights.

## **8.2 From economic migrants to migration as an existential quest**

In a time of economic crisis, environmental degradation and increasing international conflicts, more and more people, particularly in the global south, are considering whether to migrate away from their countries of origin in order to improve their livelihoods. It is a paradox of terms that the majority of people with high aspirations to leave these countries have increasingly limited capability to do so. Carling (2002)

might be right to talk therefore of ours as an age of 'involuntary immobility' rather than an 'age of migration' (Castles & Miller 2003).

In light of this, it is interesting to look at why the migrants I encountered were able to move against all odds and whether their trajectories and experiences are different from those documented in research on migrants who were able to reach their final destinations in European countries relatively easily, like guest workers, for example. This would also help us to evaluate the claim put forward by certain migration scholars that perceives 'transit' migrants as a 'new' phenomenon which points to a 'missing link' in mainstream theory (Papadoupoulou Kourkoula 2008). In order to do so, it is helpful to revisit critically perceived ideas about migrants' 'aspirations' to migrate and their 'capabilities' to do so in contemporary migration theory (Carling 2002).

In this respect, push and pull theories of migration have been very influential in dominant definitions of migrants' aspirations and capabilities for movement. On the basis of these theories, aspirations and capabilities are generally linked to economic considerations (Carling 2002, Chiswick 2008). Network theories of migration (Goss & Linquist, 1995), as well as researchers of transnationalism (Glick Schiller et al. 1992, Portes et al. 1999) and system theorists (Massey et al. 1987) have gone further to include social and cultural capital in host and home countries in their analysis of capabilities and aspirations. Nonetheless, it is often the case that capabilities and aspirations for migration are analysed in relative isolation from the political context in which they operate. The state is often overlooked as an important context generative power in this respect, and the focus rests more on the economic and social forces that drive migration (Alpes 2011).

In order to understand the peculiar trajectories of 'transit' migrants, it is important to reframe aspirations to migrate in the economic, political, social and cultural context in which they are created. Therefore, in chapter three of this thesis, (echoing the work of Escoffier 2006 and Pian 2009) I described migrants' journeys towards Morocco from the point of view of an adventure, rather than as an economically calculated move or else as a politically motivated 'exit.' My endeavour has been to show how migration as

an adventure is recounted by migrants as though it were an existential quest. The 'adventure' is created out of aspirations for social mobility. For the migrants I met, migration *in itself, regardless of where to and for what*, had a social significance in the countries of origin equal to success and status. Europe is only one possible destination within a vast array of possibilities that have no clear order of preference. Whether migration was realised through irregular or regular entry, with a stable job at hand or not, was largely irrelevant for the migrants I encountered, at least at the outset of their journeys. For this reason too, the migration plans of my research participants have no prior fixed destination or point of arrival. As an existential quest, the trajectory generates a life of its own, is 'never-ending' and is always open to new possibilities. What I have also shown, however, is that after many failed attempts to settle somewhere else, migrants finally continue their migratory trajectory with the aim of reaching Europe, as the 'last resort', but without having a clear idea if it will be the place they had dreamt of.

This way of understanding the aspiration to migrate is closely related to findings of other researchers who have investigated would-be migrants' intentions in China (Chu 2010), in Cape Verde (Carling 2002, 2008) and North-West Cameroon (Alpes 2011). Here, it is important to highlight that aspirations to migrate can be understood as a strategy to overcome 'stuckness' at home both in terms of feeling stuck on the road to modernity, as Chu (2010) demonstrates for her subjects in China, or else as stuck on the way to inclusion and participation in society (Alpes 2011, Carling 2002). Viewed from this perspective, migration becomes also a political rather than merely an economic project when it is geared to changing one's own positioning in prevalent power structures in the country of origin.

While these researchers did not investigate 'transit' as such, the experiences of the migrants they encountered had much in common with those I have documented here. This thought stands in opposition to the predominantly economically inspired theories on migration that still dominate much of academic and political thinking on human mobility, and particularly with regards to migration from the global south. It offers a new perspective on the reasons why people continue to migrate in the hope of a better



future, despite increasing border controls and daunting economic prospects in the countries of destination.

### **8.3 Revisiting capabilities for movement and their connection to existential**

#### **quests: from adventurers to fighters**

In chapters three and four, I referred to Alpes' (2011) conceptualisation regarding multiple regulatory authorities of migration in order to explain how migrants' trajectories evolve. State, market and family are all implicated in facilitating and inhibiting mobility options. How migrants are able to use mobility options is not only dependent on the context, but also on their own social location within the forces that regulate movement and stay. By social location, I mean Pessar and Mahler's (2003) idea of a person's position within interrelated historically produced power relationships. Seen from this perspective, migrants' trajectories are both forced and voluntary, as they involve taking choices. However these choices are limited and constrained by the particular regulatory framework in which they occur and the social position of the subject in relation to them (Alpes 2011). The extent to which migrants become 'stuck' in transit is therefore dependent both on structural and individual factors.

The stories of migrants' travels as well as their differing strategies to escape from Morocco all underline the relevance of this theory. While visas, passports and other 'papers' are constantly on migrants' minds, the differing access they have to them and the extent to which these make travel possible is marked by their social position in each country they are travelling through. The extent to which they are able to make family or other networks work for them in the struggle for transport, work or travel options is also largely dependent on their networking abilities. I have drawn particular attention here to the gendered differences in access to networks (Boyd 1989, Hondageu-Soreto 1994). Last but not least, the stories of the migrants I describe make clear that money and the market can become important factors in facilitating or hindering mobility, therefore bringing back the issue of class in determining where and how people are able to travel (Van der Hear 1998). All this demonstrates that the structural differences between migrants' access to mobility are socially constructed

through historically entrenched power differences between people, rather than existing objectively as given facts (Massey 1993). However, seeing structural differences as socially constructed means also acknowledging that they can be changed by humans and are dynamic in place and time, rather than fixed.

Following from this there is another point: In the same way that structural conditions for mobility are human constructs and therefore dynamic and changing, they do not leave people unchanged. Over time, they have an impact on individual and group behaviour related to migration. This is demonstrated by the fact that the aspirations of migrants encountered in this study changed significantly through the process of their migration. While they started out as optimistic adventurers, during their travels, they become aware of the limited choices they have and the prospect of failure and loss of status that migration also entails. They actually became fighters, as expressed in their view that they are 'in a battle' or 'struggling.' In light of this, their hopes and dreams about a different future were frequently reorganised during their trajectory and particularly once they arrived in Morocco, although they were never given up completely. The stories of their travels show that migrants' aspirations and capabilities to migrate are also better understood as dynamic.

This also means that the nature of the journey itself and the duration of movement and settlement in different places gives a specific meaning to migration and determines how far it is experienced as a significant movement in peoples' lives *over time*. Second, it means that during their journey, migrants change not only their objectives, plans and ideas about where and how to migrate but also *who they are* because their social location is adapting to the context in which they are living. I make this point in order to show that a limited capacity to move does not only make migrants' trajectories longer and more difficult but can significantly shape the ways in which they experience their migratory project as a personal failure. As shown in chapter five, migrants frequently hold themselves personally responsible for their inability to cross borders or build up a satisfactory life in a foreign place. Rather than blaming structure, they are blaming themselves for being lazy or stupid, or else they take issue with fate and God (Alpes 2011, Chu 2010).

In short, I agree with Papadopoulos, Stephenson and Tsiaons (2008) that migration is an autonomous project. However, rather than seeing it entirely as a positive force for renewing one's identity – as is implied in Papadopoulos, Stephenson and Tsianos' (2008) analysis, I contend that increasingly stringent migration controls have converted migration into a negative experience for many migrants. The data presented in this thesis has shown that the contemporary conditions of many migrants can also negatively alter individuals' perception of themselves and their relation to others, as well as impacting severely on their abilities to seize opportunities for further movement and settlement.

In essence, what distinguishes the Sub-Saharan African migrants in Morocco from labour migrants, tourists, business people, or other migrants in Europe is not only *why* they travel, but also *how they travel and how they stay*. This is placed in opposition to the simplistic view that any type of migration is simply a movement from A to B. This view does not take into account that the movement itself is likely to affect people's social status, their power in relation to others and their idea of themselves. Migration as a significant movement can be a positive as well as a negative experience. This is not only dependent on the degree of economic development in the country of arrival, or one's migration status there and the networks migrants are inserted into, but also the ways in which migrants' journeys evolve.

#### **8.4 From social capital to relations of dependence: place in migration theory**

In chapter six of this thesis, I described how migrants relate to each other in a situation of forced immobility. In this context, I conceptualised the role of migrants' communities in migrants' lives as both 'making place' in a no-man's land and constructing a place elsewhere. By looking at the example of a Pentecostal church and the several national migrant community structures, I argued that relations are characterised by both a desire to connect to others in order to make the present liveable and at the same time as a way to foster one's own project of onward migration and a future elsewhere. In this context, relations of dependence and mutual support between migrants are interdependent aspects of each other.

Migrant communities built their identity on values that defined them in the past, such as nationality, ethnicity, patriarchal structures of leadership and an economy of morals that is built on social difference. However these, particularly social difference, become distorted through the specific migration context in which migrants find themselves, so that equality and acknowledgement of social difference are no longer at the basis of relations of reciprocity and protection. As an example of this, the thesis discussed some data on women migrants' relationships in community networks in order to explain how they struggle to overcome situations of exploitation and dependency while at the same time fearing isolation.

This leads me to conclude that migrant networks should neither be celebrated as social capital nor dismissed as trafficking or smuggling networks. The data shows that the loss or gain that migrants can derive from networks is dependent upon their social position within them and their ability to shift their social status within them. This is particularly difficult for women because they have difficulties finding support outside of these structures. These conclusions sit awkwardly in between a certain strand of literature on transnationalism on the one hand and international organisations' trafficking/smuggling discourse on the other.

One strand of the literature on transnationalism in migration studies tends to emphasise the positive aspects of migrant networks as vehicles for movement and social support and bases their cohesion on a nomadic identity (Tarrius 2002, Bruneau 2010, Alioua 2005, Escoffier 2006). This is based on their identification with fellow migrants, rather than on shared ethnicity ties or rules and norms. Contrary to this, in government discourses on smuggling, migrants' networks are most often identified as exploitative structures which render people vulnerable (Gallagher 2002, O'Connell Davidson 2008, Agustin 2005). In effect, the crackdown on migrant networks as 'smuggling networks' in Morocco and elsewhere is mostly based on this view. It emphasises that migrants have to be 'protected' from networks in order to be persons again. What both of these discourses neglect to analyse in depth is the reciprocal nature of migrants' relationships with each other and how these are based *both* upon mutual interests *and* power differentials between people. This is also an issue in

contemporary debates on social capital in migration theory (Portes et. al 1999, Bauböck & Faist 2010, Evergeti & Zontini 2006). While in these critical analyses of migrant community networks the roles of ethnicity, rules and norms are recognised as important signifiers of identity, the emphasis is put on the question of how far these are resources for fostering onward mobility or settlement and for whom. In this context, the crucial importance of migrants' structural positions of power within networks is recognised by a variety of authors. This has been particularly analysed from the perspective of gender relations (Hellermann 2006, Zontini 2006, Hondageu - Sotelo 1994, Pessar & Mahler 2003). My analysis shows that the extent to which migrants identify with other migrants is not only dependent on internal power struggles and cultural norms but is also very much related to the political, economic and cultural context within which their community relations are embedded. In Morocco, the general marginalisation that is forced upon migrants by the state makes it extremely difficult for them to participate in alternative communities such as the nation state of the host country or in their home countries. They are therefore relegated to adapting to the sometimes exploitative structures of migrant communities. At the same time, the difficult living conditions also have an impact on internal rules, norms and functions and heighten relationships of power and domination between migrants.

So while it could be seen that communities are 'smuggling networks' because they primarily focus on moving and not staying, it should be recognised that this is in part the result of restrictive migration policies and the criminalisation of migrants. While cracking down on illegal migration, governments have done little to address either the insatiable demand for cheap labour in destination countries, or the lack of dignified living conditions in source countries, both of which make trafficking and smuggling so profitable in the first place. I agree with Ghallegger (2002:28) that at best, this is misguided but at worst, it is actively hypocritical.

### **8.5 From settling and moving to waiting for departure: time in migration theory**

This thesis has problematised the situation of living in-between movement and settlement. In order to do this, I have approached living in limbo from the perspective of time and temporality in migrants' lives.

In transit discourse, migrants' experience of their time in Morocco is temporalised through clock time by making it measurable in days, weeks, years or decades. The word 'transit' suggests that it is a 'phase' that migrants are passing through and they are relatively unaffected by it in their very being. A perspective on social time however highlights that this view is misleading. In chapter five, particularly, I described how forced immobility in Morocco can affect migrants' perception of time. They perceive a dislocation between present, past and future that can lead to an identity crisis and to a sense of a meaningless life. For migrants, waiting for time to pass, for the right moment to act or for another person to do something is neither settlement nor comparable to 'transit' or 'passing through', because it is indeterminate. This finding disrupts conventional understanding of the role of time in people's lives. While time is generally acknowledged as an ordering device for social life (Hagenstadt 1975, Adam 1994), it is less often acknowledged that living outside temporal frames of references can have a bearing on people's actions and wellbeing (Cwerner 2001).

In chapter seven, I concentrated on migrants' waiting strategies to underline the tense relationship between their limited agency and their strong desire to bring sense back into their de-chronised lives. I was shown how waiting to leave can become a form of resistance to the status quo and also signal hope in a better future. In this sense, waiting is a positive force that helps people to keep on living. Waiting itself does not necessarily signify passivity when it is broken up by activity and routines and by attempts to change both external conditions and one's own positioning towards the forces of movement. In fact, waiting can make migrants appear busy and purposeful.

I indicated in chapter five that for Camus (1942), the fact of acting in the face of meaninglessness and hopelessness means revolting against the absurd. For him, action in the face of life's meaninglessness was the only possible way to escape from despair and also the only way to remain dignified. This revolt is crucial for Camus in order to 'survive' the condition of absurdity at least temporarily. Driven by a state of extreme alienation and contradiction, I have seen migrants display signs of what Camus would term 'revolt' against the absurd - often by using strategies of waiting. Through waiting, migrants are able to link contradictory temporalities back together

and regain a sense of life and a certain autonomy. When migrants' actions in forced immobility are understood and analysed from their very own time perspective, it is possible to see them as actors, rather than victims, and as responsible persons rather than criminal freeloaders, as they are often portrayed in policy and research on irregular migrants (Willen 2007).

On the other hand, the data in this thesis has shown that waiting also often means that migrants are not focused on a specific plan or opportunity, but rather are waiting for indeterminate times and undefined chances. This type of waiting is existential and difficult to bear, particularly if one is not religious. In an article on the play 'Waiting for Godot', in which Cash (2009) analyses the existential aspects of waiting for uncertain futures, the author comes to the conclusion that no one can spend a life waiting for something uncertain without going crazy. Existential waiting can lead to a situation in which it is difficult to stop waiting for change and it can easily lead to passivity, despair and giving in to a feeling of victimhood.

By highlighting migrants' relation to present, past and future in chapter five and by exploring their waiting strategies in chapter seven, I sought to demonstrate two points. First, migrants' perspectives on their own life times help us to better understand the extent to which migrants see themselves as protagonists in their own lives despite their limited abilities to increase their capabilities of movements. It is their desire to leave that gives them their dignity and hope of having a choice.

Second, there is a difference between the various phases of forced immobility during migrants' journeys to Morocco and the situation of forced immobility they experience while living in the country. While migrants are waiting in both contexts for the right opportunities to leave, during their journeys, they can be sure that at one point or another, they will have the capacity to do so. In contrast, while they are in Morocco, they cannot be sure that they will ever leave the country. Situational waiting for departure is slowly replaced by existential waiting and endurance of time. This situation is created through a political and economic context in which migrants lose the ability to plan and adjust their lives to dominant temporalities, like the commoditisation

of their time, or the times of citizenship and political participation. There is therefore a strong connection between migrants' time perspective and the political and economic times of the contexts they have to live in.

Apart from this policy relevant point, looking at migrants attempts to depart through a perspective on past, present and future is also relevant for academic debates on the role of time in the migration process. While place is a dominant feature in the literature on human mobility, time is very much less recognised as an important factor in shaping people's relation to migration (Cwerner 2001). Indeed, the material presented in chapters five to seven of this thesis underlines the significance of Adam's (2004) premise that social life consists of an intersection of various time perspectives that coexist with each other. In this way, natural and social time, industrial clock time or cyclical rhythms are interdependent parts of the same phenomena. In this context, Adam (2006) speaks of the dualities of time, rather than dualisms. I argue that the problematic definition of 'transit' rests on a particular conceptualisation of migrants' time which is closely related to ideas of industrial and clock time. This view tends to overshadow our knowledge of migrants' temporal experiences and needs and thus leads to only partial understanding of their worldviews. For that reason, it is fruitful to deconstruct the dominant discourse of time and temporality inherent in migration theory and transit talk in particular, and to analyse in more depth the particular consequences of the temporal aspects of migration on migrants' lives.

I agree with Cwerner (2001: 15) that the study of time is arguably more crucial in situations where time is itself problematised by individuals and social groups. He rightly asserts that it is in contexts of crisis and radical change such as migration, that the normal rhythms and flows, sequences and frequencies, the duration of activities, the pace of daily life, the social narratives and the works of memory, all become problematic. By revealing these inconsistencies between old and new time perspectives in migrants' lives, it has been possible to better understand the process dynamics and possibilities of the migration process. In this sense, time should not be seen as a detached aspect of migrants' social activities, but more as a constitutive element of the immigrant experience.



## **8.6 From preventing transit to the creation of forced immobility: Globalising migration policies and localised effects**

The stories of my respondents highlight that once they arrived in Morocco, their main problem was no longer so much one of 'forced' or 'voluntary' movement, but rather of 'forced' stay. Their situation therefore points to the need to recognise that the forces that shape movement are also those that shape immobility along the way. States, families and markets are effective mediators for movement *and* settlement, but like 'rightful' movement, states can use their authority to monopolise 'rightful' settlement and participation in host societies in a variety of ways.

Furthermore, I argue that rather than being a national issue related to state sovereignty, this is an international phenomenon that extends beyond the borders of individual nation states. I have attempted to show in chapter four how through the development of the global approach to migration, several states are actually implicated in restricting migrants' movement and settlement in Morocco. While African and European states have concentrated both their financial and political efforts in measures designed to increase border controls in both African sending nations and in transit countries on the 'fringes of Europe' (Düvel 2006), measures to promote legal migration between African countries or between African and European countries have not been developed so fast. So in effect, global migration policies on both sides of the Strait of Gibraltar have translated into measures to prevent and restrict migration rather than to promote it.

Measures to discourage migration have also targeted would-be migrants in their countries of origin through the concession of development aid to particularly migration prone countries in the south (Bakewell 2008a). The material presented in chapter four illustrated that in Morocco development aid has been invested in areas of particularly high out-migration of Moroccan nationals in order to improve living conditions there (De Haas 2006, Papadoupoulou Kourkoula 2008). At the time of writing, no aid has been explicitly dedicated to projects aimed at improving the livelihoods of Sub-Saharan African nationals living in Morocco in a sustainable manner. Instead, it has first and foremost been used to finance emergency support to migrants. In this

respect, the policy framework of the Global Approach to Migration which I briefly revisited in chapter four is leaving 'transit' migrants outside any relevant policy initiatives regarding the improvement of migrants' possibilities for settlement in the medium and long-term.

As a consequence, the non-acknowledgement of responsibility towards Sub-Saharan African migrants by the Moroccan state which I described in chapter four is actually unsurprising, as it is directly related to the logic of Global Migration Policies. Thus, denying migrants any status or rights to participate in society has become a legitimate policy rhetoric for Moroccan politicians, on the basis of the internationally recognised argument that migrants 'do not wish to settle there' and are actually 'only transiting' towards somewhere else. Transit discourse gives the international community the legitimacy to suspend any claim made by migrants concerning the protection of their human rights through the international community. Thus, 'transit' can function as a pretext for suspending international human rights law for migrants. Paradoxically, this is only possible in a world in which human rights are still subordinated to the power of the nation state and in which those who are categorised as 'moving subjects' fall outside the responsibilities of states as protectors of human rights (Grant 2005a).

In summary, while the policy framework of the Global Approach to Migration advocates that the enforcement of borders is a shared responsibility of all member states of the European Union, it is a lot less clear about the shared responsibility of states for safeguarding the human rights of migrants in *other* states. This means that even though the rationale for border enforcement in migration policy-making is increasingly global, there are important national and local differences in how this policy plays out in the lives of migrants. This is particularly evident in countries like Morocco, where a lack of democratic government structures makes migrants vulnerable to human rights violations through exploitation and persecution by both non-state and state actors. As I have shown, Morocco's non-status policies actually create a 'state of exception' in which the law suspends itself, in order to justify state power.

In fact, by providing the financial means for sophisticated police surveillance and border control, countries of the European Union have actually facilitated the state of exception to take hold in Morocco, which has an authoritarian regime, a particularly weak human rights record and only partially democratically functioning state institutions. I argue that, given that the EU created and sustained the financial means for improved police capacity and border control in Morocco, it should now be equally concerned about the lack of human rights protection for migrants who are forced to live there against their will. Neither international policy initiatives that are simply designed to improve migrants' living conditions in Morocco without tackling their conditions of rightlessness or voluntary return programmes acknowledge migrants' primary need to become real persons again. Only policies that attempt to tackle head on the real causes for the isolation and exclusion of migrants, such as their inability to achieve formal status, their inability to make claims on their rights and their lack of exposure to democratic forms of government will ever actually get at the root of the problem.

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