Networks of residents in Catalonia:
a Senegambian perspective

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**Glossary**

**Cerdanyola**
neighbourhood of Mataró

**Convivencia**
‘living-together’ (Spanish); a living together and sharing of everyday life of all residents; analytically to refer to the bottom-up practices of negotiating everyday life in a diverse society

**Empadronamiento**
registration with the town hall (Spanish) and basis of residency

**Jama Kafo**
‘association of all’ (Mandinka); Sub-Saharan association, Mataró

**Planeta**
‘planet’ (Spanish); Senegalese Association, Mataró

**Legal residency**
based on a residence permit issued by the Spanish state, often linked to a work permit

**Musu Kafo**
‘association of women’ (Mandinka); women’s association, Mataró

**Nova Ciutadania**
‘new citizenship’ (Catalan); name of the department in charge of immigration and social integration policies

**Palau**
neighbourhood of Mataró

**Sabosire**
Gambian Soninke association, Mataró

**Sandaga**
Senegalese Soninke association, Mataró; market in Dakar
List of abbreviations

ASA        Associations of Social Anthropologists

CIDOB  Centro de Información y Documentación Internacionales en Barcelona
       (Centre for International Information and Documentation in Barcelona)

OPI        Observatorio permanente de la inmigración (Permanent observatory of immigration)

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1 Introduction

Like everywhere, there are good people and there are bad people. I know people here that are very good friends. Some Gambian, some Senegalese, some Spanish, some from right here [Catalan] ... All are the same, good people according to me. I know people that are like me, we are very good friends, like family. Seriously. With those I don’t know, we only greet, they are not bad people. If they were bad they would not bother. If I see someone greeting, he cannot be a bad person, wherever he is from. Maybe there are bad people, but those I know are 75 percent good ones and 25 percent not good ones. The 25 percent are not bad, because he did not do anything bad to you, because we don’t have a relation, I don’t know anything, that’s why you cannot say that they are bad. (Boubou 07/2007)

Sitting in a small neighbourhood park in Mataró, the middle-sized administrative centre of the Maresme region in Catalonia, north of Barcelona, Boubou from The Gambia gave this statement about his social relations with other residents in Catalonia and people from home. Essentially, according to Boubou, there are good people and there are bad people. Boubou’s statement adheres to a widely held belief amongst new Catalanian residents from the Senegambia region, a belief which underlies the social relations of everyday life. Although migrants experience discrimination and racism,
‘bad’ people are merely unknown, those with whom no interaction takes place. Good people, on the other hand, are those with whom they interact, those who are part of their networks, irrespective of the intensity of contact. This belief suggests an affirmative tenor about life in general which is constantly supported through everyday interaction.

While acknowledging discrimination and inequality, in this thesis, I seek to establish what can be learned from the diversity of network relations of residents in Mataró. What importance do everyday interactions such as greetings in the street have in comparison to structural discrimination? What is the importance of relationships that develop between new and old residents? And finally, in which way do these local social relations contradict or parallel transnational ones that migrants might maintain with home and other localities around the world? Addressing these questions, I found that both local and transnational network relations are relevant dimensions of migrant everyday lives, and that locally convivencia, a living together and sharing of everyday life takes place. Convivencia relies both on seemingly meaningless everyday interactions and more intense relationships between residents.

After centuries of restrictive attitudes towards diversity and even internal repression until the 1970s under the Franco regime, Spain’s society has diversified recently in a fast process of changing from an emigration to an immigration country. Foreign born now account for over eleven percent of Spain’s total population (Instituto Nacional de Estadística 2008b). The south of Spain, however, has had a long history of diversity with its Muslim, Christian, and Jewish past, and with it a long history of convivencia (Suárez-Navaz 2004). Convivencia in this thesis refers to the bottom-up practices of negotiating everyday life in a diverse society. In Catalonia, the region of this study, convivencia has been revived as a normative policy goal, and together with interculturalism, is used to stress interaction, participation and equality in order to facilitate mutual understanding between old and new residents (Generalitat de
Catalunya 2005). *Convivencia* does not emphasise cultural difference; instead, it emphasises practices of living together on the basis of perceived equality and mutual respect (Suárez-Navaz 2004). This civility between residents is the result of negotiations in everyday interactions (Vertovec 2007; Baumann 2004). Thus, researching personal networks is key to understanding the conditions and practices of *convivencia* on the basis of residency.

In Catalonia, regional and local policies of social integration stress the importance of a culturally diverse heritage and the equality of residents disregarding their legal status. This equality rests on the *empadronamiento*, registration with the town hall, which I refer to as residency in this thesis. This is in contrast to *legal* residency which means holding the formal residence permit issued by the Spanish authorities. Thus, residency is the basis of participation in everyday life and offers a different understanding of local belonging.

Catalonia is the most active region of immigration from the Senegambia region and a number of studies have been dedicated to it3. Referring to migrants from the Senegambia region as Senegambian implies their regional origin and some common migration experience only4. Generally, they are known to engage in transnational networks and to rely on the resources of these networks during their migration5. The migrants from the Senegambia region themselves identify in many different ways using national, ethnic, religious, and regional categories. I will explore whether their multiple transnational and local social relations cross those and other perceived boundaries between people. I ask how such network relations bridge diversity within the migrant

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4 For a historical account of the origins of the term in several political unions during the history of the region cf. Kaplan Marcusán (1998:32).

5 (van Nieuwenhuyze 2007; Riccio 2002; Riccio 2001; Carter 1997; Sow 2005, 2004)
group and extend beyond into the locality. Thus, the neutrality of a regional category facilitates the flexible analysis of social relations sought here. In contrast to the self-descriptive value of ethnic and national terms, I will use inverted commas for analytical purposes to indicate the constructedness of ‘ethnic’, ‘interethnic’ and ‘national’ relations rather than essentialising them (Banks 1996).

**Approach and research questions**

In this thesis, I am concerned with the social relations of migrants from the Senegambia region who were living in Catalonia at the time of my fieldwork in 2007. Transnationalism and local *convivencia* are linked in this endeavour by focusing on egocentric networks. The basic dimensions of the concept of egocentric networks had already been established by anthropologists in the 1960s and 1970s (Barnes 1954; Mitchell 1969; Mayer 1964). I am using their concept of egocentric networks to look at the qualities of individual network relations. This is fundamentally different from a network approach that analyses the properties of a network in quantitative terms such as size, density, or centrality. Studying personal networks in-depth reveals the complexity and multidimensionality of network relations and the significance of qualitative differences in individual ties. Thus, a different picture of migrant lives emerges.

Focusing on personal networks to understand social relations involved in the migration process is valuable for three reasons. Firstly, it raises awareness of the various and different social relations in and beyond Catalonia. As such, networks differ from groups since networks do not have concrete boundaries. Compared to groups defined as aggregates of people that maintain strong ties either in practice or through identification,

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6 Egocentric and personal network are used interchangeably in this thesis.

7 See for example the International Network for Social Network Analysis for more information (www.insna.org).
networks cross-cut categorical differences. In spanning different structural frameworks, personal network relations are an expression of agency. Nevertheless, institutional structures may restrict choices. Thus, networks are a concept which mediates between personal agency and the institutional or structural framework. I will question how personal networks include both people in the locality and those living far away, and to what extent the networks are made up of family members, friends, other migrants, or old and new residents of various categories and social classes in the locality.

The network approach as applied in this thesis goes beyond a focus on discourses of identification since everyday social practices are the main concern. In this way, networks do not suffer from the inherent culturalism and essentialism which political discourse and popular imagination of immigrant communities strongly hinge upon.

Secondly, I will explore the qualitative diversity of social relations amongst migrants, with those at home, and with other residents. They can vary mainly in their intensity and content while still having a similar importance for, and effects on, migrants’ lives in a diverse society. For example, both a co-migrant and a Catalan resident can be called a friend. These relations rely to a greater or lesser extent on a combination of shared norms and ideas such as respect, equality, obligation, reciprocity and affect. I will explore the extent to which an understanding of norms is shared by old and new residents alike and how such sharing facilitates various ways of interaction.

Finally, networks are a way of becoming aware of the complexities of social relations in diverse societies. Focusing on migrants’ personal networks spanning across boundaries and including relations of different kinds and purposes, I will ask what significance these networks have for diverse European societies which struggle with ideas of assimilation, integration or multiculturalism, segregation and hybridity; what can the discussion of different forms of social relations maintained by all residents add
to solutions to the challenges diverse societies face. What does the diversity of migrant networks mean for conceptual work on multicultural societies? And how does it relate and compare to migrants’ activities in transnational spaces? Both questions are relevant for an informed policy approach that accepts the complexity of actual social relations on the ground. In this capacity, a network approach highlighting transnational relations, civil interaction, and a few strong interethnic ties in the receiving society might offer new starting points for a different vision of *convivencia*, the living-together as residents.

**Theoretical embeddedness**

Understanding the complexities of migrants’ lives on the one hand, and issues of life in diverse societies on the other, has been the focus of much research. However, there are only a few studies that have investigated the relationship of transnationalism and local forms of incorporation (Morawska 2003). Assuming a local perspective, this study of egocentric networks combines both transnational activities and local *convivencia*.

Firstly, focusing on the experiences of migrants, networks have been used to describe how their migration process is organised, facilitated and maintained. Transnationalism is one field of research which has stressed the ongoing involvement of migrants through networks in the transnational social field, transnational space, and in transnational living (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004; Guarnizo 2003; Faist 2000). Different forms of transnational involvement have been stressed, both in terms of the level of organisation such as individual or collective, and the intensity, content and duration of relations. Both practical and identificatory dimensions of transnationalism have been researched, and there are many ways of participating in the transnational social field (cf. Levitt and Jaworsky 2007). Applying a personal network perspective, transnational and local forms of participation can co-exist (Glick Schiller et al. 2006).
Secondly, not only does migrants’ participation in the transnational social field vary, but incorporation into the local immigration society can also be achieved to a varying extent. The terminology applied to understand the processes is very wide ranging from assimilation, integration and multiculturalism to segregation, or, indeed cultural mixing (cf. Grillo 2005). Discussions on this topic are often grounded in questions, and the fear, of difference. This has found expression in biological racism in the past, and today is sometimes termed cultural racism (cf. Grillo 2003). Recently, some authors have engaged with a new notion of incorporation in diverse societies. They promote the idea of civility, of sharing practicable principles of how to do things (Vertovec 2007; Baumann 2004; Boyd 2006). Also implying the acceptance of common norms, some argue for new assimilationism (Kivisto 2005b). However, instead of being dictated by the receiving society, civility is the result of negotiations in daily interactions.

An awareness is developing of the relevance of seemingly meaningless everyday interactions for negotiating civility and yet the importance of a few strong ties crossing a priori perceived boundaries is rarely explored. These more intensive ‘interethnic’ ties are based on norms and ideas of reciprocity, obligation, and affect (Eve 2003; Grätz et al. 2003). Understanding the kind and content of relations in the locality, both on the basis of civility and closer ‘interethnic’ ties, adds an important perspective to the egocentric networks of migrants and is essential to understanding local *convivencia*.

**Outlook**

Before exploring the variety of networks relations and the transnational and local social fields, the background of this thesis will be presented. The following chapter is divided into two sections, the first giving two perspectives, European and African, on the migration process, and the second further situating the reader in my fieldwork to
achieve intersubjective understanding. The third chapter sets out the approach to egocentric networks and introduces theoretical considerations for the three empirical chapters that follow. The forth chapter starts by presenting a transnational perspective on the egocentric networks of Senegambian residents in Catalonia. The fifth and sixth chapters investigate local aspects of networks and *convivencia*. The fifth chapter focuses on most basic forms of interaction in the neighbourhood and at the workplace, whereas the sixth chapter explores case studies of more intensive ‘interethnic’ network relations and their importance in the lives of Senegambians. Finally, I will conclude by summarising my main findings and stressing the relevance of adopting a network approach in order to better understand the landscape of social relations of Senegambian residents, and the importance of these multiple relations for *convivencia* in a diverse society.
2 Background and methodology

This chapter presents important background information for my study of egocentric networks of Senegambian migrants in Mataró. I will approach the local context first from a European perspective, then from the perspective of Senegambian migrants whose situation and trajectories I study. Both perspectives lead into an account of my fieldwork.

2.1 Immigration to Mataró

2.1.1 A European perspective: Spain, Catalonia, and Mataró

In the European context, Spain was once an emigration country sending guest workers to booming regions in France, Germany and Switzerland. However, with the fall of the Franco regime and the introduction of democracy, Spain is undergoing massive change, of which King (2001) identifies rapid economic growth and changing labour markets as the most important. Since the mid 1980s, Spain is no longer only a sending or transit country for international migration but immigration has reached unprecedented levels. In 2007, 11.6 percent (5.2 million) of Spain’s total population was born outside of the country, of which 86 percent (4.5 million) held a foreign passport, and 1.5 million were classified as irregular since they did not hold legal residency. Given that there were only about 540,000 people in Spain without Spanish nationality in 1996, these changes signify an immense growth in total immigration over

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8 In the early years of the present decade, the number of foreigners recorded in Spanish municipal registers more than doubled in one year, from 923,879 in 2001 to 1,977,946 in 2002 (Instituto Nacional de Estadística).

9 These numbers are taken from the municipal register (padrón) and include foreigners with and without formal legal residence and/or work permit as long as they registered with the local town hall. 1.5 Mio. of them do not hold a permanent resident permit at the end of 2006 (OPI 2006; Instituto Nacional de Estadística 2008b). Some groups like students, asylum seekers and refugees are excluded (OPI 2007:9).
the last ten years. Indeed, Spain is now frequently considered one of Europe’s new immigration countries.

**Policies towards migrants**

The change towards becoming an immigration country had already been recognised in the late 1980s, when in 1985 the *Ley Orgánica de Extranjería* 7/1985, Spain’s first immigration law, was passed. Until then, there were no restrictions such as visa requirements and free immigration was possible. From the 1980s onwards, changes in immigration policy occurred, led by the need to conform to European Community policy. Spain has been criticised however as still lacking comprehensive immigration policy (Rodríguez García 2006). Immigration jurisdiction in the country is split between the Spanish state and the autonomous communities. The state regulates the juridico-administrational aspects of immigration, whereas social aspects like the provision of social services (education, health, housing, social and cultural services) fall under the jurisdiction of the autonomous communities of Spain (Aja and Arango 2006). These are 17 regions, which are constituted according to common historical, cultural and economic characteristics (*La Constitución Española de 1978*:Art. 143).

Catalonia was one of the first autonomous communities founded in 1979 using as its claim its history as an independent nation with a distinct culture and language. Situated in the north of Spain, Catalonia is known for having a long developed integration policy (Rodríguez García 2006:404). The *Citizenship and Immigration Plan 2005-2008* of Catalonia rests on the three normative principles of pluralism, of equality,

10 A comprehensive policy analysis of the past twenty years in Spain has been done recently (Aja and Arango 2006).

11 Together with Catalonia, the Basque country and Galicia were granted autonomous status for the same reasons. Andalusia was the forth community to be founded due to massive popular support. In 1983, the whole country was divided into the 17 communities.
and of civic duty (Generalitat de Catalunya 2005). These apply to those residing in the region, including irregular migrants registered with the town hall.

Map 1: Spain and autonomous community Catalonia

In the plan, *interculturalitat* (Catalan: interculturalism) is used both to describe the plural foundations of Catalan society, and to stress culture as a dynamic process which is fundamentally influenced and formed by interaction. Although the plan stresses the duty of immigrants to accept the constitutive framework of the state (politically, legally) and Catalonia (culturally), it also states that cultural difference must be protected.

Additionally, the plan suggests that emphatic and mutual understanding should underlie everyday cooperation. To facilitate interaction, the Catalan language is strongly promoted as the backbone of this intercultural and multilingual project. This however

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12 Catalan policies imply that multiple languages may be spoken, as, indeed, is already the case with the coexistence of Castellano (Spanish) and Catalan, as long as Catalan is spoken by all, e.g. to communicate.
is not the focus of this thesis\textsuperscript{13}. Given the multilingual background of many migrants from the Senegambia region, moving into a new place and learning a new language are logically linked and readily accepted by the majority of all my informants.

Apart from promoting the Catalan language, Catalan integration policy stresses interaction, participation and equality as factors facilitating mutual understanding and \textit{convivencia}, both of which are based on common residency and the recognition of (and identification with) common civic rights and duties or civility (Generalitat de Catalunya 2005). These normative goals cohere with what I analytically identify as (everyday) \textit{convivencia} between residents.

\textbf{Immigration in Catalonia}

Along with the Basque country, Catalonia preceded the rest of Spain in its high levels of immigration. The result of its faster economic development, the region drew much internal migration in the 1960s and 1970s (Bover and Velilla 2005). It was however not only a pole for this internal migration, but has also become a major region of international immigration. Nearly one million foreigners in Spain are registered in Catalonia, the largest immigration population of all autonomous communities. Put differently, foreigners account for more than 14.7 percent of all residents in Catalonia. Similar to Spain in general, 300,000, or a third of these foreigners, are irregular\textsuperscript{14}. Despite their status, these irregular migrants are also affected by Catalan integration policy as it is based on residency and not legal status.

\textsuperscript{13} A detailed case study of language proficiency of Senegambian migrants can be found in Kaplan Marcusán (1998).

\textsuperscript{14} Although this has significant implications for the labour market, social integration policies are not concerned about this aspect.
The uneven distribution of foreigners in Spain is even stronger within Catalonia. In Barcelona itself, according to the municipal register in 2005, only 14 percent of the population are foreigners. In contrast, smaller towns along the coast and in agricultural areas account for up to 30 percent or more.

Immigration in Mataró

Mataró, the district capital of the Maresme, one of the four districts of the province of Barcelona, is similar to the city of Barcelona itself in that 14.9 percent of its inhabitants are foreigners. Most of these foreigners come from the Maghreb states (40 percent), 19 percent come from each South America and Sub-Saharan Africa, and nearly ten percent from East Asia. Not only does Mataró have substantial numbers of immigrants, it is also the town in Spain with the most expertise in immigration and
integration policy (Aja and Arango 2006:383). Implementing the broader political ideas pertinent in Catalonia, the New Citizenship Department (Nova Ciutadania) in Mataró stresses the participatory aspect of *convivencia* and the cooperation with immigrant associations.

The textile industry which dominated Mataró in the past is now being increasingly replaced by the construction and service sectors (Ajuntament de Mataró 2007b). Greenhouse flower cultivation and similar agricultural production are still typical for the surrounding areas. For all sectors, labourers immigrated to the area first from the south of Spain and later from abroad. Those born outside of Catalonia, i.e. international and internal migrants, now make up 40 percent of the population of Mataró (Ajuntament de Mataró 2007a). Forty years ago, whole new neighbourhoods had been created where both waves of immigration overlap. Cerdanyola and Palau are typical examples of neighbourhoods where Catalan seems to be spoken a lot less than for example in the city centre, and where labourers from the south of Spain and immigrants from abroad make for an impressive diversity.

Table 1: Population in neighbourhoods of my informants, 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighbourhood</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Non-Spanish Citizens (%)</th>
<th>Born outside of Catalonia (%)</th>
<th>Sub-Saharan</th>
<th>Magrebian</th>
<th>Proportion of Sub-Saharan of all Foreigners (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mataró</td>
<td>119,441</td>
<td>14,9</td>
<td>40,48</td>
<td>3317</td>
<td>7132</td>
<td>18,61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cerdanyola</td>
<td>29,676</td>
<td>18,71</td>
<td>50,54</td>
<td>1445</td>
<td>2670</td>
<td>24,38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rocafonda</td>
<td>10,998</td>
<td>29,88</td>
<td>55,26</td>
<td>670</td>
<td>1974</td>
<td>19,26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palau</td>
<td>6,779</td>
<td>32,03</td>
<td>51,93</td>
<td>546</td>
<td>1340</td>
<td>22,77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molins Torner</td>
<td>5,748</td>
<td>7,55</td>
<td>41,16</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>11,57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre</td>
<td>3,858</td>
<td>10,13</td>
<td>22,4</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>7,94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (Ajuntament de Mataró 2007a)

Table 1 shows the composition of the population in the neighbourhoods where I conducted fieldwork. Characteristic is the high concentration of internal and international migrants. This impression was also given at the 5th national conference on migration in Spain, Valencia, 2007.
international migrants and the high percentage of Sub-Saharan Africans in Cerdanyola, Palau and Rocafonda. Sub-Saharan Africans are however, outnumbered by Maghrebian in these particular neighbourhoods\textsuperscript{16}.

Comparing the different towns in Catalonia, Mataró is by no means an extreme case of Sub-Saharan dominance. It does have however a substantially higher proportion of Sub-Saharan immigrants than Barcelona. As discussed below, Mataró historically was one of the first places where Gambian and Senegalese migrants settled. This has lead to, and combines with, the present high political awareness of immigration on the local level (Sow 2004; Kaplan Marcusán 1998) and makes Mataró a complex and interesting context in which to situate my study.

2.1.2 **The Migration of Senegambians to Catalonia and Mataró**

**Reasons to migrate**

The Senegambian region in Africa has seen a long history of migration. For example, the migration of Jola labour and trade migrants from the Casamance region into towns and to The Gambia was already important in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century (Linares 2003). More generally, the whole of Senegal and The Gambia have been regions of intensive migration, a fact reflected in the diverse composition of ethnic groups, their mixing and, in this case, their flexible boundaries (Diouf 1998). Within the region, Dakar and Banjul in particular were poles attracting migrants (Colvin 1981). Internationally, Senegambians first came to serve in the French and British armies given the regions’ colonial ties, and then, in the absence of visa restrictions for Senegalese, were able to circulate between France and Senegal, a phenomenon which quickly became common. Yet several factors have both sparked change to, and intensified, migration flows.

\textsuperscript{16} Data on migrants by nationality is not available on the neighbourhood level.
Firstly, poor economic development in Africa since the end of colonialism and the slow death of agricultural production have created the motivation to leave. At the same time, images of the successful migrant and of a life in Europe have made emigration more attractive. At home in the Senegambian region, as well as in other parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, the search for a better life and for means to support the family, and the desire to become someone through emigration, are part of the individual’s motivation to migrate (van Nieuwenhuyze 2007; Kaplan Marcusán 2003). Family and individual decision making overlap as do economic and social aspects and hopes for the outcome of migration.

Secondly, starting with the international oil crisis in 1973 getting into Europe is becoming an increasingly difficult undertaking. Although earlier migrants used very complex routes to get to Europe, these routes are becoming even more complex as illustrated by work which portrays diversifying migration routes and the difficulties and risks attached to them (van Nieuwenhuyze 2007; de Haas 2007; Adepoju 2005, 2004). Additionally, European destinations have changed. In response to the 1973 crisis, Central and Western European countries rapidly introduced migration controls, and Spain and Italy have become important new destinations.17

**Senegambian immigrants to Spain, Catalonia, and the Maresme**

Since there are no historical ties between Spain and either Senegal or The Gambia, complementary explanations for the strong Senegambian immigration are also given, either from a mainly Gambian or Senegalese perspective. It appears Gambians

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17 Recognising the importance of these changes, migration was one of the main focuses of the Africa-EU partnership during the EU-Africa summit in Lisbon 2007 (European Commission 2007). The summit concluded that both the needs in sending regions and the integration of Africans in the places of settlement should be addressed.
came to the Maresme because of a number of historical coincidences (Kaplan Marcusán 1998:96). Gambians who had migrated to other African states, such as Nigeria and Sierra Leone, in the mid-1970s used a direct flight from Nigeria to Madrid, since it was one of the few European destinations where no visa restrictions applied after the oil crisis. Once in Madrid, they were informed that agricultural workers were needed in the province of Girona and the Maresme and proceeded to settle in these regions.

A Senegal focused explanation is offered by Sow (2004) who claims that the early trading routes of Mourides, one of the four Senegalese Muslim brotherhoods, and others included places such as Las Palmas and Madrid, where traders bought products to re-sell them in Dakar and other coastal towns. Given their commercial and trading activities, Sow argues that Senegalese settle more in urban centres, whereas Gambians are found in agricultural areas. However, there are also many Senegalese in smaller centres like Mataró. There, migrants from the Senegambia region to Spain are continuously joined by others coming from France.

All accounts of Senegambian immigration stress the importance of social networks and chain migration in their immigration. Statistics support this and the details of the above immigration trajectories. The majority of all Gambians in Spain cluster in Catalonia (nearly 14,000 of all 17,000), whereas only 14,000 of the 36,600 Senegalese live in the same region (Instituto Nacional de Estadística 2008b). Hence, Senegalese are more spread across the different regions of Spain. Additionally, these numbers object to speaking of a temporary phenomenon. Indeed, while individual migration projects are imagined as temporary, even they may in fact last much longer than expected and thus contribute to chain migration (Kaplan Marcusán 1998; Farjas Bonet 2002).
As Chart 1 shows, migration from the Senegambia region is still male dominated. However, the second generation or children arriving through family reunification are nearly gender balanced. Most importantly, the largest cohort of immigrants is of a lower working age (16-44 years), accounting for over 70 percent of Gambian and 80 percent of Senegalese men. Although Senegambians are employed in a large variety of sectors in Catalonia (Jabardo Velasco 2006:70), Díez Nicolás (2002:263) found that for Spain in general black Africans cluster in the agricultural sector (30%), service industries, construction (14%), independent commerce and industry. Both this younger age of migrants and their employment in the above sectors are reflected in my fieldwork.

Although these quantitative statistics give a preliminarily sense of the numbers and direction of Senegambian migrations, national categories do not reflect the complexity of groups involved and their immigration patterns. Migrants themselves identify with many more categories than the nationally designated ones. For example,

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18 Barcelona province is one of Catalonia’s four provinces.
ethnic and supranational categories also underlie the practices and discourses of social organisation and identification. There are Soninke, Mandinka, Fula and Wolof migrants in Mataró, and others identifying as Sub-Saharan or African. This thesis will question fixed categories, explore their limitations, and focus on their constructedness and dependence on social interaction. Mataró reflects a diversity of ethnic, national and other groups, and through it multiple, overlapping and competing claims and ways of identification become apparent.

2.2 Account of my fieldwork

In addition to the macro trajectories of Senegambian migrants in Catalonia, details about the fieldwork I conducted between June and September 2007 in Mataró and Barcelona are crucial to fully situate this thesis. The ten weeks of fieldwork were divided in two halves with a break of three weeks in the middle. Given the exploratory nature of this thesis, I aimed to gather as many different narratives and trajectories as possible within a local context to become aware of the variety of network relations within and beyond ‘ethnic’ groups. I will firstly describe the selection of the site and secondly focus on aspects and difficulties of access. Thirdly, I will reflect upon my own impact on the specific situation and finally, will detail the practical design of my participant observation and the conversations I had with migrants.

**Mataró and beyond – Achieving more variation**

My analysis of the municipal register (padrón) directed me towards a number of smaller towns with high numbers of Sub-Saharan Africans around Barcelona. Based in Barcelona, I visited a number of these locations deciding finally on Mataró as my main

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19 To name ethnicities I use the terminology of my informants.

20 To return to the field had a positive effect, since it must have felt to them like a familiar person returning.
site of study. In addition to its large proportion of Senegalese and Gambians, my contacts to a number of migrant organisations developed fastest here, an important aspect given my limited time frame. The first half of my fieldwork I stayed in Barcelona, travelling to Mataró daily, and the second half I lived in Mataró itself to ‘dive in’ even more extensively into the networks of informants and their friends and families in Mataró.

Apart from participant observation and 48 conversations on migrant trajectories in Mataró, I also pursued other contacts. These lead to six in-depth conversations in Barcelona with immigrants with a remarkably different trajectory to many of my informants in Mataró, and three encounters in places neighbouring Mataró. These trajectories help to contrast, challenge and complement the information I gathered in Mataró. This was important as I was initially concerned the diversity of ‘ethnic’ and ‘interethnic’ relations in Mataró could be rare and might be different between a metropolitan centre like Barcelona and a smaller sized town like Mataró.

Apart from these comparative cases, focusing on a single site facilitated the gathering of in-depth knowledge about the background, institutions, and local history of immigration in the short period of fieldwork. Although a fuller comparison of Barcelona and Mataró would have allowed a further understanding of diversity in Catalonia, staying in Mataró and spending time in parks, flats, and other places allowed me to access to a wide variety of migrant experiences in a single site which initially seemed to be quite bounded.

Many ways to gain access to a complex population composition

Qualitative research facilitates the understanding of diverse practices and processes of migration (Gardner 1995:12). This thesis is based on an in-depth
knowledge of the migrants’ situation which in turn depends on getting to know individuals well and participating in their lives. Gaining personal access to the immigrants and their livelihoods was thus of crucial importance.

Over time, I gained access to Senegambian migrants in a variety of ways, including more and less formal approaches. On a formal level, I contacted migrant associations, researchers in the area, and the local government. Throughout my fieldwork, I interacted with three Senegalese and two Gambian, an ethnic Senegambian (Jola), and a Pan-African associations. Having spent time convincing the secretaries, presidents and spokespersons of these associations to allow me further access to members, they were often the first I got to know better. In relation to my questions, they were particularly keen to show me the role their associations played in migrants’ lives.

Apart from contacts established in a semi-formal way through associations, researchers and mediators of the New Citizenship Department in Mataró, I also established contacts in parks and squares in Cerdanyola and Rocafonda, on trains and through friends. Thus, I gained access in many ways to the quite heterogeneous group of Senegambian residents in Mataró. I interacted with, for example, Mandinka, Sarahoule, Fula, Wolof, Bambara, and Jola speaking migrants using Spanish, French, and English. Van Nieuwenhuyze (2007) stresses that finding informants through participant observation does not preclude meeting migrants from other Sub-Saharan countries as well. Indeed, I also had casual conversations with other Sub-Saharan, mainly with Malians. However, relying on some successful random encounters with Senegambian migrants, the snowballing of their networks worked out well. In particular, meeting one Senegalese and one Gambian together on the train opened up a whole new world of kin and housemate networks. I used several family networks at

21 The latter I mainly contacted for the reason of getting to know the political dynamics in Mataró.
parties and dinners, and also spent time in ‘ethnically’ and nationally mixed households. Participating in ‘interethnic’ and international kin relations, acquaintances and friendships gave me a sense of the relevance of personal networks. A simplified outline of my field contacts are displayed in Appendix 1 which shows the different entrance points I had into the community.

As a last way of gaining access, I participated in events and celebrations, such as African music concerts, weddings, baptisms, and the Ramadan. Through these experiences, I learned a lot about traditions, group dynamics and migration, and was able to establish further contacts. Ramadan, which overlapped with most of the second half of my fieldwork, proved to be helpful in this matter. Contrary to what some of my key informants had predicted I was often included in the after sunset practices and rituals in a number of the households I knew best. This did not only give me many more opportunities to be a participant observer but also allowed me more time to interact and have conversations about personal network relations. It helped me became familiar with traditions, ‘ethnic’ networks and transnational family and village obligations. Hence, my fieldwork combines a number of access strategies allowing for a complex net of encounters and conversations exploring topics from transnational to local.

**Being a blond, central European, young male foreigner**

As many anthropologists have stressed, I became aware of the effect of my subject position on the fieldwork situation, including the potential of reciprocity and constraints of asymmetry (Okely 1992; Rabinow 1977). This and the differing levels of access led my information in a particular direction. The first Senegambians I met were young men and older migrants who established the first associations in Mataró. Young men often share flats, most of them unmarried or having their wives left behind. After overcoming their shyness, I became part of their afternoon teas, dinners, football
screenings and relaxing hours of watching music videos. Although much time passed listening to conversations in foreign languages, my presence was often rewarded by them speaking in French, Spanish, or English, so that I could follow. Being all foreigners, we were on equal footing speaking Spanish with each other. The process of translating often made extra explanations necessary which was possible in informal conversations throughout an afternoon. By the end of my fieldwork, I had developed good friendships with some helping them set up email accounts, going out dancing, and exchanging photos. Interaction with young men who also perceived me as foreign to the local situation was easy and often friendships quickly developed.

Compared with the ease of establishing connections with men, trying to interact with women was far more complex or even seemed to be impossible. It rapidly became apparent how being a male European researcher was influencing and restricting access. In his Reflections on fieldwork in Morocco, Rabinow (1977) describes a similar situation in which he is only partially able to gain access to Moroccan society. In parks, women were suspicious or seemed uninterested, men did not introduce me to women presupposing that their opinion could not interest me, and interviews with women's associations were postponed since the committee members said to be extremely busy. Yet, there are exceptions to this general pattern; for example, Adja, a Senegalese Fula from Dakar who immigrated to Spain twelve years ago, immediately invited me to her home. Slowly, I was also successful in meeting and talking to women either in flats which I visited regularly or through Sanakha, one of my key informants, who declared herself my godmother and introduced me to all her family and friends.

By the end of my fieldwork, I had also reached Senegambians of varying age. The older men (and women) I interacted with had been very active in different associations, both ethnic and neighbourhood. From their perspective, I was often a researcher ‘interviewing’ them. Getting beyond their elaborate discourses of the
development of immigration and integration was difficult. During the meetings, they questioned my work and it was difficult to justify my study given that other studies made had had little positive impact. These people had had extensive experience with anthropologists and critically reviewed not only their own situation but also my work.

Nevertheless, having had some interaction with researchers before, informants often wanted to collaborate in a ‘good way’ once they had accepted the validity of my project. In respect to my questions about their personal ‘interethnic’ networks, they rapidly claimed to have Spanish and Catalan friends. Yet, the information gained from them became much more differentiated by the time I saw them more than once and even throughout an afternoon.

This change in discourse was not quite so strong with migrants who never were asked about their immigration history before. Including new arrivals and therefore less well-established migrants, it often was the first time that a European and complete stranger showed interest in their experiences and stories. Showing initial interest and being eager to learn from them in general ensured good conversation after a first phase of doubts and questions.

In favour of an informal approach

Generally, the informal approach of the qualitative research design facilitated the interaction with various migrants, some living in Spain for more than a decade, and others being insecure new arrivals without documentation. The unofficial and relaxed atmosphere of participant observation allowed me to be flexible, to accommodate the needs of my informants and to establish confidentiality and trust. It was for this reason I relied primarily on the protocols of conversation instead of recording them. Therefore, the discussion of personal topics, such as social interaction and relationships, was often possible.
Some recent work describes the West African migrants living with irregular status as hidden and/or vulnerable populations (van Nieuwenhuyze 2007:76f). The fact of having just arrived and being without socio-economic security and a sense of confidence in the situation, renders interaction with a researcher rather unimportant and even uncomfortable for irregular migrants (Cornelius 1982). But their legal status is not the only difficulty influencing the fieldwork situation. Amongst my informants I observed different levels of shyness and insecurity contributing to the migrants’ inapproachability or suspicion.

Participant observation is well suited to overcoming the challenges presented by this shyness. For example, spending substantial time at a flat, discussions became part of migrants’ afternoon or evening social gatherings and enough time was available to talk about my research and their experiences. In addition, these gatherings allowed me to get to know people and their trajectories in a way not possible in formal interviews, which helped me to better place the information and knowledge I gained on social interactions.

The diversity of my approach to gaining access to different groups of migrants extended the range of my experiences. Participant observation during afternoon and evening encounters in parks and flats with the aim of having informal conversations instead of interviews, facilitated access and helped in establishing trust and gaining a differentiated picture of the multitude of different experiences.

Content of conversations and interviews

Although some of my encounters with Senegambians became formal interviews due to the expectations of the migrant or my limited time frame, I always stressed the informality, openness, equality and reciprocity of being in a conversation. Thus, qualitative open interviews resemble everyday conversations (Rubin and Rubin 1995),
and have a similar objective: getting to know each other, interacting in a friendly manner, and learning about the particularities of each others’ everyday lives focusing on migrants’ networks and interrelations.

The first of my conversations were exploratory and I tried different ways to obtain the information I wanted to gain about everyday interactions and relationships with Spanish, Catalan and other immigrants. I began with a fairly basic list of areas of interest which resulted from brainstorming with academics from the Barcelona Autonomous University who had done prior fieldwork on Senegambians. At first, I tried to cover the following areas of interest: relations at the work place; civic engagement in meetings of associations; visiting family and friends; personal relationships; interaction with neighbours; leisure activities such as sports and associations; interaction during school and at parent-teachers conferences; and, ultimately, interaction with institutions such as the town hall and hospitals.

Although all of these areas are important for finding out about personal network relations, such an approach bears the risk of evoking distrust and over generalised statements instead of neat ethnographic accounts. Paralleling the approach of recording ‘life histories’, I therefore turned towards asking for ‘migration histories’\textsuperscript{22}. Thus, I conducted long and in-depth interviews with some, starting with their emigration or sometimes their immigration in Spain. With others, showing interest in their experiences and talking about the migration process and home, I established a common ground to proceed and talk about ‘interethnic’ networking and their personal contacts. Importantly, this also encompassed aspects of ‘superficial’ but nevertheless meaningful interactions in everyday life.

\textsuperscript{22} I am aware of the specific hermeneutical and phenomenological connotations of ‘life history’ as a method (e.g. (Watson 1976)). Also I am aware of critical reviews (e.g. Ortiz 1985). Ortiz, however, very clearly points out the advantages of ‘life history’ research which are all valid for participant observation.
Two aspects in the conversations were important for my research. Firstly, listening to the migrants’ life histories, I stopped the flow when they reported someone who had helped them and did not belong to the (sometimes narrowly understood) group of co-migrants. These were mostly Spanish or Catalan people, but sometimes other migrants as well. I enquired about the kinds of relations they maintained, how they first met, and whether they were still in contact today. Secondly, I had many discussions on a more general level when my informants described the reasons for, and possibilities and obstacles of, maintaining contact with ‘others’. The actual interactions that were reported and their own attempts at making sense of these combine with my own participant observations. These separate and overlapping narratives, opinions and observations are the basis for the following study of egocentric networks of migrants from the Senegambia region in and beyond Mataró.

Summary

Conducting fieldwork cannot have as its goal objectivity; yet it builds towards knowledge that is intersubjectively understandable (Clifford 1986:107). Therefore, I do not try to produce any kind of objectivity in this thesis. Rather, I aim to make the experience from the field and its interpretation intelligible to others. Furthermore, given the short period of my fieldwork, this is not a fully fleshed out ethnography. Rather, the short but intensive engagement in the field was a combination of interactions and situations reaching from formal interviews, to qualitative open conversations and participant observation during days, weekends and afternoons spent in different migrant flats. I myself sometimes acted and was perceived as the researcher, and sometimes became that strange friend who asked a lot of questions and tended to write everything down.
3 Egocentric networks – past and present of a dynamic approach

This chapter details how I use the concept of egocentric networks to understand the complexity of migrants’ social lives; this includes their contacts, relations, and interactions, as well as their incorporation and participation in society. Much is known about the transnational and ‘ethnic’ networks of Senegambians. Although networks within a community often are the focus of study, the original idea of networks is not bounded to a certain, pre-defined group. Early anthropological literature on networks for example from within the Manchester School was concerned with the individual and his/her egocentric network composed by relations within and across categorical boundaries (Mitchell 1974). My fieldwork situation in Catalonia reflects the context of those from the Manchester School studies on rural-urban migration in the Copperbelt in two ways. Firstly, both are interested in those who maintain ties locally as well as with their homes, and secondly, both take place in a complex urban context which brings people from different backgrounds together.

Exploring the importance of the networks of residents means understanding a variety of interpersonal relations. Hence, for this study it is not sufficient to summarise the characteristics of networks in short as, for example, facilitating the flow of information and the exchange of favours and goods, establishing trust and fostering a feeling of belonging. Rather, I will carefully study the reach, qualities and meanings of network relations.

Both transnationalism and recent contributions to studies of integration have re-focused on interpersonal interactions in everyday life on a local scale. Relying on the

23 Independently, similar ideas were also developed in social and cultural anthropology in Northern America (Ibid.).
initial idea of networks, I combine aspects of complex transnational relations and bottom-up *convivencia* in a diverse locality with an analysis of both minimal interactions and more intensive ties such as friendship. To do so, I will recall the wide and encompassing concept of egocentric network in the first section of this chapter. In the second section, I will contrast the concept of network with ideas of group and boundary, and then relate it to the three parts of the empirical analysis which follows. Firstly, transnationalism has re-incorporated the perspective of personal networks; secondly, *convivencia* relies on civility which is negotiated in personal contacts; and lastly, concepts like friendship and patronage help us understand more intense ‘interethnic’ relations.

3.1 *The concept of egocentric networks*

Using the concept of egocentric networks to understand social phenomena can be traced back to the 1950s and 1960s, when several members of the Manchester School of anthropology were engaging with complex fieldwork situations, such as the new urban context of Copperbelt towns in Southern Africa. Given their field experiences, anthropologists at the time questioned structural-functionalist approaches in two ways, methodologically and theoretically. Firstly, migration was found to be a process superseding the framework of a bounded field site. Moving from villages into towns meant to be confronted with a complexity which challenged uniform structures. Secondly, a new focus on the study of ‘conditions and processes which do, or do not produce generally shared meanings and understandings’ (Kapferer 1976:2) challenged the assumptions that structures where logically prior to individual practices. To present fully the network approach, the following subsections discuss, firstly, the relationship between networks and structures, secondly, the capacity of networks to cross categorical boundaries, and finally, the diversity of relations maintained within them.
Networks and institutional embeddedness

Gluckman and Eggan stress in their introduction to *The Social Anthropology of Complex Societies* that ‘the network, and other forms of quasi-groups, which are ego-centred, are becoming more significant in bridging the gap between structural framework and individual action’ (Gluckman and Eggan 1966:xxxv). Other concepts of groups, groupings, or associations attempted the same. However, the network concept was proclaimed the most promising, especially since open and loosely-connected networks in urban settings restricted the usefulness of solely studying groups, which presupposed closed networks and clear boundaries (Mayer 1964:29f). Further studies also stressed the potential of the network concept to mediate between structures and individual actions. For example, Barnes (1954) worked to explain the class structure of the people in Bremnes, a small Norwegian village, Bott (1957) ascribed the networks of conjugal partners a mediating function between the individual and wider society, while others focused on the processes of change in Copperbelt towns (e.g. Epstein 1962; Mayer 1964, 1962).

While acknowledging the importance of networks, Epstein (1962:42) is also aware of the impact the ‘new social environment’ and the ‘basic institutional framework’ in towns has on the building and maintaining of networks. Epstein describes this embeddedness as institutions and policies as well as economic organisations and systems of administration. More recently, Meagher (2005) also stresses the importance of the institutional embeddedness of networks in contemporary Africa. Networks thus depend on legacies, linkages, and localities; legacies being the particular history, linkages the power relations, and localities the relations with the state. All three aspects are also essential to understanding migrants’ situations in Europe.

24 Dyadic relationships were also developed at the time which I will come back to later.
since they direct awareness to immigration trajectories, immigration status and local opportunity structures, respectively. Working on immigration societies, Lamphere (1992b) additionally stresses that the local institutionalised embeddedness is generally structured by (unequal) power relations. Thus, the institutionalist argument, which raises awareness for inequality and other constraining factors, is important in helping to explain the urban immigration context.

**Egocentric networks and categories of interaction**

Apart from recognising the importance of a structural framework, egocentric networks put the stress on the individual in order to take into account the complexity of migrants’ lives and the impacts of various influences within the migrancy field, connecting at least a couple of formally unrelated contexts, and people from many different origins. Therefore, Mayer (1962:577) stresses the importance of studying ‘the migrant persons themselves, by mapping out their networks of relations from the personal or egocentric point of view, as well as noting their parts in the various structural systems.’

In response to Mayer, Mitchell sets out a variety of structural systems and categories of interaction that networks mediate (Mayer 1964:39; Mitchell 1969:9f). These range from to formally institutionalised structures such as factories and unions to socially constructed categories of organisation, such as tribe and social class. Additionally, he differentiates between formal organisations and voluntary associations. Finally, Mitchell (1969:10) stresses the capacity of egocentric networks to cross-cut various structural systems and categories of interaction, which all play a part in migrants’ lives.

Thus, the categorical neutrality of the egocentric network approach contrasts with other approaches focusing on one category, such as national, racial, or ethnic
identities, those working in a certain sector, or living in a particular neighbourhood (Barnes 1954:43f). Transnational network relations even go beyond locally bounded categories. Therefore, my main goal is to investigate the possibilities of migrants’ networks in Catalonia to supersede categories which are preconceived both by the public and by research on ethnic groups. Apart from crossing categorical boundaries, networks also combine different forms of relations, which I will explore on the basis of the following considerations.

**Diversity of social relations in networks**

The concept of networks itself as open ended and involving almost anyone does not present a clear picture of the qualitative nature of relationships comprising it (Vertovec 2003:647). A variety of different relations can coexist in networks and form particular aspects of it. Thus, I do not engage in mathematical calculations of morphological characteristics of networks ‘which deal with the shape or pattern of the links in a network’ (Mitchell 1974:288). Instead, I look into interactional features of network relations, which to me seem most important: their directedness, intensity, content and durability (Mitchell 1969)\(^{25}\). Additionally, the quality of network relations relies to a greater or lesser extent on a combination of shared norms and ideas such as respect, equality, obligations, reciprocity, trust and affect. Depending on both interactional features and the underlying norms and ideas, network relations take different forms which influence social processes and practices accordingly.

Firstly, directedness was once used to ask whether a relationship was reciprocal or uni-directional (Mitchell 1969:24f). However, more complex processes seem to be implied. Barnes (1954) stresses that members must perceive each other as social equals

\(^{25}\) Although Mitchell also includes frequency, I skip it in this thesis since it is least significant (Mitchell 1969:29; Boissevain 1974:34)
to forge a tie. In contrast, a seemingly uni-directional relationship might be better described as a hierarchical patron-client relationship (Wolf 1966). Instead of predefining network relations as either equal or hierarchical, both types of relationships can be present in networks and both can be reciprocal. This is also implied in horizontal and vertical exchange processes, the former including, for example, friendship relations and the latter, hierarchical relations such as patronage and brokerage relationships (Befu 1977:268). All of these relations imply a degree of reciprocity, which varies substantially in social practice and influences the quality of the relation. I understand directedness to describe the different forms of reciprocity in terms of equal or hierarchical interactions and the direction of the different contents exchanged.

Apart from questions of directedness, Mitchell (1969) stresses intensity as an important factor. It is defined as the level of being prepared to honour network obligations or feeling free to exercise the rights implied (1969:27). Given this definition, intensity remains a relative term, since it leaves us with the need to define what obligations and rights are. As becomes obvious in the case of Senegambian migrants, different kinds of obligations and rights define the kind of relation that is maintained. To understand this, the question of what is the content of networks needs to be answered.

Mitchell (1974:292) rightly points out that ‘relating to the notion of content seems to involve the most difficult problems and is correspondingly least well developed’. He identifies the following three realms as part of the content of networks: 1) information flows and the exercising of influence and pressure; 2) transactions and exchange based on reciprocity and interdependence; and 3) normative aspects, such as identification. In this thesis, I will explore the content of personal relations in the social fields of transnationalism and convivencia which combine more practical and more discursive aspects. Social fields link with the idea of networks and their content, since
they are sets ‘of multiple inter-locking networks of social relationships through which ideas, practices, and resources are unequally exchanged, organized, and transformed’ (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004:1009).

Together with directedness, intensity and content, duration is the last aspect relevant to personal networks. It is the observation that relations in networks, and networks in general, do not need to be permanent (Barnes 1954). Although A. Mayer (1966) proposed the idea of temporary action-sets\textsuperscript{26} to stress the limited durability of relations, Mitchell (1974) sees the possibility of limited duration of relations and changing compositions of networks inherent in the concept of egocentric networks.

The variety of network relations, depending on their interactional features, allows a personal network to serve many purposes, and to relate in different ways to many contexts and situations\textsuperscript{27}. As explored in this thesis, they range from basic civil interaction and minimal transnational involvement to transnational and local relations of obligation and reciprocity. It would not be helpful to pre-define the content of networks nor the form and quality of relations (Rogers and Vertovec 1995), thus defining a homogenous group. How the concept of networks compares to the idea of groups in migration studies will be discussed subsequently.

### 3.2 Using a network approach today to understand migrants’ situation

As an alternative to networks, migration studies have focused on groups or communities. However, some approaches that focus on groups have been critiqued as they tend to essentialise ethnic, national or cultural categories of belonging (cf. Vertovec 1996; Grillo 2003). This critique has been raised in a number of ways, often

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\textsuperscript{26} These are sets of people organised to support or provide some service for the person central to it in a particular situation and for a particular case.

\textsuperscript{27} In an early network analysis, Epstein (1962) reveals a whole variety of different relations in the analysis of the egocentric network of the informant Chanda, who maintains different relationships with each person he meets.
referring to studies on migration in general and approaches to multiculturalism and transnationalism

Multiculturalism has been criticised for its inherent culturalism, i.e. the essentialising and homogenising of culturally distinctive groups (Vertovec 1996). Transnationalism has departed from the study of ethnic groups to incorporate the transnational perspective of migrants’ lives. Although this is an important aspect which needs to be considered in studies on diversity in immigration countries (Vertovec 2001), Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2002) have pointed out that transnational studies have also suffered from inherent methodological nationalism. In response, both fields have acted upon this critique and refined both the conceptualisation of their studies and their theoretical approaches. The remaining subsections of this chapter address these developments; the critique that groups are not primordial is, however, important for all of these.

Anthropological studies have paid much attention to the fact that (‘ethnic’) groups are constructed and only established through ongoing processes of identification, and boundary maintaining processes (Barth 1998; Banks 1996). Furthermore, group discourses, both dominant and demotic, can differ, are readopted and change (Baumann 1996). Pushed to its limits, this critique stresses that it is important to accept that groups cannot be presupposed and that they might not even be important at all (Brubaker 2004:4).

Most recently, and in addition to the many publications on ethnic groups and ethnic boundaries, Wimmer (2008) presented an encompassing theory of the ethnic boundary making and maintaining processes. Detailing his multi-layered theory of what determines if, how and why ethnicity matters, he stresses the importance of institutional structures, political power and (not-)belonging to actual networks as the main factors on which the significance of ethnic boundaries depends. Thus, Wimmer’s approach is
partially based on the study of networks which challenges the notion of primordial groups.

In a similar vein, scholars in transnationalism have recently stressed personal networks and emphasized that these can be transnational, local and intercultural (e.g. Glick Schiller et al. 2006). Additionally, works on social integration or incorporation have employed a similar tone in talking about daily social interactions or relations (e.g. Vertovec 2007). Arising from the critique of pre-defined or essentialising groups and the awareness that network relations can transcend categories and boundaries, the network approach taken in this thesis is well equipped to study the complexities of migrants’ lives and the processes taking place in a diverse society.

3.2.1 Networks and transnationalism

Transnationalism has been important for understanding the complexity of migrants’ lives. I start by addressing how the personal network perspective has been incorporated into transnationalism, which is followed by considerations about the local character of transnational relations and their co-existence with local incorporation.

Transnationalism re assessed

Transnationalism has arisen as a concept in order to overcome the shortfall of the social sciences which were designed within the conceptual boundaries of the nation state, i.e. their methodological nationalism (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002). Levitt and Glick Schiller summarise that ‘the nation-state container view of society does not capture, adequately or automatically, the complex interconnectedness of contemporary reality’ (2004:1006). Thus, studying migrants’ complex lives raised awareness for transnationalism (Basch et al. 1994).

Although a transnational approach stressed that migrants’ lives spanned at least the sending and receiving society context and were involved in permanent exchanges,
transnational studies were critiqued themselves for being caught in methodological nationalism, since ‘[m]uch of studies overstates the internal homogeneity and boundedness of transnational communities’ (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002:233). Thus, they have overlooked the internal divisions of these groups and the possibility that such groups can have flexible boundaries.

Glick Schiller and colleagues (2006) stress the importance of their escape from methodological nationalism in a study on non-ethnic pathways of incorporation of migrants in smaller-scale cities. They emphasize ‘the diversity of migrants’ relationships to their place of settlement and to other localities around the world’ (Glick Schiller et al. 2006:613), which they study through the networks of individual migrants, and the social fields created by their networks (Ibid. 614). Thus, personal networks are incorporated into the complexity of transnational social fields.

Studies on transnational communities nevertheless primarily stress the importance of networks within bounded groups, which operate on the basis of trust, solidarity, reciprocity and obligation, and provide information and assistance. This is typical at an early point of settling-in, during which the migrants own community provides information, but also material or emotional support (Zetter et al. 2005).

Often, a common feeling of belonging is the basis on which these services are provided. As an outcome of the complex processes of identification, the feeling of belonging is sometimes still confused with primordial identities (Brubaker and Cooper 2000). Studying a seemingly homogenous group like the Hausa traders or the Mouride brotherhood reveals that people originating from many different groups are included (Cohen 1969; Meagher 2005). Such flexibility is also inherent in the many ways of being a transmigrant, and different motivations and varying forms of engaging in the transnational social field (Levitt and Jaworsky 2007; Riccio 2001). Both on a personal and a group level, there is a ‘wide panoply of social, cultural, political, and economic
cross-border relations’ (Guarnizo 2003:667). Better than the idea of group, the concept of network allows for this complexity.

**A local perspective**

The migration histories I collected show that multiple engagements in transnational social fields are part of migrants’ everyday lives; they are processes that take place from below, in and between localities (Guarnizo and Smith 1998). Thus, transnational engagement in many ways is better described as a translocal one and affects the overall local social organisation (Ibid. 6). This is why a study on the level of the locality is so important. Even within one locality in the receiving society, egocentric networks and relationships reflect the transnational aspect of migrants’ lives.

Although these migrant relations on the local scale could be described in many ways as forms of ‘ethnic’ community organisations, the transnational aspect is very important to fully understand motivations behind migrants’ practices. For example, being involved in associations serves the purposes of both communal remitting and the provision of services to migrants’ in the receiving context (Kane 2002). Furthermore, migrants’ everyday lives are interspersed with transnational practices, such as calling home or watching news from there.

Mapping egocentric networks will therefore include both relations maintained translocally with home and locally with other migrants. The complex ways of engaging with these contexts will be reflected in the varying ways Senegambians maintain their social relationships. This variety will serve as a comparison to other relations maintained locally, which only together reveal a more encompassing perspective on processes within the locality.
Transnationalism versus local incorporation

Earlier work on transnationalism assumed that local incorporation or identification with the local context would be incompatible with transnational engagement (Levitt 2003). However, transnationalism and social relations with other migrants in the receiving context does not necessarily restrict local incorporation (Vertovec 2007). Studies investigating transnationalism, local incorporation and their relationship are rare and contradicting in their results (Morawska 2003). In her review, Morawska identifies more than 40 factors influencing the coexistence or disjunction of transnationalism and local incorporation.

In this field, Levitt (2003:184) points out one factor of particular importance - in the same way that transnational engagement can vary, migrants may engage successfully in both transnational and ‘host’ locality, or equally be unsuccessful in both. Thus, a conceptual framework should articulate the interconnectedness of transnationalism and incorporation, ‘their both/and rather than either/or character’ (Kivisto 2005a:310). This thesis addresses this challenge in studying egocentric networks assuming the local perspective, but acknowledging the importance of the transnational social field.

3.2.2 Networks, convivencia and civility

Transnational networks and relations with migrants are only one aspect of social relations in a locality. Below I show that the concept of egocentric networks assumes a key role for local incorporation since new approaches stress everyday interactions. I also explore how civility, as part of the content of network relations, underlies convivencia.
Everyday relations and convivencia

Using a variety of terminology, studies on the local incorporation of migrants and other residents have recently focused on everyday interactions and relations (Vertovec 2007; Lamphere 1992b; Wise 2007). Focusing on social relations and networks, this approach contradicts both the classical ideas of assimilation and multiculturalism. Assimilation predicted the inclusion of migrants into the nation, and thus the maintenance of deep and meaningful relations characteristic for a national community (Vertovec 1999). On the other hand, multiculturalism essentialised differences between, and the homogeneity of, groups (Vertovec 1996). Interaction was, if not missing, at least not focused upon in these studies. Although both assimilation and multiculturalism have addressed these problems recently\(^{28}\), I propose the concept of egocentric networks as a viable solution of these dilemmas, feeding into an understanding of convivencia based on civility.

Interaction alone does not guarantee mutual understanding. It will always co-exist with conflicts and disagreement (Suárez-Navaz 2004), and whether positively or negatively connoted relations prevail varies (Lamphere 1992a). However, interacting with each other implies the informal negotiation of how to live together in the same neighbourhood or work together. ‘[S]ome common norms of behaviour at the most basic levels of interchange’ (Vertovec 2007:31) need to be negotiated, which again are ‘probably best inculcated informally through daily practice’ (Ibid 32). This parallels a vernacular Andalusian understanding of convivencia as ‘an exercise of negotiation that assumes difference as a basic fact of life and the need to make room for dialog among all members of society, respect for one another, and sharing the public social sphere’ (Suárez-Navaz 2004:191f).

\(^{28}\) See, for example, the volume by Kivisto (2005b) and Wimmer (2007).
Instead of dismissing short and seemingly meaningless face-to-face interactions in everyday life as superficialities, such civil practices express some basic respect and equality, which are conditions of convivencia.

Boyd (2006:867) defines being civil to strangers as ‘treating them with an “easy spontaneity” that demonstrates both a willingness to look past differences and that communicates equal respect’. As such, civility is not a purely Western value of modernity; rather, there are multiple and non-Western ways to achieve the same respectful and participatory practices (Hann 1996). Thus, civility understood as the basis for a respectful, tolerant and equal convivencia should be different to assimilation into the nationally specific civic culture. As Baumann points out in introducing civil enculturation in schools, ‘the methods and discourses are no longer about “who you are”, for everyone has the right, at least in normative parlance, to cultural or ethnic difference, but about “how one does”’ (Baumann 2004:3).

The knowledge of how to treat each other should ensure all can participate in society. Normatively, it implies that all members of society are equals and respect each other (Fyfe et al. 2006). Civility goes beyond not minding living side-by-side with others, and implies respecting each other on the basis of the strong liberal, democratic idea attached to the recognition of each others’ personhood (Suárez-Navaz 2004:207). It is questionable whether this is possible without legal equality and the lack of political participation. Seeing social citizenship within civil society as more important than legal citizenship offers a potential solution to these difficulties (Vertovec 2007). It implies that socially recognised equality furthers the capacity to participate and interact. The empadronamiento in Catalan policy is a step towards such social equality.
In contrast to the more intense and intimate sociability of the realm of communities, civility does not imply ties relying on strong obligations, expectations and solidarity (Boyd 2006:870). In diverse societies, migrants do not need to blend into existing forms of sociability beyond a respectful and equal treatment of each other. Respect and social equality are norms which nevertheless are reciprocal and include minimal obligations.

Civility as put forward here refers to norms which are the outcome of a bottom-up process. Not through instilling knowledge from above, Vertovec (2007:32) argues, but through daily interaction civility is apparent in at least ‘cordial but distant relations’. Suitable for diverse societies, it offers a perspective on convivencia as diverse everyday interrelations within personal networks.

3.2.3 Intense ‘interethnic’ network relations

As discussed so far, applying the egocentric network perspective to transnationalism and convivencia offers the possibility of becoming aware of a variety of interpersonal relations within and beyond the often essentialised and homogenised migrant group. Apart from civil relations, egocentric networks can also show more intense ‘interethnic’ relations in the locality on the basis of strong obligations, reciprocity and affect. Often, such relations seem to be forgotten in studies on immigration perhaps because they occur across the boundary of the nation.

Challenging ‘the’ boundary

Although the expectation is that convivencia, on the basis of civility, establishes a common norm between immigrants and other residents, the role of national belonging remains significant. The nation-state features prominently in Wimmer’s (2008) recent theory on ethnic groups and boundary maintaining processes referred to above, since it
assumes legitimate power over members of the nation and the paradigm of being ruled by members of your own group applies.

While Wimmer’s (2004) analysis of actual networks in an immigration neighbourhood in Switzerland suggests that in practice more intensive relations are maintained within the own group, relations outside this norm exist and become more evident (Grätz et al. 2003; Bell and Coleman 1999:4). Like civil relations, more intense relations between migrants and nationals thus challenge the nation and its boundary. Such relations can be friendship, kinship or patron-client relations, and, cross-cutting significant boundaries, they are a crucial influence on *convivencia* in diverse localities.

**Friendship, patronage, and kinship**

Relying on the same conceptions as network relations in general, friendship, kinship and patron-client relations are multiple and overlapping ways to refer to dyadic relationships of some intensity. Kinship relations can become like friendships or friendship relations can transform into patronage or vice versa (Grätz et al. 2003; Wolf 1966; Bell and Coleman 1999). Patron-client relationships again lie somewhere between equal and exploitative relationships (Scott 1977). Additionally, migrants themselves use flexible terminology to refer to such relations. Using classificatory kin terminology for friendships or friendship terminology for patronage relations are both common (Grätz et al. 2003; Bell and Coleman 1999). Thus, not only are the concepts blurry but so is the emic terminology and its translation.

Part of this flexibility can be explained by the multiple understandings of the underlying norms and ideas of obligation, reciprocity, trust, and affect (Grätz et al.

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29 For a parallel discussion on the discussion of friendship and kinship in the Amazonian see Santos-Granero (2007), and amongst migrant South Asian women see Mand (2006).

30 This is particularly salient when migrants describe their relations not in their mother tongue. Translation might cause some additional confusion.
For example, obligations and reciprocity describe all more intense relations. However, differing expectations can sever a relationship as it is the case for broken ‘interethnic’ marriages; or unequal power relations in the patronage relationship might make it impossible for the client to leave unbalanced reciprocity, when it becomes exploitative. Such examples demonstrate that how different norms and ideas interact and how resulting ‘interethnic’ relationships are best described remain empirical questions yet to be answered (Grätz et al. 2003; Rogers and Vertovec 1995).

In addition to fuzzy terminology and the complexity of underlying concepts, the content of more intensive relations can also vary. As in ‘ethnic’ networks, it can be providing information, mutual help, or finding work. In patronage-like relationships the patron will also provide his client with essential goods such as the basic means of production, or brokerage (Scott 1977). Both are important in the migration context in the relation to employers. In return, employers will get regular and surplus work, or other less tangible goods such as prestige (Ibid. 24). For friendships, Eve (2003:399) stresses the adoption of an ‘ambience’ as an important aspect of the content of networks, involving the learning of attitudes and skills, specific language and awareness, and hence aspects contributing to successful convivencia in a locality.

The content of more intense relations suggests that they are socially embedded in wider networks and draw on social resources beyond the dyadic relationship. For example, in contrast to the individualistic, modern understanding of friendship as a pure relationship ‘not anchored in external conditions of social or economic life’ (Giddens 1991:89 in:; Eve 2003), friendship proves to be embedded in networks (Eve 2003; Boissevain 1974), constrained by opportunities in social fields, and an important factor in social processes in situations of change, such as immigration (Grätz et al. 2003). This implies that more intense relations may reach beyond boundaries of existing sets or
categories (Wolf 1966:13). The linking capacity of more intensive relations is the last perspective on egocentric networks which I will deal with in this thesis.
4 Complexity of social relations in transnational social fields

Having set out the theoretical framework of the analysis, the following three chapters follow an internal logic in that they appear from the best researched forms of social relations to the least expected ones. In this chapter, I focus on the multiple and complex ways of engaging in a transnational social field, which is then followed by two chapters focusing on the local context.

An awareness of transnational practices and identifications has been used to critique methodological nationalism. However, transnational studies have sometimes also been critiqued for adhering too rigidly to national categories. They risk overemphasising single identification and a strong engagement in the transnational field. Therefore, more recent studies have stressed the importance of including the individual’s perspective and reporting the variety of social relations possible in the egocentric migrant networks, transnationally, locally, and interculturally (Glick Schiller et al. 2006). I will apply a local perspective, since migrants’ multiple engagements in transnational social fields are part of their everyday lives and are taking place from below.

This chapter focuses on the ‘ethnic’ and transnational aspects of migrants’ networks, the networks of those motivated by a common transnational migration experience. Transnationalism can be part of both the local and translocal social relations of migrants amongst migrants and between migrants and home. Transnational and local practices are in multiple symbiotic relationships, many of which can be important both transnationally and locally. In addition to differentiations according to the geographical reach of migrants’ practices, there are also many different ways of being a transnational migrant. Therefore, I remain aware of the social, cultural, political, and economic
aspects of cross-border relations and the different levels of organisation, both individual and multiple, competing for, and overlapping, aggregated groups of migrants. All of these forms of social organisation and network relations are subject to change over time.

The following sections explore the different forms of transnational and local relations amongst migrants. Firstly, I map the multiplicity of discourses and practices of organisation. Secondly, I investigate the norms of solidarity, reciprocity and obligation on an individual level. Thirdly, my attention is drawn to friendships, important forms of social network relations mainly experienced in migrant flats. Fourthly, I explore the importance of multiple forms of migrant associations. And finally, I widen the concept of transnationalism beyond the dyadic relationship between home and abroad by showing complex relations across Europe and the world. Much of my own work presented here will be complemented by the in-depth studies of Sow (2004) and van Nieuwenhuyze (2007), both working on Senegambian migrants in Catalonia. Of Sow’s work, aspects of the ‘primary integration’ of newly arrived migrants into ‘ethnic’ networks is most salient here, while I use van Nieuwenhuyze’s study primarily to complement on the importance of migrants’ social support systems in the urban labour market of Barcelona.

4.1 Complex, multiple and situational categories and groups

To familiarise the reader with the rich landscape of the local and transnational practices and discourses of Senegambian migrants in Catalonia, I provide an overview here. Conversations about personal networks stimulated accounts of their relations with home, ways of getting to Europe, and the migrants’ everyday embeddedness in the networks of co-migrants. In contrast to official discourses dominant in the majority
society, the migrants’ demotic discourses reflect a far more differentiated picture, sometimes but not always incorporating official categories\(^{31}\).

Looking at officially ascribed categories maps the first layer of the complex landscape of categories of immigrants. Mataró’s publicised statistics differentiate crude regional categories of immigrants and speak of Sub-Saharan as one such category (Ajuntament de Mataró 2007a). Similarly, the New-Citizenship Department has mediators working in the Sub-Saharan community. Academic literature generally takes a slightly more differentiated line and speaks of the Senegambian migrants (Kaplan Marcusán 1998, 1991, 2007, 2003; Rodríguez García 2006; van Nieuwenhuyze 2007), or Senegalese and Gambian migrants (Sow 2004, 2005). They further differentiate their analyses into ethnic groups and regions of origin.

These official discourses are reflected in how migrants from the Senegambia region referred to themselves during fieldwork. Some claimed to be just Africans in contrast to Arabs and Europeans; others claimed Sub-Saharan origin and again others Senegalese or Gambian. Only when I asked did they tell me their region of origin, their ethnicity, or primary spoken language. Many immediately put this information into perspective mentioning their own or their parents’ migrations in Africa, their different ethnicities, or their primary language as different from their ethnicity. This resonates with the overall mixing of ethnic categories in Senegal (Diouf 1998).

Having used the Senegambian term, I provoked some discussion. Some were indifferent to how I called them. Others strongly favoured being called either Senegalese or Gambian due to their sense of national belonging or because they alluded to the failed Senegambian political union. In other instances ethnic categories became

\(^{31}\) On similar processes of dominant and demotic (from the people) discourses in London compare Baumann (1996).
important. Thus, discourses of and about Senegambians reveal a number of ways both organisation and identification overlap.

Apart from these discourses of multiple chosen and ascribed identifications, daily practices and social network relations demand a more complex terminology. For example, some engaged only in individual remitting to their family at home although they were part of an ‘ethnic’ association\(^3\). Others claimed that their motivation for being part of a Senegalese association was only to help newly arrived migrants in Spain, although they did identify transnationally. The clearest link between people in practice was that created between migrants in sending remittances home to their families. In contrast, the greatest flexibility lay in the affective ways of remembering, engaging, and identifying with home. ‘Affective capital’ (Sow 2004:378), is wide-ranging and included music videos from Mali as well as Sub-Saharan TV programs. Thus, the transnationalism of migrants from the Senegambia region is a multidimensional concept influenced by context, purpose, and moment in time.

Multiple, complex and situational ways of doing things and naming these coexist, suggesting that transnationalism is as diverse as the different network relations. As a result, a complex landscape consisting of dominant and demotic, local and transnational, individual and collective, discursive and practical categories describes the multiple network relations in the social fields of Senegambian migrants. To what extent these relations differ, based on a combination of norms and ideas of equality, respect, obligation, and reciprocity, needs to be investigated.

\(^3\) By ethnic association I mean both formal regional associations which try to unite all members of one ethnicity from a certain area, e.g. all Jola from Senegal and The Gambia living in Catalonia, and hometown associations of members of predominantly one ethnicity.
4.2  *Between individuals - locally and transnationally*  

**Local norm of solidarity**

Studies on transnational communities have stressed the importance of the concepts of solidarity, obligation and reciprocity based on group membership. The community of migrants provides resources and services to the migrant, and the strongest cohesion therefore will lie with the migrant community (Zetter et al. 2005; Vertovec 2007). Riccio and others summarise that Senegambian migrations are also based on a strong sense of solidarity and a cohesive, group-centric organisation (Riccio 2001:584, also Sow 2004, van Nieuwenhuyze 2007). Riccio gives the example of a newly arrived Senegalese who is provided with a bed, start-up capital, and know-how to start trading goods in Italy (Ibid. 591), the essentials of ‘primary integration’ into their community (Sow 2004).

As in Riccio’s case, this solidarity is often linked to the trading traditions of Mourides and their worldwide network of *dahiras* (‘circle’), their local community structure. However, non-Mouride traders also use Mouride networks, and the Tijaniyyah order or strong hometown associations can have similar networks (van Nieuwenhuyze 2007; Kane 2002). Many of my informants’ narratives suggest that their immigration experiences are embedded in similar structures. However, solidarity does not seem to be inextricably bound to a certain community, such as those based on ethnic, national or hometown origin, and sometimes solidarity within such groups can be close to nonexistent. Thus, instead of assuming an *a priori* community solidarity, the social network perspective allows the investigation of de-facto relations, their quality and content (Vertovec 2003:646; Bridge 1995:281), and does not run the risk of being culturally deterministic (Meagher 2005).
When I met Aguibo, he said that he arrived some months ago in Mataró. He stayed with Mamadou whom he had never met before. A friend of Mamadou had given him Mamadou’s number on his way to Europe with the comment that Mamadou was a nice guy and that Aguibo should call him if he made it to Europe. Aguibo claims he did not know anybody else, since he was the first one of his family to emigrate. As a Serer who grew up in Dakar and speaks Mandinka, Wolof and French, Aguibo now lives with Mamadou and two brothers, who are all Jola and from The Gambia, and Mamadou’s Mandinka wife. It appeared Aguibo completely relied on the solidarity of his flatmates, since he has not yet gotten a job and spoke neither Spanish nor Catalan. The situation in Mamadou’s flat suggests that solidarity is not bound to any clear group categorisation. This is further supported by the example of Idi who also accommodated a Brazilian and an Argentinean and others saying that solidarity would be given to anyone.

In a way, Aguibo’s reception relied on generalised solidarity since there is no common identification other than being African. The redistribution strategies enacted by the Red Cross on behalf of the Spanish state rely on such solidarity structures. Illegal immigrants taking the sea route to the Canary Islands who cannot be sent back, since their identity cannot be determined, and who have a contact somewhere else in Spain, are provided with the means to reach this person. Thus, many start with a contact person from home who is, or who they call, a brother, cousin, or neighbour. For others, it is someone they met during the journey who serves as a first point of entrance into the local solidarity network. Aguibo’s example, however, suggests that the reception and accommodation of newly arrived migrants does not seem to be determined by strict national, ethnic, religious, or kinship criteria; it can also happen through a randomly established contact.

Solidarity in itself is challenged when comparing differences between the larger urban centre of Barcelona and the local town Mataró. Ousmane, a Senegalese student in
Barcelona, arrived legally to be a student after three years of waiting for a visa. Whilst staying with ‘someone’ for a month, he was unable to find permanent accommodation through a Senegalese or African network, and ended up looking for a place to stay on the regular housing market. He felt discriminated against by people not calling back, asking for excessive deposits, or simply not wanting him. He said he spent more than 200 Euros simply phoning flats. In contrast to the seemingly readily available solidarity found in many cases, Ousmane opposed the assumption that ‘ethnic’ support networks were always readily available.

Apart from the absence of solidarity, van Nieuwenhuyze (2007) also stresses that even if migrants rely on ‘ethnic’ solidarity, dependency on the good will of their hosts is often felt to be a burden and an unsustainable situation in which to find oneself. Migrants move on because of uncomfortable feelings, ebbing solidarity and conflict. Problems also arise between the different generations of immigrants (Sow 2004:350-352; Kane 2002). Although new arrivals rely on the help of already established migrants, they can be critical of each other for many reasons. Earlier immigrants use their authority to remind inactive newcomers of their obligations towards home. In contrast, Sow stresses, newly arrived immigrants might question the established one’s attitudes towards religious practices and beliefs.

On a larger scale, solidarity can even turn into an exploitative ‘ethnic’ business. Ousmane and others challenge the notion of solidarity in alluding to housing pateras. Established migrants rent out small bed-cabins to newly arrived ones. They are illegal and a rip-off since they charge about 300 Euros/month for a small and dark cabin. While

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33 Pateras are the small fishing boats with which migrants try to cross the strait of Gibraltar or the ocean to reach mainland Spain or the Canary Island, respectively.
Ousmane spoke of Barcelona, one of my key-informants said such housing pateras also exist in Mataró\textsuperscript{34}. Thus, solidarity is not always altruistic.

These examples suggest that solidarity and reciprocity can be abused, although in other instances can be a readily available resource for newcomers, frequently unrelated to common group belonging. Thus, solidarity can neither be presupposed within a certain group, nor can it necessarily be refined to a readily specifiable group. Nevertheless, solidarity is often found within a larger framework of reciprocity between established migrants, newcomers and home and is, in such cases, specific to the migrants sharing a transnational experience.

\textbf{Obligations towards home}

Migrants engage in a complex, often transnational web of mutual obligations and provision of services and help. Sow (2004) claims that strengthening the will of new migrants to fulfil their transnational obligation of sending remittances home is part of the primary integration and provision of help given to new arrivals. Mayer (1964) has already shown that spending time with those from home strengthens migrants’ maintenance of ties. Most migrants assume an obligation towards home and make it their own motivation. Youba, a young Gambian who came to visit his father, said:

\begin{quote}
Back home I did not know that he was working so hard ... I tell myself, I cannot return, I need to stay to help my father with what he is doing. Because all the money he is sending he doesn’t earn easily. … He is now returned to Africa, I
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{34} It is also known to the local government which in reaction to it has limited the number of people that can be registered on the same address to eight. Withstanding the advantages of the registration system, in this perspective the regularisation mechanism does not work well. I accounted for cases, when either more people were living in the houses without being registered anyways, or others could not register since former tenants who have moved on are still on the records. Thus, the dynamics seem to be difficult to be controlled.
am working like he did it before. I work like him so that he can live well with
the family.35

At home, his father has opened a sewing workshop with the support of his two
sons in Spain. Although being second generation is particular to Youba’s situation,
there are numerous similar accounts of the personal obligation to remit.

Although it is uncertain how much is sent and which channels Senegambians use
(Jettinger 2005), remitting is an important aspect of their lives, showing their overall
involvement in the transnational social field. For example, when Moussa was leaving
for Senegal, half his luggage was gifts from his friends and co-villagers for their
families. He also took about twenty envelopes with money, and a pile of photographs
showing his life in Spain in its most splendid version. Moussa had come through his
family network, stayed with people from Mauritania in Mataró and had been sending
remittances home. He has now gone back to see his wife and son, but plans to return.
Thus, for many migrants, migration and remitting home is primarily a fulfilment of a
family decision and duty (van Nieuwenhuyze 2007:108; Adepoju 2004).

While many profit from the solidarity of co-migrants and are therefore able to
fulfil their goal of migration, sending remittances home, more quickly, those who
migrated for prestige still rely on the same solidarity. Remitting might become part of
their endeavour only if they need proof of their achievements. Cantara, for example, left
against the will of his family to find success as a migrant and to be able to buy
machinery when he returns home. Not wanting to see his cousin in Spain, he still profits
from living with a friend from home who charges him very little rent, important in that
he has no papers and has only had short jobs. Cantara’s case suggests that obligations

35 Yo allí no sabía que trabajaba tan duro, y ya no sabe que trabajaba mucho. Y digo, no puedo volver, tengo
que quedarme a ayudar mi padre con lo que está haciendo. Por que todo el dinero que está mandando a
allí no es fácil de tenerlo. ... El ahora está en África, yo estoy trabajando como él lo hacía antes. Yo lo
hago igual, trabajo, ayudando para que va viviendo con la familia bien (Youba, 09/2007)
towards home can be secondary to personal success since there are no direct transnational social relations.

Even if there are transnational relations, the obligations involved can feel like an additional burden and restrict transnational practices. Unsatisfiable financial and social expectations at home restrict the possibility of returning, both temporarily and permanently. Apart from visiting rarely, a permanent return seems to be even more unlikely, since the lifestyle of a successful migrant could not be maintained. Nevertheless, this does not detract from their wish to visit home.

Sanakha, a Gambian woman who arrived in Spain several years ago, is fully integrated into many migrant associations and most of her friends are from home. She is part of her hometown association and a member of Musu Kafo (Mandinka: women’s association), the main Mandinka women’s association in Catalonia. Although she claims that much of her personal network is within this community, she does not maintain a lot of contact with home. She said that her family called her rather than her calling them and that, although she enjoyed visiting home, she found their expectations very difficult to meet. As a divorced mother of three children, she is unable to send many remittances. For her, life is centred in Catalonia and she does not plan to return home soon, if ever.

Not maintaining connections with the family is often badly regarded amongst co-migrants (van Nieuwenhuyze 2007:126), although not necessarily so in every situation as exemplified by Moussa’s and Sanakha’s cases. Moussa still receives support from the migrant network. In Sanakha’s case, other Senegambians value their relationship with her very highly, rather than critiquing her for her little involvement at home. While the high esteem might also be due to her powerful position as a mediator in the Mataró government, her value cannot be reduced to this since she is active beyond her job in providing a lot of support and help to everyone coming to her. Thus,
solidarity, reciprocity and obligation have both transnational and local dimensions, but not necessarily both.

**Summary**

Individual relationships both locally and transnationally rely on a number of shared norms and ideas. They are not universal concepts in that they are not always applicable and not strictly limited to a certain group. On the basis of solidarity and the common transnational experience, Senegambian migrants can receive help. However, unequal power relations become obvious in the cases of the housing pateras or the uneasy feelings of some migrants around their hosts.

Receiving solidarity can reinforce the feeling of obligation towards home. However, this does not seem directly reciprocal and even those with few transnational relations may still be integrated into local migrant groups. Thus, neither do all migrants maintain strong individual transnational ties, nor does a generalised norm of solidarity always exist locally, which would guarantee strong individual ties in the receiving context. Social relations on the basis of solidarity, obligation and reciprocity vary widely within the described social field.

### 4.3 Homes and friendships

Field experiences from migrants’ flats add another perspective on migrants’ personal networks. In Mataró, these networks are dynamic and found particularly amongst young male labour migrants and young families sharing flats with single migrants, mostly men. Sow (2004) refers to these relationships using the idea of friendship, which is, as I have already discussed, an equal relationship implying obligation, reciprocity and at least a minimal amount of affect (Wolf 1966).

The reasons for living together are not just cost calculation, but also the importance of being social, of having people around to feel good. This is how life is
lived also at home. In Mataró, I became a regular visitor of Idi’s flat participating in many afternoon teas and spending hours watching TV. Having arrived five years ago, Idi, a Jola, lives with his best friend Noah, a Mandinka, his niece, Noah’s brother, another Mandinka and a Soninke. On the weekends, they host many more Senegambian migrants to relax and discuss their problems and projects, both in Spain and at home. Introducing me to everybody, Idi said that he met Noah in a language class when he first arrived, and that since then they do everything together. Their friendship is based on equality and reciprocity.

Compared to the close friendship between them, Idi maintains a slightly more hierarchical relationship with many of those joining the flat for tea. Many of these men are relatively new arrivals and Idi helps them with little things like phone contracts, their paperwork, and explaining life in Catalonia. He has the highest education and is active in many associations. In return for his help, the others make tea for him and listen to his commands. They call him older brother and he appears to be their role model. Kinship terminology is often used to describe proximity in their affective relationship. I was introduced to many brothers and sisters who were just good friends. This is typical of many migrants from West Africa (Grätz et al. 2003). Sow (2004) also gives the example of migrant women grouping around a common classificatory mother who supports the others with her knowledge. Sanakha, for example, was called ‘Mami’ by women who knew her.

Those present during the weekends in Idi’s flat are also friends, and many know each other well enough to know about each others’ plans and sorrows. Sow (2004) has stressed that such friendships go beyond the generalised solidarity which is offered to every foreigner. However, a line is difficult to draw since relations and compositions change over time. Aguibo, who had arrived as a stranger, now maintains friendship-like relationships with his flatmates. Alasan who is one of Aguibo’s flatmates, on the other
hand, was formerly one of those making tea for Idi but has stopped attending the sessions. He has bought a flat together with Mamadou and now has his own little meetings with friends. Similarly, in many of the other flats I visited one man was respected as the authority. Frequently, this was the person who had been in Spain the longest or had bought the flat but was not necessarily the oldest.

Overall, the kinds of obligations and reciprocities exchanged between flatmates varied; however, based on my observation of the cordial afternoon encounters, a basic affect and support seems to have been given. Friendship relationships in flats cross many ethnic boundaries. In Idi’s flat, although Mandinka migrants predominate, Soninke and Jola are also amongst the friends. In another flat, Fula and Mandinka live together. Limane, a Fula, shares a flat with a Mauritanian friend he met in Libya and other Mauritanians. One flat was even shared by a Gambian and two Moroccans; however, this remained an exception.

In comparison to migrant men, most of my female informants were not independent migrants and lived with their husbands. When I asked my male informants about independent female migrants, they could only name a few in the region. Idi’s niece was an exception since she had previously joined her mother, who had later moved to France, through family reunification. Since then, she has been staying with her uncle when in Mataró. She neither interacts much with the single male migrants with whom she shares the flat, nor with other young Senegalese women who, she claims, are just waiting for their husbands and to have children. However, between women there are many leisurely encounters. They report visiting with the wives of the friends of their husbands during the daytime. This way, newly arrived women find their way around town and overcome the sorrow of being away from home.

Friendships are also formed in the public sphere. In Mataró, groups of friends from Idi’s and others’ flats go out for walks and to some celebrations, events described
in the following chapter. I rarely saw migrants in bars or cafes in Mataró. Most migrants I met in Barcelona, however, had a different attitude to this. I often met them in cafes and in conversation they said they go to bars. In Barcelona, Sane’s explanation for why he goes to tourist bars was straightforward: he felt that ‘foreigners had to stick together, don’t they?!’ (Sane 09/2008). Thus, some of my informants in Barcelona did contradict the otherwise quite strong impression of young male migrants socialising mainly in flats. Asked why they did not go to bars and cafes, migrants in Mataró said that home was a good place to socialise and bars were a waste of time and money, both of which were scarce. If sharing flats was not the result of solidarity or of desperation, they provided an important framework for Senegambian migrants to develop friendships of different intensities across a spectrum of different origins.

4.4 Migrant associations – engaging (trans)locally

Apart from the general solidarity and informal friendships discussed so far, Senegambian migrants in Mataró and Catalonia generally have also established numerous associations, both formal and informal. They are used to many associational forms from home such as the family, age-groups, kin, clan, caste, or, indeed, neighbourhood associations (Linares 1992; Kaplan Marcusán 1998; Sow 2005). Thus, Sow argues that associations in Catalonia are ‘a reference where some or all the demands and needs of the migrant community are met’ (Sow 2005:41). These associations become actors in the local (and transnational) field solving many of the difficulties migrants confront. For many migrants, associations are part of their daily lives and provide a powerful framework of orientation and identification; however, not for all.

Diverse immigration flows, different regional, ethnic and national identifications and categorisations, gender, and the orientation towards home or the local Spanish
context all provide the basis for numerous fissions and fusions. The plurality of associations and their different purposes and obligations show how multiple and complex the social fields in which the migrants engage are. This perspective on associations again challenges ideas of ‘community’ which assume essential group characteristics and homogeneity (Brubaker 2004). I will present three associations which are now formalised as cases in which personal relations, the local context, and the general complexity become apparent.

Sabosire: hometown association at a border

I was introduced to a number of members of the Gambian Sabosire association by Idrisa, a Senegalese Soninke and member of the Sandaga association. Sandaga and Sabosire had originally been one association; it had informally regrouped all Soninke from the region around the border town Vélingara, Kolda, in Casamance. Members had given the association the name Sandaga to stress that it should be like Sandaga, the market of Dakar, a market for all, regrouping migrants from both sides of the border.

However, Gambian Soninke could only get co-funding from the Mataró municipality for their big hospital project if they constituted themselves as a clear Gambia-based association. The official state categorisation made it necessary for Sabosire to split-off from the Sandaga association. This national categorisation, so important in obtaining co-funding, is quite meaningless in the border region of Senegal and The Gambia. Nevertheless, the official discourse of nations and state holds the power and prescribes meaning through migrants’ categorisation. States thus also influence the symbolic definition of groups (Brubaker and Cooper 2000:15)\(^\text{36}\). Sandaga and Sabosire have divided and tend to now meet separately. Nevertheless, the state

\(^{36}\) The power of the state is also reflected in its ability, to provide or restrict access to space for meetings and further resources. The same association has only recently fulfilled the formal criteria to be ‘legalised’ and consequentially be eligible for a proper space to accommodate office and meeting necessities.
perspective is challenged by the remaining personal contacts which link both associations. Idrisa joined at the end of the Sabosire meeting to exchange news with Sabosire. Like him, there are still migrants in Mataró participating in both the Sandaga and the Sabosire associations.

Internally, Sabosire experiences other fractions. In their monthly meetings, members from all over Catalonia contribute to their hospital project, and only a minority pays into a fund for mutual assistance, such as in the event of sickness or death\textsuperscript{37}. As a result, some members left the meeting as soon as the discussion about the accounts and the progress of the common hospital project was over, whereas others stayed to socialise. Thus, several levels of relationships are apparent even within one regionally based association. Firstly, although the state power split the association, friendship ties are maintained. Secondly, the larger project at home was the project all members from across Catalonia identified with, yet the stronger obligation and reciprocity for mutual support in Catalonia was only enacted between some.

**Planeta: Senegalese transnational and local**

Idi, who hosts the weekend meetings in his flat, is also the secretary of the Planeta Association, a male Senegalese association which provides services to migrants in Mataró and is strongly engaged in development projects in Casamance (Sow 2005; Sokpoh 2006).

At the meeting of the committee, one of the lay members brought a friend who was having problems with his documentation. This was his first meeting and Fakeba, the president who also worked in the migrant support centre in a labour union, advised him. Similarly, the committee was also called when some Senegalese along the coast

\textsuperscript{37} Many migrants reported that originally associations were founded to help bearing the costs of sending passed away members home for them to be buried in their homelands (cf. Kane 2002).
had run into trouble. The general norm of solidarity which often exists between migrants individually is embedded in the structures of Planeta. All committee members are keen to address the problems of Senegalese in Catalonia. In a similar vein, they also prepared an exhibition on Senegalese migrants’ engagement at home, which was to be shown in civic centres.

Additionally, Planeta engages in development projects at home. Different to Sabosire, they comprise members of different ethnic backgrounds which seemed to make the negotiation of their projects more complicated. The second secretary of the association, and the only Fula on the committee, was quite concerned that Fakeba who had just come back from Senegal was unable to report on the progress of projects with local Fula communities, especially since he had information on Mandinka and Jola projects. Fakeba explained that he had problems in gaining the necessary information from the partner organisation. The Fula, however, appeared to be quite concerned with the fate of his co-ethnics. Thus, ethnic categories can become important when development projects and the remitting of money are involved. Different priorities in showing solidarity with home become apparent.

Nevertheless, the committee members and Planeta itself connects many with different ethnic backgrounds and some good friendships support the associational structure. Despite the professional tone used between the committee members during the meeting, the treasurer Rafael was best friends with Fakeba, the president, and the friends Idi and Noah were both present. On the other hand, none of the other flatmates or friends of Idi showed up, and I got the impression that his flatmates, although they knew about the associations, did not feel motivated to participate actively. Thus, formal membership did not directly translate into the use of the associations as places for socialising.
Jama Kafo and Musu Kafo – all Sub-Saharan?

Founded in the 1980s, Jama Kafo (Mandinka: Association for all) is the oldest association of Sub-Saharan migrants in Mataró. It was created in response to the new immigration law in 1986 by the Sub-Saharan migrants who were in Mataró at the time. Without any transnational orientation, it was an association founded to promote the interest of all Sub-Saharan migrants in Catalonia. Musu Kafo is an association that was founded by the women following these first labour migrants. Whereas Jama Kafo promoted political interests, Musu Kafo promoted the maintenance of their traditions and culture for the next generation, which according to Kaplan Marcusán (2003) is one of the traditional purposes of women’s associations in the Senegambia region.  

Today, both associations are less active than they used to be. Sheriff, president of Jama Kafo, says that with the growing number of migrants and a growing interest in projects back in Africa, former members increasingly dedicate more time to regionally focused, or ethnically based, associations. Idrisa’s association Sandaga is only one example. Nevertheless, proud of the cooperation with the municipality and of their success in Mataró in having preserved and obtained rights, some members still run projects with Jama Kafo, such as giving language and computer classes to newly arrived migrants.

Although members of Jama Kafo are still known to many migrants, many new arrivals have not heard about the association at all. Not withstanding the importance of the services provided by Jama Kafo, the activity of this multi-national and multi-ethnic association seems to be in decline. Those still involved in organising have been close friends for a long time and in their private life tend to stick to themselves, as one son of

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For different forms of female associations compare Evers Rosander (2000).
one of the founders admits. Apart from him, there are no other young members in the association.

Similarly, Musu Kafo’s activity has declined. Nevertheless, they claim to have a member network reaching all Sub-Saharan women throughout Catalonia. Although members of Musu Kafo disagree, the reach of this self-described network was challenged by some of my informants who were not part of the association and perceived it as ethnically defined and Mandinka-only. Internal and external perceptions do not seem to overlap any longer. Thus, both examples of Musu Kafo and Jama Kafo suggest that the larger framework chosen seems only partially true, differently perceived, or no longer tenable given the rising numbers of migrants.

Reach of associations

Although formalised associations fulfil important functions for migrants and in both past and present have advocated for migrants’ rights, the claim that they reach all migrants or are in one way or another part of all migrants’ lives is questionable. Firstly, not all migrants go to the meetings of formal associations. Alasan was a member of both the ethnic Jola and the Planeta associations, yet he had attended meeting at either for quite some time similar to Idi’s flatmates. Not engaging in communal projects in Africa, Alasan still supported his wife and family individually.

Secondly, many of the newly arrived migrants have neither heard about Mataró’s main associations nor identify as organised otherwise, formally or informally. For them, the solidarity of their flatmates and friends in other flats appeared to be more important sources of information and places to socialise. Thus, while the two large associations of Mataró (Planeta and Jama Kafo) and the other specifically ethnic associations sometimes claim to cover the whole of Catalonia, they in fact do not reach all migrants and therefore cannot represent migrants generally to either the local
government or academic audiences. For members of the associations, however, the associations play important parts in their lives and even passive membership can be very helpful. They maintain both close friendship and looser solidarity structures within the association.

Having institutionalised generalised solidarity, many formal associations provide help and information beyond their membership. In doing so, they assume an important role for migrants and are also a forum where the first reception of newcomers can take place. This was even more so with the Senegalese association in Barcelona which has to struggle daily with numerous demands by irregular migrants in trouble. Thus, local and transnational aspects of migrant lives can be closely intertwined in associations of Senegambian migrants in Catalonia.

4.5 Beyond classical transnationalism

In this last section, I add another dimension to the networks of Senegambian migrants. Their transnational practices are by no means always one-dimensional and focused on the homeland. Glick Schiller and colleagues (2006:613) stress ‘the diversity of migrants’ relationships to their place of settlement and to other localities around the world’. This is the case for collective forms of organisations such as the Mouride brotherhood with networks spanning the whole globe (Stoller 1996), and is true for individuals themselves who either maintain relations to, or have had relevant experiences in, other countries.

Mouride brotherhood

Mourides are one of the four religious brotherhoods in Senegal whose migrations have been widely researched (e.g. Stoller 1996; Carter 1997; Riccio 2001). Transnational engagement is a very strong part of their lives. Worldwide, they rely on a strong base of symbols and identification with their founder, Amadou Bambha and their
holy city Touba (Riccio 2001). Locally, Mouride organisations provide migrants with assets similar to those provided by other associations, although many of their activities are based on strong religious belief. Globally, they engage in a network spanning all major places in the Western world, and both religious leaders, marabouts, and traders circulate within the network.

The general difference that Riccio (2001) proposes between associations that relate to the receiving context and religious organisations that maintain transnational engagement, only partially holds true, since local associations also engage transnationally. However, the transnational activities of those belonging to the religious brotherhood are joined by other activities and the consciousness of their global religious network of local associations. Mourides cultivate their community in dahiras, where they regularly meet, exchange news from home, and worship (Riccio 2001; Carter 1997).

In the daara (school) in Mataró, which belongs to a particular subdivision of Sheikh Béthio Thionne, Mourides meet every Sunday afternoon to pray and discuss the news from Touba and the Sheikh39. They are proud of their Sheikh’s network which includes important guesthouses and meeting centres all over Europe, and in France and Italy in particular. The members of the daara stress that wherever they go, they will have somewhere to stay. Beyond the globality of their network, the daara also dedicate monthly remittances to the building of Quranic schools of their Sheikh and their new mosque in Touba.

39 They stress not to be a dahira to indicate their stronger religious purpose.
European, North America and home

Apart from Mourides, single individuals also engage in complex transnationalism (Levitt and Jaworsky 2007). On the one hand, complex migration trajectories influence migrants’ perceptions of life in Catalonia, and on the other, they relate to members of their family or home region who are in other countries across the Western hemisphere (Kane 2002).

Ami, a Soninke woman running a corner store, was born to a trading family in The Gambia. Her grandfather had gone to Sierra Leone and returned a rich man, the result of diamond trading. Ami arrived in Mataró to join her husband and after her marriage disintegrated, opened a store in which she sells music and video tapes, jewellery, and frozen fish imported from her brother in Paris. She also bought the material for the dresses of her best friend’s daughter’s wedding in Paris, for which a relative in Canada paid. When the same friend, Haja, was left behind in The Gambia by her husband who took a second wife to Europe, it was again a relative from North America who paid for Haja and her three daughters to return to Europe. Thus, Haja and Ami maintain personal relations with many members of their extended families in other Western countries in addition to being involved at home in The Gambia. Their intense friendship expressed through their chosen sisterhood also opens each other’s networks for their benefit.

In other instances, my informants referred to previous experiences in other countries or compared their situation to those of friends and family members living in Italy, France, Germany or the US. As Sow (2004) also stresses, migrants in Catalonia collect experiences and contacts wherever they go. Limane, for example, went from Senegal to the Ivory Coast to run a business with his uncle. After selling the business and in an attempt to get to Europe, he passed through Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Libya,
Tunisia, Algeria, and again Mauritania and Senegal to finally end up in the Ivory Coast again. The second time, he made it straight from the Ivory Coast to Europe. Arriving in Madrid, he first went to his uncle in Paris for some weeks and then went to Mataró. On Limane’s first long trip, he met Ibrahima, his good friend in Mataró, and a Mauritanian, with whom he is now living. Both of these friends are now also in Mataró. After all these experiences, Limane is very satisfied with his situation in Spain, particularly in comparison with the difficult working conditions in Libya.

In different ways, Ami’s and Limane’s examples show the diversity of migrants’ experiences and personal networks. Transnationalism is not one-dimensional but a complex process involving many different places and experiences. Likewise, local relations in Mataró are influenced by these complex experiences and not just by the common orientation towards home. Although this aspect of networks has already been fairly well investigated for Mourides, it has not often been mentioned for other Senegambian migrants.

4.6 Conclusions

In this chapter, I have shown that transnationalism is important for many of the relations migrants maintain. These relations can take diverse forms depending on varying aspects of transnationalism, different levels of organisation, and the level in which underlying norms like solidarity, reciprocity and obligation are enacted. Thus, migrants’ transnational relations in egocentric networks can be nearly as diverse as the individual relations themselves. The transnational social fields which are built on the basis of these individual networks are therefore overlapping, contested and encompass one another. Bounded groups do exist which may be organised in associations or bear particular meanings for some migrants, but they have a processual character and are subject to change.
Transnationalism is an important part of both transnational and local egocentric network relations. Firstly, it explains the maintenance of relations to home both as part of individual obligation and identification, and as part of the projects initiated by associations. As a shared experience, transnationalism can explain some of the locally formed relations between migrants, yet not all. There are also local migrant associations which focus only on the local situation of Senegambians. Secondly, relations cross kin, ethnic and national boundaries depending on which level of aggregation is applied, or no relations may be maintained even within these groups. Thirdly, relations are even maintained beyond a one-dimensional idea of transnationalism in that many localities can be part of egocentric networks.

Finally, relations on the basis of transnationalism and the implied solidarity, reciprocity and obligations also vary in their intensity. As in the case of solidarity, the relationship may even become negative. Thus, a complex picture of transnationalism has emerged on the basis of an analysis of egocentric networks challenging the notion of reified groups. I will complement this in the next two chapters with a local perspective of convivencia beyond the realm of transnationalism. Similarly, multiple forms of relations become apparent.
5 Everyday life and an everyday *convivencia*

The last chapter focused on the relationships that exist between migrants in the locality, with home and other places transnationally. Glick Schiller and colleagues suggest, however, that migrants maintain local relations with residents of all categories (Glick Schiller et al. 2006). Thus, there is a complex interaction between the local and the transnational (Levitt 2003; Morawska 2003). By investigating individual relations within the locality and their interactional aspects, as presented in this chapter, I avoid both arguing for one-sided assimilation and reifying migrant groups.

*Convivencia* and Civility

Everyday *convivencia*, as discussed in Chapter 3, focuses on interpersonal relationships which are based on civility. Although *convivencia* implies mutual understanding and acknowledges conflict and disagreement as part of processes in a locality, it also suggests, as it is based on civility, mutual respect and tolerance as a minimal reciprocal obligation (Suárez-Navaz 2004; Boyd 2006; Fyfe et al. 2006). Such an understanding of *convivencia* accepts difference as a basic fact, and stresses the necessity of the daily practice of negotiation.

Maintaining civil relations is different from maintaining more intense relations such as friendships. No obligation other than the respectful and tolerant treatment of each other is implied. There are, however, many ways to be civil (Hann 1996) which need to be negotiated. How far negotiations take place or in which way local power relations urge new residents to accommodate local norms remains questionable. Ultimately, the negotiation process will lead to a common knowledge of accepted practices which support successful interaction (Baumann 2004). Underlying these processes is a socially recognised equality, the basis for social citizenship (Vertovec
The acquisition of residency by registering with the local town hall seems to be an important step in supporting basic interactions.

**Residency**

In Spain, a relaxed atmosphere seems to prevail in the diverse neighbourhoods and towns. Migrants do not have to hide since irregulars are formally accepted on a local level, an acceptance expressed in the *empadronamiento*, the registration with the local town hall. This is in contrast to Suárez-Navaz’s finding that ‘the coercive apparatus of legal implementation categorically barred illegals from participating in the civil sphere’ (Suárez-Navaz 2004:136). Whereas Suárez-Navaz’s research deals with West and North African immigrants and locals in Andalusia, and their shifting and antagonistic relations with locals, the situation in Catalonia presents itself differently. In Mataró, the *empadronamiento* can be a very strong way of facilitating participation in the institutions of everyday life, such as neighbourhood associations, and in popular celebrations. A number of Senegambians even described the situation in Catalonia as very relaxed in comparison to France. They said that nobody asked for their legal documents if they stayed ‘clean’ and did not blatantly break the law; they felt they experienced relative freedom. This suggests that the *empadronamiento* fosters a different understanding of belonging and legality and ultimately creates a category of residents who ideally are able to participate equally in interculturalism and *convivencia*.

On the basis of these aspects of residency, the Senegambian perspective on networks between residents reveals some successes of, and challenges to, *convivencia*. The processes of negotiating social norms and practices described above as civility and the conflicts around equality, respect and learning through interaction are constrained by resentment, exclusion and discrimination. This complexity is portrayed in the following subsection on everyday life in neighbourhoods, celebrations, and finally in the migrants’
narratives on how they perceive their situation at work. I will critically question the notion of achieving common practices of everyday life amongst new and old residents and co-workers.

5.1 Living in a migrant neighbourhood

As pointed out in Chapter 2, the neighbourhoods in Mataró where I spent most of my fieldwork were built about 40 years ago to accommodate labour migrants from the south of Spain. Today, these migrants share the neighbourhood with migrants from mainly North and West Africa, and some from South America.

In the public sphere

On a typical early Saturday afternoon in Cerdanyola, one such neighbourhood, there is a busy market before the siesta. Women from North and West Africa, some wearing traditional clothing, others jeans and t-shirts, mix with Spanish women. Generally, there are more women than men at the market. One African family passes, the man in a formal suit, the two women in traditional clothing and their two sons in Barca tricots. They appear to be heading to a party and strongly resemble Spanish couples heading to Saturday wedding parties. On the way, the man gives some change to an old beggar in front of the supermarket.

This busy scene of weekend preparations surprised me in many respects: Firstly, the different people in the market all harmoniously go about the same tasks in the neighbourhood. Secondly, I seemed to be the only one surprised by this colourful multiculturalism, something everyone else appeared to take for granted. Finally, the African man with the two women contradicted my strong image of West African single men, working on the farm or in factories and staying at home on free days, drinking tea with their friends and flatmates. In this market scene, I could not see segregation, discrimination, or inequality; rather, I was observing shared practices of everyday life.
The same sensation can be experienced in the afternoon when West African men, like Spanish men, gather in the park to chat. Children play with each other and sometimes African mothers sit and talk together. Children from all different origins claim to know each other from primary school. However, Sheriff does not trust this display of seemingly successful *convivencia*. In a conversation about my first impressions, he critically remarked that the problem lay in adults not talking to each other. Hence, the harmonious togetherness described at the market and in parks does not guarantee interaction; rather, it shows a similarity in familiar practices and tasks.

Some mutual tolerance can be observed, however, in the interaction that does take place. Although Sub-Saharan migrants seem to know mainly other Sub-Saharan migrants and tend to greet each other, they also interact with other neighbours. An elderly woman from Extremadura in the South of Spain was very emotionally welcomed by a small Gambian girl playing in the park, and greeted by her Gambian mother. The elderly woman explained that the Gambian family were her neighbours and that she understood them since they were immigrants like herself. In a similar manner, Sheriff’s Andalusian wife also referred to her own immigration experience when talking about Senegambian immigrants. Yet, while these older women implied a general sympathy and understanding for the situation of the more newly arrived migrants, this same relationship between internal and external migrant was in other instances referred to as problematic, given the competition for housing and unskilled employment. This is complemented by ethnographic accounts from Andalusia, where locals complain about the strong presence of Africans and their activities (Suárez-Navaz 2004:91).

Contrary to these critical voices, I witnessed a lot of informal but very respectful relationships amongst neighbours. On a short walk with Idi, the first ‘Hello, how’re you?’ was exchanged with the Gambian wife of a friend; subsequently we stopped to catch up with two Spanish women, neighbours who had asked where Idi had been
lately. Another day we stopped by the small corner store to buy cigarettes and to discuss football, a discussion which ended with the Catalan shopkeeper identifying Idi as the better Barca fan of the two.

Idi had engaged with Spanish society from the first. Even without proper legal documentation, he had sought information on how to carry on with his studies of medicine at the town hall. When his previous studies were not accredited, he accepted ‘la vie clandestine’ and found his first job in the warehouse of a Catalan business whilst walking through the neighbourhood. Idi says he is still friendly with the Catalan owner who also found Idi’s next job for him. Idi rented a house when he found a landlady who accepted him as a tenant without a residence permit on condition that a legally resident Gambian signed the contract for him. Today, he has settled and is the main tenant of another flat negotiating successfully with the landlord, who is well aware of his rights and duties\textsuperscript{40}. Other migrants’ trajectories are very similar concerning work and housing; however, everyday interactions on the streets as described above are not always as apparent given the large number of people in each neighbourhood.

**Norms and obligations in neighbourhood blocks**

Whereas Idi lives on a street with small two story houses, many of my informants live in apartment blocks where they paid a lot of attention to mutual respect and cooperation. When Alasan introduced me to his music collection, he chose to play it at low volume since otherwise, he explained, the neighbours would complain or even call the police. He found life in Spain a lot more restrictive, but he accepted the restrictions because he wanted good neighbourly relationships having bought the flat

\textsuperscript{40} This became very clear when he explained to me about my rights as a tenant when I told him about my problems with my landlord in the UK.
not long ago. His neighbours are mostly Spanish, apart from another West African family on the first floor and one Moroccan family living above him.

Although Alasan respects the different attitudes towards living in an apartment block, he does not completely copy the ways of older residents and raises general questions about the European life-style. Although he accepted the fact, he could not understand why the Spanish would rather live with pets instead of living with each other. He was certain that this would never happen in Africa. On the other hand, Spanish people never understood that to him sharing a flat with many others is essential to feel at home, beyond the sheer necessity to share the costs.

Many other migrants also reported that they were quieter than usual, cleaned the staircase and paid for the common bills. Although migrants hold on to some of their ideas and norms, they tend to accept the way things are done in Catalonia and try not to cause trouble. Youba, for his part, explained to me in detail how he went about introducing himself to his neighbours after moving into the flat he had bought with his father:

[With my neighbours] I am on good terms. This is because when I got there, I went the first day to my neighbours and asked whether they would mind to have an African neighbour. He responded ‘no, no, no’ ... To be on good terms with people you have to introduce yourself, the way you are, so that the people can understand you. ... She is a mom with her daughters. When she comes with five shopping bags I help her. I do this to be on good terms with my neighbour. … In some cases there might be bad neighbours, no matter where you go. Everywhere in the world there are good people, and there are bad people. But at least you also need to introduce yourself. (Youba, 09/2007)\textsuperscript{41}

\textsuperscript{41}[Con los vecinos] lo llevamos bien. Llevo bien, por que desde llegar allí, el primer día fue al vecino preguntando, ¿no te molesta tener un vecino africano? El dice no no no ... para llevarlo bien con la gente
This sort of informed action does not apply to all migrants. Not all of them claimed to help their neighbours and some even decided not to say hello anymore, since neighbours never responded. But this also applies for Senegambians amongst themselves. In one instance, I had to introduce two Senegalese informants to each other who were living in the same house and had not met before.

Notwithstanding instances of living side-by-side, Senegambians negotiated solutions between neighbours to accommodate the needs of all involved. I was told that once when a Sub-Saharan could not afford to pay his share of a new lift, the block association agreed that he and his wife should clean the staircases and the lift in order to earn their share. One could argue that this is discriminatory; however, they reported it to me as an example of negotiated agreement. Although the above examples of daily interactions in apartment blocks and the norms that residents agree upon do not seem to be the outcome of equal power relations, it is also important to stress that migrants claim to freely accept this situation.

**Block and neighbourhood associations**

In contrast to the accepted unequal power relations, some migrants report being active and successful in apartment block and neighbourhood associations. Residential, not kinship-based, organisation has always been important to Senegambians at home (e.g. Linares 1992:65f). In Mataró, the level of familiarity with block associations is very high, although different levels of involvement are common. Many migrants do not care much or cannot go to meetings because of multiple responsibilities, yet know...
enough to explain the common procedures and concerns of the apartment block. Only
the very recently arrived migrants do not know about these associations.

Some migrants have even made careers in block and neighbourhood associations
and are still engaged in many forms of community organisation. Mbar arrived in 1982
and is now working for immigrants in a labour union both in Mataró and Barcelona. He
explained his attitude as follows:

[Regarding neighbours], I never had problems. At first, they did not have a
neighbours’ [block] association. There was no coordination so I tried it. There
were many; this is impossible. When three or four backed me, they established
an association. Wanting to organise maybe is natural to me … I wanted to be
helpful, if I see people without protection … People were saying how it is
possible that a person comes from Africa and coordinates people here, but it is
possible. If we stand together as a group we are stronger, we can achieve what
we want. (Mbar, 07/2007)\textsuperscript{42}

As president of the block association, Mbar was very active and successful.
Apart from this commitment, he has always been active in many other associations and
clubs, both local and transnational. He is a member of a labour union and runs many
courses for Jama Kafo. He is convinced that his way of fully engaging with life in Spain
is correct. He even married a Spanish woman in a Catholic church. He claims that
participation in local life is very important for migrants. Acknowledging that this is
more complicated now because of the difficulties of obtaining legal residency, he

\textsuperscript{42} [Con los vecinos] yo no tengo problemas. Primero, donde vivo yo no tenían asociaciones de vecinos.
No había coordinación, yo lo he intentado. Estaban muchos. Esto no puede ser. Hasta 3-4 me han
apoyado, hacían una asociación... organización viene quizás por naturaleza mía ... quería ser útil, si ve la
gente sin defensa ... la gente dice cómo es posible que una persona viene de África y coordina la gente de
aquí, pero es posible, si venimos en grupo tenemos más fuerza, una voz más fuerte, podemos tener lo que
queremos. (Mbar, 07/2007)
nevertheless believes that engaging on multiple levels is the only way forward for immigrants.

Travelling back and forth between The Gambia and Spain, Mbar’s example suggests that participation in Mataró is possible whilst maintaining transnational ties. Idi’s history coheres with this possibility. Although he maintains ties to home, his wife being in Senegal, Idi became the neighbourhood’s representative in consultative committees at the municipality with only his empadronamiento. Having had much family support and university education, such participation might have been comparatively easier for Idi than for current new arrivals lacking either. Also, this type of participation might not be relevant to them. For Cantara, a recent arrival without a passport, any form of socialising came after the necessity to find work. Thus, having neighbourhood and block associations does not guarantee that all migrants, newly arrived or long established, will participate in the locality; nevertheless, they are one forum where common norms and ideas of living together can be negotiated in contrast to readily accepting established local practices in a one-way process, or undermining them in ignorance of each other.

5.2 **Celebrations in a Catalan summer**

A particularity of life in neighbourhoods, celebrations are interesting for two reasons: firstly, they are one-time possibilities in which neighbours can meet and interact. If migrants are in neighbourhood associations, they are even involved in the design of popular festivities. Secondly, African festivities like baptisms and weddings are important to understanding how venues are negotiated. The *Fête Africaine*, a large
West African music concert organised by a Catalan institution, the Casa de la Música Popular\(^{43}\), combines aspects of both of these reasons.

**Popular festivities**

The annual celebrations organised by neighbourhood associations are part of a recurrent narrative about life in neighbourhoods. Idrisa, a Soninke living in Cerdanyola, explained that these celebrations, and the music played at them, are very important aspects of public life in neighbourhoods. Speaking for Cerdanyola, he says that although the Gambian community cannot pay for it, the neighbourhood association often hires West African bands. This was also visible during the celebrations of Palau, where both a Moroccan and a Sub-Saharan band played, if only shortly. However, the main aspect of the Palau festivity, a communal lunch on Sunday, offered a different picture of relations between neighbours. West Africans did not participate in the communal lunch although they were present in the park at the same time.

Sheriff, president of Jama Kafo, had revived Palau’s neighbourhood association 30 years ago, and had been its president for many years. He was the only Sub-Saharan to participate in the communal lunch, where neighbours ate paella and couscous prepared by Andalusians and Moroccans. A Moroccan woman gave an address in Catalan; later, however, the neighbours participating noticed the absence of Sub-Saharan. No one could tell me why, the most plausible explanation being that no single Sub-Saharan was currently a member of the neighbourhood association. The cooperation between Sub-Saharan and other residents must have failed, or was absent, in the preparation of this event. However, at another annual feast in the neighbourhood

\(^{43}\) Engl. House of Popular Music, a network of places with the aim: ‘To contribute, in a word, to the normalisation and potentialisation of popular Catalan music, the music that is played in Catalonia.’ (Spanish: Que contribuya en definitiva a la normalización y potenciación de la música popular catalana, la música que se hace en Cataluña.) (http://www.casadelamusica.cat/es/xarxa/proyecto, 17/04/2008)
celebrating the multiple origins of its residents, Ami, the Gambian corner store owner in Palau, claimed to have been cooking for free for each celebration in the last six years.

This absence of Sub-Saharan immigrants at the lunch in Palau was not reflected in the Mataró celebrations. Some Sub-Saharan families enjoyed the procession of the giants and dragons as part of the crowd in front of the town hall and joined in the fireworks at the beach during the evening. However, none of the presenting groups had Sub-Saharan performing, which reflects Morén-Algaret (2005) observations that only internal migrants profit from integration through participation in the traditional human tower associations in the South of Catalonia. In Mataró, however, Sub-Saharanans did become part of another traditional institution: Balthazar, the black king of the three Magi celebrated on the 6th of January, is recruited through Jama Kafo from among the Sub-Saharan children.

Impressions of the official neighbourhood and town celebrations leave a mixed feeling about active and equal participation of Sub-Saharan migrants. They reveal the neighbourhood residents’ and associations’ awareness of the dynamic process of developing a common public sphere, with some stories of success and some of failure. Then again, civility does not imply the bonding of individuals into cultural groups such as demonstrated by the human towers or the three Magi. The line between building a community and simply accepting civil cooperation as the underlying principle of convivencia is blurry and can neither clearly be drawn in public goals nor in outcomes of convivencia. What is shared is even further challenged in the negotiations around African parties.

44 Human tower associations (in Catalan: colles castelleres) traditionally build human towers, i.e. members standing in circles on each others’ shoulders.
African parties

During the summer in Mataró, I was invited to a number of African parties to which it is said everyone is always welcome. Indeed, I was randomly invited three times to the same wedding of a Senegalese man and a Malian woman, neither of whom I knew. There had even been written invitations to the wedding, for example, to the Catalan colleague of a distant relative of the bride. Written invitations are very unusual for an African celebration; however, these invitations did not say anything about the large party in the evening. Thus, there were hardly any Spanish friends at the party.\(^{45}\)

The wedding party had more than 1000 people and took place in a hall rented from the municipality. As the party ended at 10 am the next morning and most men having spent the night outside the venue, the neighbours had not surprisingly complained at various times. Consequently, it was the last wedding to take place at the hall. In contrast, the two baptisms that I attended ended abruptly, one in the early evening, the other at midnight due to the agreed regulations, despite the fact that the parties were just about to begin. The limited duration and other restrictions sparked a lot of discussion in my conversations with migrants. Some argued how restrictive the rules were and that in France they could celebrate through the whole night and listen to music as loudly as they wanted. Also, they complained about low standard venues. Sheriff put these emotional statements into perspective and stressed how much they are provided for by the municipality. Whereas in France migrants have to pay immense amounts for the use of a venue, in Catalonia they used to use them for free and today only pay very little. In return, he is convinced that respecting local restrictions is important for successful convivencia. Women at the parties, however, saw their needs neither

\(^{45}\) I observed Spanish friends attending parties only at the small birthday party of Raki’s daughter which included her friends from school.
acknowledged nor understood claiming that African weddings were large and not like Spanish ones which could be held in a small restaurant with the closest family members only.

The increasing difficulties of Sub-Saharan migrants in finding venues for their celebrations show that the problems related to the different understandings around how and where to celebrate have not been resolved. In some ways the local government recognises migrants’ needs by providing large venues. Ending parties early demonstrates compromise on the migrants’ side. Other migrants find new solutions. The daughter of Ami’s best friend was going to get married in October 2007 and so rented a big barn outside of Mataró where they would not disturb anyone. Transportation was already organised and Ami and her friend seemed satisfied with this solution.

Migrants, residents, associations and the town hall are constantly negotiating the principles of *convivencia* acceptable to all parties. If there seemed to be unequal power relations prevailing in neighbourhood blocks, these relations were more balanced in regards to African festivities but were not without some conflict.

*L a F é t e A f r i c a i n e*

Whereas most of the private celebrations were facing venue difficulties and confrontations over the way in which to celebrate, the *Fête Africaine* held in July took place on the football field quite centrally in Cerdanyola and lasted the whole night. Similar to the neighbourhood celebrations, this event was designed for all residents, but, unlike the former, the latter attracted mainly Sub-Saharan migrants arriving on crowded trains from all over Catalonia.

There were many Senegalese displaying national symbols in the audience. Women and men were dressed as if for a huge celebration of their music and origins. Interest in the concert also extended to adjacent streets and balconies where many more
West Africans were standing and participating without paying the 20 Euro entry fee. Amidst this strong manifestation of pride and joy, there were also groups of Spanish people blending in. They were mainly Spanish women and the only interaction visibly taking place was between them and Sub-Saharan men, a topic I will return to in the next chapter.

The acquisition of public space by Sub-Saharan migrants in the middle of their neighbourhood for one night, respected by the remaining residents, is worth stressing and would not have been possible in a society disrespecting the multiple origins of its residents. The celebration of the *Fête Africaine* in Cerdanyola together with the negotiations and disagreements on where and how to celebrate private African parties reveals an active exchange and discussion taking place in society about the needs and wishes of Sub-Saharan immigrants and their neighbours. This negotiation must be based on some sort of mutual recognition and respect. While both sides retain some of their traditions, norms and values, the examples of celebrations suggest that both groups are working together to negotiate the everyday principles of interaction. Further research could explore issues around the active public life of Spanish towns to better understand their role in negotiating a new *convivencia*.

### 5.3 Narratives of working relations

Having investigated celebrations in neighbourhoods and their embeddedness in negotiations on the basis of tolerance and respect, narratives on working relations give insights into another important sphere of migrants’ lives. As has been described in the previous chapter, the ability to work, earn money and support those in Africa, is a prevalent, if not the single most important, reason for Senegambians to come to Europe. For this reason migrants spend most of their time working which renders the workplace the most likely location for interaction with other residents, i.e. their co-workers and
bosses. Relations at the workplace become even more salient given that migrants spend a lot of their spare time within their flats exchanging common sorrows and thoughts with those in the same situation. A common theme of general friendliness runs through narratives of the workplace, which I will challenge by other accounts of disappointment and potential deprivation.

**Generally reported friendliness**

After working long shifts, Senegambians mainly used their spare time to catch up with home, fulfil the duties of a position in an association, look after their family, and go for strolls with friends. At work, however, many claim to interact with their co-workers in a positive way. Moussa arrived two and a half years ago and quickly found work on his own in the agricultural sector. About to leave for Senegal, he showed me pictures of himself and colleagues, both on a trip together to Barcelona and at work on the farm. He said that he had good relations with them. Nevertheless, he does not feel particularly committed to his workplace and will simply be looking for a new job once he returns. Whether he will maintain contact with his colleagues is uncertain.

In a similar way, other men also claim to get along well with Catalan colleagues. Noah said he sometimes goes out with colleagues, Limane has good relations with his colleagues at the drycleaner, and Sidibé, another Mandinka, told me how he was planning to go to Andalusia with a colleague during the summer holiday. Although Sidibé was excited, he told me in September that the holiday did not happen. These workplace relations are not particularly close friendships, but co-workers seem to have accepted or negotiated a way in which to interact amicably with each other. As Farba reported on working with his Catalan colleagues,

relations are very good. I never had the smallest problem. The only thing that I will have to talk with them [the employer] about is the income … There I am
very good with everybody … where I work it is the same for everyone –
between workers we are in the same boat. We talk to each other about this;
together we are not happy about the income.’ (Farba 07/2008)

Whereas Farba stresses the equality of workers, for many others the general
friendliness at the workplace is extended into a good understanding with their boss.
Whether employer-employee relationships are also only friendly, or whether a
dependency develops, will be discussed in the next chapter.

The reach of working relations

Although there are many cases where respectful relationships exist between co-
workers, these relationships are not always perceived as unproblematic. Bara is a
successful migrant who arrived in 2000, bought his own flat in 2003, and works as an
operator in a factory. With his colleagues he maintains ‘working relations’, by which he
means that at work they get along well, but at day’s end their relationship ends. To Bara
it feels as if they socially disappear. He has never met with any of his colleagues outside
of work. Although he is very friendly and helpful to his flatmates and friends, he,
himself, has never invited his colleagues home because he thinks they would feel
uneasy. He feels that they ignore him and pretend not to know him on the street. Feeling
disrespected by his colleagues outside work reduces the validity of good working
relations for a positively perceived convivencia. Whether as a response or not, Bara
likewise does not invest much effort into intensifying relationships either with
colleagues or with others. Standing on the street in front of his house, he additionally
expressed the little esteem he has for the, in his eyes, less educated and narrow minded
Spanish neighbours.

Whereas Bara is successful and self-confident, there are others keen to repeat
that they have good relationships at work which ultimately makes them accept even
disadvantageous employment conditions. Iba, who only arrived a year ago, works full time for only 600 Euro a month in the warehouse of the firm where his brother Ibrahima also works. Both brothers emphasise their good relations with the employer and the other workers. Since Iba neither speaks Spanish nor any other European language, nor has legal residency, he is lucky to have permanent employment at all.

Migrants without legal documentation do not easily find work and their jobs are often temporary (Mendoza 2003; Díez Nicolás 2002). To find work it is no longer sufficient to claim equality on the basis of the empadronamiento. Rather, having ‘papers’, i.e. a formal residence permit linked to a work permit, is crucial for finding work. It is in this realm that the ‘fetishism of papers’, their perceived magical power, comes heavily into play (Suárez-Navaz 2004). Thus, there can be socially positive relationships which are ostensibly built on respect on the basis of social equality, yet the payment conditions suggest the opposite. The question of the informal employment of irregular migrants with questionable pay alludes to the ongoing discussion around what defines labour exploitation and minimum employment rights46.

Wage deprivation also applies in cases of longstanding and generally positive work relations. Damé, living for more than twelve years in Spain and constantly working with the same enterprise, has not had many increases in salary and is still only receiving less than 1,000 Euro a month. This example strengthens the hypothesis that structural discrimination and racist elements are persistent in the labour market, elements which need to be addressed. However, neither the level of earnings nor legal status uniformly affect the relations of the migrants with their co-workers or employers.

46 This is embedded in the impression of the majority of migrants that their situation at the work place is worse to the situation of Spaniards (Díez Nicolás 2002:272).


5.4 Conclusions

By applying a network perspective and investigating everyday interactions between migrants and their neighbours, colleagues and others, a very complex social field characterised by connections and frictions emerges. First and foremost, daily life in diverse neighbourhoods stresses the normality of some everyday relations which in turn contribute to reciprocally respectful interactions. Also, daily life provides both sides a basis on which to negotiate compromises and learn to do things to mutual satisfaction. Conflicts cannot always be avoided as is seen in the discourses around the described celebrations in neighbourhoods. Although not every event proves successful, the discourse around these events and the negotiations that take place reveal a process in which individuals, migrants’ associations, neighbourhood associations and local government institutions play a role in creating a stable and perhaps even harmonious everyday situation. Diversity within neighbourhoods, which is also a precondition for interaction between old and new residents, seems to be acknowledged as one of the most fundamental variables of everyday life in Mataró.

In narratives on the workplace, the discussion about social relations receives a new twist. Having presented only some of the examples of migrants’ discrimination, sometimes based on prevailing good social relations, I critically assessed the universal assumption that good social relations are necessarily to the advantage of migrants themselves. Although migrants might have a positive view at their conditions, migrant rights, such as a full legal status and protection against exploitation, must be reinforced. Migrants do not always seem to have the power to negotiate their own rights. However,

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47 This section could be extended in many ways. For example, and evaluation of the efforts of the municipality to offer projects, forums, and spaces of interactions organised in the local civic centres would be a valuable task.
social relationships in individual interactions outside and within institutions of everyday life have the potential to help achieve greater equality, tolerance and respect.

There are a number of illustrative examples where norms of civility are enacted in the diverse networks of migrants and participation in the associational structure seems key, both for general negotiation processes with local institutions and for migrants’ initial participation in Spanish society. Equal participation in quick, but regular, everyday interactions and the development of some working relationships at the workplace and in the neighbourhoods are manifold. However, often it is more of an accommodation of pre-existing norms than a new negotiation. The wish for a more cohesive and homogenous community can sometimes be read between the lines on all sides. However, it is the quite relaxed everyday situation, described at the beginning of this chapter, which matters. Thus, residency, the large capacity of migrants to compromise, common identification at the workplace and the two edged relations with employers and the state, facilitate basic interactions through which networks of residence in Mataró are embedded in an everyday civil *convivencia*. 
6  Crossing the boundary: what Europeans are to migrants

The last chapter has already alluded to the variety of different social relationships possible in everyday life in Mataró. I documented aspects of normality of everyday life like the Saturday markets and the generally friendly, though not always enduring relationships at the workplace. These relationships seem to suggest that interaction with other locals lacks aspects of personal obligation and engagement. However, some relationships crossing preconceived boundaries of nationality, ‘ethnicity’ or origin go beyond this minimal respectful and tolerant practice and develop into more intense relations.

As argued in Chapter 3, this boundary between nationals and others can be important, both on a level of discourse as well as practice. This would not be the case if *convivencia*, based on civility, was fully practiced and the most prominent way of relating to one another. Despite this shortfall of civil interaction, more intensive relations between migrants and others make up another layer in the egocentric networks embedded in the local (and transnational) social field. They illustrate some of the attributes which are often stressed as specific to networks amongst migrants, in that they are based on norms and ideas of reciprocity, obligation, trust, and affect.

Both the terminology and concepts used to describe more intense relationships, friendship, kinship and patronage are blurry. The presented ethnographic cases provide rich data with which to investigate the kinds of more intensive relations in which migrants engage as well as the reach and meaning of the relationship. These might be unequal in power, more or less durable and intense, and involve romantic aspects. They can provide access to resources such as information or work, but can also contribute to the accommodation and negotiation of civility. Thus, differentiation between the qualities of various network relations of Senegambian migrants is difficult, and the
constructed boundaries of close and loose, or strong and weak ties are inevitably vague. Despite these challenges, more intense relationships play an important part in the personal networks of Senegambian residents, and the local social field, and will thus be explored below.

The terminology used by migrants contributes to understanding what these relations mean to the migrants themselves. The analysis presented here is based on migrants’ narratives of their closer relationships with Spanish or Catalan residents. In the first section, I explore relations at the workplace, and the difficulties in differentiating between equal and hierarchical relations. In the second section, I focus on the relationships of female migrants in and through institutions. In the final section, I investigate some aspects of romantic relations, arguing that, compared to friendships and other aspects of *convivencia* discussed so far, these relationships are more prone to be difficult.

The selected case studies below reflect on the variety of terminology and social settings I encountered in my fieldwork. Although not comprehensive, this study identifies some recurrent themes in the migrants’ narratives: classificatory kin relations, indebtedness to some employers and social workers, instrumental friendship relations and the longing for European partners.

### 6.1 At work

Previously, I mentioned that Sub-Saharan migrants’ first jobs are very short. Mendoza (2001) notes that Sub-Saharan are very flexible and follow the succession of different harvests in Catalonia. Young migrants without families are the most flexible labour force, which is reinforced by the fact that many of them have not yet obtained legal residency permits. Van Nieuwenhuyze (2007:145) stresses that it is nearly impossible for recent arrivals to find employment of longer than one year. Thus, the
immense flexibility of the labour market appears to restrict the possibility of developing strong ties at the workplace. Although the atmosphere of general friendliness at the workplaces explored in the previous chapter might be characteristic of a wide spread phenomenon, migrants’ narratives suggest that stronger relations occur and are very important.

The Chef of Adja – ‘like one of us’

The good relations between migrants and Spaniards or Catalans were not always the first information reported to me. Adja, a Senegalese Fula from Dakar who studied to be a nurse and who was working as a nurse in Italy before coming to Spain, spent considerable time describing negative experiences in Spain, such as discrimination at the workplace, not being allowed to work for five years after family reunification, and the bullying of her son in school. This said, she began a detailed account of her relationship to Maria, a Catalan woman and colleague of hers who she described as having become like ‘an African’ during their relationship. Throughout the conversation, Adja repeated how important this relationship was and that it had been constant throughout her twelve years in Mataró. Today, as Maria is elderly and no longer working, Adja told me that she regularly goes to see her.

Maria was the chef in the restaurant where Adja was first employed with the help of Adja’s own husband. Adja was neither used to cleaning nor to cooking, and Maria taught her from scratch how to succeed in her new role as kitchen help48. In doing so, Maria protected Adja from the owner of the restaurant and helped her find a better job. Already in the first year of their friendship, Maria came with Adja to Senegal and stayed with Adja’s family. Since this first visit, Maria travels to Senegal every October,

48 This was an irregular occupation during the first five years in Spain. Finding work as a nurse proved impossible then and now.
even in years when Adja herself stays in Catalonia. She knows the whole family and, as Adja said, has become ‘like one of us’ who eats with her fingers when in Senegal. Most recently, Adja’s brother, who joined his sister in Mataró and is still irregular, has found work with Maria’s brother.

According to Adja, Maria is one of her few ‘real friends’, and contrasts the relationship with Maria with relationships she maintains with African women. Although she has numerous relations both amongst Fula and other West Africans, and although they would all call Adja their friend, she marks a difference in her relationship with Maria saying about Maria that ‘friends are something holy’. Perhaps Adja differentiates her relationship with a Catalan from relations with co-migrants since she feels it is exceptional.

Working in the kitchen, the relationship between Maria and Adja was not formally based on equality, since Maria was Adja’s boss. However, in comparison to the owner of the restaurant, they felt to be on equal standing. Adja also reciprocated the help she received from Maria by inviting her to Senegal where Adja belongs to a wealthy family. This family standing further explains the felt equality. Thus, the relationship with Maria is built on perceived equality, reciprocity and obligation. The relationship has endured, and over time seemingly very different favours were exchanged.

Given the importance of Maria throughout Adja’s account of her twelve years in Spain, their relationship perhaps contributed to Adja’s feeling of security in Spain, which may not have been the same without Maria’s friendship. However, Adja also has higher education and previous migration experience which feature prominently in her account. Adja also assumes an important role in the migrant community, and is president of a new women’s association. Thus, she has intense local relations with both Maria and co-migrants.
Youba’s colleague – a good person

For some, good relations with colleagues referred to in the previous chapter seem to go even beyond pure working relationships. A good example is Youba who is very concerned about getting along well with everyone in Spain and has very clear ideas on how migrants should adhere to the norms and standards in Spain so as not to cause trouble. He relies on Xavier, the only colleague above him in the hierarchy at work, as a source of information, advice and security. Youba said about him:

With him I am going along well, I tell you very good, because I think he is a up-front person. For example, he is someone who never has a problem ... he is someone who treats everybody the same, ok?! With him I am going along really well. ... He has helped me a lot and whenever I asked him a favour he does it for me – and everything [is] perfect. (Youba, 09/2007)

Here, Youba describes Xavier as someone who adheres to the standards that he himself claims to be important. Xavier has helped Youba with paper work and official communications regarding his flat. Youba benefits from Xavier’s expertise since Xavier has grown up in Catalonia. Whenever Youba has problems, he invites Xavier over to confide in him and Xavier advises and warns him when someone attempts to deceive him. Youba even asked his advice on whether or not to meet me.

Youba also said that he observes people around him to learn how things are done in Spain and how he needs to act in order to avoid difficulties. Youba’s description of Xavier demonstrates he views him as a role model. In Youba’s case in particular, the friendship with Xavier furthermore assumes a mediating role between himself and Spanish society. Thus, friendships can link and cross the boundary between two

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49 Con esto lo llevo muy bien, te digo que muy bien, por que creo que es una persona comprensible, es una persona que no tiene ningún problema ... es una persona que considera todo la gente lo mismo, vale, y a él, lo llevo muy bien con él. ... me ha ayudado mucho y encima cada vez que pido un favor a él y me lo hace - y todo perfecto. (Youba, 09/2007)
separate sets or social fields. Asked whether he had similarly close relationships with anyone else, he said, ‘Well, a friend friend like this – no. He is the only one I get along with so well’ (Youba, 09/2007). As expected, intensive relationships like the one between Maria and Adja and that between Youba and Xavier do not seem to be found in the majority of interactions.

If I argued in the last chapter that everyday civil interactions are important in creating an atmosphere of *convivencia* in a diverse society, I suggest here that individual, more intense ‘interethnic’ relations equally contribute to it. Such relations are important to the migrants involved, and their content suggests that the relationships are imbued with much value on the basis of affect, reciprocity, and perceived equality. The practical help received leads to a description of the friend as either ‘one of us’, or as a generally good person. Hence, both Youba and Adja in their own ways stress that these are relationships which make their lives more bearable and connected to locals. They mediate the local opportunity structure and influence its perception. Youba even seems to learn from Xavier how to do things in order to be successful. Thus, few but strong ties add a new dimension to the daily lives of migrants in Catalonia. And although research found that Senegambian immigrants quantitatively are interacting least with other communities and therefore are the least well incorporated (Lubbers et al. 2007), the conclusion could change once the quality of these few relations is actually taken into account.

**Access to work and legal papers – patron or friend**

Patronage-like relationships bring a new dimension of more intense social relations to egocentric networks. Alasan arrived in 2002 in Mataró, and whilst walking

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50 Bueno, de amigo amigo así no. Es el único que lo llevo tanto así.’ (Youba, 09/2007)
around in the adjacent fields, found a job 20 minutes by foot from where he now lives. Since he had always looked for work in the agricultural sector, he happily stayed with this first job. Only one other of the large number of Sub-Saharan labourers working for the same employer has stayed as long as Alasan. Depending on the season, Alasan works more or fewer hours yet gets paid the same all year round. Alasan describes the relationship with his employer as very good. If Alasan does not want to walk to work, he calls him and he will come to pick him up. After work, he often drops him off in front of his house. During the day, they share cigarettes and in July Alasan organised the music for the company party. On top of this, Alasan reported a general situation of mutual trust. For him, this trust is inextricably linked to the help of his employer in having his papers legalised.

A similar relationship exists for Ibrahima. His employment relationship started when his boss, a French entrepreneur, picked him up when he was queuing for work along a street outside of Mataró. This continued for a number of days until the entrepreneur offered Ibrahima a more permanent position. Beginning in the warehouse, Ibrahima now works in accounts. He is also often invited to his employer’s house and uses one of his employer’s motorcycles for free to get to work. The employer’s wife organised that Ibrahima’s stay be legalised which they managed to do in 2005. Ibrahima’s brother Iba, who arrived only a year ago, is now also working for the same employer. Ibrahima said he is very glad about this ‘very good relationship’.

Ibrahima’s relationship with his employer was the closest one reported. On the other hand, given Iba’s disadvantaged situation the result of bad pay (Chapter 5.3), Ibrahima’s own relationship can also appear in a different light. Both Alasan and Ibrahima, like many more of my informants, were helped by their employers to legalise their situation and express their gratitude. In contrast to Alasan who is openly very happy with his decent salary, neither Ibrahima nor his brother said anything about their
salary, let alone complained about the brother’s poor salary. The fact of having obtained papers through their employers implies a strong dependency and a hierarchical relationship between employer and employee. Employers are in the position of brokers in that they have to issue pre-contracts to migrants in order for them to legalise. Providing basic means of subsistence, in this case a place of work, is a patron’s typical obligation (Scott 1977). In return, Ibrahima and Alasan both talk in favour of their employers and Ibrahima does supplementary work such as baby-sitting.

Nevertheless, the relationships between both Ibrahima and Alasan and their employers are reciprocal. Ibrahima’s employer even expressed his hope that Ibrahima would not go back to Senegal for three months because the employer needed him. Alasan’s employer also gave him extras that were not part of their employer-employee relationship, such as offering him rides to and from work. Thus, their relationship seems to be a friendship which crosses social categories (employer-employee) and is characterised by generalised reciprocity, trust, and hierarchical patronage.

There is no one conclusion to be drawn, especially taking Iba’s situation into account. Anderson (2007) addresses the possibility in her work on trafficked sex-workers, that individuals may willingly accept disadvantageous situations. In Iba’s case, patronage resembles a coercive and exploitative relationship, although he agreed on those conditions. While some argue that many West African immigrants do not know their rights and therefore willingly accept such exploitative relationships (Carter 1997:40; Riccio 2001:594), the balance between reciprocity and obligation must be very carefully assessed for these relationships are rarely uni-directional.

Anthropologists have described patronage as integral to both Mediterranean societies and West Africa (Gellner and Waterbury 1977; Fatton Jr 1986; Cruise O’Brien

51 Furthermore, the issue of pay only came up when I asked his brother about it at a later stage and was not part of their own account.
Thus, the hierarchical power relation between employer and employee is a concept to which both parties relate. Sometimes even a comparative perspective needs to be remembered, allowing the Spanish situation to be put in perspective in relation to conditions in either West Africa or the transit countries. On the other hand, it is questionable that the morality of patronage relationships, generally not part of the official morality of law (Gellner and Waterbury 1977), has been incorporated into the official system of regularisation which applies throughout Spain.

6.2 Relations in and through institutions

While the workplace appeared to be the most vivid space for social interaction for men, women more than men also reported relationships with people in other institutions, such as teachers at school, nuns teaching language classes, or workers at municipal institutions. Again, others established relationships in their apartment blocks or neighbourhoods. This reflects the social context in which the migrants’ lives take place.

Sometimes, migrants used kin terminology to refer to relations with Spaniards or Catalans as they do in their relationships with co-migrants. For example, three Gambian women referred to some Spanish or Catalan people they knew as ‘parent-like’. Each woman described a relationship in which this Spanish/Catalan individual was in one way or another caring for her like a parent. For Fanta it was an elderly man in the neighbourhood who she got to know on the street; for Meissa it was the couple living below her who looked after her. In return, Fanta and Meissa respected their authority

52 Men also reported good relations in neighbourhood associations; however, there is no room to go into detail here.

53 To exclude potential misunderstandings it is important to mention that Fanta is married with two children and she also got to know the wife and daughter of the Spanish man.
and enjoyed their company. The third woman, Ami, called one of the three nuns of a Catholic charity in Palau her mother.

Charity and government agency

Like many other early immigrants Ami went to the charity in Palau to learn Spanish, reading, writing and math. After eight years of study from 1987, she would go to Mercè, the teaching nun, whenever she had problems. She also went to her after her divorce, a particularly difficult time for her in Spain, when she also claimed welfare from the charity. At that time, Mercè also helped Ami in finding work as a cleaner which was both very difficult and urgently needed since her husband had wasted his income. Although Mercè’s role is certainly prescribed by her work in the Catholic charity, an affective relationship has developed since. Ami goes to see Mercè sometimes, despite Mercè’s retirement.

Similarly, a woman at the work and training agency encouraged Ami to become a caretaker for elderly people, and helped to develop a business plan for her corner store in order to claim a start-up grant. Although this relationship was only temporary, it was based on much personal motivation on the part of the state employee and resulted in much gratitude on the part of Ami.

As parents at school

In addition to the charity in Palau, Ami’s children’s school also proved to be a further important forum for Ami in which to interact with locals. Ami told me that Ester, a mother at her children’s school, noticed that Ami was feeling awkward at the parent-teacher conference the first time she attended. Ester invited her to join, introduced her to everyone else and explained the procedures. Ester has done so ever
since, for example when the children go on excursions or when they need sports equipment.

Her relation with Ester is in stark contrast to what Adja reported about her son’s school where she got into a fight with another woman who had beaten her son because he had been in a fight with hers. Hence, relations between parents are not necessarily positive. In Ami’s case, however, Ester has become a good friend. She comes to see Ami in her shop and they visit each other in their homes, for example, to eat breakfast together on weekends, sometimes with their children.

Both positive and problematic relationships in the form of reciprocal friendships or open disagreement in institutions coexist with the structural problems some of the neighbourhoods face. To stay with the example of schools, many more of my informants complained that they had to send their children to school at the other end of town, which, for some, resulted in keeping the children at home for as long as possible. Also, a number of my informants saw their obligations towards local institutions as incompatible with their work schedule which was reflected in the absence of parents from parents-teacher conferences. Finally, some issues arose from the burden presented by the cost of schoolbooks and from the lack of awareness about the need for halal food for Muslims. Thus, it is even more important that notwithstanding the structural problems within institutions and in neighbourhoods, intense personal relationships developed, which remained concealed in other accounts focusing on structural problems.

These personal relations are probably most commonly defined as a relationship with, at first glance, unequal power relations. It is the old residents that help the migrant get settled, push for their needs, or simply care about their situation. However, these relations seem to be based on at least some reciprocity and mutual affect. They help to balance other structural problems caused by the lack of awareness about the
fundamental needs, such as orientation, of migrants. Thus, relationships cannot be understood as simply one-sided and unequal. Other categories of sameness may gain importance beyond ‘ethnic’ difference. In an atmosphere where confidence on basis of clear rules and working institutions is sometimes missing, the established trust based in at least one intense relationship seems to add much to the skills, orientation, and security of migrants.

6.3 Romantic relationships

Marriages as intense relationships

Finding a European partner is, if not a goal, at least a recurrent theme in the accounts on relations with Europeans. Compared to the above relations which seemed to better the migrants’ sense of well-being, accounts of ‘interethnic’ marriages between Senegambian and Spanish can be similarly positive, but can also reveal this kind of relationship as a source of sorrow, distress and conflict. As I will discuss, this restricts their potential to add in a similarly straightforward way to a positive experience of migrants.

In his very detailed account focusing on the marriages of Senegambian migrants in Spain, Rodríguez García (2006) gives examples of many successful relationships but also stresses the problems which arise. Apart from the increasing numbers of mixed couples, he finds that ‘the context of the formation and the dynamics of mixed unions constitutes a particularly active and complex socio-cultural hybrid space, especially with respect to the upbringing of children’ (cf. Rodríguez García 2006:426). This complexity is larger than in friendship relations, which explains why dynamics in partnerships are more diverse, and positive and problematic at the same time.

From the perspective of dyadic relationships, ‘interethnic’ marriage or enduring romantic relationships are the heart of the strong and enduring ties and were sometimes
stressed as the best example of assimilation (Rodríguez García 2006:405f)\textsuperscript{54}. As such, they constitute a counterpart to the random civil interactions in neighbourhoods which I described in the previous chapter. Although some friendship or classificatory kin relations also cross the boundary from the public into the private sphere, there remains a gradual difference in the intensity of relations, particularly in terms of affect and expectation.

Boubakar has been very successful running his own publishing enterprise for journals and newspapers for the Sub-Saharan residents in Catalonia. He met a Spanish woman in a disco, and after they had moved in together, they quickly got married. After only a few months following the birth of the second child, Boubakar moved out. About his reasons to split up, Boubakar said:

There was a little bit of everything, personal stuff, cultural stuff … Until you are living the relationship, you do not realise it; because I have been one of the supporters of mixed marriages, but afterwards you see it, I guess, if we had worked it differently, each one of us knowing … maybe we were not prepared, I guess the future generations will be. (Boubakar, 09/2007)\textsuperscript{55}

Although Boubakar’s marriage broke up, his relations with other foreigners and Catalans whom he calls friends or acquaintances continue. He generally likes crossing pre-conceived boundaries. Despite this, his marriage has failed, the result of personal and structural difficulties. Different expectations about the norms underlying a conjugal relationship rendered their relationship unviable, the differences could not be mediated.

\textsuperscript{54} Wimmer (1998), however, stresses the establishing of interethnic or transethnic partnerships as the foundation of a new sub-culture.

\textsuperscript{55} Hasta que estás dentro no lo detectas, por que era uno de los promotores de parejas mixtas, pero después se ve, supongo, trabajándolo de otro forma o sabiendo cada uno … puede ser que nosotros no estamos preparado muy bien preparado, supongo las futuras generaciones sf. (Boubakar, 09/2007)
For others, marriage is successful and another way to enter the local social field. Sheriff many years ago married his wife from Andalusia and, as she reported to me, they consciously decided to bring up their one daughter as a Catalan girl. Although they chose their new geographical home as the main framework of their lives, they ensured that their daughter knew about both her African and Southern Spanish origins. Sheriff himself also stayed attached to his homeland and is very active in transnational, ethnic and local associations.

Rafael represents a similar case in that he himself maintained some contact to home; however, his children have never been there. He is a Christian Senegalese and married a woman who had migrated to Catalonia from Murcia, Southern Spain. Although he is active in migrant organisations, he has only travelled back a few times and maintains contact with only one brother. He also admits that he does not think about going home or having his body sent home since his family is here. Certainly, being Christian influences his perspective and his strong ties within Spain. A female friend in the church was key to his positive experiences in Spain.

For people like Rafael and Sheriff, their partnership has not restricted their strong engagement in transnational affairs; their strong foundations in Catalonia perhaps even helped them in building bridges across the many potential divides between Catalan neighbourhoods, the Southern Spanish and African immigrants and their transnational orientation. Thus, marriages can be examples of the successful crossing of boundaries and mediation of difference, but they are not necessarily more important or more successful than friendships in this endeavour due to the intensity of arising problems.

Longing for a relationship

Although there is evidence that the number of mixed couples is raising, for many of the more recent immigrants, their partner at home or their wish to get married at
home are very important aspects of their transnational engagement. Linked to the wish of eventually returning as successful migrants, they see their future in their originating country (Kaplan Marcusán 2003). Nevertheless, for some of the newly arrived and amongst those experiencing problems with family reunification, the longing for a European partner is extremely strong.

Whether married at home or not, having some sort of relationship in Europe is desirable to many. Comments about Spanish girls and ex-girlfriends added a further dimension to the discourse on relationships. At concerts I was witness to these interactions in practice. However, those having experience in such relationships quite often sounded disappointed.

Alasan, who got married a year ago in The Gambia, had been in a relationship with a Spanish woman. According to him, it was not successful since he always had to invest a lot, taking her out for dinner, paying for the drinks and calling her, and the returns were always below expectation. Today, he has stopped going out and meeting women and said he preferred a quiet life, paying off his flat. He stressed his good relationship with his employer, his regular income and his good relations with neighbours more than his romantic relationships as important to his current situation.

The desire of a still dominant male labour migration for the comforts of romantic relationships in Spain is matched with the difficulties of qualifying for formal family reunification and the prevalent idea of returning home at some point. One could argue that these men are simply looking for comfort both in Africa and Europe. If this is the case, the failure of relationships in Spain might be due to problems arising from differing ideas and expectations of the relationships. Not revealing a second wife in West Africa is one of the most obvious examples. Others are different perceptions of

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56 It struck me that when I left for some days to Germany, I was frequently asked to find girlfriends for them there.
partnership and of obligations and expectations involved in the cases such as those of Alasan and Boubakar. However, the structural reason constraining family reunification and, at an earlier stage, the need for papers can promote their longing for partners simply for utilitarian reasons.

Hence, the variety of romantic relationships and their possible meaning for Senegambian migrants are in their detail as diverse as the individual cases. This does not mean that they simply depend on the individual, but rather that the combination of factors relating to the relationship varies greatly and is beyond the scope of this thesis. The significance of relations extend from purely utilitarian thought and fast, naïve marriages, to secure, if not always conflict-free, marriages raising a new Catalan generation. These relations can be durable and sustain integration whilst maintaining transnational activities, or they can be one-off experiences in which the full range of discrepancies between norms and ideas become apparent.

Either way, these relations feature as part of the complex migrant networks and add another layer to them. Although ‘interethnic’ relationships are often expected to be the most reliable and straight-forward indicator of successful migrant incorporation, mutual acceptance and interaction, this subsection offered a number of examples which show that the complexity of the phenomenon does not allow this gross simplification. Rather, it drives me to suggest that the other forms of close friendships and the positive everyday interaction in neighbourhoods and at the workplace are generally speaking the easier, and therefore more attainable and successful examples of *convivencia*.

### 6.4 Conclusions: Are these relations sustainable?

Chapter 5 revealed that the local opportunity structure and power relations still restrict common civility and *convivencia*. In contrast, in this chapter, I have focused on
more intense relations of mutual obligation, trust and affect, which cross remaining boundaries.

These ‘interethnic’ relationships link still separate social fields by drawing on the social resources of the two parties involved. The best example might be the friendship between Adja and Maria. These relationships facilitate migrants’ daily lives, but also enhance his/her experiences and feeling of comfort in certain social fields, such as the workplace or the teacher-parent conference. In contrast, strongly imbalanced patronage relations and romantic relationships can result in bad experiences given the more intense involvement of both parties. Nevertheless, some romantic and other intense ‘interethnic’ relationships diversify migrants’ network relations and contribute to their better managing their relatively insecure situation.

Apart from individual favours, having a good relationship to a Spanish or Catalan individual raises migrants’ opportunities to use this relation as a resource and pass favours on to their group of co-migrant friends. Some migrants maintaining a more intensive relationship could at some point help another migrant, similarly to Sanakha, who could do so through her job in the government department. Thus, understanding the quality of few, but more intense, relationships opens a new and additional perspective not only on migrants’ networks but also on convivencia in a diverse society. The case studies above suggest that having one close friend might have greater effects than it has been generally assumed.
7 Conclusions and outlook

My study of the networks of residents from the Senegambian region in Catalonia has shown that a variety of relations exist in networks both locally and transnationally, and within ‘ethnic’ groups and across perceived boundaries. Boubou expressed this generally in the quote opening this thesis: good people who you know and interact with can be from anywhere. My main argument has been that egocentric networks relations are diverse and include people generally perceived as belonging to a number of categories. I have shown that there are multiple ways of maintaining both transnational and local relations.

I have argued that looking at egocentric networks and their interactional features reveals a diversity of relations which reflect the complexity of migrant lives. I have explored the content, directedness, intensity, and duration of both local and transnational relations, and sought to understand the various combinations of norms and ideas these are built upon. The quality of network relations varies depending on the extent to which norms and ideas of reciprocity, obligation, equality, respect, and affect are shared and adhered to. Using various ethnographic examples, I have explored the differences and contradictions in the networks and network relations of new Senegambian residents in Catalonia. To conclude, I first present in which ways relations maintained with various people from different categories are similar in their intensity and content, both on an individual and collective level. Secondly, I reiterate the new perspectives this study has offered on migrants’ lives, their transnational and local practices, and their more and less intense relations. Thirdly, I show what the egocentric network perspective means for convivencia, conceptually, on a policy level, and on the level of discourse. And finally, I suggest future work which could extend the argument of this thesis.
On the individual level, Senegambians often maintain relations with home, fulfil their family obligations, and locally show particular solidarity with co-migrants. Although these are intense relations at times, they may simply be the fulfilling of a basic solidarity with co-migrants, which can be based on the common transnational experience. With others, migrants may just be friendly. On this level, migrants seem to maintain tolerant and respectful relations with other locals as well. Finally, apart from these everyday interactions, some migrants also maintain closer ‘interethnic’ relations on the basis of obligation, reciprocity and affect, expressed by calling them friends, older siblings or parents. Thus, migrants from the Senegambia region tend to be generally civil, show solidarity with those in similar situations to themselves, and maintain more intense relations both with co-migrants and old residents. Locally, the latter can be of similar importance: information flows between old and new, migrant and non-migrant, African and non-African residents, and all take part in exchanges on the basis of a combination of reciprocity, felt obligation, and sometimes perceived equality, trust and affect.

On the collective level, both Senegambians and other residents are often members of associations. These associations vary in organisation and individual commitment. Some unite only residents of an apartment block or those from one village in Africa and are very informal; others try to unite whole neighbourhoods or all migrants from one country. The narratives of Senegambians revealed that they were either active in many, some, or none of these associations. Many were at least part of associations on a low level of abstraction, such as the block or the home town. Associations are places in which migrants and residents can meet, where civil practices can be negotiated and closer friendships developed. Other forms of collective organisation, which include migrant members, can also be such meeting points, for example labour unions and religious groups. Egocentric networks of individual migrants
transcend these different categories of interaction and extend in both local and
transnational social fields. Hence, both on the individual and on the collective level,
residents share similarities and common ways of doing things, and transnational and
local social relations can be interlinked and combined in migrants’ complex lives.

Focusing on the diversity of practices in egocentric networks and going beyond
strong relations within a bounded group and related discourses of identification and
difference, my study of egocentric networks stresses three important aspects of studying
migrants’ lives, and thus reveals new perspectives: Firstly, differentiations and frictions
become apparent within otherwise essentialised communities of foreigners, which
challenge dominant European discourses of ‘us’ and ‘them’, nationals and immigrants,
‘legals’ and ‘illegals’. In this way, this study reflects the multiple ways of being a
transmigrant, equally in practice and on the level of demotic discourse, and it avoids
engaging in methodological nationalism, culturalism, and essentialisation.

Secondly, understanding civil everyday relations reveals processes of
negotiation, awareness and dialogue. Understanding practices of individual interaction
embedded in networks, instead of analysing structures of exclusion and segregation,
addresses the urgent challenges diverse societies face from an innovative angle. Even
seemingly irrelevant everyday interactions appear important in that they rely to some
extent on a socially recognised equality and can express mutual respect and tolerance.
As examples of civility, they facilitate everyday convivencia. Nevertheless, it still seems
that local practices are as often accommodated by migrants as they are freely negotiated.

Thirdly and finally, having one friendship crossing the still prevalent ‘ethnic’
boundary is a resource used to mediate the foreign local context, and becomes a source
of felt security. These more intense relationships seem to be formed according to the
different spheres of life in which migrants engage. Apart from the importance of the
workplace for all, I stressed the seemingly greater diversity, although not necessarily
greater quantity, of women’s more intense relationships. Even if there are only a few relations, one friend is sufficient to serve as an anchor in the locality.

All three aspects of personal networks suggest that social relations in diverse societies are more complex than dominant, official discourses propose. Nevertheless, having discussed the diversity of, and contradictions within, these three important aspects to a fuller understanding of the networks of Senegambian residents, I do not want to suggest that these are universally true or unconditional facts. It is not, perhaps, quantity but quality that matters here. Seemingly superficial everyday interactions, collective organisation, and few more intense ‘interethnic’ relations may, in fact, be important for, and an expression of, *convivencia*. By accepting difference as fact, stressing equality and respectful, tolerant sharing of the social sphere, and by facilitating the negotiation of practices, norms and ideas of everyday life, *convivencia* shows itself to be a promising concept for diverse societies looking beyond cultural essentialism or demands for assimilation.

In this process, governments are still major actors defining the local opportunity structure, and they can have a positive impact on further enabling the bottom-up processes of everyday life. Indeed, the *empadronamiento* or residency in Catalonia is a promising example. Nevertheless, in Catalonia as well as elsewhere, other institutional structures and categorical differences still translate into unequal power relations, which restrict the possibilities of recognising diversity and facilitating *convivencia*. Migrants, who arrive intending to work and for whom the work place proves to be an important field of interaction with co-workers and other residents, still remain restricted in access to legal and thus equal work opportunities. On the basis of this study, strengthening equal opportunity would possibly result in fuller participation and interaction and thus *convivencia*, superseding existing marginalisation and segregation. My findings suggest that addressing inequality and at the same time fostering participation both in general,
and in migrant and local associations, would likely contribute further to mediating structural inequality and fostering new *convivencia*.

Although I have stressed the importance of practices so far, discourses and a common feeling of belonging can also contribute to, or constrain, successful *convivencia*. Transnationally, a common identification with home, shared experiences and related hardships often still seem to support several, sometimes strong, relations between co-migrants. However, there are instances when a complementary identification of migrants with a locality or region, such as Catalonia, perhaps develops relying on the civil way of *convivencia* and residency.

Understanding the complexity of the networks of residence in Catalonia thus contributes to seeing the diversity of practices of socialising both transnationally and locally and their impact on *convivencia* and transnationalism. Future research could refine this approach and its relevance for migration studies. Firstly, the Senegambian perspective should be complemented by the perspective of other local residents, including Catalans and Spaniards, to balance conclusions drawn above. Secondly, a fuller understanding of the egocentric social networks of migrants from the Senegambia region according to their experiences at home, during migration, and further socio-economic and gender aspects could help explain some of the encountered differences and contradictions looking beyond the local context of Mataró. And finally, a comparative study including localities in Southern Spain, France and Italy could qualify the case presented here. This further research could be based on the overall findings of this explorative study, which suggest that thinking in terms of connections and their multidimensionality, instead of boundaries, can reveal new approaches to understanding diversifying and socially rich lives.
Bibliography


Appendices

1. Chart of informants

Key

- female informant
- male informant
- informant mentioned in thesis
- indirectly mentioned
- Spanish/Catalan contact
- participant observation in flats
- interview recorded (14)
2. **Short social and migration profiles of my informants**

In the absence of having collected quantifiable data from my informants, these short profiles aim at giving some more background information for the interested reader outside the argument of this thesis. The following information is reproduced in the subjective format I received it in. I have tried to cover aspects of origin, ethnicity, religion (other than Muslim), (European) languages spoken, social age (married, children), migration experience, activities undertaken in associations, and work experience in Europe.

**Adja**

She is a Senegalese Fula having grown up in Dakar. She speaks Fula, Wolof, Mandinka, Jola, French, Italian, Spanish and some Catalan. Being from a wealthy family, she initially went to Italy to join her first husband at a young age. She stayed there for five years and owns property there. She then got divorced and joined her current husband in Mataró twelve years ago, after they had had a child together. Her husband came to Mataró 27 years ago. Her 20 year old son from the first marriage is also in Mataró and goes to one of the universities in Barcelona. Two more children are in a French school in Senegal. She has two brothers in Italy. Another one recently joined her in Mataró. She is president of a Fula association with 63 members. After being a kitchen aid and a cleaner, she now cares for elderly people. Since her qualifications from Senegal were not accepted she could not work as a nurse.

**Aguibo**

He is a Senegalese Serer from Casamance, but grew up in Dakar. He speaks Mandinka, Wolof and French. He is not married at Senegal. He is the first one from his family to
have migrated and arrived only a few months ago. He came to Spain, because according to his information Spain was the easiest to enter. He came through the Canary Islands and was provided with a train ticket by the Red Cross to come to Mataró. He lives with Gambians in Cerdanyola and spends his time trying to find work. He hopes that he can facilitate the migration of the rest of his family. In Senegal, he went to university but did not finish a degree.

Alasan

He is a Gambian Jola from a village outside Banjul, but grew up with his grandmother from the age of two in Senegal, close to the Gambian border. He speaks Spanish, French, Mandinka, and Jola. He immigrated in 2002, but does not want to speak about it. He has returned once in 2006 when he also got married. His wife takes care of his grandmother, one of his reasons to have married her. At the moment he would like, but does not actively plan, a family reunification. Before he went home, he had a Spanish girlfriend which was costly and had little returns. He used to go out a lot, smoke weed and drink bear, which ceased after he bought a flat. He is paying the mortgage together with his friend Mamadou. They share the space with his brother and Mamadou’s wife, their first son and Aguibo. He is a member of the Jola and Planeta associations and pays his membership fees, but seldom goes there to contribute actively. He found his first job walking around in the fields and stayed with it. He received the residence permit with the help of his employer. He gets a reasonable salary of 1,200 Euros.

Ami

She is a Gambian Soninke, daughter of a rich trading family. She immigrated in 1987 to join her husband. They were meant to meet on the Canary Island but missed each other. Another man helped her to get to the Spanish mainland since her ticket was stolen. Her husband sent her to a Catholic Charity where she stayed for eight years to learn Spanish,
read and write. One of the nuns, Mercè, became her good friend. She had her first child in The Gambia, and was able to bring him to Spain only four years ago. The second time she got pregnant was just after her arrival. She only went back to The Gambia twice, in 1998 when her father died and in 2003 with her children. In 2003, she also got divorced which was unwelcome among other Soninke women. Only her Spanish friends and her children helped her. She enjoys her new freedom by engaging with the civic centre and the activities they offer for women in particular. She would love to have dan association of all Sub-Saharan women in Mataró. Musu Kafo, a Mandinka women’s association, does not achieve this. She does not know about a Soninke women’s association. She started to work from home making socks, and is also a cleaner. She passed a training course in caring for the elderly. She worked as a caregiver for two and a half years but could not carry on for emotional reasons. Thereafter she opened her corner store. To earn a living she still goes cleaning.

Bara

He is a Gambian Mandinka, from Serekunda, close to Banjul. He prefers to speak English, although he also speaks Spanish. Before coming to Spain, he lived in the UK (1995-98) and in Germany (1998-2000). He was married (in a relationship) both in the UK and in Germany, both of which did not work out. He came to Spain in 2000 to profit from a regularisation, bought a flat in 2003 and lives with his brother, his nephew, and two friends. He is 44 years old, married and has a son just over a year old. He hopes that they will join him soon in Spain. He returns every year to Gambia where he built his own house. He has the flat, a car, and a ‘good paying job’ in a factory. He does not say anything about associations.
**Boubakar (Barcelona)**

He is a Senegalese Mandinka from Sédiou, Casamance. He arrived on forged Gambian papers in 1994. Since, his father had stopped working, he had to drop out of university and decided to go to Europe against the wishes of his family. As he had studied Spanish before, he aimed to go to Spain. His first place of stay was with Gambian friends of his elder brother, close to Mataró. After five months he moved to Mataró where he stayed five years before moving to Barcelona. In Mataró he was part of the Planeta association. Today, he is part of some associations in Barcelona which focus on development in Senegal. Although since 1997, he has returned to Senegal annually, he does not know whether he will ever return for good. He married a Catalan woman and has two children, although ultimately, the marriage did not work out for them. Throughout the stay in Catalonia, he had undertaken training courses in several things which in turn helped him getting better jobs. He started to do agrarian work, became a mediator in Mataró, and then had jobs in the Fishing industry, a restaurant and later in a web design office in Barcelona. Ultimately, he started his own enterprise publishing street newspapers with a West African focus; parallel to which he works for a big money transfer agency.

**Boubou**

He is a Gambian Soninke from close to Basse Santa Su. He speaks mainly Spanish. He arrived 24 years ago directly by plane since no visa restrictions applied. He knew Idrisa, who migrated before him. His wife joined him in 1990 and they have four children, the eldest aged eleven. He has nephews in other Catalan towns. Generally, he plans to return at some point in life. He is the spokesperson of the Sabosire association and engaged in building a hospital in the region. At the beginning he worked for 13 years in agriculture. After having returned to Gambia for nearly a year, he worked in textile
industry. Thereafter, he had a shop but it did not run successfully. Before starting to work at the Barcelona Airport a month before we met, he had been unemployed for over a year.

Cantara

He is a Senegalese Mandinka from the Tambacounda region. Although he is Muslim he prays only when he feels like it. He speaks good French, and some Spanish. He wants to do a Spanish course but is not even on the waiting list since there are not enough places, and he is still waiting for a passport. He arrived in January 2007 after three years and eight months of travelling. He passed through Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco. He had to work during his journey. The conditions in Libya were particularly bad. He came to Mataró since he knew Siaka, the owner of the flat he shares with Iba, Ibrahima and two others. Instead of 150 Euros he pays only 100 Euros rent. When he left Senegal he dreamed of being a professional football player in Europe. He believes that one day he will find work, although so far he has only had day jobs since he does not have papers. He wants to work in the agrarian sector.

Damé

He is a Senegalese Jola, from Sédhiou, Casamance. He came to Mataró twelve years ago, now living with his second wife and their baby, his wife’s sister (an independent migrant), and two men. If he could, he would go back immediately to do a plantation project. He buys everything his family needs at home over phone and pays the traders directly. He is a member of the Jola association. However, he does not do anything in particular other than going to meetings. Since he came to Mataró he has worked for the same enterprise as a driver. Every week he goes once or twice to France. He is not satisfied with his salary of less than 1,000 Euros, since he has to care for his large family.
**Fakeba**

Not having spoken to him much, he was one of the early arrivals in Mataró. He is a Senegalese Mandinka. He is president of the Planeta association and works in an immigrant advice service of a trade union. He is very close friends with Rafael and with two members of the Soninke Sabosire association.

**Fanta**

She is a Gambian Mandinka. She arrived in Mataró many years ago to join her husband who had already been here and whom she got to know when he visited home. She learned Spanish by herself, and also wants to learn Catalan. She has two very clever sons born in Spain who go to a private school not far from where they live. She is very outgoing, always has guests and has engaged with her neighbours from the first day. To be able to take care of her children, to take them to school and pick them up, she had to stop working for a fish shop. Now she only works as a cleaner, but is on the lookout for another job.

**Farba**

He is a Senegalese Jola from near Siédhiou. He is Youba’s relative. He mainly speaks French and some Spanish. He arrived in 1999, going from Dakar to Morocco by plane, into Ceuta by foot, and after he received ‘papers’ in a refugee camp to enter the Spanish mainland by boat. ‘They’ paid his ticket to Mataró where he knew people. He is married and his wife joined him in Mataró four months ago. They have three children that are still in Senegal. He is a member of the Jola association and says how important associations are for the life of migrants in general and his own in particular. After his arrival, he immediately found work in the textile industry through the husband of a Catalan colleague of his Senegalese friend from a neighbouring village in Casamance,
who lived in the same area in Dakar. Of seven workers, he is the only foreigner and he never encountered problems.

**Haja**

She is a Soninke, divorced and with three daughters. She is Ami’s ‘sister’. After she was left behind by her husband in The Gambia she and her daughters used all their means to get back to Mataró. A relative from the US paid for the tickets. Back in Mataró, she received substantial help by the authorities and now is still living in social housing. She works as a cleaner at several places.

**Iba**

Ibrahima’s younger brother. He arrived one year ago joining his brother using his Senegalese passport and a commercial visa. He only speaks Fula. In Senegal he is married. He is between 20-25 years old. He has been a tailor and currently works for his elder brother’s employer for a poor salary of 600 Euros. He has the *empadronamiento* and is on the waiting list for a Spanish course.

**Ibrahima**

He is a Fula from the Senegambian border region close to Tambacounda. He speaks many languages: Fula, Mandinga, Wolof, English, French and Spanish. His mother is Gambian, his father Senegalese. His wife and his two daughters live in Dakar where he is visiting them for three months. He immigrated to Spain in 2002 using his younger brother’s Gambian passport. He passed through Senegal, Mali, Libya (?), Algeria, Morocca and the Canary Islands. He joined is uncle in Barcelona. He does not know about associations in Mataró. He lives with other Fula and Mandinka, and spends a lot of time with Limane, his good friend. He was doing day jobs queuing outside Mataró for work until he found his current job. Beginning with work in the warehouse, he now
does the accounting work because he is very good with numbers and even deals with customers.

**Idi**

He is a Senegalese Jola from the Ziguinchor region, Casamance. He identifies mainly as a Jola, thus being Senegalese or Gambian does not matter to him. Apart from many African languages, he is fluent in French, Spanish and Catalan. He left his studies since his father died and he could not afford it any longer. He married a Soninke before he left for Europe. He arrived in 2002 on a tourist visa to visit his aunt, Mahawa’s mother. He overstayed his visa after he could not get into university to continue studying medicine and received his residence permit in 2004. When he returns he stays with his wife in his newly built house, otherwise his wife is with her family. He also supports his mother. He lives with Noah, his best friend, and three Mandinka and a Soninke. They are often joined by many others. He is the secretary of both the Jola and the Planeta association and heavily engages in providing assistance to newly arrived migrants and doing community projects at home. He used to also be the neighbourhood representative at the town hall. After working in the warehouse of a Catalan firm, he worked in a hard metal factory. After been unemployed for some months, he returned to work in the same factory, doing several paid extra hours.

**Idrisa**

He is a Soninke from the Senegambian border region of Vélingara/Basse Santa Su. He primarily speaks Spanish, because when he arrived nobody used Catalan when speaking to foreigners. He arrived in the late 1970s. He came with a return ticket to see whether he liked the new locale, but ended up staying for ten full years. Now he returns almost every year. He is married and his four children aged between eleven and 22 years. He is a member of the Senegalese Sandaga association, however, also joins the meetings of its
Gambian counterpart - the Sabosire association. His main motivation for associational work is to develop African regions of emigration to discourage the remaining people from leaving. When he arrived he was working in a hotel and textile industry, after which he went on to working in the agriculture industry and is today employed in a factory.

**Limane**

He is a Senegalese Fula from Tambacounda. He speaks French, and attends a Spanish course. He supports his wife and mother at home, and has a five year old child. He arrived in 2005 on a second attempt. Earlier, he had been to the Ivory Coast to work in his uncle’s shop, and passed through Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, and again Mauritania and Senegal to finally end up in the Ivory Coast again. The second time he went straight to Spain with a commercial visa, but went to see another uncle in Paris before coming to Barcelona/Mataró to see his Mauritanian friend whom he knew from Libya. His father had migrated to France. He keeps regular contact with his brother in Italy. Together with his Mauritanian friend, he now lives in the flat with two Fula brothers and another Mauretanian. He does not know about associations. He works in a drycleaner with eight colleagues, another African, one from Ecuador, and Catalan/Spanish persons.

**Mahawa**

She is Idi’s niece and arrived through family reunification. She studied French and English translation. She feels that she does not have much in common with the first generation of migrants, either male or female. Her friends are mainly boys from school, and she has only few female friends. At the moment she lives with her uncle, since everything else would be badly regarded by other Sub-Saharan migrants. She is looking for a job which is more difficult than in France, where her mother now lives. At the
moment she works an hour south of Barcelona, where her income is entirely based on
provisions on sales. She hopes to go back to France where she has a French boyfriend.
She goes back and forth regularly.

**Mamadou**

Not having spoken to him much, he is a Gambian Jola, married to a Mandinka. He and
his wife are fluent in English he also speaks Spanish. They have one child aged about
twelve months and have bought a flat together with Alasan.

**Mbar**

He is a Gambian Mandinka from Bakau. He arrived in 1982 after a friend from home
had explained the advantages of living in Europe. He speaks English, Spanish, and
Catalan fluently. When he arrived he wanted to work and study at the same time but left
studies to work longer hours. He increasingly concentrated on life in Catalonia. He
married a Catalan woman and had a child. After the death of his first wife he married a
Russian woman. He was also married in The Gambia where he had five children. Two
of them are in Catalonia. He plans on going back when he retires. He was a co-founder
of Jama Kafo. He still runs a lot of courses there, although he did even more some years
ago, and through them he got involved in local politics and developed good relations
with Catalans. He also engaged in the block and neighbourhood associations. When he
came to Catalonia, he first worked in the agrarian sector. He now does administrative
work for over twelve years. This progression was possible since he constantly
undertook some small courses, for example in cultural mediation, or administration. He
now works for a trade union in its immigrant advice service.

**Meissa**
She is a Gambian Mandinka and relative of Sanakha. She immigrated to Spain in 2002 after having been in Sweden with her elder brother. She speaks good Spanish. In Spain, she got married and had a child. After her first husband died, she got married again and had a second son. She is now divorced and lives on her own in a small village outside Mataró with very little immigration. She shares a flat with a Senegalese couple and another Gambian woman. She got a stipend for her older son to go to school and is likely to get one for the younger one as well. She started with working as a cleaner and then worked in a factory. She does not want to go back to the factory and is on the lookout for an alternative job.

**Moussa**

He is a Senegalese Mandinka from Tambacounda. He speaks Spanish quite well. He came to Mataró in 2005 after passing six months through Mali, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco, and immediately profited from the regularisation. His family paid for the journey. He is about 30-32 years old, married and has one six year old son. He returned for the first time, and will stay until he will move into his new house. He is friends with Cantara who is from the same region and had met him in Libya. He does not know about the Mandinka associations or about Jama Kafo or Planeta, nor does he say that he wishes to be organised in an association. He works in the agricultural sector but might lookout for a new job when he returns from Senegal.

**Noah**

He is a Gambian Mandinka and Idi’s best friend. They share most of their activities in Mataró. He is a member of Planeta, although not on the committee. He also regularly goes to the Catalan Mandinka association. He is not married back home, but is about to build a house there. In Mataró he works in a factory where he claims to have a Bolivian friend and to get along well with his co-workers.
**Ousmane (Barcelona)**

He is a Senegalese Jola from the Casamance region, living in Barcelona. He speaks French, Spanish and Catalan. He is 29 years old and unmarried. He wants to return after his studies. He had to wait three years for a visa. He came to Spain three years ago to study. He obtained information about Spain from a woman who had been working in Senegal. He came legally, stayed with ‘someone’ for the first few months after he found a room on the regular housing market. During his second year in Spain he had a scholarship at a Basque institution where he had free housing and could teach. He is very active in a Senegalese association in Barcelona, which also has Spanish and Catalan members. They provide services such as legal advice to newly arrived migrants, but also organise concerts and courses, for example in Wolof. He feels that he needs to help everybody so that they do not have the same problems that he did. As a student he is only allowed to work for 20 hours a week but the administrative procedures make it nearly impossible to find work. Hence, he is struggling for money, but he does not want to breach any law.

**Rafael**

He is a Senegalese Jola and a practising Christian. Married to a woman from Extremadura (South of Spain), they have three daughters (aged 12-16). He arrived 18 years ago and today is 49 years old. He went from Senegal to Mauritania and was working as an electrician in the US embassy. When there were political problems, with the help of the US embassy he went as a political refugee to the Canary Island. After 90 days of refuge he had an irregular status for 5 years. In Mataró he first stayed with people from Guinea Bissau until he met Sheriff, who helped him a lot. The first time he visited Church, some people stood up to avoid sitting next to him, apart from a woman who became his good friend. He knows her family, and her father helped him finding a
job as an electrician after working 18 months on the fields. His friend today works for
the municipality and is his constant source of information. He only maintains contact
with his brother at home, who he visited once, 3 years ago. After death, he does not
even want his body to be sent back. In December 2007 he wanted to take his three
daughters to Senegal for the first time. He is a founder member of Planeta and treasurer.
He is also a member of a trade union and the green party (for 8 years). He is friends
with Fakeba, the Catalan woman mentioned above, and two of his colleagues that have
been in the business for longer.

**Raki**

She is a Gambian Mandinka from Bakau. She is Sanakha’s niece. She speaks Spanish
and English well. She came in 1990 at the age of 15/16, by when already was married.
After passing through Sweden, where she stayed for three months with her ‘adoptive
father’, she came to Catalonia for a visit. Her husband took her passport so that she
could not return. They had twins and another child. When he was imprisoned and
staying with his relatives became unbearable for her, she lived in a women’s shelter and
afterwards with a woman from Guinea Bissau. She now is divorced and married to a
Senegalese with whom she has four more children. She bought the flat in an upper
middle class neighbourhood. She is a member of Musu Kafo and their women’s
hometown association of Bakau. After working it textiles from home, she started
trading. Today, she trades in cloths from The Gambia and in airline tickets. She travels
a back and forth frequently. She also works at a fast food restaurant to cover the costs of
the flat and for her children’s education at the private school.

**Sanakha**

She is a Gambian Mandinka (despite Jola surname) from Bakau. She is about 50, has
three children, and is divorced. Her children go to an Islamic school on Sundays. Her
migration 18 years ago was organised by her brother, Mbar. She initially came to study, but never ended up doing so. She only had Spanish classes with Caritas, and started to work as a cleaner and in the textile business, followed by work in a restaurant and after a course in mediation, now is a mediator for the local government, mainly doing the reception and orientation courses for the Sub-Saharan immigrants. She was quite old when she married a Gambian from the Girona area. After the divorce she moved back to Mataró, the place she knows best. She has three jobs since she does not get any help from her husband. Additionally, she engages with the migrant community. Being one of the oldest, she distributes food at parties held by other Mandinka. She is also part of the female hometown association of Bakau and is an important member in the Musu Kafo association. Her neighbours admire her for having seen her on TV through her work for the government. As one of my key informants, she declared herself my godmother and introduced me to all her friends, nieces, aunts and other relatives living in Mataró. She also introduces me to Committee members of Musu Kafo.

**Sane (Barcelona)**

He is a Senegalese Fula who grew up with Wolof. He speaks Spanish well but does not see the use of learning Catalan. He is 29 years old and unmarried but is on the lookout for an African wife in Spain. He says that Spanish ones would not like him. He arrived seven years ago with a working visa. He is living with his uncle, has good relationships with his neighbours and has a lot of international friends whom he meets in a tourist pub around the corner from his house. He goes to the events of the Senegalese association in Barcelona. Since his arrival, he has done many different jobs, starting with a restaurant, installing gambling machines and escalators and now working at reception in a hotel. He found his first job through his uncle and others through (African) friends.
Sidibé
He is a Senegalese Mandinka. He is a regular visitor in Ibrahima’s flat. He never spoke much. When talking about colleagues he proudly told me about the trip he was planning to Andalusia with one of his colleagues that ultimately never happened. He was one of the few ones familiar with the Internet.

Sheriff
He is a Senegalese Jola, from Casamance, close to Ziguinchor and Dakar. He speaks Spanish and Catalan fluently. He arrived in 1969 in the Maresme region to join a relative who later left for France. He came from Dakar and went through Mauritania and the Canary Islands. At the beginning there were very few Black Africans around, hence he used to go on excursions and small trips with Catalans and Spanish people. He got to know his Spanish wife on one organised trip to the opera in Barcelona. She is from Andalusia and they have one daughter who they consciously brought up as a Catalan girl. She has become a primary school teacher. Sheriff does not have parents and has gone once in about every three years to Casamance, but his wife has never been and his daughter only in 2003. He feels settled in Mataró where his family is. In 1985, he bought a house but they only moved in seven years ago. Sheriff is the president of Jama Kafo, the Jola association and used to be president of the neighbourhood association in Palau that he revived. He is convinced that everybody knows him. He maintains very good relations with the mayor and the head of the New Citizenship department. In the 1970s, he started to work in agriculture, and later in the textile industry. Afterwards, he worked in other industries; once in a cooperative for ten years. For the past 14 years he has worked for a hard metal factory and says that he is well off.
Youba

He is Jola, from Siédhiou, Casamance, but grew up in Dakar between the ages 12 and 20. He speaks many languages from Senegal, Spanish, a bit of Catalan, and he learns English in a language school sponsored by his employer. He is unmarried, since he feels he cannot meet a woman at home properly whilst living in Spain. He is about 26 years old. In 2000, he came with a Schengen Visa through Frankfurt to see his father in Mataró. He wanted to see another European place using the visa. When he got to Mataró, he decided to stay and help his father. His brother, uncles and cousins are also in Mataró and Catalonia. His father has a small tailoring workshop with 10-15 people working for him. If this business is successful, Youba will also return to Casamance. At the moment he is living with his brother and two friends in the flat he bought together with his father. He is a member of the Jola association where he regularly attends meetings. He has heard about Planeta, but he has not met them yet, although he thinks about going. He also knows about Jama Kafo, but he wonders whether they give, for example, good computer and language classes. In Catalonia, he works in an interior design business, where he is third from the top. Apart from language classes, his boss pays him for the driver’s license. He managed to bring some of his Senegalese friends into jobs. He also sells plane tickets to his friends and so gets cheap tickets to Senegal for himself. Additionally, he runs a trading business buying large amounts of goods in Dakar, sending it to Casamance were a friend distributes them to the families of other migrants in Catalonia who pay him directly.

Youssou

He is a Mandinka from the capital region of The Gambia. He joined his parents in Catalonia at the age of nine, and for the first two years he struggled to catch up. Today, he is 36 years old and still only has a permanent residence permit and not the Spanish
citizenship, because he does not want to accept the contemporary immigration system by being part of it. In Mataró he maintains contact with friends that he knows from university, theatre and sports (basketball). Given that his father was a founder member of Jama Kafo he is also part of it. He is convinced that they had a lot of good ideas which on a political level were implemented too late. Professionally, he started studying law, but changed to business. After university he went with a Spanish firm to Gabon to run a project. Then he went to The Gambia but his Internet Café and import-export-business did not work out due to the bad economic situation. He came back and now works in a non-governmental organisation in Barcelona and started his own business for professional mediation and import-export in Mataró with his two sisters.
3. Map of the Senegambia region with places and regions of origin