Imagining Migration:
Cyber-cafés, sex and clandestine departures in the
Casamance, Senegal

Emilie Venables

Full citation:

Please contact Dr Emilie Venables for further chapters: evenables@rhru.co.za
CHAPTER 1: Introduction

1.1 Introducing the Research Topic

When I began my research in Senegal I did not intend to study migration. And I definitely did not intend to write a thesis on migration. I had always gone out of my way to avoid studying migration, assuming it would be quantitative, economics-focused and overly statistical. Whilst in Senegal, however, I saw a very different side to migration; a side which intrigued me enough to study it. As much as ethnographers prepare for their time in the field, serendipity will ultimately intervene and the luxury of ethnography is that it allows the researcher to change track and study what is important to one’s informants even if it means, both literally and metaphorically, being led down unknown paths. I realised over time that my daily conversations were punctuated with talk of mobility and movement and that this was the research route that I should take.

I am aware that a thesis is more than just a story. The words making up my arguments are real words, spoken under a burning African sun. The narratives told to me in Ziguinchor’s bars and nightclubs, the stories pieced together on Cap Skirring’s sands, and the observations I made without always realising give this thesis a human element and I would argue that they show the need for ethnography in making sense of the people’s lives and actions. In linking the small scale, local goings-on of an oft-forgotten town on the banks of a slow-moving African river with a wider, larger, global picture of mobility, maybe the lives of those in (and outside of) Ziguinchor can be understood more deeply.

The four ethnographic chapters in this thesis are all interconnected, although they may at first appear unrelated and disjointed. I struggled to put them together, initially not realising that all the things that impassioned and infuriated me about Senegal were in fact linked. The first images of illegal migrants shown on the BBC news made my heart sink because I recognised the painted boats to be those I saw everyday when walking along Ziguinchor’s streets. The sex-workers with whom I danced mbalax were somehow linked to those illegal migrants, as were the dread-locked beach-boys who showered me

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1 I address my decision to use the term ‘sex-worker’ rather than ‘prostitute’ in chapter four.
with insults as I sat on the beach. Nor were the women in Ziguinchor’s cyber-cafes isolated in their passion to meet a toubab (white person) and move to Europe: their lives fitted into the story too.

So what do all these different types of people have in common? Every story I heard, every voice echoing in my head long after I had closed my eyes and tried to block out my day were united in their desire to leave Senegal and go to Europe. For some, it was a joking demand for financial assistance as I walked down the street, but for others it was deeper than a flippant comment that I should ‘take them back with me’. The urban tourist myths and the warnings not to befriend ‘the locals’ because all they wanted was a visa were more than gossip. They were all individual people wanting to migrate, in whatever way they could.

1.2 Methodological Discussion

This section intends to give the reader a broad overview of my research and the timeframe in which it took place. Specific methodological issues will be dealt with as necessary in the individual ethnographic chapters.

1.2.1 Research Beginnings

The motivations behind my choice of thesis topic are inherently personal ones, stemming from a combination of extensive work and travel within the West African region and studies in social anthropology, international development and Africa. My interest in francophone Africa began when I was 18. During my ‘gap year’ in 1999 I worked on HIV/AIDS prevention projects with women in Bouaké, Côte d’Ivoire and this experience began what is almost a decade of dedicated attachment to West Africa. My first experience of Côte d’Ivoire led me to return in 2002 to carry out a three month piece of fieldwork for my undergraduate degree, during which period I critiqued the idea of ‘empowerment’ through studying a local Non-Governmental Organisation, or NGO’s, involvement with female sex-workers. During September 2002 civil war broke out in Bouaké and I was evacuated suddenly from the country, leaving my research unfinished. This abrupt removal from a place that had become an important part of my life left me
determined to return to West Africa, but in order to pursue further research I was forced
to search for somewhere more politically stable. Fulfilling my criteria of a Francophone
coastal country with a vibrant music scene, active night-life and a town situated on a
crossroads, I took advantage of existing contacts that I had and flew to the Senegalese
town of Ziguinchor for seven weeks of MSc dissertation fieldwork. Thinking I would be
focusing my research on sex-workers, the night-life was not just for my own
entertainment but was significant as a fieldwork site.

I intended my MSc research to link with my larger-scale doctoral fieldwork and, despite
changing my research topic, the seven weeks I initially spent in the field were invaluable
to me. As I discuss below, my research changed over time and even though sex-work
was no longer the focus of my research, it gave me a valuable insight into survival
strategies for those living on the margins of society and people’s desires to leave Senegal.

1.2.2 Presence in the Field
Any piece of research begins with introductions and explanations, and my main concern
was how to introduce myself and my work to friends, neighbours and potential
informants (Davis 1986). In remaining overt about my research, I was potentially putting
some of my informants at risk of their involvement in clandestine, illegal or immoral
activities being discovered. I felt torn between having an ethical obligation to protect my
informants whilst not wanting to be dishonest with my wider group of Ziguinchorois
friends. Many of my expatriate friends were seeking volunteering opportunities and keen
to get a ‘foot in the door’ with the local NGO community. One female friend in
particular wanted to visit the STI clinic and meet the women with whom I worked, but I
did not feel comfortable with this. I gave her a constant stream of excuses as to why she
could not come, before eventually sending her an extremely cowardly text message
which mumbled something about ‘research confidentiality’ and ‘sorry’. I had to gently
turn many of my friends’ requests for information about my research down and, to
borrow a phrase from Shaver, avoided the temptation of giving them ‘guided tours’ of my
fieldwork sites (Shaver 2005: 302). Amongst my wider group of local friends I talked
about my research as a ‘study of women’ or ‘life in Senegal’ and they did not pose any
further questions.
Whilst in Ziguinchor, I struggled to balance ‘work’ and ‘non-work’; participant observation and informal interviews were seemingly taking over every aspect of my being. I felt hypocritical in the way that I was expecting my informants to grant me access to their worlds, whilst simultaneously denying them access to my own (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983: 111). I felt guilty about the relative luxury in which I lived: despite being far from living in expatriate conditions, my rent was considered extortionate by local standards and I felt embarrassed about my informants seeing my home. I also wanted to have a spatial divide between my work and my home life, preferring meetings to occur in neutral places or in the spaces in which my informants worked and lived than in my home.

Within the field, the ethnographic researcher plays a variety of roles, bringing with them many different ‘selves’ that can both help and hinder the research process, such as being a woman, a daughter, a researcher and an ‘outsider’. Managing my multiple selves became a daily struggle (Reinharz 1997). Abu-Lughod (1986) also discusses the feeling of being caught between different roles and, as a woman living in a Bedouin society, she felt uncomfortable at the roles given to her because of her gender and status as a both ‘foreigner’ and ‘local’. She was given labels that simultaneously granted and denied her access to certain spaces. I felt that to fulfil my position as a good ‘woman’ I should not be living alone, or going out alone at night, yet to be a good researcher I needed to be. Whilst being a Western woman allowed me to ‘get away with things’ and ask questions about potentially taboo issues in a way that I would not have been able to do had I been Senegalese. I did not want to use my toubab identity as an excuse for things: I enjoyed being able to drink in public, go out alone and talk to men but, equally, I did not want my status as ‘honorary male’ to have a negative effect upon my relationships with Senegalese women.

1.2.3 Placing the ‘I’ in ‘thesis’

I realise that the use of the word ‘I’ is a controversial issue within academic writing, and discussion with supervisors and students from very different backgrounds to my own has made me aware of the need to defend the extent to which ‘I’ appear(s) in my work. I learned from talking to my fellow historians, lawyers, clinical psychologists and chemists
that the use of the word ‘I’ is considered taboo, but when I read the work of social anthropologists I recognise a similar style of writing to my own.

The first ethnographic work that really drew me to anthropology as a discipline and the power of ethnography as a methodological tool resonate in my mind was *Death Without Weeping* by Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1992). Since then I have always been drawn to ethnographies in which the voice of the ethnographer is present. Although readers from other disciplines may disagree, I believe that a reflexive self-awareness and the presence of the ethnographer add to a piece of research, rather than taking away from it. There is a delicate balance to be reached though, and I am sure that I am not the only person to be frustrated to read a piece of academic writing that seems to be more about the person doing the writing than the people who are being written about. *Women at the Crossroads: A Prostitute Community's Response to HIV/AIDS in Urban Senegal* (Renaud 1997) is one of these pieces of work. Despite being an ethnography about sex-work in Senegal and an obvious piece of work for me to relate to, it is not a piece of writing I derived much from because Renaud’s voice was the only one to be heard.

I defend my use of the word ‘I’, realising that although it may irritate more readers than it appeals to, it emphasises the importance of the researcher in the research process. I do not want to erase myself and my experiences from my writing yet equally I try to avoid having an over-bearing presence that distracts from the stories of those whose lives are at the heart of this discussion.

### 1.2.4 Anonymity

Following on from the discussion of what to tell people in Senegal about my work, I was faced with the issue of dealing with informant confidentiality and anonymity. The Association of Social Anthropologists, or ASA, (1999) notes that anonymity includes places, not just people, and I feel the need to protect the spaces in which I conduct my fieldwork as much as I do the individuals involved. In masking the identity of bars and other workplaces, the anonymity of those who frequent them will not be compromised. In order to maintain some sense of authenticity, and following Chernoff (2005), I have

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2 For ethical guidance I consulted the ASA and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) guidelines for conducting research. It should be noted that the ASA also stands for ‘African Studies Association’.
invented pseudonyms that are representative of a West African context for the bars, hotels and night-clubs in this thesis. I have also renamed the Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) clinic, which we will see to be of significance in chapter five. I cannot re-invent the town of Ziguinchor because its location is essential to my work, but I can protect particular people and places within it.

I wrongly assumed that all my informants would want to remain anonymous, thinking that they would not want their real names to be published in fear of someone finding out about a relatively unknown part of their lives. In fact, I found the opposite. Some of the people I interviewed seemed proud to be asked to participate, and I had to keep reminding them that even though I was taking notes for my ‘book’, my writing would not achieve the level of international recognition that they imagined. I had to reiterate that even though their names would appear in print, it would not be in the way they imagined and would not be for sale in Ziguinchor’s sole librairie. This was gendered: men were more likely to want their real names to be used than women, apart from one exception that I discuss in more detail in the côtéman chapter. I have, however, only used first names throughout, because my informants were not comfortable with their surnames being published.

1.2.5 Participant Observation and the Unstructured Interview
Blaikie (2000: 114) argues that data can be collected in four main ways: the context in which activities of interest to the researcher occur, semi-natural settings, artificial settings and through the use of social artefacts. By using the contexts in which my informants lived, and immersing myself in their lives as much as possible, I retained as natural an environment as I could throughout my time in the field.

The favoured tools of anthropologists are the informal, unstructured interview (rather than an obsession with Lichart scales), and the process of participant observation, in which researchers embed themselves as much as possible into the world of their informants. Obviously this had its limits within my work: sex-work, clandestine migration and cyber-romance are not conducive to the ‘participatory’ element of
Rabinow (1977: 79) has discussed the tension that arises between ‘participating’ and ‘observing’, stating that even with a great investment of effort, researchers will still remain outsiders. They remain unable to participate fully in the world of their informants, even when integrated and accepted within the community they are working. Yin (1994: 11) states that participant observation requires ‘a hefty investment of field efforts,’ but it is an effective way of seeing and hearing things that may otherwise be missed. This is particularly relevant in my discussion of clandestine migration in chapter seven, when the importance of the issue became apparent to me only when I stopped and listened to the conversations around me, and realised that irregular migration was something a lot of people were talking about.

One of the hurdles I faced whilst carrying out my research was having the confidence to ask people (initially only women) if they would mind being interviewed. Like Davis (1986: 244), I often imagined conducting the perfect interview when, deep-down, fears of rejection and feelings that I was intruding were preventing me from talking to those in whose lives I was interested. I found that when I began researching men, the interview dynamics changed and conversations suddenly became much easier, despite (or because of?) underlying sexual tensions.

All the interviews I conducted were informal, with open-ended rather than closed questions. This allowed for more in-depth discussion and enabled my interviewees to discuss issues that they felt were of importance, rather than pushing them to say what I wanted to find. Bumping into someone and chatting as we waited for a taxi or wandered through the market were far more valuable than pre-arranged meetings. Often ethnographers feel that they are investing a lot of their time into ‘doing nothing’, but it is this ‘nothing’ time that was crucial to my gaining an understanding of people’s lives. If I had not have done this, I would not be writing about migration. I tried to record interviews during my initial MSc research, but found this to be detrimental, and for my doctoral research would write copious notes (in French, English and Wolof) that I transcribed and translated into English immediately after interviews. I once attempted,

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3 There have been cases of journalists who have taken the pirogue journey from Senegal to the Canary Islands with illegal migrants, which as well as being dangerous and potentially life-threatening is also, in my opinion, extremely unethical.
rather disastrously, to use a translator during an interview, but I soon realised how much this affected the interview dynamic, and I preferred to rely on my own informal way of interviewing instead of using an intermediary. I conducted my interviews in French and Wolof, or English if talking to an Anglophone and each time an interview is cited throughout this thesis, I note the language the interview was conducted in. I did not offer payment for interviews, considering this to be unethical, but reimbursed transport costs or bought my interviewees drinks or food if we met in a bar or restaurant. Although other researchers have offered payment in exchange for the time the interviewee is giving, I did not consider it appropriate to do so in this instance (see Shaver 2005; McKeeganey and Barnard 1996, amongst others).

As I make reference to in individual chapters, it would be easy to critique my research for its lack of balance. Where are the interviews with Internet-dating European men? Where are the clients in the sex-work chapter? Why do I not interview the women who the côtéman romance? Where are the migrants who left Senegal and did not come back? The lack of their voices is extremely revealing. I could not interview everyone, and I made decisions as to who I should include and exclude from my research for several reasons. Practically, each case-study only formed one part of a larger research project and time constraints prevented me from following individual cases further. I also felt a moral obligation to my informants, and it would have been obtrusive to sex-workers if I had interviewed their clients. Similarly with the côtéman, I would have felt awkward interviewing the women with whom they had relationships. Although the samples are in some cases undeniably small, I am not claiming to make over-arching generalisations about migration in Senegal, but am trying to show what life was like for a particular sample of people in a certain place and time. I excluded clients and male internet-daters just as I did tourist women, as I felt that interviewing them was a research project in its own right. I also did not want to betray the women and men who I had formed working relationships by talking to people with whom they may not have been entirely honest. I felt that researching Senegalese migrants in Europe would have been a fascinating project and one that could have provided a different side to the argument, but it would have been too vast a topic to take on, as well as not being a particularly original one.
1.2.6 The Risk Factor

One of the issues raised by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) is the need to assess potential risk of physical harm (such as in medical trials) or psychological harm to either researcher or participants during the research process:

[T]hese risks may be difficult or impossible to quantify or anticipate in full prior to the start of a social science research project, especially in longitudinal, qualitative research.

ESRC (2005: 21)

I was acutely aware of this when conducting interviews, but was careful to watch the body language of my interviewees and gauge whether or not they were comfortable with my questions. Interviewing and asking questions can also be traumatic as questions can make informants consider themselves and their lives in new ways. Cross (2002: 128) has addressed this point, and it is interesting to question the extent to which our own curiosity evokes curiosity in those being questioned, and what effects this may have upon their lives. Even if I did not intend to make people think or act in a different way, I may still, unintentionally, have caused them to do so. Researcher and researched can begin to mimic each others’ behaviour, and modify each others’ thoughts and feelings as a means of understanding each others’ lives, as shown below by Schep-Hughes (1992: 147):

Although psychodynamic self-awareness is obviously not a native practice among the people of the Alto, as a result, in part, of the style of questioning and the close and intense scrutiny that I have introduced into their lives, some moradores have begun to think in personally self-reflexive ways, for better or worse.

Equally though, interviews can have a psychological impact upon the researcher. When I first began working in Africa I was initially disturbed by the stories I heard, and would often return home in tears, deeply upset by the way that global inequalities had manifested themselves. Over time, although I never stopped caring about my informants, I learnt to deal with the stories I was hearing and gradually became desensitised to them. Through writing up I have re-visited my old diaries many times, something that is both a cathartic and a stressful experience. I see a shift in my thinking – I move from wanting to change things to accepting that ‘this is how life is’. Reading about this acceptance makes me angry that I felt so powerless to change things, yet at the same time has refuelled my
desire to use my research skills practically in a way that could have a positive affect upon the lives of others.

1.2.7 Leaving the Field
Just as researchers must prepare for their arrival in the field, they must equally prepare themselves and their informants for their ultimate departure. Leaving the field after an extended period is a traumatic experience, as intense attachments to people and places alike are formed and often end suddenly. I do not believe that the people with whom I lived and worked in Ziguinchor realised that I was leaving for good. They were used to toubabs coming and going (sometimes for several years), and the passing of time was a vague, inexact concept to them. They had seen me return to the UK during my fieldwork on several occasions, and assumed that this time would be the same.

Upon leaving the field, researchers need to be aware of the impact they have had, and could continue to have, on the lives of their informants and those in the wider community:

We cannot (nor would we want to, I think) deceive ourselves into believing that our presence leaves no trace, no impact on those on whose lives we dare intrude...we can hardly help becoming involved in the lives of people we have chosen to be our teachers...

Scheper-Hughes (1992: 24)

As much as possible, I maintain email, Skype and telephone relationships with those I left behind a year ago, and hope that my sporadic bonjours show people that I have not forgotten them. My guilt about being a researcher returned in December 2008. As I sat at my desk, a red envelope indicating that I had a new email flashed onto my screen. It was from a friend of mine in Ziguinchor. He was writing to tell me that a very close friend of mine had died. He said that he was disappointed in me for never phoning or emailing to ask about her health. I felt defensive, and was used to such accusations, but at the same time I realised that he was right. I had spent almost two years of my life in

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4 The ASA also points out that the fieldwork site should be left in such a way that permits future access by other researchers.
Senegal, and knew that even phoning just to say ‘hello’ was expected, even if I had nothing else to say.

1.3 The Research Timeline
I undertook a total of 20 months of fieldwork and language training in Senegal, which I outline here in more detail. As well as making the research process clearer for the reader, this section also shows some of the shifts in thought I had whilst being in the field. During this time, I conducted a total of 67 formal interviews, details of which are given in Appendix A.

1.3.1 MSc Fieldwork: April 2005 – June 2005
Although I knew the West African region and felt confident and comfortable living on the continent, I was unfamiliar with Senegal. I saw my first trip as an introductory visit in which to make contacts, familiarise myself with Senegalese culture and the Wolof language, and conduct preliminary research. This research, as well as being a stand-alone MSc project, eventually became the basis of my doctoral fieldwork.

During this period I spent three mornings a week in the local STI clinic, talking to the staff and the women as they waited for their consultations. On first hearing about the STI clinic, I had not expected it to play such a pivotal role in my research, assuming that my time there would be spent talking to staff and carrying out ‘official’ interviews, rather than chatting casually to the women. I had underestimated the importance of the waiting room space, and the possibilities I had to talk to women as they waited for their consultations and test results. It was extremely awkward at first, as the staff and sex-workers alike were suspicious of my presence, and as I did not speak Wolof I was often unable to follow what was being said. After the clinic, I spent my afternoons with the sex-workers in their homes or at the market. My focus at this point was on female life stories: the reasons they gave for becoming sex-workers, and the coping strategies they used in their daily lives as they balanced home and work.

I continued my research in the evenings, going to Ziguinchor’s hotels, bars and clubs to talk to the women I had met at the clinic, and to chat to bar owners and staff, who would then introduce me to other sex-workers. I would usually leave my house around 9pm,
and often would not return until 3am which, in comparison to my informants, was going home early.

I carried out ten interviews with women during this seven week period, of which seven were recorded. This was in addition to weeks of extensive participant observation and informal conversations. I re-visited many of the stories I had heard during this time in the latter phases of my PhD fieldwork.

1.3.2 Language Training: May 2006 – December 2006
I undertook a six-month period of language training in Dakar, Senegal’s capital before beginning my research in Ziguinchor. I took Wolof and French classes during this period in what, admittedly was a rather haphazard fashion. Dependent on when classes were running, whether enough students were enrolled and whether or not teachers were willing to teach, my approach to language learning was by no means structured. I took classes at both the Baobab Centre and the Institut Français, supplementing them with private tuition and the informal lessons I had from my neighbours as we sat outside my house in Yoff’s sandy ruelles. My formal and informal language training was unarguably an essential part of my research training and was immensely useful once I began my fieldwork in Ziguinchor. I initially relied on French with smatterings of Wolof, but by the end of my stay I spoke a fluent ‘Frolof’ and rarely spoke English.

I found myself free to talk about my research whilst in Dakar, as I was not constrained by being in my research site. Owing to the sensitive nature of my research topic I felt unable to be completely open and honest about my work when in Ziguinchor, so being in Dakar gave me a chance to talk through my research ideas with people who did not know my informants. Whilst in Dakar I gave presentations about my research to the British Council, the Baobab Centre and SIT language school and received a lot of useful feedback from Senegalese and American students.

5 The Baobab Centre runs language classes and cultural exchange programmes. See http://www.acibaobab.org/ for more details.
6 http://www.institutfr-dakar.org/
1.3.3 Initial Fieldwork: January 2007 - March 2007

I returned to Ziguinchor in December 2006, and after a few weeks of settling in, I began my research, intending to continue where I had left off almost two years earlier. For the first three months of my time in Ziguinchor, I continued to spend my evenings in bars and clubs, rekindling friendships with sex-workers and catching up on their lives. I found myself sitting in the same seats and ordering the same drinks as I had done two years beforehand, slipping easily into the life I had left behind. Despite the comfort of the familiar, I soon realised that I could not continue living a night-time existence.

In the early evenings I attended local community séances held by women attending the STI clinic, but knowing about these was purely down to luck. I tried to establish contact with local NGOs, including Environment and Development Action Santé (ENDA Santé), and regional United Nations (UN) bureaus, but this led to several dead-ends. They were under no obligation to help me, and even if my findings and presence could benefit them, my status as an independent researcher was not something they understood or saw as beneficial to them. I felt that they were trying to take advantage of the time and effort I had invested in making individual connections with certain women, and I did not feel willing to have these relationships exploited, even if it meant I would have access to larger-scale, easily quantifiable data.

I found the initial stages of my research extremely difficult, and my fieldwork diaries from this time portrayed loneliness, frustration and despair as I was unsure of the direction my work was going in. Practically, I was living on my own for the first time, and did not feel safe returning home alone at night on my scooter. My house was situated in a very dark neighbourhood infamous for the bad state of its roads, which were dangerous to drive along in the dark. I also did not want to disturb my neighbours by coming home late every night, as I felt a sense of obligation to the family who had become my friends and did not want them to think badly of my nocturnal working hours. I realised that the focus of my research had changed, and my work was less about the after-hours sex-work lifestyle of dancing and drinking and more about how sex-work was simply one part of these women’s lives. My focus was no longer on the significance of identity and social spaces, but the slippery and complex world of dreams, aspirations and migratory desires.
1.3.4 Fieldwork: April 2007 – December 2007

After my initial three months in Ziguinchor, I stopped going out regularly at night, and no longer visited the seedier bars in the outskirts of town where I had once spent most of my time. I saw women at the clinic, or visited them in their homes, and I would often recognise people I knew in the street, which would lead to impromptu interviews or discussions. I still saw some of the sex-workers when I was out at night, but these meetings were social events and not ‘work’ orientated ones. I was trying to distinguish between my home life and my research life as much as I could, and in doing so found myself seeing them more as friends than as ‘informants’. This meant that making the jump back to wanting to carry out interviews with them or trying to extract concrete information was difficult as after a friendship had been formed, it was hard to go back to a working relationship.

By this point, sex-work and the clinic locus were no longer my main focus. I concentrated on migration both to and from Ziguinchor during this period, and met several Anglophone West African sex-workers with whom I began to spend a lot of my time. I also realised my tendency to talk to the younger, more ‘modern’ women – partly as they were more willing to talk to me, but also the issues they talked about were more exciting from a research point of view. They were still hopeful about their futures, whereas the older ones did not display the same feelings.

I spent a lot more of my time in the nearby beach resort of Cap Skirring during this latter fieldwork period. I had begun to broaden my research rubric and talk to men about their aspirations of migration, and in doing so began to consider the link between tourism and the desire to migrate. I also regularly visited the Village Artisanale where, as well as learning to carve wood, I interviewed young men working in the tourist industry about their perceptions of tourists and their desires to migrate. This meant that I was not present at the STI clinic as much as I once was, and would miss seeing women I wanted to talk to in more detail – the clinic was the only way I had of contacting most of them. Whilst in Cap Skirring, I talked to the sex-workers I knew from Ziguinchor, but most of my time was spent on the beach or in small hotels known as campements interviewing men. I felt that I was having to choose the direction in which to take my research, as I could not be in both Ziguinchor and Cap Skirring at the same time. I decided to
concentrate more on the new directions my fieldwork was leading me, rather than revisiting the old ones.

1.3.5 Writing Up: January 2008 – December 2008
Although the infamous writing-up period is not strictly part of fieldwork, it still holds an important place in my overall research. The final writing up period did not, as I had originally envisaged, include a return trip to Ziguinchor. The data I had at times seemed insufficient but on the other hand seemed overwhelmingly vast. Despite this, it was forming a coherent story that I was reluctant to alter by adding more details from a different moment in time. There are gaps in my research, but there will always be gaps in research despite the researcher’s best intentions. A newly published article on a relevant topic will trigger ‘what if?’ questions, but I could not become too hung up on ‘what if?’ and ‘if only’. I was at times too involved in Ziguinchor life and missed the obvious, yet at other times I wrote down every minute detail, only to find most of my scrawling irrelevant.

1.4 Thesis Structure
This chapter, as we have seen, provides the reader with an introduction to my research in Senegal. The following chapter addresses the main theoretical approaches to migration in order to locate the four ethnographic chapters that follow within wider debates about mobility. Chapter three gives the reader a geographical and socio-political background to Senegal, and chapter five focuses more specifically upon the region in which my research was carried out.

My first ethnographic chapter (chapter four) looks at women who are using a new way of meeting men: the Internet. They are actively reshaping their futures and searching migratory escape by spending time in the cyber cafes located on many street corners in Ziguinchor. I aim to show how women are taking an active stance to better their lives through attempting to migrate, and to show that they persist despite being unsuccessful in their quests. I ask why women want to leave: why do they see no hope in their current
situations, why do they not want to marry Senegalese men, and why do they see their futures as dependent upon a relationships with others?7

In chapter five I look at a different category of women who also want to meet foreign men, but who do so in a much more direct, initially commercial way. Sex-workers, although not homogenous by any means, were united in their belief that sex-work could lead to a relationship, or to a state of economic dependency beyond a temporary commercial exchange. I consider the vocabulary surrounding the phenomenon of sex-work and address the ‘sex-work versus prostitution’ debate. I consider the notion of choice: do women have an element of freedom in the way they earn their money or do they, as they so often claimed, ‘have no choice’? In arguing that sex-work is simultaneously a cause and a consequence of migration, I suggest how the case-studies presented in the chapter can offer a new way of studying social networks.8

Chapter six concentrates on a group of young, unemployed men who are known locally as the côtêman, or beach-boys. Although I do not classify them as sex-workers (for various reasons that I outline), they have much in common with female sex-workers. For these men, meeting toubabs and making contacts is viewed as a stepping-stone to the West. They are seeking a life of independence, not dependence, and they are not necessarily looking for a permanent relationship, but a helping hand. In this chapter I show how sexuality and image can be used as migration strategies.9

Despite being concerned with the most obvious and current Senegalese migratory topic, the final ethnographic chapter, chapter seven, is one that I have struggled to link to the rest of my arguments. Clandestine migration has become the focus of journalists and academics alike, and in March 2008 was the subject of a special edition of Politique Africaine. The study of clandestine pirogue (wooden boats) departures differs from the rest of my examples because the men I discuss actually left Senegal and attempted to start

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7 This chapter also forms the basis of the article, ‘Senegalese Women and the Cyber-café: Online Dating and Aspirations of Transnational Migration in Ziguinchor’, in Appendix C (Venables 2008).
8 This research for this chapter was the basis to a chapter in an edited volume entitled “‘They don’t know and I don’t want them to know’: Sex-workers and Uncertain Identity in a Senegalese STI Clinic’ in Appendix D (Venables 2007).
9 The experiences I had carrying out the research for this particular chapter form the basis to a forthcoming paper in ‘Anthropology Matters’, entitled “If you give me some sexing I might talk to you”: researching the Senegalese beach-boys ‘at my side’ (Venables forthcoming).
a new life for themselves, rather than just imagining doing so. Interlocking their experiences with the voices and opinions of others who did not leave, I show how a group of young men went further than the realm of the imagined and illegally left Senegal for a new European life. The *pirogue* is a very masculine symbol in terms of its practical usage as a mode of subsistence, but who can migrate in its hollowed-out shell is also a highly gendered phenomenon. In addressing the legal and practical issues surrounding this type of irregular migration, I show how desperate some young Senegalese men have become to make the sea crossing, and why this is a masculine phenomenon.

My thesis is thus a discussion of migratory aspirations and largely unfulfilled dreams. I consider the idea that the desire to migrate may simply be a way of expressing discontent in Senegal and a means for people to voice their current unhappiness: people’s desire to go to Europe could be viewed as a metaphor for their current discontent. What is unusual about this study is the lack of actual mobility. Instead, it is about the space that migration occupies in people’s imaginations. What is remarkable about migratory movement in these case-studies is its absence.
CHAPTER 2: Migration: a theoretical overview

2.1 Introduction

There can be few people in either industrialized or less developed countries today who do not have personal experience of migration and its effects; this universal experience has become the hallmark of the age of migration.

Castles and Miller (2003: 5)

[M]igration as a shared system of meaning, a process that goes beyond the mere movement of people to encompass identity, status and the understandings of space.

Lambert (2002: 2)

The movement of populations within and beyond the borders of nation-states is not a recent phenomenon, and nor is its study. It is not mobility that is new but the speed and magnitude in which it happens and consequently, the way that we think and write about it.

The World Bank (2008) estimates that nearly 200 million people, or three percent of the world’s population, live outside their countries of birth. The top migrant destination countries are the United States, the Russian Federation, Germany, Ukraine and France. The top immigration countries, relative to population, are Qatar (78 per cent), the United Arab Emirates (71 per cent), Kuwait (62 per cent), Singapore (43 per cent), Israel (40 per cent) and Jordan (39 per cent). These World Bank figures are clearly just the beginning of the migratory story; studies of migration vary immensely depending on the country context, who is studying them and from what disciplinary background they come.

The study of ‘migration’ is vast, and this chapter addresses just some of the ways in which it can be approached. Some theoretical approaches may not appear to link directly to the arguments in this thesis, but I suggest that in order to re-think current migratory aspirations in Senegal it is important to understand conventional approaches to migration first. This thesis differs from many existing studies of migration because of the emphasis placed on imaginings of migration, and I assert that a study of how people perceived and imagined migrating is just as valid and useful as existing multi-sited ethnographies of transnationalism or the statistical analysis of migration rates.

It would be impossible to do justice to every shift in thought or new ethnographic study
on migration here. Hence I focus on aspirations of international migration from the
global South to the global North. This chapter looks at migration literature from
various international contexts (India and Pakistan to the UK, Asia to the US and West
Africa to Europe amongst others), whereas the following chapter considers some of the
unique, locally rooted Senegalese patterns of migration in more detail. We should not
ignore the importance of specific histories and contexts to the mobility of populations
(when thinking about Africa and its long history of colonialism and the slave trade, for
example) but equally we can apply theoretical contributions to contexts other than those
in which they were written.

I begin this chapter by providing the reader with a background to some of the main
theoretical approaches to migration. I discuss the limitations of neo-classical
approaches before considering how transnationalism has emerged as an important
concept within the study of migration. I then consider the importance of gender to
discussions of migration, looking at historical shifts from male labour migration to
increased female mobility. Thinking about forced migration and the idea of ‘choice’
leads to a discussion of refugees, and human trafficking and a discussion of other
migratory issues includes immigration politics and the migrant journey. In turning my
attentions to the relationship between migrants and their countries of destination, I
stress the importance of anthropological studies of remittances and their meanings. I
find it interesting that although my informants made few direct references to the sending
or receiving of remittances, they base their migratory aspirations on what they believed
others to be sending and receiving. Remittances for them were not necessarily about
money, but material goods, new languages and new ideas. My discussion of migrants in
their host countries is important not because of my informants’ direct experiences of
migration and integration, but because of what they believed life elsewhere to be like. I
conclude by showing how existing theories of migration may or may not be useful in the
case of Senegal, and offer my own paradigm – the importance of the imaginary – as a
framework for the ethnographic chapters that follow.

2.2 A Theoretical Background to Migration
We can approach the study of migratory behaviour from various perspectives, and, as
with any other issue of academic study, we can see both shifts in actual migration
patterns themselves and, in response, changes to how they are studied. An interesting example of changing trends in migration studies is Grillo and Mazzucato’s claim that only five percent of articles published in the *International Migration Review* between 1966 and 1999 were focused on Africa (Grillo and Mazzucato 2008). This was partly in response to the limited numbers of Africans in Europe during this period (except for a West African presence in France) and a lack of political interest in them. If we compare this to the current situation in which African countries are rarely excluded from edited volumes or conference panels on migration, we can see how both migration patterns and academic thought have shifted. Emerging new journals or special editions such as the aforementioned *Politique Africaine* on irregular migration from West Africa to Europe and the 2008 edition of the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* should be noted not just for their content, but for their existence.

**2.2.1 ‘Push and Pull’ Theories**

Castles and Miller (2003) claim that the ‘earliest systematic approach’ to migration is the oft-cited statistical work of the nineteenth-century geographer, Ravenstein (1889; 1885). This ahistorical, classical economic approach uses the ideas of ‘push’ and ‘pull’ to explain migration and factors including heightened demographic growth, poor standards of living, economic insecurity and political repression were used to explain migration. Migrants (at this point, mostly male) were simultaneously drawn by the potential for employment, availability of land, political freedom and improved economic conditions. To these I would add that many people are now attracted to the global North not just because of the increased earnings they believe it will bring them, but also because they are drawn by the desire for modern consumer goods and the ‘good life’ they believe to exist outside their countries of birth (Castles and Miller 2003: 18; Gardner, 1995: 10).

In *The New Helots*, Cohen states that such a simplistic rational choice approach, although relevant to the experiences of many migrants, neglects their ‘particularistic desires and ambitions’ by concentrating solely on the general structural features of the economies in question:

> Quite clearly, individuals migrate for a number of different causes – desire to escape oppression and famine, financial ambition, family reunification, or education of children. Nothing is easier to compile than a list of such ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors and present them as a theory of migration. The customary survey reporting percentages endorsing each such ‘cause’ might be useful as a sort of first approximation to the
question ‘who migrates’? In no way, however, does it explain the structural factors leading to a patterned movement, of known size and direction, over an extensive period of time.


As Coutin summarises in her discussion of irregular migration from El Salvador to the United States, there are many different factors that contribute to the flows of people from one country to another. She cites geopolitical concerns, capital flows, the transnationalisation of labour markets, cultural diffusion and social interconnections as just some of the different factors that make people mobile (Coutin 2003: 510). There is, therefore, more to migration than just economics.

Another example we could use to demonstrate differing factors that can lead to migration is the case of Pakistanis migrating to Britain during the 1950s and 1960s. In this example, a combination of colonial links, political freedom of movement, the desire to improve educational qualifications and an economic ‘push’ and ‘pull’ were all factors leading to international mobility. Pakistani workers gave mostly economic reasons for wanting to move, and over time their mobility developed into ‘chain migration’, in which one group of migrants leaves a beaten path for others to follow (Anwar 1979: 21). Jeffery, writing about the migration of Pakistanis to the city of Bristol explains chain migration in the following way:

[R]elatives contribute cash for the migration of one man, who finds work in Britain; from his savings he ‘sponsors’ the migration of another kinsman. Subsequent savings on the part of these two enable further kinsmen to migrate, and thus the ‘chain’ develops. Generally, the earlier migrants help the later ones with housing and finding jobs, and thus related men from the same areas in Pakistan tend to cluster in Britain.

Jeffery (1976: 48)

We will see in further chapters that although many migrants from Senegal form part of long established chains based on ethnic and religious ties, the hopeful men and women I spoke to in Senegal do not. They want their lives to be like other migrants, but are unable or unwilling to take advantage of existing diasporic links, and are making their own chains through contacts with toubabs or embarking on individual journeys.

We can clearly see, therefore, from countries as different as El Salvador and Pakistan, that there are diverse reasons for wanting to migrate and it would be unhelpful to try
and homogenise the reasoning behind individual decisions. Due to the lack of emphasis on social, political and cultural reasons for migration, focusing on economic factors does not help us to study migration as a social or cultural act, nor does it help us to study people whose attempts to migrate are unsuccessful. Neo-classical economists such as Ravenstein see the decision to migrate as an individualistic one, and they do not help us to explain why migrants are drawn to certain countries and not others. Despite their critics, neo-classical approaches to migration are not completely redundant, but there is more to the study of migration than ahistorical and individual mobility. Rather than focusing on the voiceless migrant as part of the international labour market we should consider theories that look at socially-grounded reasons for movement.

### 2.2.2 Anthropological Theories of Migration

I would suggest that a more anthropological approach to the study of migration is useful in this thesis. We should think about local and culturally specific reasons for people’s aspirations to migrate, as well as how global forces have heightened their desire to move elsewhere. I cannot claim to be as thorough as Kearney’s incredibly detailed review of anthropological migration literature, but what I can do, however, is point the reader towards some of the most relevant issues and corresponding literature (Kearney 1995). I would also suggest Gardner’s introduction as a useful overview of how anthropology has changed the way in which scholars look at migration (Gardner 1995). Kearney’s piece is particularly useful as a broad overview to changes and shifts in thinking about migration, and his discussion of the concepts of globalisation, migration and diaspora are particularly useful when thinking about the transnational spaces that migrants can inhabit, as well as how they came to inhabit them. Anthropology, writes Gardner, has often thought about migration as something that breaks down local culture – it can be seen, in a sense, as an ‘external force’ disrupting and transforming ‘traditional’ communities into ‘modern’ ones. As much as migration has been seen to disrupt and divide, it has also brought positive change and led to the creation of new communities, new flows of ideas and increased opportunities (Gardner 1995: 5). We should not make the mistake of thinking that ‘traditional cultures’ are easily bounded and identifiable nor that migration is a destructive and disruptive force. Anthropological notions of culture have shifted and migration theories have changed in response, as I show in the discussions that follow.
Ethnographic studies of migration allow us to think about migration in new ways and on different levels: how do flows of people affect the household, the village, the host country of the migrant and the global economy, for example? How do migrants shape and reshape the landscapes that they have left behind, and the ones that they have recently discovered (Moyer 2004)? How do migrants contribute to what Sassen (1991) has called ‘global cities’? How does the notion of ‘choice’ relate to migration and is the decision to migrate always an autonomous one? Anthropologists have used empirical data to investigate all of these issues, and have told some of the individual stories behind wider migratory phenomena.

One of the most important issues in the study of contemporary migration, and one which is the focus of much anthropological attention, is the shift towards using the concept of transnationalism, or transnational migration, as a way of thinking about mobility, as I now discuss.

2.3 Transnational migration

2.3.1 What is transnational migration?

Transnational migration is the process by which immigrants forge and sustain simultaneous multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement.

Glick Schiller (1995: 48)

When visiting the Ellis Island Immigration Museum in New York in 2007, I remember being deeply touched by the display cabinets of relics that migrants had brought with them to the United States. The cabinets were full of symbolic items of clothing, important family heirlooms, wedding dresses and old photographs. These items represented how migrants saw their emigration to the United States as a rupture between past and present (something which still occurs in the case of forced migration) and the objects they had chosen to bring with them were to serve as symbolic reminders of ‘home’.13 Today, however, the contemporary transnational migrant does not necessarily need symbolic reminders of the past, because in a globally connected world the past remains in the present. I felt that the contents of the museum’s glass cases

13 Not every migrant in this period had the same experience of migration. Some were Jews fleeing persecution, whereas others were Italian or Irish labour migrants.
were the key to how migrants felt about leaving their old lives behind – at this point, migration was not looked at with a transnational lens, and migrants were viewed as being uprooted and separated from the lives they once knew, and many of them were actually in exile. One life was replaced with another upon swearing Allegiance to the United States, rather than the migrant existing in two spaces simultaneously.

Rather than describing the migrant as ‘uprooted’ and having no contact with ‘home’, scholars of contemporary transnationalism consider migration as a social process connecting both worlds. Described by Mahler (1998) in terms of ‘transnational social fields’ and by others as ‘transnational communities,’ the idea of transnationalism has changed the study of migration (see Portes 1996; Levitt 1998: 928 amongst others). Constable (2003) stresses the multi-directional nature of transnational flows in comparison to the very much one-directional flows of ‘migration’ and ‘trafficking’, again emphasising the hybridity of the migrant, and their presence in multiple spaces at the same time.

Migrants establish social fields that cross geographical, political and cultural borders and the transmigrant maintains ties with both country of departure and destination (Glick Schiller, Basch, and Szanton-Blanc 1992). The study of transnational migration focuses on linkages between ‘here’ and ‘there’ and avoids splitting the lives of migrants into disconnected domains. It has become more useful to talk about ‘transmigrants’ with multiple and constant connections to their country of origin and their destination nation than to think of migrants as being separated and disjointed from their pasts.

I find Grillo and Mazzucato’s use of the term ‘double engagement’ extremely useful for thinking about transnational migration (Grillo and Mazzucato 2008). Regardless of whether or not the migrant is physically moving back and forth between two different locales (which many irregular migrants cannot do because they do not have legal documentation allowing them to do so), double engagement and ‘dual orientation’ are part of the migrant’s lived experience. Whether through the process of sending back remittances, making or receiving phone calls with people in one’s country of origin, writing letters and emails or living within a community with all the common features of home, the contemporary transnational migrant exists in two inter-connecting worlds.

We could also use Glick Schiller and Levitt’s (1994) idea of there being a ‘transnational way of belonging’ as a way of thinking about this kind of migration.
Globalisation encompasses ideas of hyper-mobility, of international communication (aided by ever advancing Information and Communication Technologies or ICTs) and what Sassen (2002: 254) has called a ‘neutralization of distance and place’. Glick Schiller (1992) links transnationalism to the abatement of national boundaries – the growth of the ‘world city’ has led to a drop in the significance of the nation-state’s borders and, as modern production and constant developments in ICTs make communication easier, gaps between people and places become smaller. This creates conditions in which ordinary people’s aspirations to migrate are heightened and makes those who had not previously considered themselves to be mobile think about migrating. Transnational communities are built on the foundations of globalisation (Appadurai 1996), yet we must also think about the effects of migration at a local level, whether through the receipt of remittances, flows of new ideas and material goods or return-migrants causing aspirations of migration amongst local communities on their return.

2.3.2 Problems with Transnationalism

Such an approach to migration is not without its problems. Grillo and Mazzucato critique earlier 1980s anthropological approaches of transnationalism for their failure to appreciate that it is a heterogeneous concept that affects different people in different ways. North America, they claim, dominated academic study of the issue whereas colonial or post-colonial migrations, trans-Atlantic migration and European migrations were mostly ignored (Grillo and Mazzucato 2008: 200). They are also extremely critical of Appadurai’s writings on transnationalism, referring to one of his comments as ‘astonishingly naïve’ (2008: 204). They raise the point that it is difficult to distinguish between labour migrants, asylum seekers and Western intellectuals if everybody is considered to be a transnational. Al-Ali and Koser also critique this tendency of transnationalism to essentialise migrants and their experiences – they argue for empirical studies which note the importance of the age, gender and class of migrants as well as the specifics of their socio-economic and political circumstances (Al-Ali and Koser 2002).

Homogenising the category of transnationals in such a way does not allow for distinctions between people and their reasons for migration, nor their lived experiences of mobility. Migrants living in the same places will not have the same kinds of experiences – I, as a researcher living between the UK and Senegal for two years did not have the same experience of ‘migration’ as my expatriate friends with five year work
contracts, nor as my constantly mobile West African friends who frequently moved back and forth across international borders. We all had very different ideas of where ‘home’ was, and I would add that our differential access to ICTs affected the extent to which we could be simultaneously connected to different worlds.

Transnationalism is useful to think with, but in this thesis I discuss not just the lived experiences of migration, but imagined experiences and failed attempts at it too. I recognise the importance of the economic and the role that the global economy plays in making such mobility possible, but I believe a more anthropologically grounded approach, in which the social and cultural factors and the implications of migration are incorporated, is useful. Some of the issues that I cover in this chapter are interesting not because the hopeful migrants whom I discuss have experienced similar situations themselves, but that they are basing their aspirations on those who have. Information flows and ideas are crossing borders, even if hopeful migrants are not crossing any spatial boundaries.

2.4 Gender and Migration

It is no coincidence that two of the ethnographic chapters in this thesis are male-focused, whilst the other half focus on women. Although it may be problematic to separate the experiences of men and women, I divide this discussion of gender and migration into two parts, one of which talks about men, and the other which discusses women. I begin by discussing ‘men and migration’ before looking at how women have experienced mobility and how this may differ from that of men. The ‘male’ section looks at economic, voluntary migration and uses examples from Pakistan, India, the Caribbean and Southern Africa, whereas the latter half of this section uses empirical data on female migrants from the Philippines, India and West Africa.

Throughout this thesis I show that whilst Senegalese men and women alike are aspiring towards the same migratory dream, they seek to realise it in different ways. The main difference, as I discuss in further chapters, is that men are looking for a ‘stepping-stone’ or helping hand with the migration process, whereas women are looking for someone (usually a man) on whom they can depend, something which is directly related to gender relations in Senegalese society, as I discuss in more detail in the following chapter. Women are imagining a life outside of poverty, but they are not just thinking about
economic betterment. The ways in which they attempt to migrate reveal a lot about local gender politics in Senegal, and the empirical data reveal many important gendered differences in new approaches to migration as women, not just men, take advantage of increased global flows.

2.4.1 Male Migration

My search for literature on male migration led me down many dead-ends because I was looking in the wrong places. Whereas ‘women and migration’ or ‘gender and migration’ are recognisable categories of study, earlier migration literature assumed that migrants were men. Rather than looking for literature on ‘men and migration’ I should have simply searched for ‘migration’ because although they were not framed as such, many early studies of migration revealed a lot about gender relationships in the societies concerned, through their failure to discuss the issue.

Typically, migrants have been men who have moved either for economic reasons or in search of employment: their migration is ‘voluntary’ or ‘economic’ when compared to the patterns of forced migration that I discuss below. Labour migrations were, and are, produced by the need for cheap, often unskilled labour, and it is this need that created migratory movement of the 1950s and 1960s from the European peripheries and the global South to the global North. The nation-states of countries deemed to be ‘under-developed’ or ‘developing’ were used as a cheap workforce for other more developed countries. As well as international labour migration from the peripheries to the core, rural to urban migration, with men coming from rural areas to make a living in urban ones, was also commonplace during this period.

Labour migration and refugee flows have been the predominant forms of international migrations within Sub-Saharan Africa, and male mine-workers have occupied a prominent position in classical literature on migration and urbanisation. As Ferguson (1999) eloquently points out, the modernisation story he seeks to tell about life on the Zambian Copperbelt ‘operates with a masculine vision of modernity based on a hard, metallic masculine industrialism’ (Ferguson 1999: 36). Broadly speaking, migration from rural areas to urban ones originally took the form of male labour migration. The introduction of a market economy in the colonial era created a need for labourers and men migrated either because they had been contracted or because they sought casual employment. Women were not usually brought to the labour camps, which were seen
as male reserves (Little 1973: 16).

I find it interesting with this example that male migrants have been written about in their capacity as labourers, whereas when women appear in the literature it is because of their involvement in professions, such as sex-work, that served men. Although we may like to think that the study of female migrants places much more emphasis on autonomy than it once did, women often still appear in migration literature as dependents of men, victims of forced migration or exploited labourers, but this thesis is an attempt to show them as independent migrants.

Another example of a pattern of migration with a gendered history is that of Asian immigration to the United States. During the latter half of the 1800s, Chinese men were employed on Hawaiian sugar plantations, as labourers during the Californian gold-rush and to construct the trans-American railroads (Constable 2003: 177). There were several reasons for this prominence of male labour migrants. In summary, employers preferred single male labourers to female ones, the nations of China and the Philippines were reluctant to send women abroad and it was more economically viable for the families of male migrants to remain at home rather than migrate too. Constable describes how male labourers remained the most common group of Chinese immigrants in the United States until the 1980s, when an increase in immigrant women’s labour was noted. In such cases, the type of work available was seen as being suitable only for men, and hence they were the primary recruits.

A similar pattern of migration occurred in the UK — earlier migrants to Britain were mostly male labourers, and if women did migrate it was to join their ‘breadwinner’ husbands as dependent spouses, rather than as independent labourers. Obviously there are differences between ethnic groups and migrants from different countries, and we should be wary of generalising because, as I now exemplify, there were clear differences between South Asian and Caribbean migration to the UK during the same period.

Demand for labour in Britain during the 1950s was, according to Peach, the ‘dynamic’ factor prompting migration from the Caribbean to the United Kingdom (Peach 1967). Many male labourers originally came to Britain during the Second World War, when they worked in factories or as volunteers in the armed forces. Women from the West Indies were in high demand in the service and care sectors and were seen as wage-
earners in their own right, even if their earnings were lower than those of men. This differs from the situation amongst mostly male Indian and Pakistani migrants because women accompanied them as dependent family members rather than independent labourers. This was linked to family structure and gender politics in their countries of origin – women in the West Indies are believed to have a greater degree of independence and a stronger position in the household than women in Indian or Pakistani society (Anwar 1979: 39). It has been suggested that if Pakistani women were employed it was inside their homes, as wider cultural factors prevented them from seeking outside economic activity in the formalised and male dominated workplace.

As we will see in later chapters, another important issue related initially to male migration is the existence of social networks, which have a very significant role to play in migratory flows. Social networks were originally introduced empirically by Barnes (1954) and gradually became a conceptual rather than just a metaphorical idea. A network ‘refers to a set of points (individuals) defined in relation to an initial point of focus (ego) and linked by lines (relationships) either directly or indirectly to this initial point of focus’ (Kapferer 1973: 84 cited in Stoller 2002: 53). According to Clyde Mitchell (1974) personal networks are sets of linkages which exist on the basis of specific interests and which last longer than one isolated transaction. Erikson (1995: 78) describes the nature of networks as fleeting and impermanent – they can transform and disappear when people choose not to maintain the ties, or, as I discuss in chapter five in relation to female sex-workers, may choose not to create the ties in the first place.

Reciprocity is a key factor in informal networks, as migrants rely on each other for the transmission of information, goods and money. Although the study of social networks is essential to discussions of migration in Senegal, especially in relation to the Mouride trade diaspora, it is also relevant to contexts outside of Africa. Jeffery, for example, compares social networks amongst Christian and Muslim Pakistanis in Bristol, dividing her discussion into ties that migrants have both within and outside of the city. Christians, she found, tended to mix more with people who were not kin (including British people) and the ties they retained with kin in Pakistan were comparably weaker than those maintained by Muslims (Jeffery 1976: 119, 155). Much of the literature on

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14 Also written Murid or Mourid.
social networks is, coincidentally, written about Senegal, and I address this in more detail in the following chapters.

This section has discussed some of the main ways that male migration dominated earlier literature. As my final two ethnographic chapters will demonstrate, the men to whom I spoke in Senegal were not labour migrants as such – in one chapter they were hopeful migrants, using their sexuality and persuasion techniques as a way of migrating and in another they are irregular migrants, making illegal boat crossings in the hope of arriving in Europe. Whilst they hope to find employment upon arrival, they do not have a specific skill or job in mind, but are confident that they will be able to find some form of employment if they are able to migrate, despite only having vague notions of what this may be. The journeys they hope to make will not involve female partners accompanying them nor joining them. This is either because they are hoping to migrate through forming a sexual or romantic relationship with a European woman, or because they are embarking upon dangerous sea crossings from which women were excluded.

2.4.2 Women and Migration

The most obvious reason for addressing gender issues is that women workers make up the overwhelming majority of the workforces of labour-intensive, export industries in developing countries, dominate the international migration of care services workers, and tend to be concentrated in the most vulnerable jobs of global production systems. (Dejardin 2008: 1)

Due to what can be loosely termed the processes of globalisation, women are much more internationally mobile than they ever have been. According to World Bank figures, women make up 49.6 per cent of the world’s migrants and 50.8 per cent of all migrants coming from developing countries (World Bank 2008). Women are increasingly engaging in labour migration, which, as we saw in the previous section, was once solely the domain of men, with women moving as dependents to join their spouses. As well as moving for education and work, women are travelling more for pleasure. Cheap airfares to old and new tourist destinations have led to more Western women engaging in solo and group travel for pleasure, which has in turn created new sites of consumption for people working and living within tourist resorts in the global South.
Women from the global South are migrating more as independent labourers, responding to skills shortages in Northern nations. It is the increasing flow of female labour from ‘poor’ countries to richer ones which I am interested in here, as it is this kind of movement that forms the background to the ethnographic chapters on aspirations of female mobility that follow. Women who have partners are increasingly migrating independently of them, and although it is tempting to put this solely down to their involvement (voluntary or otherwise) in the sex-industry and the rise in illegal trafficking of women and children, we should be wary of making such generalisations.

The mobility of women from Asia to the world’s wealthier regions (Western Europe, the Middle East and the United States) is well documented, but we must be cautious of equating this movement from ‘poor’ to ‘rich’ with trafficking, as it is for many women a deep-rooted decision (Constable 2006; Gamburd 2000; Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002). It becomes difficult, argues Constable, to think of good female migration as women are often portrayed as victims, either resulting from male control over their lives or bodies or wider structural forces affecting their decisions to leave.

One suggestion for the rise in numbers of female migrants is that the global North has seen a skills shortage in health and care sectors, which has created a need for trained nurses and carers from Africa and Asia to fill the gaps. Ehrenreich and Hochschild (2002: 9) claim that because of the increase in Western women going to work since the 1970s to ‘make up the difference’ in the shortfall of their husband’s incomes they are no longer able to care for the sick, elderly or young. The increased presence of women outside of the home means that someone needs to fill the gap which is left by them, hence the need for domestic help in the stereotypical female role of carer. Their replacements are typically women and in such cases it is the husbands who follow the wives, and not vice-versa. Gamburd’s monograph, The Kitchen Spoon’s Handle, discusses the flow of female labourers from Sri Lanka to the Persian Gulf (Gamburd 2000). In demonstrating how such migration is not unique, neither in the displacement of citizens nor the power relations of the countries involved, she shows how domestic work, undertaken by women, has become part of local, national and global economies.

Women from the global South, as well as becoming increasingly involved in labour

\[\text{In the UK, for example, the need for carers is so great that free training is offered to those registered as unemployed in the attempt to encourage people back to work and address the lack of professional carers.}\]
migration, are also actively mobile tourists and travellers. Travel is also voiced as a reason for wanting to migrate by Sri Lankan women in the earlier cited study by Gamburd who describes the motives of Shriyani, a young Sri Lankan woman who had experienced migration through working as a housemaid and a nursing home assistant, with the phrase ‘dreaming of travel’. After living in Austria with her Austrian husband, Shriyani found returning to her village difficult as she was accustomed to a certain degree of freedom in Europe that she could not replicate in Sri Lanka (Gamburd 2000: 145).

There is also a close relationship between sex-work and migration, but we must be careful not to think of all sex-workers as female migrants, nor all female migrants as sex-workers. There is equally an important distinction to make between forced and voluntary sex-work; as I discuss in chapter five, some women migrate specifically with the aim of becoming sex-workers, whereas others become sex-workers as a consequence of migration. As one of the women I discuss later on exemplifies, women from the global South are often enticed and deceived by attractive propositions promising them well-paying, high-status jobs in the global North only to find themselves forced into the sex-industry on arrival, or to have little choice but to use sex-work as a means of making money. This is not just something which follows the South to North route (Nigeria to Italy for example) but also includes women who are trafficked from eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union to western Europe and the United States (Williams 1999: 3).

Ehrenreich and Hochschild suggest that the reason the sex-industry is made up of so many immigrants is because it is becoming less and less desirable to Western women, particularly in light of the AIDS epidemic. When thinking about sex-workers in relation to migration, the clients are often forgotten about, when in fact if it were not for male demand there would be no need for female supply. Another reason which is highlighted in Brennan’s work (2002), is the attraction of foreign women; men, she claims, are attracted to ‘exotic’ looking women and so there is a demand for migrant sex-workers.

There has also been a shift in migration theory to thinking about sex-tourism not just as a site of male mobility and female exploitation, but as a phenomenon involving Western women too. As we will see in chapter six, increasing numbers of Western women are
travelling to the Dominican Republic, the Caribbean and West Africa to have sexual relationships with local men, challenging existing assumptions of sex-tourism being simply about Western men exploiting ‘local’ women (Ebron 2002; Pruitt and LaFont 1995).

In addition to increased female mobility and new reasons for which women migrate, we must also consider the differing ways in which men and women experience migration and what kinds of migratory routes and means they have access to. In the latter section on migrants and their host countries I will address some of the occupations in which migrant women find themselves involved in more detail.

2.5 Forced Migration

Not everybody who migrates does so because they want to, and there is an important difference between forced and voluntary migration. Rather than labour migrants, who move to find better employment or working conditions, forced migrants are those whose departure is an unwilling or involuntary one. Refugees fleeing social or political conflict or ecological disruption and disaster such as drought or famine (Ager 1999), women in systems of arranged marriage, Internally Displaced Persons or IDPs (Cohen and Deng 1998) and those who are trafficked or considered to be ‘slaves’ are all mobile populations, but their decision to migrate is not always an entirely voluntary one. Economic migrants, seasonal workers, pastoralists, nomads, pilgrims, traders, travellers and tourists, on the other hand, have more choice surrounding their decisions to move, even if wider-scale social and political circumstance was a factor in their decision to leave.

The issues of choice and agency are complex ones and the notion of ‘voluntary’ migration is problematic. If someone leaves their home because they are living in a state of ‘poverty’ caused by wider socio-economic structures, does this mean they were actually forced into making their decision by structural factors beyond their control? My informants, as later quotations will show, often framed their expressions of migratory desire in terms of lack of choice. This does not mean, however, that we should place structural inequalities and socio-economic insecurity into the same category as political and civil unrest.
2.5.1 Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons

The study of forced migration is relevant to the Casamance region of Senegal in which my research took place, yet the civil conflict in the region has received very little media or academic attention when compared to other refugee flows in Sub-Saharan Africa. I discovered that some of the migrants whom I interviewed had come to Ziguinchor as a result of civil conflict both within Senegal and the wider West African region. As I discuss in more detail in chapter five, some women’s narratives of forced migration were linked to their present situations as sex-workers.

By the end of the twentieth century, an increase in the number and scale of internal conflicts, together with other causal factors, led to a rise in the numbers of refugees across the world. Refugees and asylum seekers made up 13.5 million or just over seven percent of international migrants in 2005. The Middle East and North Africa had the largest share of refugees and asylum seekers among immigrants (60 per cent), followed by Sub-Saharan Africa (17 per cent), East Asia and Pacific (11 per cent), and South Asia (11 per cent) (World Bank 2008). At least as many people again have been internally displaced and face similar problems to refugees within the borders of their own nation states. The meaning, consequences of and responses to this displacement are concentrated in but not restricted to developing countries in Africa and Asia.

The word ‘refugee’ and the discipline of ‘refugee studies’ that accompanies it have been used to describe those who have been uprooted (a word which we have already seen to be of significance) or forced into exile. International instruments define refugees as those who have crossed international borders, categorising those who are displaced within the boundaries of their nation state as internally displaced. The very use of the word ‘displacement’ suggests a way of thinking about migration as involuntary. As Zetter writes, the label ‘refugee’ ‘indicates change in the normal structure and mechanisms of economic, social and cultural life’ and these changes, involving little choice, often become pathological for those involved (Zetter 1988: 1). The refugee experience is a traumatic, disruptive and forced one, which can challenge economic, social and ethnic identities. Rather than being able to maintain ties with the communities that they have left behind, people are, in many cases prevented from doing so.¹⁶

¹⁶I am reminded of an interview I carried out in Ziguinchor, with a female refugee from Sierra Leone. I realised a few minutes into the interview that I could not ask the same kinds of questions that I would
As much as refugee status and forced migration arise as the result of violence, insecurity, fear and persecution, we must not forget that people can also be forced to migrate as a result of natural or ecological disasters beyond the control of the individual. Paul Farmer writes about ‘water refugees’ in Haiti and their reminiscences of a valley flooded by a dam that he describes as ‘de-humanising’. Communities were displaced because of a reservoir not civil conflict yet still suffered from the same problems of displacement, uprooting and resettlement that social and political refugees do (Farmer 1992). Another example of how changes to the environment can affect patterns of migration is linked to the migration of Pakistanis to Britain. The construction of the Mangla Dam displaced around 10,000 Mirpuris, who had to move from the area when the dam was constructed. Villagers were compensated for their move – some bought land in the Punjab, whereas others used their compensation money to come to Britain in search of work, taking advantage of migrants already in the ‘chain’. This displacement, and a Government level arrangement, have been suggested as reasons for the large numbers of Mirpuris to Britain (Anwar 1979: 24).

In relation to the above study of gender, there are also differences in the ways in which men and women experience forced migration and displacement:

[T]ogether with children, women constitute the vast majority of displaced populations, they are also the ones whose rights and protection are most likely to be undermined by a generic, ungendered and ultimately militarized approach to security, refugee protection and assistance.

Callamard (1996: 211)

Even if men and women alike are fleeing the same place, they do not have the same experience of flight and generally it is women who are more likely to suffer. Women and girls in exile are ultimately more likely to become the victims of rape, forced pregnancy, sexual slavery and trafficking and they also risk being abducted and forced to serve as domestic servants, spies and sex slaves. Sexual abuse against women can be used as a political weapon; during the political violence in Rwanda during the 1990s, rape was used as a means of humiliating women’s husbands or partners and the attacks

[usually ask my interviewees, because her situation was so different from the voluntary migrants to whom I had previously spoken. She could not answer questions about ‘home’ and what her family were doing because she had left so abruptly and did not know, but also because it was extremely painful for her to talk about.}
formed part of the cycle of revenge between Hutus and Tutsis (Turshen and Twagiramariya 1998). Rape, as well as being a physically and psychologically painful and horrific experience, also has indirect consequences on its female victims, such as the transmission of STIs and HIV/AIDS, unwanted pregnancy and ostracism by family, friends and community. Even if women are able to flee, they may find themselves in a structurally disadvantaged position in their new destination. Linguistically, educationally and economically at a disadvantage, women can find it harder to get work outside the informal sector.

2.5.2 Human Trafficking

Trafficking literature also links very closely with migration literature, and there have been many studies examining the experiences of African sex-workers in Europe who have either been the ‘victims’ of trafficking, or who have turned to sex-work upon arrival in a new country because they saw no other way of making a living (Koh Bela 2005; Kempadoo and Doezema 1998). I give an introduction to the issue here, because of one particularly poignant interview I carried out in Ziguinchor with a Nigerian woman who had been trafficked. What was interesting about her story was that she did not say ‘I was trafficked’, but that I realised as she was talking that her words fitted into the definitions of trafficking discussed below. Trafficking and ‘illegality’ are categories that are created by state discourses and practices in the countries that are trying to prevent migrants from entering them.

Trafficking refers also to any commodities (including people) that have been traded or bartered, and has sinister and implicit assumptions of non-consent. Trafficking can be defined as situations in which human beings are moved across borders into forced slavery, labour or servitude. Similar to Nancy Scheper-Hughes’ investigation into the transnational trade in body-parts, trafficking is something which crosses not only physical land borders, but those of morality and decency (Scheper-Hughes 2000). It is important to realise, however, that trafficking is not limited to sex-work, and can refer to any form of labour into which people are coerced, deceived, abused or forced through the use of violence.

The most widely used definition in legal terms is that found in the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish the Trafficking of Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the UN Convention Against Transnational
Organized Crime, more commonly known as the UN Trafficking Protocol. Trafficking is thus defined as follows:

[The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of abuse of power or a position of vulnerability or the giving or receiving payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.]

UN (2000)

Official figures and narratives from trafficking ‘victims’ suggest that trafficking has become an issue of concern for women and girls more than it has for men. The enslavement of young Thai girls into sex-work (Bales 2002) and the increasing numbers of Nigerian women trafficked into sex slavery in Europe (Koh Bela 2005; van Dijk 2001) are just two examples of such. One reason behind the supposed gendered nature of trafficking is the overarching idea of the ‘feminisation of poverty’; women are structurally and economically disadvantaged when compared to men, and are therefore more vulnerable to being trafficked (Demir 2003). Likewise, the experience of trafficking is affected by gender in many ways, including who is recruited, where they go, and what kind of labour they are involved in at their destination, as well as the ways in which they cope with and react to their situation.

2.6 Other Issues in Migration Studies

This section addresses other theoretical issues within migration studies that are relevant to this thesis, in particular immigration and politics on the one hand and the migrant journey on the other. Immigration law affects where migrants can go and restrictive border policies go some way to suggest why many hopeful migrants are restricted to dreaming about migration. I choose to concentrate on ‘the journey’ because it is relevant to the sea voyages made by clandestine migrants whom I discuss in more detail in chapter seven. The migrant journey is an area that I think is neglected within the study of migration when in fact it could be very revealing to us about migrant experiences. For the unsuccessful migrants in chapter seven, the pirogue journey was their sole experience of migration and their narratives should not be ignored.

2.6.1 Immigration and Politics

Politics and immigration policies play an important part in the migrant’s decision of
where to move and it is their inability to migrate legally that led the hopeful migrants in chapter seven to embark on illegal *pirouge* voyages. Immigration law and governmental decisions about national borders are not the only thing that prevent migrants from migrating, but I focus on them in this section as they are a crucial element of any discussion on mobility. In one sense, they act as barriers to prevent people from migrating, but equally, changes in immigration laws and the opening of borders entice people into migration.

Today’s hopeful migrants, despite being ‘global citizens’ are not free to cross borders as they wish, and their movement is restricted by ever-tightening immigration policies and political decisions. Migrants make decisions about their destinations based not just on where they want to go, but where they are able to go. Their ability to migrate is affected by where they will be able to find work or make money (formally or informally), as well as what the immigration policies and required documentation of their destination are. Recruitment agencies, skills shortages in certain countries and a shared linguistic or cultural background (or even colonial heritage) attract and entice people to migrate, but there are just as many, if not more, forces working against them.

I am now going to take the oft-cited United States ‘melting pot’ to give just one example of how shifts in immigration policies can affect people’s decisions to migrate, and as a result, can alter flows of different ethnic groups in and out of any particular country. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 was one of the main political decisions concerning the flows of international migrants to be made in the last century; updated in 1990 it is still of importance today. It replaced the restrictive quota system put in place since the US Immigration Act of 1924 and resulted in a flood of new immigration from non-European nations that changed the ethnic make-up of the United States. Asian migration, particularly from the Philippines, more than quadrupled in the five years following the 1965 Act, and the United States also saw an influx of people escaping the Cold War. Preference was, and continues to be, given to skilled workers, causing what is commonly referred to as a ‘brain drain’ from many developing countries to the West. International labour migration represents a loss of human resources for countries sending skilled labourers, as professionals leave their own countries for places where

17 The phrase ‘melting pot’ was actually taken from the title of a 1908 Broadway play by Israel Zangwill.
18 Sometimes referred to as The Immigration and Naturalization Act.
they can earn more money and have more potential to develop their careers. In South Africa, special visas are available for foreigners considered to have ‘exceptional skills’ in order to redress the skills shortage in certain areas caused by South Africans leaving to find work elsewhere.

Unlike today, the number of family reunification visas for the United States was previously unlimited, and there were no country-origin quotas for spouses or other relatives of American citizens. The United States currently allows approximately one million immigrants into the country every year. It is notoriously difficult for migrants to gain entry, but interestingly the Mexico – United States migrant corridor still remains the most frequented in the world; this is in part due to the large numbers of irregular migrants crossing the border. It should be noted that the United States also has a ‘visa lottery’, in which 50,000 diversity visas are made available each year as part of the Diversity Immigrant Visa Program. ‘Winners’ are drawn at random from all applicants meeting strict eligibility requirements and coming from countries with low rates of immigration to the United States. In 2008, 917 Senegalese citizens were drawn as ‘winners’. By means of comparison with neighbouring African countries, four Bissau-Guineans and 57 Gambians were also selected.

Another example of how changes in immigration policy can radically affect migration patterns was the introduction of the First Commonwealth Immigration Act in Great Britain in 1962. Prior to 1962, British citizens were classified not only as those resident in the UK, but citizens of the remaining colonies, known as Commonwealth citizens or British ‘subjects’. As long as their country remained in the Commonwealth, all citizens of dominions and former colonies retained their citizenship after Independence and were free to enter the UK. However, the Act of 1962 brought with it a system of employment ‘vouchers’ restricting the flows of economic migrants into the country. These were given to Commonwealth citizens with specific job offers, those who had skills that were seen to be in short supply (offered by British High Commissioners in their country of origin) and finally, those applying on a ‘first come, first served’ basis with preference given to war veterans. As discussed in the earlier section on male migration, the post-war British economy needed extra labour to rebuild the economy, most of which was provided by migrants from the Caribbean and South Asia. In Gardner’s words, this is an example of ‘the capitalist core […] demanding human
resources from its dependent peripheries’, if we want to look at it in neo-marxist terms (Gardner 1995: 45).

The Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1962 had a dramatic impact on the numbers and profiles of people entering the UK, and Ceri Peach’s work provides an interesting example of how both economic circumstance and changes in policy can affect not just migration rates but the gender and age of migrants. In the six months prior to the Act being introduced, 31,610 West Indian migrants came to the UK, but this was reduced by a tenth, to 3,240, in the six months after the Act was introduced. Figures from India and Pakistan demonstrated a similar trend and it was thus concluded, wrongly, argues Peach, that the Immigration Act was responsible for a decline in the number of migrants (Peach 1967). The change in numbers of arriving migrants around the time of the Act, he writes, was a result of economic uncertainty and the psychological barrier of rumoured political intervention, rather than because of the Act itself. People were also impelled to migrate before 1962 in reaction to rumours they had heard about impending immigration restrictions (see Jeffery 1976 for a discussion of this in relation to Pakistanis moving to the UK). This meant that immigration in Britain was increasingly made up of dependent women and children entering the country for the purpose of family reconstruction, rather than in response to economic circumstance. Men who had already settled could bring their wives and children once they had gained clearance to do so, and in 1991 DNA testing was introduced to determine kin relations for those applying for visas. Peach argues that demand for labour continued to explain West Indian migration to the UK, despite the uncertainty caused by the UK’s political interventions.

The immigration policies of France are also relevant to this discussion. Due to strong colonial links, France was once the preferred destination of Senegalese migrants. France, under Sarkozy’s rule, has also tightened its control over its immigrant population – a 2007 legislation requires immigrant family members older than 16 to take a test in their country of birth to prove their knowledge of France and French values. This is similar to the ‘Life in the UK’ test, which questions applicants on British governance, history and family structure so that they can prove themselves to be

19 This was often termed the ‘beat the ban rush’.
‘worthy’ citizens. Applicants for family reunification also have to prove that relatives in France are earning at least the minimum wage, and are able to support another person. Any doubts over whether or not someone really is a relative have to be settled by a DNA test costing €600 to prove that claims for visas to be reunited with one’s family are genuine, similar to the X-raying of children’s long bones and DNA testing which was first introduced in the UK in 1962. This could obviously create problems for families, and brings into question many issues about the nature of social and biological kinship (Franklin 1997). Restrictions led to migrants moving to other European countries instead, and the ethnic make-up and cultural heritage of neighbouring countries can change dramatically as a result.

As the above examples of policy changes show, migration is influenced by state regulations seeking to make what were once porous borders more discriminatory and harder to cross. Events such as the terrorist attacks of 9/11, and to a lesser extent those in London and Madrid, link increasing rates of international migration with the threat of terrorism. Many hosting nations are fearful about migrant communities, and they restrict entry to those whom they believe to pose a threat to national security. However, such restrictions on where migrants can go lead many to seek alternative and illegal entry routes: border controls restricting the movement of migrants lead many to enter the realm of the undocumented and irregular, as we will see in chapter seven.

As much as countries keep their borders closed, we must not forget that others are left open for migrants. The expansion of the European Union (EU) in May 2004, for example, has led to an increase in the numbers of Polish, Slovenian and Latvian immigrants to the United Kingdom, so, although migrants are restricted by political decisions about borders, they can also benefit from them.

2.6.2 Studying the Migrant Journey

The previous discussion of the opening and closing of borders leads me to the next issue I would like to discuss; the migrant journey itself. This liminal state of ‘betwixt and between’, first introduced as a concept by Victor Turner when working with the Ndembu of (what is now) Zambia, could in fact be an interesting way to approach the study of migration (Turner 1969; Grillo 2008). There are several reasons for the neglect

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20 http://www.lifeintheuktest.gov.uk/
of the issue, the main one being the impracticalities and methodological difficulties of studying people in transit – researchers are dependent upon diaries, second hand accounts and photographs (if they exist) of the time in-between new and old lives. In chapter seven I rely heavily upon the narratives of two return migrants who were repatriated to Senegal from the Canary Islands after their failed attempts to migrate, but I also draw upon discussions I had with other men and women living in the Casamance to show non-migrant views about irregular pirogue departures.

I would suggest that studying journeys links in with the anthropological concept of liminality. Usually associated with rites of passage, the study of the liminal looks at periods in people’s lives in which they move from one state to another, such as puberty rites when a change from boyhood to manhood (or from being a girl to a woman) occurs (van Gennep 1960). Rituals themselves are often shrouded in secrecy and are sometimes considered too dangerous or sacred to talk about, making them even harder to study (de Jong 2007).

Christian Vium’s paper ‘CLANDESTINE’ argues that the analysis of the migrant journey should be the ‘central optic’ through which the migrant’s struggle (both in their home of Mali and as illegal immigrants in Paris) is viewed (Vium 2008). Looking at migration from the transnational perspectives we have seen above, the journey could be seen as losing its symbolic significance because migrants are not uprooted, and arrival in a new destination does not mean cutting off all ties with ‘home’.

One exception to the lack of studies on the migratory journey itself is the increasing number of narratives from ‘victims’ of forced migration, often collected by UN agencies or NGOs. They all follow the same format; those who are trafficked are either ‘victims’ or they are ‘agents’, actively changing their own futures and resisting forces of domination. Ethnographic work seeks to give migrants a voice and tell the stories which may not otherwise be told. These are often female-focused, because, as I have addressed above, it is usually women that are the victims of trafficking. Female forced migrants are often portrayed as powerless victims, but the following ethnographic works seek to show another side to this:

Women are really very strong. It is surprising, but men are cowards when it comes to hunger, they really are.

Shikola (1998: 142)
Shikola describes her flight from Namibia in 1977 and of a life growing up in exile. Her account, in addition to describing the suffering and pain she experienced during her years in exile, also highlights the active role she played during the war as a soldier and then a humanitarian worker. Her account, like that of Angolan refugee Susanna Mwana-uta who spent years in exile before returning to her country of birth, shows how women do not have to be the passive victims of persecution and forced migration, but that they, along with men, have their own coping mechanisms and creative and resourceful means of survival (Powles 2002). Powles tells us of Susanna Mwana-uta’s creativity and resourcefulness when fleeing Angola, and her adaptation of ‘familiar forms of sustenance and subsistence’ in order to survive (Powles 2002: 100).

Such narratives and accounts of the migration journey are as important as the effect of rupture and a time of liminal uncertainty. Even if the migratory journey loses some of its significance if we use a transnational, constantly flowing framework for the study of migration, it should not be ignored. In the case of irregular migration from Senegal to the Canary Islands, the in-between phase is significant because it is their only experience of migration. For them, the journey is the sum total of their migration experience – rather than talking about what life in Europe was like, they told me what their journey was like.

2.7 Migrants and Host Nations

Although none of the people I discuss throughout this thesis were ‘successful’ migrants and did not reach the point where they were employed or integrated in their host nations, these are still important domains of study that remain relevant to this thesis. Return-migrants have a tendency to distort the truth about their lives in Europe to their friends and families in Senegal; many do not reveal the work that they did, the conditions that they lived in or the number of hours they worked. The role of remittances is equally important, as although none of the people I discuss reached the point where they could send remittances home, they saw the effects of remittances upon their local communities and wanted the same for themselves. This relates to the emphasis I place on aspirations – as well as wanting a life in Europe, migrants want to provide for their families and have an elevated status in their hometown. The money and objects that migrants sent home – whether a photo of themselves next to a newly
purchased fridge, a new item of clothing, or money for construction – were ubiquitous and the theoretical contribution made by studies of remittances should not be ignored.

A growing amount of attention has also been given to migrant communities in their host destinations. What kind of work do migrants do, for example? How do they integrate, if at all? Where do they consider ‘home’, and why? These are all questions that seek to add a cultural and social dynamic to the study of migration – as well as being interested in how many people went and where they went to, anthropologists are concerned with the impact of their arrival in a new country on both sending and receiving nations and how migrants respond to living in new places.

This section looks at how migrants’ experiences of host countries have been studied. Most studies see the informal ways in which migrants live on the margins and look at their survival strategies in the face of adversity. As well as looking at the work carried out by migrants, I consider the role that remittances play in local and global economies.

2.7.1 Migrants as Informal Workers

White Englishman: Who are you people? Why haven't I seen you before?

Okwe (Nigerian immigrant in London): We are the people you don't see: We are the ones who drive your cabs, we clean your rooms, we suck your cocks.

*Dirty Pretty Things*21

The sad fact is that many migrants perform the jobs that we, in the global North, do not want to do. Partly restricted by a lack of skills, an unfamiliar language or incorrect or non-existent paperwork, migrants can end up being exploited and paid below minimum wage to do the jobs that others do not want to do. Believing that migration is just a temporary life-stage, many are willing to do jobs that they would not do at home. Obviously, not all migrants fall into this category, but for many, casual and poorly paid employment is the norm rather than the exception.

Hart’s pioneering and oft-quoted 1973 work on the informal sector in Ghana still has relevance to migrants (not just African) in contemporary European cities as many migrants find themselves using creative strategies and informal networks in order to ‘get by’ (Hart 1973). As much as global flows bring new exchanges of people and goods and

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21 Taken from the film *Dirty Pretty Things*, which portrays the lives of illegal immigrants living and working in London.
new opportunities for work, education and income-earning, they can just as easily replicate existing inequalities. As the opening quotation shows, migrants often end up in unskilled jobs and fill vacancies in the service, hospitality and sex industries, working for minimum or below-minimum wage. There are distinct gender differences with regard to who carries out what kind of work, and, as discussed earlier in this chapter, women often suffer more than men as a result of poor educational backgrounds, literacy skills and lack of formal work experience. Many migrants, such as the women in Ehrenreich and Hochschild’s edited *Global Woman* (2002) find themselves living in terrible conditions and although I want to stress that we cannot assume all female migrants from the global south are exploited, we cannot deny that this exploitation exists.

Although many migrant men and women from the global South do end up in domestic work, informal sector jobs and even the sex-trade, women are also taking advantage of trade networks and setting up their own businesses (see MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga 2000). Similarly, men are not always exploited or involved in illegal employment, although when reading studies of diasporic communities we may be tempted to think otherwise.

### 2.7.2 The Role of Remittances

Worldwide remittance flows are estimated to have exceeded $318 billion in 2007, of which $240 billion was sent to developing countries. Due to undocumented flows of money and the use of informal channels, these figures are undoubtedly larger. Remittances are transferred through both formal and informal networks and the black and yellow Western Union signs across Senegal are a constant reminder of one of the more formal channels for transferring money. Informal transfers involve using friends, relatives or chauffeurs to carry cash or goods, and the Senegalese post office also has a system in which payments can be made and received. Banks are also forming alliances with Western Union and Moneygram to increase their participation in the money transfer business, and growing amounts of remittances are also transmitted by telephone or fax (Shaw 2007: 45). The importance of remittances to the Senegalese economy demonstrates the reliance many Senegalese families have on relatives who have migrated and young men, as we will see, feel under pressure to be able to provide for their parents.
It is claimed that recorded remittances are more than twice as large as official aid and make up nearly two-thirds of Foreign Domestic Investment (FDI) flows to developing countries. In 2007, the top recipient countries of recorded remittances were India, China, Mexico, the Philippines, and France. As we would expect, rich countries are the main source of remittances and the United States is by far the largest sending country, with $42 billion in outward flows recorded in 2006 (World Bank 1997). In 2005, 6.1 per cent of Senegal’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) came from remittances, compared to 2.6 per cent in 1980 (Shaw 2007: 17).

Studying remittances reveals a lot to us about the destinations of migrants – they tell us where migrants are and can help us to analyse economic relationships between home and host countries. Remittances can be studied on both a local and a global level; Coutin and Hernandez (2006) argue that remittances are a ‘direct’ form of support which makes the personal success of migrants and their individual monetary flows an instrument for national development. The worldwide remittance figures and the visibility that remittances have gained demonstrate their importance both to migrants and their families and to those studying them. Nugent suggests that remittances from abroad have actually been a more important source of funding for reconstruction in Eritrea and Somalia than external aid, and Eritrea actually taxes nationals whom are resident in the United States (Nugent 2004: 488). Return migrants are in some cases considered to be ‘national heroes’ for the contribution they make to the economies of their home countries.

As much as remittances are important to national and international economies, we must also think about the smaller-scale impact they have, and how family budgets, division of labour and changing flows of money can alter relationships and change people’s responsibilities towards each other. We should also consider the significance of rituals and prestige and changes that come with consumption patterns as a result of increased remittance flows. I would suggest that in some cases the presence of remittances can actually create tension and increase disparities between households, as some individuals benefit more than others.

Remittances bring prestige, and as I observed throughout my fieldwork in Senegal, being able to construct a building or wearing clothes that obviously came from abroad were both status symbols. What happens to remittances when they are sent back by
migrants is a fascinating domain of study and one with plenty of rich empirical studies. Receiving economic assistance may be a luxury, used for starting up a business or investing in a second property, or it may be a necessity. Migrants send money home for a variety of things – they may make a monthly contribution to household expenses or send back money for a particular event: a pilgrimage to Mecca, annual school fees or money to invest in building work, for example. Remittances may supplement daily incomes, or be the only source of income a particular individual or family has.

Gardner discusses how stone constructions in a village she calls ‘Talukpur’ in Bangladesh replaced traditional bamboo and mud structures, and became symbols of status and prosperity because they had been built with remittance money (Gardner 1995: 133). Remittances can also change gender dynamics within the household, as Gamburd shows using the case of Sri Lankan women who have migrated to the Middle East to work as domestic workers. Although they were the wage-earners, the money that they sent home was often controlled by others. This led some women to conceal the money that they earned so that they did not lose control over their income. She demonstrates how remittances can cause tension in the household, and that married and unmarried couples alike have suffered because of disputes over access to money (Gamburd 2000: 141). Lefebvre (1999: 265-67) as quoted in Gardner (2004: xxv) makes the link between migration and new kinds of consumption and social differentiation. Remittances and savings sent back to rural northern Pakistani Punjab were used to organise the performance of ritual activities that maintained and increased the honour (known as izzoat) of the migrant’s household. In this example, remittances have reinforced existing cultural practices and patriarchy – basic needs are met, but a ceremonial fund preserves symbolic capital and honour.

An issue of relevance to this thesis is the link between remittances and migratory desire. I, like the people to whom I spoke during my fieldwork, did not know the exact details of how money sent home through remittances had been earned, what percentage of the migrant’s earnings it was nor how frequently it would arrive, but I was able to see its effects and the impact that it had on local communities. Remittances, like rumours about successful migrants, fuelled Senegalese people’s imaginations and seeing the concrete effects of what an additional income could do, made them even more determined to migrate themselves.
2.8 Theorising Migration without Movement

2.8.1 Imagining Là-bas

In Sierra Leone, suffering is seen as an unavoidable part of life. Though one imagines a better life, a fairer lot, one is taught to stoically accept the inevitability of hardship. What matters most is how one endures it…

Jackson (2007: 125)

‘Imaginative fantasy’, argues Weiss in his study of Tanzanian barber’s shops, has become essential to the way in which popular culture is expressed, and I would add is also important in the town of Ziguinchor where my research took place, as women and men sought to portray themselves as active and mobile through their imaginings of a ‘modern’, European life (Weiss 2004: 198). From the ‘New York’ graffiti on the wall of a local restaurant to the miniature French flags hanging inside a taxi, images of Western culture penetrated the imaginings of local Ziguinchorois and strong diasporic links, tourism and return-migrants have made the distance between Europe and Senegal appear smaller than it is.

The study of the imaginary is not new, but the way in which I use it to approach the issue of migration in Senegal is. There is a space for the study of unsuccessful migration, and (un)fortunately, Senegal is helping to fill this void. The literature I have discussed above, whilst useful for explaining the reasons for which migrants move, does not help to explain why so many hopeful Senegalese migrants persist in their attempts to be mobile despite being largely unsuccessful. This thesis is aiming to fill a gap in existing literature by looking at people’s aspirations of international mobility even though they are vague, slippery and imagined.

Weiss’ summary of how the imaginary (2004) has been studied provides us with an overview of how ‘the imaginative act’ appears within academia. He notes the presence of the imaginary in the political (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999), the production of biomedical knowledge (Martin 1998), and nuclear proliferation (Gusterson 1999). Borrowing from Moyer (2004), imagination is ‘the ability to create an alternative vision in the face of oppression, whether the oppressors are the local police, the national government, or global finance capital.’ Whilst Appadurai’s concern is with how

22 Là-bas literally translates as ‘over there’, and was used by my informants in reference to Europe. No distinction was made between cities, countries or continents, which were all referred to as là-bas.
alternative globalisations may be imagined, Moyer tries to understand how alternative localisations are imagined in the context of global spaces through a study in the Tanzanian city of Dar es Salaam (Moyer 2004: 136). In his frequently cited work, Appadurai argues that the imagination ‘allows individuals to consider a wider set of ‘possible’ lives than they ever did before,’ but we must not forget that achieving one’s imagined departure depends very much on who is imagining leaving and where they want to go (Appadurai 1991: 197). Brennan’s work (2004: 41), like my own, stresses the importance of the imagination of migration as a realm of study in its own right. She shows how female sex-workers in the Dominican Republic are engaged in transnational practices that are not always successful and she argues that we should be interested with how women imagine capitalising on global linkages rather than whether or not they are able to leave.

Imaginings can be temporal or spatial. They can be of a condition that is yet to be, or nostalgia for a time gone by or they can evoke a desire to be elsewhere. Just as Sawa, a refugee in Jackson’s discussion of Sierra Leonean migrants in London, imagines and thinks about what life ‘back home’ was like, the migrants-to-be in this thesis imagine their route to a life in Europe. In the case of young Senegalese men and women, imagining a better future, through migration, gives them hope in their day-to-day lives. For many, aspirations of migration are just as important as an arrival elsewhere, hence the importance of imagined migration as an area of study. In the film Dirty Pretty Things, the focus is not on Senay, the Turkish illegal immigrant’s arrival in her new world, but on her aspirations of getting there, and what she envisages life to be like on her arrival in New York.

The people with whom I conducted interviews and with whom I discussed ideas about migrating were those who occupied ‘marginal’ positions in Senegalese society (Werner 1993). I was talking to people who did not have regular incomes and relied on the informal economy to earn their living, but I believe that there is more than just a lack of economic resources behind their imagining. Although a visa costs an enormous amount of money and the complicated process involved is too much for many ordinary Senegalese people, it is more than just practicalities that prevent people from migrating.

2.8.2 Consuming the Idea of Migration

The idea of studying the imaginary leads me into the second theme running through my thesis, in which I consider how imagining an escape from Senegal to Europe could link
to the idea that people are consuming the idea of migration. I consider the possibility that people see migration as a way of expressing their discontent and frustrations in a country which they believe has very little to offer them, which explains why they continue to aspire despite many failed attempts. Whether encouraged by a friend to online date, or being encouraged to try sex-work by women who claim their clients have become long-term partners, gossip and rumours about the success of migration leads men and women to buy into the idea of it. Migration, despite being out of reach for so many people, has become a tangible object that can be consumed just like any other material good. Culture is constructed through consumption, not just production, states Howes (1996: 8), and I argue that young Senegalese men and women consume the idea of migration in the same way as one can consume any other commodity.

I argue that people are consumers of the idea of migration, and that their apparent desire and near-obsession with migration could almost be considered a form of peer-pressure as well as explaining why the unemployed young person may appear to be ‘doing nothing’. In the chapters that follow, I consider the idea of the goorgoorlu – someone who ‘gets by’ or ‘makes do’, and show that people do not know how to voice their concerns about their futures and consequently turn them into migratory desires. Migration has become a metaphor for discontent.

Scheld’s work (2007: 236) on clothing in Dakar also notes the sense of disenchantment amongst Senegal’s urban youth, and the limited ways they feel they have to express themselves:

Young men and women frequently talk about their efforts to ‘débrouiller,’ a French term which means to manage, to sort out, and to put up with a struggle to get by. A gendered Wolof equivalent is ‘gor-gooralu.’ This is derived from the Wolof word for ‘man’ (goor gi) and is similar to saying ‘be the man’ in English. Some describe daily life in Dakar as a process of ‘dugu ak géen’ (entering and leaving [through the door]) and ‘kor-koral’ (fasting to economize and make ends meet). These street expressions indicate that youth are determined to be productive, but they see themselves working within a socio-economic system that significantly limits their power. In some cases, it is necessary to lie, steal and hurt other people in order to reach their goals.

The work of Daniel Mains (2007) and the concept of ‘yiluũña’ help to explain how young men’s feelings of disenchantment and, quite simply, boredom with their current state in Ethiopia, are similar to those expressed by my informants and linked to a discourse of migratory desires. Yiluũña is ‘to experience an intense shame based on
what others think and say about one and one’s family’ – Mains likens it to a whining mosquito, a constant reminder that people are watching and judging your behaviour (Mains 2007: 660). As I discuss in Senegal, living in an urban locus provides men and women with basic social networks that enable them to meet their daily needs for food and shelter. Earning money is mostly dependent upon the informal economy and people are used to ‘getting by’ in an informal context. Mains states that the amount of unstructured time the young Ethiopians in his study possessed gave them more time to think about and imagine themselves elsewhere, and I began to wonder if the same could be said of Ziguinchor. Were all the afternoon siestas and claims that there was nothing to do actually an expression of despair and almost a sense of people giving in? They wanted something to do, but could not find anything, and thus began to use talk of migration as a way of relieving this boredom and to explain their lack of prospects or permanent employment. I find Mains’ suggestion that young Ethiopian men are trying to solve the temporal problem of *yilunëta* with the spatial solution of migration a fascinating one and his theory gave me a new way to think about the lives of my informants. If they could not fulfil society’s expectations of them through employment and earning a wage, they could talk about migration as a potential means of doing so.

The idea that migration and consumption are linked is also connected to theoretical debates on identity and dress, which is something that I address in the ethnographic chapters that follow. Many scholars have looked at the role of identity and how the appropriation of different styles, material goods or ideas can transform the individual (Schoss 1996). One of the most important studies of theoretical relevance is that of the Congolese *sapeurs* (Gandoulou 1984; MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga 2000).

The French verb *se saper* means to dress well, or elegantly and became known in academia through Gandoulou’s writings on young, Congolese people in Brazzaville and the style of dress that they adopted. Brand names, skin lightening creams and hair straightening all became ways for youth identity to be expressed and they dressed in a way that emulated and looked towards metropolitan Paris. Looking good was a sign of upward social ability and a way of achieving recognition for one’s accomplishments and aspirations; the clothes that the *ôtinan* of Senegal wear display similar aspirations.

Although the people I discuss in this thesis are not internationally mobile in a migratory sense (or if they are, they are unsuccessful) they are displaying a desire to be upwardly
socially mobile through consuming Western images and ideas about migration. As I will demonstrate in the following chapters, the transformation in lifestyle that hopeful migrants believe will occur when they arrive in their destination country is linked to a transformation of identity. When migrants stress what they want to have when they move là-bas, they are indirectly lamenting what they do not have in Senegal. In Ethiopia, Mains (2007: 669) describes this as ‘defining their lives through absences’, whether the absence of entertainment, health or ‘modernity’.

Imagining spatial movement has become a way of solving social problems. Expressing a desire to cross international borders has made migration a symbolic act, and something which can transform people and their identities (Newell 2005). Consuming the idea of migration and wearing clothes associated with a life elsewhere is almost as significant as actually moving. Imagining and consuming elsewhere is, in Newell’s words, a ‘magical’ and ‘symbolic’ process, and in Côte d’Ivoire, as in Senegal, aspirations of migration can be explained through thinking about the consumption of an idea as well as a reaction to economic circumstance. Migration is about the quest for betterment and even if the journeys which the migrants in this thesis go on do not cross any physical borders, they cross imagined ones.

2.9 Conclusion

This chapter has provided the reader with an overview of the main theoretical approaches to migration. I have concentrated mostly on transnational migration, and whilst I am aware that this is not the only way in which people, goods and ideas move between place and time, it is the most relevant to the discussions that follow. I have talked about the differences in forced and voluntary migration, and some of the factors that push and pull people into leaving their own country for another, often unknown place. I have shown some of the complexities of a transnational approach – are people really caught in the middle of two different nation-states? Are the endless potentials of seemingly open borders and technological advances really as boundless as they seem?

In short, no. The migrant is restricted by immigration policies which decide whether she or he has the right to enter and stay in a country. Today’s migrants cannot just pick a holiday destination or seek employment where they wish. There are politics involved, visas to be acquired and borders to be crossed, and when those borders cannot be
legally traversed, the migrant becomes irregular or illegal. They become dark, shadowy figures who can no longer take advantage of global flows and seemingly endless possibilities for economic enrichment and self-fulfilment. Even if migrants successfully arrive in their chosen destination, the life they have will not necessarily be the one they imagined for themselves.

In the chapters that follow, I relate the discussion above to life in contemporary Senegal. How do people in the Casamance fit into these international flows of people? How do they perceive migration and what are their strategies for getting to Europe? Why and where do they want to go? The next chapter provides a history of Senegal and the Casamance so that the reader can understand the place in which my work took place and the reasons for which people aspire to migrate. My work considers the socio-economic climate in which people live and work and why it does not meet their expectations.

As much as this thesis is a snapshot of a particular place in a particular moment in time, I believe it to have similarities with places where I have not been but know must exist. The literature noted above has shown us that Senegalese people are not the only people to migrate, and that they are not the only ones to have been dissatisfied enough with their present lives to move. In talking about the imaginary, and in talking about a country with deeply mobile populations, we can see that the examples I present are simply new ways of looking at an already existing phenomenon.

I want to show that unlike many of the cases discussed above, for most of the young men and women whose words form the basis of the discussion that follows, migration is limited to imaginings. They have been drawn into the magic of a transnational, global world and believe that they can be a part of it. Senegal’s long and complex history of migration shows that the issues I discuss are not just individual stories or one-off incidences of people wanting a better life, but that they are linked to traditions of mobility that existed long before global developments in communication made distances smaller.
Imagining Migration:
Cyber-cafés, sex and clandestine departures in the Casamance, Senegal

Emilie Venables

Full citation:


Please contact Dr Emilie Venables for further chapters: evenables@rhru.co.za
CHAPTER 3 *Fii, dafay metti*: An Introduction to Senegal and its Migrations

### 3.1 Introduction

The material realities of the West African country of Senegal and the southern town of Ziguinchor where my research took place are integral to the stories that I recount in later chapters. This chapter provides the reader with an overview of Senegal, looking at the history of both the country and the Casamance region, before focusing in more detail on the town of Ziguinchor. As well as providing background information to Senegal, I show how important migration is for Senegalese men and women, particularly in the Casamance where circular rural to urban migration has been a longstanding feature of rural life. In this section I show how these patterns of migration mean that Senegalese people have a long history of mobility not just in response to socio-economic, political or environmental disasters, but as part of the everyday. It is these histories of mobility that help to fuel the imaginations of today’s migrants. Fouquet’s (2007) work on aspirations of migration in Senegal is very similar to my own, but rather than talking about hopeful migrants’ obsessions with *là-bas*, he talks of the Senegalese fascination with *ailleurs* or ‘elsewhere’, seeing *trajectoires d'extraversion* as a continuation of deeply-rooted migration patterns.

I begin this chapter by introducing the country and regional context of my research, before discussing Senegalese patterns of migration. I discuss what draws people to the Casamance, as well as what pushes them away. This chapter ends by bringing the reader back to present day Ziguinchor so as to provide a more contemporary, ethnographic context to both my fieldwork and the empirical chapters that follow.

### 3.2 Senegal: *fii, dafay metti*

Demographically, the post-colonial state of Senegal has much in common with many other Sub-Saharan African countries. Senegal has experienced a rapid population increase over the last half a century; it grew from three million people in 1960 to five million in 1976, and in 1988 was estimated at seven million. It has a low and uneven population density, and today’s young and increasingly urban population are estimated

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23 Life is hard.
to make up 40 per cent of the country’s 12,379,000 inhabitants.\textsuperscript{24} Rapid population increases such as this cause demographic pressures which some scholars have linked to international migration (Riccio 2001: 584).

Senegal has, like many other countries, experienced socio-economic and ecological crises that have contributed to its current situation as an economically unstable country. Despite widespread poverty and unemployment and the collapse of the groundnut economy in the 1980s, Senegal’s economic situation has remained more stable than would be expected.\textsuperscript{25} Politically, elections have remained on the whole democratic, and people were hopeful for the future of the country both upon Abdoulaye Wade and the \textit{sopi}\textsuperscript{26} party’s election win in 2000 and their re-election in 2007.\textsuperscript{27} Although the Casamance has been marred by low-level civil conflict (which I discuss later in this chapter) the country has not been affected by civil unrest in the way that many of its West African neighbours have. Rich in natural beauty, Senegal is a popular tourist destination both because of its beaches and natural landscapes and also its rich cultural heritage.

\subsection*{3.2.1 Political Economy of Senegal}

Senegal is a former French colony, and Dakar was, until 1958, the capital of French West Africa, a federation consisting of eight French colonial territories: Mauritania, Senegal and Niger, Côte d’Ivoire, French Sudan (Mali), French Guinea (Guinea Conakry), Upper Volta (Burkina Faso) and Dahomey (Benin). During this period Dakar had established itself as an important commercial and trading centre not just throughout West Africa, but the rest of the continent. The city was not the only port in Senegal, and the northern town of Saint Louis and the island of Gorée off the coast of Dakar were also important trading posts, the latter also being used to ship slaves. Until this point, Dakar had been a leading centre of commerce, industry and culture, yet upon

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{24} Projected population figures for 2007. See http://unstats.un.org
\bibitem{25} In recent years Senegal has benefited from the conflict in nearby Côte d’Ivoire, as investors moved their businesses and money to Dakar.
\bibitem{26} \textit{sopi} means ‘change’ in Wolof.
\bibitem{27} The 2007 film, \textit{Democracy in Dakar}, suggests that the elections were not as democratic as they may appear. The film analyses the relationship between hip-hop music and the state, suggesting that those who spoke out against the government had been threatened and silenced.
\end{thebibliography}
Independence in 1960 suddenly found itself being the capital of a small African economy dependent upon exporting groundnuts (Peteree 1967: 63).

Senegal became fully independent in 1960 (after becoming independent with Mali and then splitting), and it was during this year that the country was divided into seven separate administrative regions. Senegal retained close links with France under Senghor, its first president, and France was heavily involved in the main industry, groundnuts, which are intrinsically linked to the country’s socio-economic and political development. The post-Independence years saw a remarkable maximisation of groundnut production and economic growth, but this did not last. Due to a combination of factors, including financial scandals, decreasing groundnut prices and economic downturn as oil prices rose, Senegal, like so many other countries, was forced to turn to Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs). Senegal’s period of structural adjustment began in 1979, and it was simultaneously aimed to diversify and increase agricultural production whilst moving resources to areas other than groundnut production. These attempts to alleviate debt were imposed across the country by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. In 1994, as part of these reforms, the Communauté Financière d’Afrique (CFA) franc was devalued across West Africa, and a rise in the cost of basic food items ensued.

These factors, along with environmental crises that I discuss in more detail below have created a situation in which many Senegalese men and women feel they cannot support themselves or their families, and migration is one way they see as leaving their economic despair behind. They are disenchanted with Senegal, and people in the Casamance region particularly want to migrate away from a region that they feel has been systematically neglected. This is important as it provides a background for the ethnographic examples of migratory desires that follow.

3.2.2 Agriculture and Fishing

West African commercial agriculture differed from that in Southern, Eastern and central Africa because its origins lay not in European settler colonisation, but in the rapid spread of small-scale, indigenously produced cash-crops. Today, it is estimated that 80 per cent of the Senegalese population are actively involved in the agricultural sector. The

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28 Peanuts.
main crops grown in Senegal are groundnuts, rice, millet and corn, and fishing (both sea and freshwater) is also an important industry. This section discusses the role that agriculture and fishing have played in the development of Senegal, and as I will show, they are linked not only to social life and politics, but religion too.

One cannot talk about the rural economy of Senegal without discussing groundnuts. Groundnut revenues were the basis to the colonial state in Senegal and they are an important area of study not just for the ways they have affected agriculture and the economy, but also how they caused changes in economic and social organisation (Nugent 2004: 198). The groundnut sector is an important source of seasonal employment and export revenue and since Independence, almost all the government's training, subsidies and agricultural extension services have been oriented toward their production. Such support has not led to much improvement in rural living standards, even in Senegal's main groundnut zones.

Figure 4. Groundnut ‘mountain’ in Ziguinchor

The groundnut industry has a close relationship with the Mouride brotherhood, who I also discuss below in relation to international migration. The Mourides are a Muslim sufi order founded in 1898 by Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba (who died in 1927), and they have become the focus of studies interested in the brotherhood’s economic power and potential to mobilise political resources. The predominantly Wolof brotherhood is significant because of the strong relationship a marabout leader has with his disciples or
talibés, the work ethic of believers and the sense of solidarity felt between members. The spiritual home of the Mouride order is the Senegalese town of Touba, but in the 1980s an international trading network began to link Touba with cosmopolitan cities around the world, including Paris, New York, Madrid, Rome and Milan. Mouride migration to towns began following World War II, increasing after Independence and accelerating during the droughts of the 1970s (Babou 2002). The Mourides played an important role in the geographical expansion of groundnut production throughout the northern Wolof zone, and principle religious leaders have become some of the biggest individual groundnut producers in Senegal (Cruise O’Brien 1971).

In a country such as Senegal, where so much of the population is dependent upon agriculture, environmental shocks such as drought can have a devastating impact on local populations. The 1960s and 1970s were, for many African nations, a time of drought as well as a period of international recession. The 1968 Sahelian drought in particular had a devastating impact upon Senegal: production stagnated, incomes in rural areas fell and international trade suffered. Solutions to the problems caused by the drought included intervention from governments and private enterprises who wanted to manage and transform agricultural labour processes, and across Africa large-scale agricultural schemes were established in the hope of ending low productivity, hunger and shortages in foreign exchange.

Chronic drought dramatically altered agricultural conditions for many Senegalese farmers, and I will discuss this in more detail below in relation to the Jola of the Casamance. Manchuelle’s work on the Soninke (a group of peoples inhabiting the area around Matam in the north of Senegal) provides another example (Manchuelle 1997). Soninke farmers, Manchuelle writes, have great knowledge of the land and are skilled in adapting to their environments. The jeri lands, which are in the interior of the region, were suited to rainy-season agriculture, but as a consequence of drought, agricultural output was severely damaged and the Soninke suffered from unpredictable harvests and lower yields. He is keen to point out that even though the drought had a severe impact on the Soninke homeland, and left many with no choice but to migrate, the period in which the drought was at its worst (1968 – 1972) was also a time in which migration to France was already commonplace. Drought cannot, therefore, be considered the
original cause of migration to Europe from the Soninke, although it may have played a part (Manchuelle 1997: 212).

Senegal never completely got over the drought years, and even today production still remains irregular and land that was deserted has never fully recovered. The problems of the rural economy have a clear link with the pressure placed on urban areas as people moved to the towns and cities in search of alternative incomes and economic betterment (Riccio 1999: 4).

Agriculture is not the only industry in Senegal that has suffered. The fishing sector, in which 15 per cent of the population is estimated to be involved, is Senegal’s second largest industry. Over-fishing by European fisherman with industrial fishing methods, a subsequent decline in fish stocks and the rise in cost of fuel have all affected the fishing industry. Fishing is still an informal sector activity in Senegal; small-scale artisan methods and tradition of apprentisage cannot compete with international industrial fishing techniques, despite there being 20,000 Senegalese pirogues along the coast (Sall and Morand 2008: 34). Due to the seas being over-fished by European boats, Senegalese fishermen are forced to go further into unknown waters and spend longer at sea to make a living, and their small wooden vessels cannot cope. It is not only fisherman who suffer, but all the industries that are attached to fishing, such as fish processing plants, factories producing ice and small-scale drying and smoking industries.

There have been direct links made between the crisis of the fishing industry and the increase in clandestine pirogue migration from Senegal to the Canary Islands, which is the background to the unsuccessful migration I discuss in chapter seven (Hallaire 2007). As well as this being recognised by scholars, it was recounted to me numerous times during my fieldwork as Senegalese people themselves made the link between a suffering industry and increased occurrences of irregular migration:

With work, lots of people would have stayed here. There used to be a lot of fish, but now we don’t see them because there aren’t any fish left. Fish has become more expensive, because all the fisherman have left. They’ve left.

Aziz, NGO worker, Ziguinchor

Interviewed conducted with Aziz on June 3rd, 2007 at the Hotel Perroquet, Ziguinchor. Interview conducted in French.
An investigation into the occurrence of irregular migration carried out in the coastal fishing village of Yoff, the quartier of Dakar where the majority of the city’s Lebou fishermen are based also points to the same thing. Hallaire reports that 75 per cent of the return migrants she interviewed were fishermen, who saw irregular migration by pirogue as their only hope for the future because they were no longer able to earn a living from fishing (Hallaire 2007). Fishermen stated that it was cheaper for them to stay on land than go out fishing because the constant rises in the cost of fuel, and of living more generally, made it difficult for them to earn money from their fishing trips, especially when there were allegedly no fish to be caught.

The problems facing the fishing industry have affected the country not only on a larger economic scale, but also in terms of national identity and the level of the household (Fall 2007). Meals have become smaller and harder to source, the national dish of cëeb-u-jën (fish and rice) has become more expensive to prepare and the unofficial yet widely recognised national symbol of the pirogue has taken on a much more sinister meaning.

3.3 The Casamance: an isolated region?
Despite my research taking place in the urban locus of Ziguinchor, the Casamance is essentially a rural zone. The region is divided into three main geographical areas – the Basse, Moyenne and Haute (Low, Medium and Upper) Casamance. The lower and middle areas are concentrated around the rivers of the South, whereas the upper area consists of oriental (eastern) Senegal. The region was officially divided in 1984, when Ziguinchor became the capital of the Basse Casamance and Kolda the capital of the Moyenne and Haute Casamance. The Casamance is considered to be an ecologically rich, green region – it is seen as a privileged place, rich in mythology and fertile land, but at the same time is considered isolated and neglected. Populations outside of the main towns of Ziguinchor and Bignona are concentrated in villages and the majority of the local population are dependent upon agriculture rather than urban employment.

Despite the recent scholarly trend for writing about international Senegalese migration and urban survival strategies (Fall 2007; Nyamnjoh 2005; Fouquet 2007), very little of this literature concentrates on the Casamance, which instead tends to attract scholars interested in rural livelihoods. I, like Lambert (2007; 2002), want to show how people in the Casamance also have aspirations of international migration, and that, despite its
isolation, Ziguinchor is a legitimate ‘urban locus’ worthy of study. This thesis shows that even if the Casamance is considered to be rural and ‘forgotten’ it is still a place that attracts migrants. The Casamance is not excluded from global flows of information and the people have the same aspirations of migration as people elsewhere in Senegal, even if they are not part of the Mouride social networks. Although de Jong (2007) refers to Ziguinchor as a city, I do not feel that as the fifth largest urban locus in Senegal it merits such a title, and choose instead to call it a ‘town’. It does, however, have many similar characteristics to the literature on cities (as urban environments) I discuss throughout this thesis.

There is a vast amount of literature focusing on the intricate historical details of the Casamance, and Christian Roche’s *Histoire de la Casamance* provides an extremely thorough overview of the region’s historical trajectories during the late 1800s and early 1900s (Roche 1976). His work alludes to some of the migratory shifts that have helped to shape the Casamance of today. The ethnographic work of Pélissier (1966) and Thomas (1959) provides empirical detail on the Jola people that I cannot begin to do justice to in this thesis, and I draw on the work of Pélissier to explain Jola *riziculture* in more detail later in this chapter. Whilst I am aware, and as many scholars stress, that Ziguinchor and its surroundings consist of hybrid groups of people, the Jola are the most numerous ethnic group in the region. Whilst I could be accused of ignoring the other populations that live in the region, I believe that the Jola have a lot to contribute to the history of the region, thus choose to write about them in more detail here. Due to the populations that I spoke to during my research often being marginal or mobile, not all of my informants were local Jola. I still discuss them in this chapter, however, as they are an important ethnic group who are important to contemporary Casamance. Thus, as much as ethnicity is a factor in mobility, it is not the only factor and we must be careful to avoid an ethnic essentialism when talking about migration.

Linares (1987; 1992) and Hesseling (1994) have both written extensively about land, agriculture and the Jola in the Casamance, and Nugent’s work on the Gambia has also crossed over the border to Senegal (Nugent 2007). Lambert’s wonderfully rich ethnographic work gives the reader great detail about local and transnational migration patterns amongst the Jola, and I draw heavily on his writings throughout this chapter (Lambert 2007; 2002). Foucher’s extremely thorough analysis on the Casamance
provides an excellent political introduction to the region, and he offers an interesting theoretical overview on reasons behind the civil conflict, as I discuss later in this chapter (Foucher 2007). Evans adds a social element to the study of the conflict, and his work on displaced populations allows a greater understanding of forced migration in the context of the Casamance, which as I stated earlier, is neglected in relation to war in other West African countries (Evans 2003; 2007). Juillard’s work shows how the flows of people in and out of Ziguinchor have transformed the ethnic and linguistic make-up of the town, and is especially useful for the comparisons made with Dakar (Juillard 1995). Relevant to my discussions of identity and the consumption of outside ideas and influences, she shows how the language used by different people (in this case Wolof) was linked not just to ethnic identity, but to cultural values and ideas of modernity. Contemporary ethnographic studies on the Casamance have concentrated on other issues of interest such as female circumcision amongst the Jola (Dellenborg 2004) dress and clothing (Andrewes 2005) and the role of ritual and power amongst the Jola (de Jong 2007). Such ethnographic work demonstrates the importance of symbolism, ritual and the natural environment for people living in the Casamance in the same way that earlier scholars did.

One of the main themes running through all these different bodies of literature is how and why the Casamance has a differential experience of economic development to the rest of the country. The sense of isolation apparent in the region is something which arguably is of relevance to contemporary aspirations of migration. Despite the tendency to think of the Casamance as isolated, I show how it is nonetheless influenced by international flows of people and ideas and does not have to be studied as a purely rural region. Much of the migration literature emerging from Senegal comes from Dakar, and this thesis shows that the Casamance not only has urban spaces that people are attracted to, but that within its cyber-cafés and along its beaches, new and innovative modes of migration are emerging.

3.3.1 History of Ziguinchor and the Casamance

The Casamance region is home to the Jola, a largely agricultural group of people, traditionally living in scattered, autonomous communities and known for their wet-rice cultivation. Unlike some other ethnic groups, namely the northern Wolof, the Jola are non-hierarchical and their social and political organisation is often described as
‘egalitarian’, ‘individualistic’ and lacking in administrative infrastructure. As a result of the socio-political organisation of the Jola, the Casamance experienced a very different kind of colonial conquest from the groundnut basin in the north of Senegal. Jola political institutions rarely extended beyond individual villages and Pélissier argues that their lack of existing hierarchical political authority made it more difficult for the French administration to govern Jola society as they actively resisted French rule (1966: 671). The social and economic life of the Jola changed during the later colonial period, but the lack of internal hierarchy remained constant.

West Africa saw a battle between British, French and Portuguese colonial powers. Portuguese settlers arrived in 1645 and Ziguinchor was originally a Portuguese trading enclave known as Izguinchor. In 1886, Ziguinchor was ceded to the French and the town was administered by expatriates based in the central neighbourhood of Escale. In the post-Independence period Senegalese citizens replaced these French bureaucrats, but the replacements were northern Wolof and not local people from the Casamance, something which we will see to be of significance during the conflict in the 1980s and 1990s (de Jong 2007; Juillard 1995; Lambert 2002). Boone argues that local populations viewed such state agents as ‘foreigners from Senegal’; the construction of the postcolonial state was considered to be a process of colonisation nordiste and is just one example of how many residents of the Casamance felt dominated and neglected by the northern administration (Boone 2003: 119). During the 1980s local clerks gradually took over from the Wolof administration in Ziguinchor, in response to the expression of local discontent with the Senegalese government.

Ziguinchor’s population increased considerably as the European presence diminished, and this, along with events in neighbouring countries contributed to an influx of migrants. The liberation war in Guinea-Bissau (1960-75) brought refugees to Ziguinchor during the same period, and easily floodable zones and spaces once reserved for agriculture were occupied as people struggled to find places to settle. Fulani refugees fleeing Sékou Touré in Guinea-Conakry also came to Ziguinchor during this time. In the 1970s rural populations affected by the Sahelian drought also moved from the Senegal River and central Baol areas to settle in Ziguinchor. A sleepy town on the

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30 See Pélissier (1966: 670) for more detail on the two different ‘waves’ of Wolof ‘colonials’ in the Casamance.
banks of the Casamance River, Ziguinchor is now home to a vibrant *bricolage* of people, cultures and languages, which form, in Juillard’s words, a *brassage éthnique* (1995: 18). The flows of people mentioned above go some way to demonstrate how multi-cultural and hybrid Ziguinchor remains today.

As I have hinted, the location of the Casamance is a curious one, and one which has not gone un-noticed by scholars writing about the region who describe it as ‘isolated’, ‘neglected’ and ‘ignored’. Lying between the once Portuguese enclave of Guinea-Bissau and the former British colony of the Gambia, the Casamance is situated between two countries with very different characters.\(^3\)

Martin Evans (2003) has called the Casamance the ‘southern limb of Senegal’ in reference to the way Senegal is almost completely divided in two by the Gambia. Hesseling (1985: 41-42) refers to this bisection as being ‘one of the most curious heritages of the colonial era’ – the English speaking country of the Gambia stretches almost 300km from the coast to the interior and cuts Senegal in two, apart from the most eastern areas. Described by Andrewes (2005: 59) as a ‘buffer between two contrasting regions, a cultural fault line between the dry scrubland of northern Senegal and the humid forests of Guinea,’ Ziguinchor’s location is clearly a symbolic one both in terms of its geographical location and socio-economic development in comparison to the rest of the country.

This sense of physical and geographical isolation was highlighted by a lack of infrastructure preventing the Casamance from connecting to the rest of the then French colony. Goods were once traded directly from the Casamance to France, without the need to pass through the colonial administration in the capital, and the imagined routes of today’s migrants wanting to go directly from Ziguinchor to Europe mimic this path. Although the construction of the Dakar-Bamako railway was completed in 1923, this only connected the north of Senegal to Mali, not the Casamance. The railway led to a ‘purposeful expansion’ of the Mouride zone, when the line spread east from Thiès in 1907. New villages in this northern region attracted migrants with the promise of food and land and their remoteness also meant that they were unable to be controlled easily by colonial administrators (Cruise O’Brien 1971: 60). The completion of the Trans-Gambian highway in 1952 was an attempt by Senegalese authorities to reduce the

\(^3\) Ziguinchor lies only 30km north of the Bissau-Guinean border town of Sao Domingos and approximately 70km south of the town of Seleti (on the border with the Gambia).
geographical isolation of the Casamance and although road travel between the north and south of the country was eased, the region is still cut off from the main administrative region and the groundnut basin, where much of the country’s wealth is centred. As we will see, the road had an impact on migratory patterns within the Casamance as it made it easier for people to travel and opened up new flows of people, ideas, languages and goods.

3.3.2 Rural Economy

As Nugent has pointed out, marked differences in environmental resources across the African continent have had a profound impact on the way in which Africans make their livelihoods, construct their living spaces and construe their social relations. Differential access to fertile and well-watered land and basic infrastructure, as we can see with the case of the Casamance, can help or hinder development. The climate of the Casamance differs greatly from the rest of Senegal and the region is excellently suited for the cultivation of various food crops as a result of its relatively favorable climate. It is surprising therefore, that the Casamance remained isolated and ‘under-developed’, or, in Nugent’s words, ‘untapped’ when it seemingly has so many resources to offer (Nugent 2004: 197).

The Casamance is the wettest region of Senegal, and the land of Ziguinchor and its environs is extremely fertile during the rainy season, known as *hivernage*. The rainy season is at its heaviest between May and September, which means that both agriculture and migration are seasonal.32 Cashew nuts, mangoes, citrus fruits and timber, although not indigenous, are all important to the region, but more importantly, there is a long tradition of rice cultivation in the Casamance. During the rains, every once-dusty verge in Ziguinchor becomes replaced by vivid green rows of rice resembling the terrace agriculture of Vietnam more than the dry Sahelian landscape of northern Senegal (see below). This is a point discussed in more detail by Linares, in her discussion of agricultural production in Ziguinchor (1996).

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32 Although the Casamance is the wettest region, other areas of the country also receive heavy rainfall and have been prone to flooding. See [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/426843.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/426843.stm) and [http://www.seneweb.com/news/article/18438.php](http://www.seneweb.com/news/article/18438.php) for details about flooding in Dakar in 1999 and 2008.
Jola riziculture dates back to pre-colonial times and is claimed to be one of the most advanced rice cultivation techniques in Africa (Boone 2003: 101). Their system of wet-rice cultivation is dependent upon highly seasonal rainfall, but Pélissier (1966: 759) makes the important point that despite the seasonal nature of the work, riziculture is nonetheless an all-year-round process, culminating in the harvest months of January and February. Rice was grown for subsistence, and as Lambert notes (2002: 67), it was occasionally used to exchange for cattle but was rarely traded across village boundaries.

According to Pélissier, writing in 1966, riziculture was a dominant factor in Jola economic and social life. He gives a long, ethnographically rich description of the processes involved in rice cultivation, praising the Jola techniques of cultivation and concluding that:

…la riziculture diola est remarquable par la qualité de ses techniques qui en font certainement l'une des plus perfectionnées du monde en dehors des régions de civilisation mécanicienne… Comparée à la riziculture extrême-orientale, la riziculture diola relève une supériorité indéniable, celle de ses labours au kayendo, et une faiblesse certain dans le domaine hydraulique.

Pélissier (1966: 759)
De Jong (2002: 206) suggests that rice cultivation has lost some of its significance because of the Jola’s increased participation in the market economy, but notes that other important Jola rituals, such as male circumcision rites, have not lost their importance.

As mentioned above, Senegal was affected by drought during the 1960s and 1970s, and although the Jola were spared poverty and famine during this period, they still suffered from lost rice crops and food shortages.\textsuperscript{33} Precipitation has declined since 1968, and years of drought have had a negative effect on rice growing because the rice fields have become overly salinated due to a lack of rainfall. It is estimated that the rice-growing areas decreased by as much as 50 per cent (Linares 1998: 62). The rainy season has become progressively shorter over the past three decades, and whilst I was resident in Ziguinchor, people were worried about the rice crops as the first rains of 2007 did not fall until June 9\textsuperscript{th}, which was considered to be extremely late in comparison to previous years. Migration and drought are undoubtedly linked, as people move in response to crisis, but as demonstrated in the earlier example of the Soninke, migratory patterns of seasonal labour were already in place and the drought simply accentuated them.

Apart from rice, cashews and groundnuts are also produced in the Casamance. The cashew nut is the region’s principal export crop, and only a small proportion of the harvest is consumed locally and nationally. Growing cashew nuts is a private enterprise, and local buyers purchase the cashews from smallholders, before selling them on to Indian buyers (Evans 2003: 10). Industrial processing is necessary as cashews are toxic in their raw state, and local methods cannot cope with huge amounts of nuts. There are no large-scale industrial processing facilities in Senegal, and limited processing plants in Africa. Ziguinchor, and indeed Bissau\textsuperscript{34}, see a brief period of temporary Indian migration at this time, as a handful of male buyers come to Ziguinchor and rent apartments or hotel rooms for several months before returning to India.

Ziguinchor is also home to the Société Nationale de Commercialisation des Oléagineux du Sénégal, or SONACOS. SONACOS is a state purchasing and processing body for groundnuts, but in local terms it is simply the name given to the factory in which the nuts are stored and industrially processed before being sold. Groundnut production

\textsuperscript{33} See De Jonge et al (1978: 41) for a detailed quantitative analysis of rice production in the Casamance during the 1970s.

\textsuperscript{34} The capital of Guinea-Bissau.
challenged the prominence of *riziculture* in the Casamance region, and peanuts were seen as the fuel behind Ziguinchor’s growth. Such cash-cropping introduced by the French administration also caused changes in Jola society as people began to have more contact with the Muslim Mandinka, whereas up until the 1930s, the Jola had been mostly animist. Today, over 90 percent of Jolas are Muslim (Mark 1978). The introduction of groundnuts also led to changes in gender relations as men tended groundnuts and women were left to cultivate rice.

### 3.3.3 Conflict in the Casamance

Geographical isolation, differential wet and fertile climate and predominantly Jola population are all important factors to consider when thinking about the region’s conflict. The Casamance experienced a largely un-reported period of civil conflict beginning in 1982 when non-violent grievances became violent. The separatist mobilisation was led by the mostly Jola *Mouvement des Forces Démocratiques de Casamance* (MFDC) who wanted independence from the north of the country. The conflict lasted 22 years and caused displacement, civilian and combatant fatalities and disruption to civilian life. A first cease-fire was signed in 1991, but the conflict officially ended in 2004. Despite the signing of this peace treaty, 2008 saw several isolated incidents of rebel banditry on the roads around Ziguinchor and many governments, including that of Britain, still warn against travelling to the region. The conflict was also marked by infighting between different MFDC factions, the *Front Nord* and the *Front Sud* which is also part of the reason it lasted for so many years.

The reasons behind the conflict are very much intertwined with the factors that I have discussed above and we need to think about cultural differences between the north and south, and the political and economic domination by the north of Senegal over the Casamance as potential explanations for the conflict. Politics and history had a role to play long before economics, argues Foucher, and the protracted violence owes much to the legacies of colonial politics, geographical location, the economic problems of the 1970s and 1980s and the differential access to territorial, material and political resources.

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35 This was something that frustrated a lot of local people, especially those involved in the tourist industry. They could see no reason for tourists not to visit the region, and felt disheartened and victimised by governments who were dissuading their citizens from coming to the Casamance. One man recounted a story to me in which he claimed to have seen the French Ambassador eating at a restaurant in Ziguinchor after he had warned French citizens not to visit the town.
(Foucher 2007: 191). He describes the social history of the region as a ‘narrative of loss and exclusion’ and social, political or economic explanations of conflict all allude to the cultural differences and geographical isolation of the region (2007: 173). We could, he writes, use the idea of ‘deep cultural misunderstandings’ between the north and south regions including differences in agriculture (millet versus rice), civilisations (Sufi Islam versus Catholicism) and landscape (savannah versus swamp) as an explanation, or, we can address the political and economic domination of the Casamance by northern traders, civil servants and migrants as its root.

Cruise O’Brien (1998: 38) has suggested that the spread of the Wolof, especially amongst rural Jola populations, added to the MFDC’s resentment towards the hegemony of northern Senegal. Land disputes and the belated application of the National Domain Law also had a role to play, as autochthons lost their land to people from outside the region who acquired it in order to produce groundnuts, plant orchards and create sites of touristic interest. Local Jola populations saw this appropriation of their land as a threat to their identity as the original peoples of the Casamance (Boone 2003: 135).

Although largely under-reported in comparison to civil conflicts in other West African countries, such as Sierra Leone (Richards 1996), Liberia (Ellis 1995) or Côte d’Ivoire, for example, the separatist movement had a disruptive effect on the everyday lives of civilians living in the Casamance region. This lack of media interest may have been due to a lack of ‘glamour’ or seemingly bizarre practices that were present in other West African conflicts – there were no child soldiers, unlike Liberia and Nigeria, and no strange clothes or ritual behaviours were displayed by perpetrators. Instead, local-level community life suffered as village wells were poisoned, bridges were blown up and schools, health centres and farmer training centres were closed. Land-mines have made many roads unusable and villages unreachable, and despite current de-mining programmes from local and international NGOs including Handicap International and Catholic Relief Services, there are still huge areas of rich, fertile land which have been lost. The conflict caused over 60,000 people to be internally displaced, and approximately 13,000 are estimated to have fled into neighbouring countries including

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36 Land would often be advertised on local notice-boards in Ziguinchor for sale at very low prices, as sadly, it was affected by land-mines and no longer safe for use.
the Gambia and Guinea-Bissau (Evans 2003). Exact figures are hard to ascertain, because so many of those who were displaced were housed with relatives and involved in processes of ‘self-settlement’, or they were involved in circular displacement, moving temporarily in response to particular incidents (Evans 2007). We must also remember that many of these displaced populations returned, so it is difficult to be numerically exact when estimating the numbers of people displaced. Although the Casamance makes up roughly a third of Senegal’s territory, its economic importance is much larger than this would indicate, and the conflict left what should have been a region suited for export agriculture, fishing and tourism in an under-developed state.

Interestingly, although civil war may seem to be an issue that should feature prominently in any discussion of the region, the fact that my informants did not mention it means that it is mostly absent in the empirical data in my thesis. Despite being of significance to the country’s history, the only time I heard conflict being talked about was when tourist guides associated the slump in their client numbers with the conflict. I do not think that this was because they did not want to, or could not talk about it, but because they framed their economic despair in terms of lack of resources rather than the after-effects of civil war.

3.4 Senegal: a long history of migratory movement

This section goes some way to explaining existing patterns of migration within and beyond the Casamance and how they relate to the ethnographic examples in later chapters. The reader may well be asking what cyber cafes, sex and pirogues have to do with the rural economy of the Casamance, and this chapter attempts to answer that question. I begin with a discussion of Jola migration, notable for female as well as male migration, before discussing patterns of Senegalese migration across international borders.

3.4.1 Migration within Senegal: the case of the Jola

The Jola are known for their movement within and from rural areas, as well as their migration to the urban centres of Ziguinchor and Dakar. Whilst not all my informants are Jola, the fact that my work took place in the Casamance means that their migratory movement cannot be ignored.
The first migratory pattern of significance is that of rural to rural migration. Lambert describes how migrants at the turn of the century moved between different rural locations in the Casamance because of immense pressures on the land. Rice fields were scarce and in some cases became the source of violent disputes. People were not moving for commercial gain during this period, but for subsistence, containing their mobility within the rural areas of the Casamance and across the border into the Gambia where they labour was also desired. Although originally for self-sufficiency, migration gradually became linked to the market economy. Women and men alike travelled to the Gambia during the dry season in search of rubber, palm oil and forest products to trade with European and Manding traders (Lambert 1999: 86 and Dellenborg 2004: 84).

As discussed above, the Jola are important rice cultivators, and this has an impact on when they can migrate to other areas. The most important migratory pattern for the Jola has been seasonal – whether from October until June, or January until June (Péllissier 1966: 817). Seasonal migration was orientated to towns as well as rural areas, whereas longer-term, more definitive migration (classed as that lasting for at least several consecutive years) was aimed solely at urban areas. The Jola would move to urban areas as a means of supplementing their income in the dry season, when the labour in the rice paddies was less intense. Findings from other studies also point towards a clear pattern of seasonal migration, exemplified by the large population differences noted between the wet and dry seasons (de Jonge et al. 1978: 14).

Lambert explains this system of seasonal migration, called the *navetaine*, in more detail, and I borrow heavily from his work on female migration in this section (Lambert 1999; 2007). The collapse in the rubber market during the 1920s meant that men turned to groundnuts as a cash crop, and worked as tenant farmers under the *navetaine* system rather than being subsistence farmers. Originally a male example of mobility, men began to bring their sisters to accompany them, both to work in the fields and to

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37 Land disputes are still a common judicial issue today, and whilst attending a court case in Ziguinchor, several of the cases presented were land claims.

38 *Navetaine* is the French word for a system of tenant farming linked to patterns of seasonal migration. I was fascinated to discover the meaning of the word *navetaine* as whilst in Ziguinchor, I lived opposite a football stadium and through the rainy months of July and August, I was kept awake by cheering as teams of local men played matches against each other in the pouring rain. They referred to this annual tournament as the *navetaine*, which I was excited to learn was named after the historical kind of male migration.
provide domestic assistance, but women had little to gain from this, and as Lambert showed, received very little economic remuneration for their work.

Improvements in transport links between the north and south of Senegal meant that there were more opportunities for people living in the Casamance to find work in urban areas. Ziguinchor and Banjul (once known as Bathurst) were the two most attractive urban destinations for migrants, but once the Trans-Gambian highway opened, Jola seasonal migrants turned towards the larger cities of Kaolack and Dakar. This migratory route has much in common with that of the Wolof and the Serer, whereas the dry season migration of the Jola, directed toward other rural areas in search for less densely populated areas and places suitable for rice cultivation, was more unusual (Pélissier 1966: 821).

Rural to urban migrants were mostly young, single women working as *bonnes* (maids) in large towns, male students migrating for education or work and young married men and women who worked during the dry season as *navetaines*, fishermen or agriculturalists. We can see an interesting shift which is still relevant today – earlier Jola migrants were those who were educated, whereas from the 1960s, much as today, people migrate to urban areas regardless of their educational qualifications. This period also saw an increase in Jola women migrating to urban areas in the form of seasonal urban migration, in part due to the newly established road links. Eventually, Lambert writes (1999: 88) migration to urban areas became expected of women, although they were still required to assist in seasonal rice transplanting and harvesting.

Lambert has written about how commoditisation provided Jola women with the chance to free themselves from the control that men had over them – they are seen to be much more powerful and autonomous than women from other ethnic groups in Senegal and it is no coincidence that much of the writing about Jola migration concentrates on women. I wonder if the fact that migration has been an important part of Jola life for so many years goes some way to explaining why women in contemporary Ziguinchor believe they can migrate.

Lambert has written elsewhere about the networks made by Jola women upon arrival in Dakar, which aided female migrants to collect their wedding *trousseau.*[^1] Even when

[^1]: He directs the reader to Linares’ work on female Jola networks in Dakar (Linares 1988).
thinking about migration that does not cross international borders, the existence of a welcoming structure in the destination town encourages potential migrants to leave home. Eventually, migration became seen as a way for girls to earn enough money to buy school clothes for the following academic year and it became something that was not so much a transitional activity, but a long-term one. Migration was not something that happened in response to crisis, but something that was and continues to be an integral part of Jola life.

So, what role does the Jola migration described above play in thinking about contemporary patterns of migration? I argue that Ziguinchor has always been a ‘node’ of migration, not just for the Jola, but for other ethnic groups. As well as an end destination – a place to settle rather than sojourn – it is also a transit point, used by rural-dwellers to get to Dakar and then potentially to Europe. To this I would add in more recent years, due to the increase in tourism and the draw of the beach resort of Cap Skirring, Ziguinchor has become a stop off point for young male and female migrants hoping to make their fortunes. In order to get to Cap Skirring, regardless of which direction one is coming from, it is necessary to pass through Ziguinchor, unless arriving by plane from Paris or Dakar, in which case Ziguinchor can be bypassed completely.

The crossroads town of Ziguinchor has an important position in migratory literature – it has been a desirable urban place for people coming from the rest of the Casamance, but as well as being a place of settlement it is also a point of transit. This has made Ziguinchor multi-cultural and given it a hybrid mix of people, cultures and languages (Juillard 1995). Not all of my informants were Jola, let alone Senegalese, and although it is difficult to explain systematically how they all came to be in Ziguinchor, as many of them themselves replied to my questions about their presence with an evasive shrug, there are several structural factors that contribute to their presence.

Conflict in West Africa explains the presence of Sierra Leonean and Liberian refugees in Ziguinchor. If migrants are travelling to Senegal by road from Mali, they have the choice of going north to Dakar or coming south to the Casamance, and some choose Ziguinchor rather than the capital, which they believe will be expensive and difficult to navigate. Other non-Senegalese migrants are drawn to the Casamance simply by chance.
– random encounters with strangers led to discussions about Ziguinchor or Cap Skirring and resulted in people finding themselves in Ziguinchor.

3.4.2 International Migration: from Senegal to Where?

Soninke and Fulani immigrants of the Senegal River Valley once dominated the literature on Senegalese emigration – both populations lived in harsh geographical climates and had long histories of contact with Europeans and North Africans, which favoured their mobility (Babou 2002: 157). However, the international migration I talk about in this thesis, although obviously related to and affected by the historical processes described above, is not ethnically distinct or divided. I argue that the kinds of migration I am discussing are not attached to any one ethnic group, and have infiltrated imaginations regardless of the person’s background.

As previously discussed, migrants have many different reasons for choosing the country to which they want to migrate. In the case of Senegal, the former colonial power of France was the place to which migrants were first drawn, and Senegalese migration to France follows three main patterns – those moving to France between the two World Wars, the post-independence movement and family regrouping. Senegalese emigration to Europe began in the colonial period, when the French government enrolled tirailleurs at the end of the nineteenth century and during World War I. As we saw in the previous chapter, the economic boom in the 1960s also saw a huge increase in mass migration and Senegalese migrants were attracted by the need for unskilled labourers in Europe. France’s need for such labour gradually declined, and migrants turned instead to other European countries including Italy and Spain, especially after France changed its immigration policy in 1974. Student and tourist visas became harder to obtain, and the need for skilled rather than unskilled labour as well as the more recent restrictions imposed by Sarkozy have left many Senegalese with no legal way of entering Europe. The Canary Islands and Spain are often used as illegal entry points to Europe, but are not necessarily the migrant’s final destination.

40 ‘Sharpshooters’ were also recruited from Algeria, Morocco and Turkey.
41 During the 2006 World Cup final, Senegalese people stated that they were torn between supporting France, the former colonial power and a country to which many of them felt attached, and Italy, a country in which many of their friends and family lived and worked.
42 As Nugent as pointed out, this is not necessarily a new phenomenon. He quotes an interview from 1946: ‘It had been settled that I should return to the U.K. by air but luckily a Swedish ship M.S. ‘Becky’ – only 3 months old, arrived to take a cargo of groundnuts. Four passengers could be accommodated. I was
Since 1974, when France closed its borders and began to view immigrants as a problem rather than a resource, Senegalese migrants turned to other destinations and Riccio, for example, has written extensively about the Senegalese transnational community in Italy (Riccio 2003). Other destinations for Senegalese migrants include Hong Kong and the Saudi Arabian city of Jeddah, where migrants work as itinerant traders in factories (Buggenhagen 2004). The increasing presence of Chinese commerce in West Africa is an emerging area of study for Africanists and may go some way to explain new patterns of migration involving China (see Sylvanus 2007 for an example of Togolese perceptions of China). As I have been reminded of on numerous occasions when taking taxis in New York and Philadelphia and chatting to the driver in Wolof, the United States and Canada also have large Senegalese migrant communities. Mouride traders began emigrating to the United States in significant numbers only during the 1980s. They went to the United States not only because of changes in French immigration law, the fall in the price of groundnuts on the international market and the effects of drought but also to exploit the emerging African-American demand for authentic crafts which accompanied a renewed interest in African culture and the continent in general (Babou 2002: 158).

3.4.3 Social Networks in Transnational Migration

Work on social networks was originally intended to highlight a lack of concern with the social element of the migration process in theories which prioritised economic accounts of migration. The economic aspects obviously remain important and where the social aspects of migration alter or are diminished, economic considerations may prove to be a significant driving force behind new movement.

(Collyer 2005: 714)

As discussed in the previous chapter, social networks have been an important feature of migration. Some of the most fascinating studies of social networks come out of the African diaspora, and although not exclusively Senegalese, many of them do discuss the lives of Senegalese migrants. The most commonly discussed Senegalese transnationals one. We left Bathurst on the evening of March 11th. I shared a cabin with R.A.J. Walton, the other passengers were Mons. Fritze of Maurel et Prom and Mons. Brugiere of Maurel Freres. We had a most comfortable and fast trip. The only incident was that four Wolof [sic] stowaways were found on board. They had to be transferred to an outgoing ship S.S. ‘Flora’, in mid ocean near the Canary Islands. That gave me the opportunity to send the draft of a census report back to Bathurst.’ Prof. Paul Nugent, personal communication, December 1st, 2008.
are the Mourides (following a migratory trail set by the Toucouleur), who feature heavily in academic literature on social networks (see Cruise O’Brien 1971; Diouf 2000; Stoller 2002). As we have seen, their religious order was originally a rural one, and it was only when crisis hit rural areas in the 1960s that they moved to being firstly an urban, then an international network.

Mourides feature heavily in recent ethnographic studies about the transnational spaces occupied by Senegalese migrants, and a lot of contemporary literature, including studies by Tall and Riccio, addresses the situation of Senegalese migrants in Italy and the realities of the working conditions in which some of them live (Tall 2007; Riccio 2003). Although work on the Mouride brotherhood tends to be about men, there have been attempts to redress this imbalance, and study the relationships that women have with Mourides. Buggenhagen (2004) uses the life of Bintu, a young Wolof girl promised in marriage to Musa, a Mouride trader, to show how cycles of domestic production have been transformed by remittances from the brotherhood, and how a struggling international trading market and strict economic reforms may impact on Senegalese gender dynamics. Awa Ba’s work also attempts to fill a gap in traditional studies of the brotherhood by addressing the role of women in the Daal’ra Mame Diarra Bousso association in New York. She suggests that women are no longer migrating simply to accompany their husbands or to take up work as domestic servants and shows how female migrants have also taken over public spaces in New York and are not just situated in the domestic sphere (Ba 2008). Such studies locate migrants transnationally – they have a presence both locally and global, in the local Senegalese consciousness and the diaspora.

Scholarly work on the Mouride trading diaspora has provided us with a large body of empirically rich, ethnographically detailed data on the international migration patterns of Senegalese men and women, but not everybody has access to such networks and hopeful migrants are now seeking to make international connections directly with Europeans, rather than exploiting the ‘chains’ set in place by fellow Senegalese migrants. As I will show, the cyber-café, the beach and the night-club have all become poignant spaces in which men and women attempt to forge new links.

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41 Stoller has also written a work of fiction, *Jaguar: A Story of Africans in America*, based on his ethnographic research amongst traders in New York (Stoller 1999).
As a result of their international presence, Mouride traders became rich and powerful (‘a fabulously wealthy merchant cartel’ in Stoller’s words [2000: 39]), and many return to re-invest their money in Senegal through public displays of wealth such as the building of property. Senegalese migrant communities depend on extensive and unofficial networks such as the *dahira*,44 relying on personal connections rather than the recognised legal and judicial state apparatus for protection and support (Babou 2002; MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga). Just as return migrants are blamed for fuelling the Senegalese obsession with migration, others feel that tourists are responsible. Omar, a 30 year old man working at one of Ziguinchor’s main hotels explained how he saw the problem:

Everybody wants to leave…and it’s not their fault. Tourists who come here, even the ones who are poor, they live well. And they come back and build houses, they buy land in nice areas. They buy in Saly45 and then re-sell it. But us? We’re born here but what can we do? If we want an étage or a terrasse? We can’t work here and earn money, so that’s what makes us want to go.46

His words bring us back to the earlier discussion about the role that remittances play in discussions of migration. In the case of Senegal it is the visual signs of migration that inspire others to leave – they see the terrasse on a neighbour’s house, or see a Senegalese person return to Senegal and buy land with their toubab partner, and believe that they do can have the same (Melly 2008). Tall (2007) also makes a similar link between what hopeful migrants believe remittances can achieve, and their decision to migrate. He lists building houses, paying for their parents to go to Mecca, meeting attractive girls and supporting their families as reasons that young men believe life will be better elsewhere. People’s dreams do not just appear from nowhere, and it is Senegal’s long migratory history and the evidence that return migrants bring back with them that create aspirations to partir.

3.5 Gender Politics within Senegal

The previous sections in this chapter have shown some of the deeply-rooted socio-economic issues that have caused the futures of many people living in Senegal to

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44 A key institution of the Mouride brotherhood, fulfilling both religious and secular functions and enabling the integration and socialisation of Mouride communities across the world.
45 A luxury tourist resort near Mbour, south of Dakar.
46 Interview conducted with Omar on November 16th, 2007 in Ziguinchor. Interview conducted in French.
become uncertain. Although men and women alike faced a difficult economic situation and a lack of stable employment opportunities and future prospects, there were important gendered differences to their experiences. This section gives an overview to some of the issues surrounding gender politics in Senegal, because, as I show in subsequent chapters, even though men and women had international migratory aspirations, they attempted to leave in different ways and were not necessarily searching for the same thing. As I stated in my introduction, it is no coincidence that there are two ‘female’ chapters and two ‘male’ ones in this thesis, and that the migration strategies appearing in each of them are different.

The majority of the men and women whose words appear throughout this thesis were from Senegal, but some were not. They were from other areas of the West African region, and as much as one should not generalise or talk about ‘the African woman’ or ‘the African man’, there were many clear similarities between the lives and aspirations of hopeful Senegalese migrants and those from other West African countries. It would have been impossible for me to provide a detailed country background for every person to whom I spoke, but because we can see similarities between the words and socio-economic statuses of the Senegalese and non-Senegalese men and women in this thesis, I do not feel that a lack of background detail is detrimental to an understanding of their lives. There are important differences between West African populations that should not be denied, but for the purposes of this discussion the men and women whom I discuss had similar experiences and migratory desires despite their different nationalities.

3.5.1 Gender and the Economy

The different positions that men and women occupied within the Senegalese economy are important to this discussion, and throughout this thesis I show how migratory desires were linked to dissatisfaction with the economic climate discussed earlier in this chapter. Agriculture plays a key role in gender politics, and the workings of the rural economy in the Casamance were very much gendered, and rice cultivation in particular saw a distinct division of labour between men and women (de Jong 2007: 33). In Senegal, very few women are land-owners and, although they are involved in the processing and commercialisation of agricultural goods, they do not gain from their agricultural work in the same way that men do (Sow et al. 1999: 82). Men have had more opportunities to work in paid employment than women have, and thus have more
capital with which to buy or rent fields. Men are the main owners (or borrowers) of land, which means that women are in a subordinate position compared to men in terms of their agricultural earning potential. Additional pressures have been placed on local land because of the influx of immigrants and rural refugees to Ziguinchor, and the price of renting or buying land has risen accordingly, making it harder for agriculture to become a sustainable means of making money (Linares 1996). Ecological factors, namely drought, have meant that land is not as fertile as it once was, meaning that even though men may once have more access to land, they cannot necessarily make a living from it nowadays.

It is becoming more difficult for rural populations to sustain an agricultural lifestyle, which, as we have seen, was one of the factors that led to increasing rural to urban migration within the Casamance. I would suggest that another reason why the young men and women in this thesis sought to move to urban areas was that agriculture was not compatible with their aspirations of a modern, urban lifestyle. In addition to the effects of ecological problems on the fertility of the land and subsequently people’s ability to earn a living from agriculture, men and women were also rejecting agricultural labour because it was not compatible with their aspirations of modernity and urban living. Although Hesseling’s work shows how rice cultivation takes place within the town of Ziguinchor itself, and does not have to be restricted to remote and isolated, rural areas, the actual physical labour involved did not appeal to young, hopeful migrants. A hard day’s work in a field did not link to the consumer goods or lifestyle hopeful migrants believed that they could have, and they were reluctant to apply themselves to a sector that they believed would yield few financial or social benefits. The inability or reluctance to rely upon agriculture has increasingly led men and women to occupy positions within the informal sector.

As I have hinted above, the informal sector is essential to this discussion, and even though accurate figures are difficult to ascertain (because of the very nature of the work), according to the second Senegalese household survey, conducted in 2004, 54 per cent of the Senegalese working population were economically independent – they did not earn a fixed salary, but were involved in the informal sector or casual labour (ESAM II 2004 cited in Sow et al. 1999). The figures also reveal that out of those people who were salaried, over twice as many were men than women (22 per cent rather than 10 per
cent). In Ziguinchor, the total percentage of the population working ‘informally’ was estimated to be 59 per cent; as we will see in subsequent chapters, the majority of my informants did not have fixed or salaried employment and relied upon casual, informal work to earn a living. Others learned their skills through extended periods of *apprentissage*. The majority of the sculptors and artisans who worked in Ziguinchor’s *Village Artisanale*, for example, had followed formal apprenticeships that led to careers in wood carving, batik making and weaving.

Men have typically been the ‘breadwinners’ in Senegal, as they have been in many other countries around the world, but their ability to provide and maintain their position as ‘head of household’ has become threatened. The impact of the SAPs and the agricultural and fishing crises discussed above, combined with the constant rise in basic living costs, have led to high levels of unemployment throughout Senegal. Rural and urban men were left unable to find work in sectors of the economy that once were thriving, and occurrences such as the closure of a fish-processing factory in Ziguinchor saw many men lose their jobs. Sow (2003: 69) has linked the wider constraints of SAPs to the fact that men, over time, had access to fewer resources. They were unable to meet their basic needs or those of their families, and men have blamed their individual feelings of inadequacy on wider social circumstances. Senegalese households are becoming more cash dependent, but they are also incurring more debt.

With men occupying the position as ‘head of household’, women were responsible for most, if not all of, the housework and childcare. They were, however, required to work outside the home either to replace or subsidise the income of their male partners, and they have played an increasingly important role in the informal sector. They supplemented their incomes where possible through casual petty-trading, as they were unable to take on full-time salaried work in addition to their domestic responsibilities. Working in the informal sector meant that money could be earned through *petit-commerce* without a great deal of initial funding, equipment or stock being required. A woman wanting to sell sachets of cold water, for example, would only need plastic bags, a cooler-box and access to a tap to start earning very small amounts of money.

Men’s inability to provide economic stability is closely linked to migration, and as discussed in the previous chapter, expressing the desire to migrate can be theorised as being as much about present dissatisfaction as future aspiration. Women are also
motivated to migrate as they are dissatisfied with their own economic situations, and men’s inability to provide for them. We will see how aspiring male and female migrants in the Casamance expressed sometimes similar and yet also contrasting

3.5.2 Women, Men and Urban Life
The position of Ziguinchor (and to a lesser extent the nearby beach resort of Cap Skirring) as an urban locus is important to this thesis. The urban environment was believed to be the route to earning more money and finding employment, but it was also symbolic as a site of imagination and temptation that gave people a ‘taste’ of modern living. One of the main attractions of moving to urban areas was the belief, amongst my informants and throughout migration literature more generally, that there would be more opportunities to work. The opportunities that Ziguinchor offered were ones not available to rural dwellers, and the people, ideas and ways of life encountered in the town were very different from those throughout the rest of the Casamance.

There is an extensive literature, much of it from the 1960s and 1970s, which described prosperous African cities such as Lagos, Dakar and Abidjan as metaphorical seducers. The city was seen to provide women with an escape from traditional family constraints and to offer men the route to modern employment, as we saw in the discussion of male labour migrants in the previous chapter (Akyeampong 2000; Ferguson 1999; Little 1973). West African capitals were believed to offer people an escape from ‘tradition’ and the route to urban employment, education and emancipation, particularly for women who were used to being restricted to the agricultural and domestic spheres. However, the city expresses the best and worst extremes of human potentiality, argues Southall (1998: 12); it can provide migrants with hope of a better life, but can also give them a harsh experience of reality. As Nyamnjoh (2005: 298) describes, Dakar offers a space for ‘ordinary Africans seeking belonging as consumer gatecrashers and zombies’ but is a space in which many find it difficult to survive.

As we saw in the previous chapter, the roles that male labourers occupied within cities were important, but the role of women within the African city is of particular interest for the discussion that follows. Carmel Dinan (1977), taking from Schwarz (1972), has summarised the literature on the status of urban African women in terms of ‘pessimists’ and ‘optimists’. Optimists believed that moving to the city heightened emancipation and brought women independence and economic autonomy, whereas pessimists wrote
about the deterioration and subordination of the ‘African woman’ in the urban locus. Upon moving to the city, many women found themselves restricted to the informal sector, and outside the home they became involved in petty trading, food production, sex-work and the illegal brewing of beer. They were excluded from higher-paying jobs because of a lack of skills, training and education. A similar pattern occurs today in the Casamance. The sex-workers I write about in chapter five were independent and autonomous and earned their money through their involvement in the informal economy. They all tried to supplement their sex-work incomes with petty trading, mainly selling clothing they had imported from the Gambia or from Europe, or producing and selling food. To supplement her income as a sex-worker, Gnema, a friend and ‘key informant,’ ran a restaurant which she had financed through a micro-credit loan, and another woman, Mbouré, worked as a serveuse in a bar.

I am reluctant to turn this thesis into a discussion about the negative effects of urban life, or how rural to urban migration has supposedly heightened sexuality and promiscuity amongst women. Yet it cannot be denied that there is a sexual element to urban life because people become accorded with a liberty that the village did not always allow them. My research does not, however, focus solely on sexuality (male or female) and in subsequent chapters I have focused on how sexuality is just one aspect of migration strategies.

### 3.5.3 Relationships and Migration

As I will discuss in more detail in further chapters, it is not only the search for economic betterment that women associated with living in Europe. Although both genders stated their desire for financial security as a key reason for their aspirations of migration, the link between migration and the search for a new kind of relationship was something only women cited as a reason for seeking a life elsewhere.

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47 African fiction set in both newly emerging post-colonial cities and in the present day also portrays women through a similar dichotomy, contrasting the vulnerability and innocence of village women with the exoticism and sexuality of those in towns, and playing upon the juxtaposition between ‘good’ (tradition) and the ‘bad’ (modernity). Ekwensi’s *Jagua Nana* is the story of a Nigerian woman living in Lagos, who became trapped in a tangled web of conflicting values, in which the security of the traditional village and the dangers and uncertainty of the modern city are opposed (Ekwensi 1961).

48 Beer brewing is an activity appearing in East and Southern African literature, and does not appear to be as important in the context of West Africa.

49 First interview with Gnema carried out in April 2005 in Ziguinchor. Interview conducted in French.

50 First interview with Mbouré carried out in April 2005 in Ziguinchor. Interview conducted in French.
Senegalese women have a great social pressure upon them to marry – Senegal is a predominantly Islamic country, and sexual relations are taboo before marriage (Dial 2008; van Eerdewijk 2006). Although having sexual relationships before marriage was common amongst the young men and women with whom I spoke, they were disapproved of by wider societal norms. The taboos surrounding sexual relationships outside of marriage go some way to explaining the stigmatisation surrounding sex-work, and why so many women concealed their involvement in the metier. Senegalese women felt obliged to marry because of the economic benefits marriage could bring, but also because of the elevated social status and respect that would be accorded to them upon doing so (Dial 2008).

Under Islamic law, men can have up to four wives at the same time, which clearly places additional financial burdens upon the household(s) involved. The young, unmarried women to whom I spoke expressed their concerns about polygamous marriages not just in terms of the financial problems that could arise, but the emotional ones too. They did not want to ‘share’ their potential partners with other women, and alluded to the jealousy that they had witnessed between co-wives forced to share a husband and his resources. The polygamous men with whom I spoke would roll their eyes in despair when I asked how they were able to support more than one wife financially, but they dismissed the potential problems of jealousy and time management between households and wives as largely insignificant. These issues led some women in the Casamance to reject Senegalese men in search of a monogamous relationship. Women realised that locally-based Senegalese men were not always able to provide for them economically and romantically, and they had begun to seek foreign men, or Senegalese men living in the diaspora, with whom to form relationships. Buggenhagen (2004: 36) points out that in addition to men’s inability to meet their own basic needs, women’s increasing demands for material goods and support cannot be met. During my fieldwork, I would often hear men complaining that women only wanted new clothes and mobile phones, yet women would make the same complaints about the frivolous spending patterns of men! Women in Dakar, Buggenhagen argued, sought successful Senegalese migrants living in the diaspora as husbands because they believed these men would have more access to the material goods and economic security that they desired, and throughout this thesis we will see how women sought not only successful migrants, but toubabs.
Hopeful male migrants claimed that they were content with the gender politics of marriage in the context of Senegal. They did not want to migrate to seek a new kind of relationship, but because they wanted to be able to fulfil their own gender role obligations more successfully. This is not to say that they did not fantasise about or imagine relationships with Western women, but that their desires for *toubab* girlfriends were discussed in terms of physical attraction rather than the search for a provider.

Thus, faced with economic hardship caused by the wider socio-economic factors cited above and finding themselves unable to maintain a *göorgörü* lifestyle, the men and women to whom I spoke sought alternative ways of surviving and turned to places outside Senegal to secure better futures for themselves. Women did not have the same access to education and formal employment as men did and wanted to migrate to somewhere that would offer them more opportunities, but they also wanted to benefit emotionally and economically from their relationships. Gender is about men *and* women, but arguably many of the issues that arise throughout this thesis are ones that effect women more than they do men. Many women in Senegal do have a subordinate position in relation to men, but the female-centred ethnographic chapters that follow show how women, not just men, are aspiring migrants. Although women are seeking relationships of dependency, they are doing so in an independent and autonomous way. Although the people in this thesis are unsuccessful migrants, their attempts and imaginations of migration demonstrate to us that they are creatively trying to construct new futures for themselves in what are, ultimately, gendered ways.

Men sought to migrate in order to maintain their position as breadwinners: they suffered the consequences of unemployment in Senegal, and saw moving to Europe as their opportunity to earn money and send home remittances to their families. If they did form romantic or sexual relationships with European women, as discussed in chapter six, these were simply a stepping-stone to enable them to move to Europe, and they did not intend to become financially dependent upon them. I show, however, that as much as women’s desires to go to Europe were also about economic gain and living a modern lifestyle, they also involved the search for new, long-term relationships.
3.6 Ziguinchor Today: an introduction to the fieldwork site

This final section is intended to bring the reader back to the contemporary Ziguinchor of this thesis. The Ziguinchor which has a sweet, sickly smell of roasting peanuts hanging in the air and the Ziguinchor in which people take extended afternoon naps because “there is nothing else to do”. Ziguinchor is a calm, quiet antidote to the hustles and bustles of Dakar yet Dakarois and fellow researchers pitied me for living there – they saw the quiet, sleepy town on the banks of a river as an under-developed hinterland. “How would I cope?” they wondered. “There’s nothing to do!” they exclaimed. My Senegalese friends were more concerned about how I would deal with the heat and the rain, and were envious of the cheaper cost of living. I was happy to replace traffic jams, smog and chaotic construction with a slower pace of life, people with time to talk and life as a pedestrian. As much as it is idyllic to the Western visitor, Ziguinchor is not utopian, and my status as someone living in relative luxury means I have a somewhat warped view on what life was like, but hours, weeks, months and years spent with my informants enabled me to understand what the town had to offer them, and what it lacked.

3.6.1 Contemporary Ziguinchor

From its humble roots as a Portuguese enclave of 300 people, today’s Ziguinchor has a population of approximately 200,000. The sprawling and continually expanding capital of Dakar has, by means of comparison, around two million inhabitants.

Scholars are all in agreement that the Jola are the dominant ethnic group in the town, therefore it is interesting to consider the expansion of the use of the Wolof language. The northern Wolof make up 43.7 per cent of the total Senegalese population, yet it is estimated that 80 per cent of Senegalese people now speak Wolof as a first or second language. This figure reflects the increasing ‘Wolofisation’ of the population (Cruise O’Brien 1989). The fact that I conducted my fieldwork in the Casamance, yet chose to study Wolof as the language which would be of most use to me demonstrates this very fact. De Jong (2007: 69) suggests the popularity of Wolof (both as a language but also in relation to cultural practices) is due to it being identified as a status of modernity and urbanity. Juillard’s detailed work on ethnicity and linguistics in Ziguinchor also offers us some explanations for the popularity of the language, including how seasonal labour
migration, particularly by those returning to the Casamance from Dakar, has aided its spread (Juillard 1995).\textsuperscript{51}

The population of Ziguinchor and the wider region (including Oussouye and Bignona) was made up of the following ethnic groups, according to government statistics published in 2005:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>Population (percentage)</th>
<th>Origins</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jola</td>
<td>61.1</td>
<td>Casamance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandinko</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Casamance/Futa Jalon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulani/Peul</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Guinea-Conakry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wolof</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>North/north-east Senegal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manjak</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Guinea-Bissau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mancagnes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Guinea Bissau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balante</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Guinea-Bissau/Casamance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serer</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Siné Saloum (central Senegal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other ethnic groups</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Europe/Lebanon/other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Ethnic breakdown of the Ziguinchor region

These statistics must be viewed critically because they are not just for Ziguinchor, but for the wider region. What the figures do represent, however, is that the Jola people are the main inhabitants throughout the region, as one would expect for autochthons.

\textsuperscript{51} When I attended a court case in Ziguinchor one of the accused was brought forward and the judge spoke to him in French. He did not understand, so the judge repeated what he had said in Wolof. The accused said that he was Jola, and only spoke Jola. The judge looked at him in disbelief and annoyance, and summoned one of the administrative staff of the court to translate Wolof into Jola for him.
I was fascinated to discover that Anglophone West African communities (other than those of local Gambians) living and working in Ziguinchor formed part of the ‘other’ category mentioned above, as I had not realised the town would host so many different nationalities and ethnic groups, particularly English speaking ones. There was a small community of Ghanaian fishermen based in the village of Elinkine (recognisable by the flags and English phrases painted on the side of their boats), a gang of young Nigerian men involved in Internet ‘commerce’ and female migrants from Sierra Leone, Ghana and Nigeria. I would suggest the close proximity of Ziguinchor to the English speaking Gambia is a reason for the presence of Anglophone migrants – Ziguinchor is a stepping-stone to another country. Jojo, a young Ghanaian woman who ran a hairdressing salon in Ziguinchor during 2007, emailed me in June 2008 to say that she had moved to Banjul, where it was much easier for her to work as she spoke English, not French. She preferred living in Ziguinchor, but linguistically, Banjul was much easier for her to work in.

The town has an interesting hybrid of old and new; it is urban yet at the same time rural. Within Ziguinchor, there are distinct quartiers or neighbourhoods, spreading out from the old colonial centre of Escale with its crumbling verandas and faded balustrades to more rural quartiers lying on the outskirts of the town. Escale is the commercial heart of the town, where a grid of banks, administrative buildings, public services and shops are centred. Houses with mud walls and tin roofs and pot-holed, sewage filled roads sit side-by-side with luxury hotels and swimming pools. In terms of ‘modern’ public amenities, Ziguinchor has a post office and DHL office, two petrol stations, a gym, four small swimming pools, two different banks with ATMs, two universities, schools (local and expatriate) and representatives from various UN agencies. It has an abundance of cyber-cafés (which I discuss in the next chapter) and an array of restaurants, bars and nightclubs catering to local and expatriate budgets alike. The urban commercial centre eventually gives way to less densely populated areas, before Ziguinchor fades away into local villages.
Figure 6: The outskirts of Ziguinchor by air

Figure 7: Ziguinchor’s main street during the rainy season

The roads within Ziguinchor are in an appalling state, and even though the road between Cap Skirring and Ziguinchor was resurfaced in tarmac in Autumn 2007 to
promote tourism, the roads within the town centre are in disarray.\textsuperscript{52} Taxi drivers and car owners face huge maintenance costs for their vehicles, and drivers are forced to turn passengers down as they are unwilling to take certain roads for fear of damaging their cars. Many governments warn about the dangers of travelling on the roads in the Casamance, because of the presence of landmines and the state of the roads, which, even though the road between Ziguinchor and Cap Skirring has been declared safe, deter many tourists from visiting.

As I have stressed, the Casamance is an isolated area, and although transport links have improved, travel between Ziguinchor and Dakar is looked upon as a time-consuming hassle, rather than a trip that can be made quickly. Long delays at the Gambia-Senegal border, corrupt customs officials and an unreliable \textit{bac} (ferry) service add to the frustrations of a long, tiring journey by road to or from the capital. There is a long history of boat networks between Dakar and Ziguinchor, but these have been marred by tragedy (see Peterec 1967: 63 for a brief summary). The \textit{Joola} tragedy in 2002 shook the nation, as the passenger ferry that traversed the seas between Dakar and Ziguinchor sank and almost 2000 lives were lost.\textsuperscript{53} In 2005, a new boat, the \textit{Wilis}, was launched, but after mechanical failure, it was replaced again in 2008 by another, more luxurious boat named the \textit{Aline Sitoë Diatta}.\textsuperscript{54}

Whilst the boat link provided a mode of transport without border hassles and a generous luggage allowance (200kg. per person) to promote trade, it remained unaffordable for most Senegalese voyagers. Travel by road in a shared taxi (\textit{sept-places}) cost 8,500CFA one-way, when in 2006 it was only 7,500CFA. This increase in price corresponded to the rise in the price of fuel. A one-way boat ticket cost in the region of 20,000CFA depending on the class of cabin – there were no longer cheaper airline style seats, further limiting those who could afford to travel. There is also a daily internal flight between Ziguinchor and Dakar that eased travel for those on larger budgets, but costing approximately 60,000CFA one way, did not help the average Senegalese man or woman to decrease distances or travel easily.

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{52} The journey between Ziguinchor and Cap Skirring now takes 40 minutes, instead of the minimum of two hours it once took.
\end{flushleft}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{53} The tragedy resulted in many years of court cases and legal battles for compensation by the victims’ families. See http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=80500 for more details.
\end{flushleft}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{54} A Senegalese heroine of resistance against colonialism who was, in Boone’s words, a ‘Diola prophetess’ (2003: 111).
\end{flushleft}
Ziguinchor suffered from more food and fuel shortages than the rest of the country as a result of its distance from the commercial and administrative centre of Dakar, although trade links with the Gambia went some way to alleviate this. Although Ziguinchoris benefited from some cheaper consumer goods (such as sugar and charcoal) bought in the Gambia and access to cheaper local commodities such as timber, the benefits of living in the Casamance were limited.

3.6.2 Cap Skirring

The other area in which I conducted research was the beachside village of Cap Skirring, one of the main tourist destinations of the Casamance region. The small fishing village was not a tourist attraction in itself, but its coastal location was. The beach stretched to Guinea Bissau and was lined with several kilometres of privately owned residences, luxury hotels and apartments as well as smaller campements.

Senegal is a significant African tourist destination and for many Europeans it is the ‘gateway to Africa’. The Casamance has been an attractive destination for European
tourists for several decades, apart from a period during the 1990s when civil conflict dissuaded foreigners from visiting. In 2006, 25,899 tourists were reported to arrive in the region, spending a total of 121,028 nights in the Casamance. Ziguinchor and Cap Skirring accounted for 20.9 per cent of the total number of visitors to Senegal in 2006, and an estimated 49.6 per cent of these visitors to Senegal were French. There were direct flights between Paris and Cap Skirring during the peak season (October until May), and the resort boasted a luxury ‘Club Med’ complex (referred to by some locals as the prison touristique) as well as several other four and five star hotels and privately owned residences. In 2006, there were 90 official hotels, campements and hostels listed in the Casamance, 20 of which were classified as luxury accommodation.\textsuperscript{55}

Tourism in the Casamance began to develop in the 1970s when a Campement Rurale Intégré (CRI) tourist circuit was created. This contrasted greatly to the 5* tourism described above because the emphasis was on making unexplored areas and villages accessible to tourists who wanted to experience the unfamiliar and ‘exotic’. The first CRI opened in Elinkine in 1974, and a further campement opened in Enampore in 1964, which was soon followed by eight more in the Basse Casamance area (Masurier 1998). Villages that were not involved in the initial scheme copied the format of the CRIs, but their campements were privately owned and run for individual rather than community profit. Such campements, including one in Djembereng and others on the island of Karabane, excluded villagers and were against the ethos of the campement construction (Scibilia 1986). Very few of the CRIs are still functioning today, but the famous impluvium in Affiniam continues to welcome backpackers, local visitors and international school parties, all of whom are enticed by its location and architecture.

There were two main tourist seasons in Cap Skirring. The longest one coincided with the dry season and ran from October until late April. The months of May, June and September remained quiet and Cap Skirring became a ghost town. Hotels and campements lay deserted during this period and seasonal workers went home to visit their families or to try and find work elsewhere. July and August were known as the ‘Italian and Spanish’ season, which rather perplexingly coincided with the heaviest months of

\textsuperscript{55} Information taken from Liste des établissements touristiques fonctionnels 2006, provided by the Ministry of Tourism in Ziguinchor. These statistics, compiled using data from those registered at hotels are undoubtedly incomplete, as most of the smaller hotels and campements did not make their guests fill in registration cards on arrival, and thus they are not included in official figures (Ministry of Tourism 2006).
hivernage, when the Casamance was at its greenest but humid, wet and unpleasant. Small businesses capitalised on these months because most of the larger hotels and restaurants in the village were shut as their European owners went back to Europe for the summer.

The tourists who visited the region were very much divided into two distinct types: older French tourists (usually couples) who stayed in luxury all-inclusive accommodation, and independent, younger travellers who stayed in cheap <i>campeMENTS</i> and were searching for a cultural adventure rather than a beach holiday. The large numbers of tourists visiting the area have undoubtedly stimulated ideas about migration to Europe and ‘the good life’ for those living in Ziguinchor and its environs, and have provided men and women with new ideas about consumer goods and fashion, as well as ideas about relationships. As we will see in the discussion that follows, tourists were not explicitly sex-tourists and they did not come to Senegal with the sole intention of engaging in sexual relationships – instead, they came to the Casamance because its beaches, natural beauty and laid-back environment attracted them.

The sleepy village stretched along a main street, on one side the sea, and on the other a lagoon leading into a labyrinth of creeks and mangroves. Its dusty centre was home to local <i>boutiques</i>, several clothes shops, three cyber-cafés and several French owned restaurants attracting a foreign clientele. There was also a plethora of tourist <i>boutiques</i> selling wooden carvings, batik clothes and drums to tourists, some of which were imported from other African countries.
During the day the village of Cap Skirring remained calm and quiet, yet in the evenings, the main road came to life as people ate and drank in the local bars and restaurants. The largest of the two nightclubs, the *Case Bambou*, started to get busy around midnight, and hosted a mixture of local people and tourists, including the majority of Cap Skirring’s sex-workers and expatriate community. Cap Skirring’s population increased enormously at weekends, when Ziguinchor’s expatriate community descended upon its beaches. There were private bungalows available to rent, so those with large budgets could afford to come to the beach for the weekend to escape the stifling heat of Ziguinchor. The local economy depended on both weekend and seasonal tourism, which provided jobs not only in hotels and restaurants, but also in the transport industry. Souvenir sellers and craftsmen were able to make money selling their wares to tourists, and other petty traders walked the length of the beach selling fruit, sachets of peanuts and other goods.
Despite its idyllic location, cool sea breeze and interesting mix of people there was something quite sinister about the village at times. Aside from the hassles from local men, there was something that made me feel uneasy about being in Cap Skirring. Part of it was my age-old anthropologist guilt of being able to afford being there when my Senegalese friends could not, but there was something deeper than that. The air felt heavy with sexual tension, and I felt constantly judged, both by locals and other tourists. There was an intense aura of competition in the village too – everyone was struggling to make a living from tourism, and tourists became a precious resource. Toubabs were fought over, and it was only once I had established a presence in the town that I was able to walk around in peace.

Due to the rainy seasons that make riziculture so prominent, tourism was not an all-year round business and although there was a large choice of accommodation for tourists, much of it was lacking in quality. Although the Casamance was a popular tourist destination, it faced many difficulties and during 2008 many campements were in financial
crisis and did not know if they would be able to remain open.\textsuperscript{56} The significance of Cap Skirring will become clearer in chapters five and six, as the village also features in men and women’s aspirations of migration.

3.7 Conclusion
This chapter should have helped the reader to understand both the history of Senegal and its present situation as well as the country’s long histories of migration. The idea that Senegal is in a state of \textit{metti} where life is hard is deeply rooted, and I have shown how the economic and ecological situation of Senegal has led to the movement of peoples.

The Casamance is a region known for its isolation, but Ziguinchor and Cap Skirring are nevertheless hybrid places with constantly shifting flows of local populations, tourists and international migrants. I have tried to portray Ziguinchor as a town to which people are drawn, whilst equally stressing how its isolation and poor economic situation also make people want to leave. I have shown migration to be not just something that occurs in times of crisis, whether ecological, political or socio-economic, but as a strategic and longstanding feature of everyday life.

The patterns of rural to rural and rural to urban migration that are specific to the Jola provide an important background to migration within and beyond the region and go some way to suggest that this thesis provides new ways of thinking about old migratory routes. The following chapters build upon the context provided above and show very different, and dare I suggest innovative, ways in which people imagine leaving. The cyber-café, the \textit{pirogue} and the use of one’s sexuality are not migration strategies that are linked to any one particular ethnic group. Nor are they unique to the Casamance. What is unique about the Casamance is its location, the position of Ziguinchor as an oft-neglected crossroads town and the lure of Cap Skirring as a miniature European enclave within a predominantly rural region.

\textsuperscript{56} Personal communication, Flora, \textit{campement} worker, December 2008
Imagining Migration:
Cyber-cafés, sex and clandestine departures in the Casamance, Senegal

Emilie Venables

Full citation:


Please contact Dr Emilie Venables for further chapters: evenables@rhru.co.za
CHAPTER 4: Senegalese Women and the Cyber-café: online dating as a migration strategy

4.1 Introduction

The riverside town of Ziguinchor was, as I have shown in the previous introductory chapters, an attractive place for both male and female migrants. Yet as this and the following chapters demonstrate, it was also a place which many Senegalese people want to leave. My daily conversations with young, urban women were punctuated with talk of ‘leaving’, ‘escaping’ and starting a life in a non-specific European là-bas with a French, Italian or Spanish husband. In order to find partners, some women turned to online dating websites in an active search for the metaphorical pot of gold. In ‘chatting’ online to European men, women were not simply looking for someone to marry, but a new way of life. The virtual and transnational relationships they built were a hopeful attempt to realise better futures for themselves. This chapter discusses female aspirations of migration and a new, creative way in which women were attempting to leave Senegal. My discussion focuses on what these women believed they would find, and why they were so desperate to find it. In looking at their identities as hopeful migrants, I examine their role as agents who were adapting and appropriating modern technologies as a way of securing their futures.

I prefer to leave open the question of whether or not their attempts to leave Ziguinchor were, or will be, ‘successful’, as the significance of my research lies in aspirations of mobility rather than actual departures. The success of online dating as an international migration strategy was limited for women in Senegal so I frame this discussion within the realm of dreams and the imaginary. Despite only hearing through second-hand rumours and gossip about women who had met foreign husbands over the Internet, Ziguinchor’s young, female online-daters clung to these stories of hope with a sense of near desperation and unbelievable determination. The women sitting in the town’s cyber-cafés hoped that investing time in the world of the virtual would enable them to meet a man who could give them an immediate and temporary break from their everyday lives, and eventually, new opportunities and a life elsewhere. The Internet has become a potent space of escape for urban women, allowing them to shape and negotiate their identities in new ways to disconnect themselves from a present in which they cannot fully resolve their discontent.
4.2 Methodological issues

Research on online dating requires a specific type of methodological approach, and Constable’s very thorough discussion on Internet methodologies shows both how new research possibilities and new ethical concerns arise (Constable 2003: 62). Unlike many other studies of online behaviour, including Constable’s ‘virtual ethnography’, I used online communication as a supplement to traditional anthropological approaches rather than as a primary research tool. The term ‘virtual ethnography’ has also been used by Hine in reference to ethnographic work on human genetics that she carried out over a computer network. Her article raises important issues about the relationship between traditional ethnographic techniques of data collection and a virtual world where research does not necessarily need to be carried out face-to-face (Hine n/d). She suggests that a hybrid approach is necessary when studying the virtual – as much as we need to treat the spaces created by the Internet as a ‘real’ situation, we also need to be aware of the specific technologies and the spaces produced and how these may affect the research. Internet relationships formed just one of several strands of my research project, and due to both time constraints and practical issues, online conversations took place in addition to my Ziguinchor-based ethnographic fieldwork.

In this chapter I mainly concentrate on the case studies of two women taken from a sample of 15 semi-structured interviews, and numerous informal conversations and observations undertaken in Ziguinchor’s cyber-cafés, bars and restaurants. In addition to interviews and participant observation in Ziguinchor, I set up my own profiles on online dating websites, directly contacting women and asking them if they would be willing to be interviewed. This was not overly successful as many women were suspicious of my motives and were consequently reluctant to talk to me. I did not put a photo of myself on my profiles and kept my personal details to a minimum, initially not wanting to reveal my toubab identity or attract unwanted attention from men. Despite this, the majority of friendship requests or messages I received through being on the sites were from Senegalese men. Some of the women whom I contacted passed on my details to their male friends and relatives so that I could talk to them instead! I felt that I would have been much more successful in my online research had I either pretended to be male, or concealed the fact that I was doing research altogether, but I would have
felt extremely uneasy about the ethical implications of doing this. Carrying out covert research would have raised ethical issues with which I was not comfortable so I chose to remain open and honest about my work even if this did affect the number of women with whom I was able to converse.

I did not talk to any of the European men with whom the women in this chapter communicated, and it would be easy to criticise this research for being one-sided and neglecting the motivations of the men involved. I did not feel able to expand my research and approach men online, partly because the women whom I interviewed would not have been comfortable with my doing so, and partly because I would not have been comfortable doing so. If I had decided from the beginning that I was going to research correspondence relationships, I would have taken a very different approach to my research, posting on message boards or subscribing to online groups or chat rooms and asking specifically for male and female interviewees (Constable 2003: 51).

As my research began with an interest in the female perspective on online dating, I did not feel able to backtrack and ask the women with whom I had built up a rapport if I could then talk to their male correspondents, as this would have felt as if I was betraying them.

Another difficulty I had during my fieldwork was that because it was taking place in the slippery, uncertain realms of the virtual and the imaginary, traditional sociological snowball approaches to meeting people did not work. During one interview, I asked my interviewee, Koumba, if she knew of any Senegalese women who had met men online, hoping she would be able to introduce me to them. She was able to tell me of three couples she had heard about who had met online – she talked about these couples with envy, but equally aspired to be like them. To her, they had succeeded even though she knew nothing of what their lives in Europe were like. When I pushed her for details on who they were and if she could introduce me to them, she said that she did not know where they were, or that she had heard that they had left and she did not know how to contact them. Her evasiveness, I would guess, was because she suspected some of the stories she had heard were just rumours, but that she did not want to lose hope by

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37 Interestingly, a fellow researcher, Thomas Fouquet, carried out similar research on female Internet users in Dakar and found that rather than it being difficult for him as a man to talk to women, it did in fact help him in his research. Personal communication, December 2007.
admitting as such. She may also have been unable to put me in touch with people because they were, quite simply, part of well-known urban myths.

I do not, therefore, claim my research to be comprehensive or representative of the experiences of women’s Internet dating across Senegal, but intend it to be an exploration into one particular sample of women and their attitudes towards virtual relationships. As much as I am aware that I was at times talking to ‘virtual’ personas, which is important in itself, these women’s online characters are not mirrors of reality or figments of their imaginations, but cultural artefacts, produced for particular reasons.

4.3 The Study of the Internet

The abundance of new journals and publications on how ICTs have infiltrated and changed people’s lives around the world exemplify the significance of the Internet as an area of study in its own right. Although this chapter concentrates on the use of the Internet, I should point out that ICTs encompass not just computer technologies but other technological developments too, such as mobile phones and the text messages, ring-tones and the multi-media games that accompany them. Katz’s edited volume (2008) makes a valuable contribution to literature on mobile communications. His collection of papers show not only how ICTs have an impact on ‘developing countries’ in terms of economic and technological development, but on the way that their users appropriate technologies in a way that is meaningful to them (Katz 2008). What this collection demonstrates is that ICTs are involved in the daily lives of ordinary people across the globe yet are adapted in different ways in different contexts. Molony’s chapter, for example, shows the importance of the social dimension to mobile phone use in Tanzania – rather than focusing on technological advances, he shows the social role that the mobile phone has to play in the Tanzanian informal economy (Molony 2008).

In Ziguinchor, and indeed throughout Senegal, cyber-cafés are increasingly important spaces of communication, interaction and education. Even though this chapter concentrates on online dating as a migration strategy, I do not wish to suggest that this is the only way in which the Internet is used or has been studied. As much as it gives us a new lens through which to think about migration, the Internet is also significant for the leisure space its usage creates. Using a cyber-café gives Senegalese youth instant
‘modern’ identities, and being online also allows them to have a virtual identity of their own making. By this I do not mean the creation of a visual avatar that appears on the screen, but a new persona who encompasses what they want to be, not just who they are. I am interested in the hope that is placed in the virtual, and how this unseen dimension acts as an escape route for young women wanting to migrate.

There are two main issues I want to discuss in this section. Firstly, I want to consider the Internet as a social space and how it has become a site for consuming modernity and the idea of migration. Secondly I want to address the very important body of literature that looks at Internet dating and correspondence relationships.

4.3.1 The Cyber-café as a Social Space

I would be tempted to argue that part of the reason for the popularity of cyber-cafés in Ziguinchor was their significance as social spaces. They were places in which to reaffirm one’s identity as urban, modern and educated. Cheaper than buying a drink or snack in a café or restaurant, the public domain of the cyber-café offered young people a low-cost, social place in which to interact both with their friends and meet new people. As well as offering gaming and Internet access, cyber-cafés were safe, alcohol-free places in which to meet friends, sit next to new people and chat whilst working or ‘surfing’. Internet use in Senegalese cyber-cafés was mainly for leisure, in comparison to Internet use in an office environment which one would assume to be primarily for work purposes.

The cyber-café provides a dedicated user space bound up in the domestic and work routines of its users. Different users reformulate and take up the rhetoric of the Internet, itself a collective body of social and cultural meanings, in their own ways (Lee 1999: 332). In Ziguinchor, home Internet access was reserved for the elite, or those whose employers pay for their Internet access for work purposes, so the cyber-café was an extremely sociable domain. I would suggest that the majority of people in Ziguinchor with Internet access were expatriates, and although home connection (provided by Orange) had become cheaper, most Senegalese cyber-café users did not have any need for or intention to purchase a home connection. Whereas Lee makes the point that the future of the cyber-café could be short lived as home Internet use becomes more common, this is irrelevant to Ziguinchor where, even though there has
been a definite rise in the number of home users, the cyber-café is unlikely to disappear anytime soon.

I link the highly visible public Internet use of young people in Ziguinchor to a desire to be seen as modern and fashionable – specific cyber-cafés came in and out of fashion as much as clothes and music did, and if a new cyber-café opened up it would momentarily be the favoured hang-out of young people. If the cyber-café was thought to be a ‘cool’ place to be, the people who worked there would take on a momentary celebrity-status and would build up huge networks of online friends by adding all users of the cyber-café to their own Microsoft Service Network (MSN) account.⁵⁸

![Image](image.png)

Figure 11: Cyber café offering VIP access

Although the very essence of sitting and typing at a computer lent itself to being an individual activity, Senegalese youth turned it into a form of public consumption – they were using the technology temporarily, rather than owning it permanently. Their consumption and usage was not individual and discreet but public (except for those who pay for VIP use) – the fun lied in sharing your computer experience and screen with others, which may suggest why I found working in cyber-cafés distracting, obtrusive and not in keeping with the individual and maybe selfish attitude I had toward my valuable online time.

⁵⁸ MSN messenger is now known as ‘Windows Live Messenger’, but I use MSN messenger throughout as it is still referred to by its former name by many of its users.
Lee claims public Internet consumption to be part of a ‘highly self-conscious cultivation of lifestyle’ (Bourdieu 1984; Lee 1999: 341). It gives the user an elevated social status, and I am beginning to wonder whether or not my informants told me they spent a lot more time on the Internet than they really did because they wanted to appear knowledgeable about new technologies and convince me of their place as modern consumers. In a sense, the Internet was helping its users to leave behind a world of which they did not want to be a part: it gave them a virtual experience of migrating in a temporary, affordable and relatively risk-free way. Studies such as Lee’s show Internet users creating a transnational connection with ‘home’ through the Internet (emailing friends, talking to their family through Skype, reading the local newspaper online and so forth). In the case of Ziguinchor, however, I would suggest that the Internet has come to be about establishing new connections, and potentially a new home, rather than reaffirming a sense of the old.

Another study of particular relevance to something which puzzled me during my fieldwork is by Gibbs et al, who analyse ‘self-disclosure’ amongst the users of online dating websites. How much do people reveal about themselves in their online profiles, and are they always honest about who they are? What kind of effect does this have on the relationship, particularly if it is going to progress from computer-mediated communication (CMC) to offline interactions (Gibbs, Ellison, and Heino 2006)? The relationships that were discussed by my informants rarely went from online to offline, and I wondered how what women put in their online profiles related to their aspirations of migration. I often wondered when searching through profiles for women to contact if the majority of women were really based in Dakar as their profiles suggested, or if they had pretended to live in the capital, both because it was more well-known and because it suggested that they were more modern and urban than women living in Ziguinchor. In this sense, even one’s profile allowed virtual migration.

I liken the cyber-café, as a space of potential and mobility, to the karaoke bars discussed by Ong:

…many working women prefer the ‘state-free’ arena of bars and discos to work out individual strategies of eluding economic exploitation… The romance of mobile capitalism, then, conjures up a felicitous brew of imagined personal freedom and wealth, a heady mix that young women imagine travelling men can provide the passports to.

Ong (1999:156)
The cyber-café was just one potential site of upward social and spatial mobility, and for women in Ziguinchor it was a poignant space of virtual escape which they hoped would one day lead to physical mobility. As we will see in the following chapters, hopeful migrants appropriated other social spaces as potential sites for making the contacts that they believed would lead them to Europe.

4.3.2 Online dating as a domain of study
Online dating and chatting have become an increasingly popular phenomenon across the world in the past decade, and innovative, instant modes of communication have enabled people to form new social networks and develop friendships across international borders, as well as helping them to maintain existing ones. Letter writing, pen-pals and responding to ‘lonely hearts’ adverts have been replaced by chat-rooms, instant messaging and Skype conversations and lengthy phone calls squeezed into the 160 characters that a text message will allow. Aissatou, a 27 year old Senegalese woman whose story I discuss in more detail below, was surprised when I showed her the lonely hearts, or correspondance section of ‘Amina’, a women’s magazine circulating throughout francophone Africa. She could not understand who would choose to reply, or wait for replies, to such adverts, when she could use the Internet, which was so much more immediate.

The study of Internet correspondence relationships is not a new one, but this chapter offers a glimpse at women online daters in Senegal (a country which does not feature in current literature on the topic) and looks not at the relationship itself but the desire for a relationship. One of the most significant pieces of research on Internet correspondence relationships in the context of Africa is Johnson-Hanks’ work on young women and their relationships in urban Cameroon, which I discuss in more detail below. Cole’s discussion of transactional sex practices amongst young women in Madagascar also talks about how local women are using the Internet as a way of meeting French and Réunionais men (Johnson-Hanks 2007; Cole 2004). Outside of Africa, Brennan’s study

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59 Interview with Aissatou conducted on January 21st, 2007 in Ziguinchor. Interview conducted in French.
60 Amina, Le Magazine de la Femme, No. 443, 2007.
61 I have chosen to use the English spelling of Cameroon in this discussion, rather than the official French spelling, Cameroun.
of sex-tourism in the Dominican Republic addresses the impact the Internet has had upon relationships between local women and tourists. She discusses how the web is used both as a way for women to stay in touch with tourists who have returned home, and as a place in which male sex-tourists access online fora to talk about different resorts and the women they have met (Brennan 2004). Marriages between US men and Asian women who met each other over the Internet have become increasingly common and in her research on ‘mail-order brides’, Nicole Constable addresses the role of the Internet in correspondence courtship between US men and Filipinas and Chinese women and looks at how such relationships are both imagined and experienced (Constable 2003). She writes that although material concerns are one of the factors propelling Chinese women to search for a husband online, they, like the Senegalese women discussed below, evoke ideas of the ‘global imaginary’ and are aspiring to a kind of relationship and lifestyle that may or may not exist.

Due to the nature of the websites used in the context of my research, the lack of agent or broker involvement in matching couples, and the fact that very few (if any) of the relationships I discuss actually ended in marriage, my research does not fit into such discussions of ‘mail-order brides’, in which the majority of correspondence relationships do end up in the couple actually meeting. In her article on Asian-Australian marriages, Robinson states that the ‘democratising aspect of the Web’ means that those seeking relationships are not limited to commercial marriage-broker sites and can use more informal websites to pursue correspondence relationships (Robinson 2007: 486).

Although these examples of literature differ to my own work in some respects, they are useful because they show how using the Internet can be a legitimate migratory route for many women. The women whom I discuss in this chapter, although unsuccessful in their attempts to migrate, were clearly basing their aspirations of migration on a strategy that can work. This literature shows that women in Senegal are not the only women around the world to be seeking partners online. Although the persistence of women in Ziguinchor may seem irrational because they are unlikely to succeed, it is not irrational in the sense that it has worked in other contexts and could work in Senegal. It also reveals that as well as economic betterment and an escape from poverty, women were

62 Although there are some overlaps between sex-work and online dating, and indeed sex-tourism and the use of the Internet, these do not form the basis of my discussion.

63 See www.worldsexguide.com.
looking for new kinds of relationships which they believed could only be found in the West. These migratory flows follow the patterns laid out in the previous chapter – women were seeking to move from the global South to the global North, and in this particular example, the Internet was the means they used to attempt to get there.

4.4 Introduction to the Internet in Senegal

On arriving in Senegal in late 2006, I noted a huge growth in the number of cyber-cafés both in Ziguinchor and in Dakar since my previous visit almost two years earlier. As well as their ubiquity, I also noticed an improvement in the accessibility, speed and quality of Internet connections and many cyber-cafés and restaurants offered a (usually) reliable wireless connection to their customers. Cyber-cafés, as well as becoming more plentiful, had become cheaper, and thus more accessible to those outside of the elite classes. Opening a cyber-café seemed to have replaced the dream of investing in a télécentre (call centre) for many aspiring local entrepreneurs, and every main street and quartier in Ziguinchor now boasted a choice of places in which to access the Internet. Cyber-cafés offered people many different services in addition to Internet access – phone calls, photocopying and printing were standard, and many offered word processing courses as well as selling cold drinks. Although going online remained a pastime of urban-dwellers, people living in rural areas without Internet access also saw its benefits and visited towns with cyber-cafés to keep up their professional and social connections. This was especially important for those working within the tourist industry, such as Alpha, a tour-guide based in Cap Skirring, who needed the Internet to stay in touch with clients, organise bookings and monitor online travel reviews about his services.

4.4.1 Female Internet Users in Ziguinchor

The women who spent time online in Ziguinchor’s cyber-cafés as a way of meeting men were young and urban – they were not ‘the elite’, but still spoke very good French and dressed in modern, Western-style clothes. In their twenties and thirties, women searching for online partners fitted into the stereotypical image of what is known locally as a disquette. The terms disquette and miss were used to describe the appearance of ‘young, trendy and modern girls’, and although they can be used derogatively, I would suggest they are usually used jokingly (by men and women) and in admiration of a
woman’s physical appearance (Nyamnjoh 2005: 299). These women dressed in cheap, imported jeans or skirts and tight tops (known by the English word ‘bodies’) and wore high-heeled shoes. Their outfits were accessorised with handbags and earrings and their mobile phones, adorned with beaded chains, were worn on strings around their necks. As Scheld has pointed out in her discussion of fashion in Dakar, dress is often discussed as a ‘signifier of cosmopolitanism’, serving as a way for women to shape their own identities within the space of the city. In this case I would add that wearing Western clothing, particularly for web-cam conversations, was linked to women’s imaginings of a life in Europe and their aspirations of modernity (Scheld 2007: 233; Heath 1992). They were hoping to fit into what they thought Western women were like so that they appealed to the Western men they wanted to attract. We will see more examples of how fashion is used by sex-workers and côtémans to portray a particular image in later chapters.

As I discussed in the previous chapter, the women to whom I spoke throughout the course of my research had no regular source of income or employment, and like many women in the global South, formed part of the informal sector. Many were occasional petty traders, selling imported bags and clothing acquired from Dakar or bought cheaply in the Gambia, but this did not give them guaranteed economic stability. They were dependent on male friends or relatives for stock to sell, and supply was by no means regular. They relied instead on their families and casual boyfriends (local and foreign) to provide them with gifts and haphazard financial support, including mobile phone credit, taxi fares or food. These women wanted to work, and wanted a steady income, stating a desire to ‘do commerce’, but lacked the capital to do so. They saw very little for themselves in Ziguinchor – they did not see themselves as ‘rural’ and wanted no involvement in agriculture or domestic work, and as a result of their limited educational qualifications had very few opportunities for travel or employment. They also felt a sense of duty to their families and wanted economic security not just for themselves, but for their kin.

4.4.2 Setting the Scene: Inside the Cyber-café

In a hot and sticky cyber-café in the centre of Ziguinchor, I casually glanced up from my computer screen to look around the room, taking in who was there and what they were doing. A mixture of people occupied the computers, some in groups, some alone.
The majority were young, between 12 and 30, with the exception of one man in his 40s who asked me to help him complete an online job application form in English. A group of Nigerian men in their twenties was printing business cards and applying for jobs in Canada whilst simultaneously answering calls on their mobile phones. Pre-teen boys jostled noisily for their turn in the salle de jeux as they played computer games, whilst two American backpackers checked their emails and tried to make sense of the French keyboard to which they were not yet accustomed. A local boutiquier brought in a piece of paper with the recent increase in bread prices written on it, and asked Sylvie, the cyber-café’s assistant, to type it up for him so he could display it in his shop or boutique.64

Aside from the business deals and computer games, the majority of young people were chatting over the Internet, the pings from instant messages audible over the general murmur of conversation as the flash of multiple conversation windows lit up their screens. Many users wore headsets or casques, and were talking into their microphones using Skype or MSN messenger. A young man re-positioned the web-cam on top of his computer, his screen showed the grainy outline of the person to whom he was talking alongside an equally fuzzy image of himself. Some people chose to pay for relative calm, and were sitting in the VIP booths, where in addition to air-conditioning, users had the luxury of being able to draw a curtain behind them as they sit down, offering a degree of privacy and the potential for intimacy that did not come in the main room.65 Instead of 250CFA an hour, the VIP booths, with their subtle lighting and hints of sexual sleaze, cost 1000CFA, so this was an option that not everybody can afford to choose.

The most popular websites accessed by young Senegalese people were French ones, and the sites on which I spent most of my time included www.123love.com and www.amitie.fr. They were free to join, and thus extremely popular because no financial commitment was required. There were also fee-paying sites de rencontres that required much more of a financial investment, and attracted a more elite, exclusive clientele, but

64 See Le Soleil, August 30th, 2007.
http://www.lesoleil.sn/article.php3?id_article=28260&var_recherche=prix+pain+hausse
65 A series of articles in Le Quotidien commented on how Senegalese women have been using web-cams for ‘pornography’, talking about it as ‘a direct way of selling themselves to toubabs. Le Quotidien, January 8th, 2007.
they were not the focus of my research. Upon joining a website, users created a profile of themselves, and then searched for people with whom to communicate. Users could browse each other’s online profiles in a variety of ways, making searches on the basis of gender, age, location and general interests, or simply through looking at the accompanying photographs.

The web-cams sitting on top of every computer meant that it was not necessary to own or have access to a digital camera or scanner to attach a photo to one’s profile. Profiles that did not have photographs were not as popular as those that do: I suggest that seeing a photograph created initial trust in the person, even though there was no guarantee that people’s profile pictures were actually of them. Constable (2003: 155) gives an example of Chinese women who were suspicious of men who sent photographs of themselves posing in front of fancy cars or houses, as such images of ‘conspicuous consumption’ were considered as showing off. As well as making it more difficult for men to be deceitful, talking to someone who has a web-cam adds an additional element of flirtation and intimacy to the exchange, and many women refused to communicate with someone whom they could not see. Another benefit to these ‘face-to-face’ conversations is that women who did not have a high level of written French could rely on verbal communication and did not have to ask others for help in reading and writing messages. After initial messages had been exchanged through the websites, women usually gave out their email address, Skype or MSN account name or their phone number so that they could be contacted more easily.

4.5 Understanding Migratory Aspirations

I now discuss the two main reasons for which women imagine migrating and what they believe a life outside Senegal has to offer them. Into this section I interweave excerpts from interviews I conducted in order to give voice to the women seeking global mobility through the use of the Internet. I divide my discussion into two main parts – the search for economic betterment and material goods, and the hope of finding a ‘modern’ relationship with a European man, or a Senegalese man living in Europe, issues which we will also see to be of importance in the next chapter.

66 I also discovered the occurrence of speed-dating and other exclusive events for men and women to meet in Dakar, in which a fee was paid and details of the event kept secret until the last minute.
4.5.1 Reasons for using the Internet

When I asked women why they went online they gave a variety of responses. Safiatou, a 22 year old woman working in ‘an office’ told me over email that she began her Internet communications because she had thought it would be fun, and wanted to meet somebody who wanted a serious relationship.\(^{67}\) Other women talked about friends who had encouraged them to visit such websites, or who accompanied their friends to cyber-cafés because of the social element to them and they then became drawn into online dating and building up contacts. Other women, such as Aicha, a 25 year old woman who came to the cyber-café on a weekly basis, voiced her desire to migrate in terms of ‘discovery’ and ‘exploration’. She wanted to see for herself what life ‘over there’ was like, and saw no reason why she should not be able to travel and see the world in the same way that toubabs (including myself) did.

One thing was common to them all: their imaginings of là-bas were vague and unspecific, yet they spoke about their futures with confidence. It was not if but when they would leave. The actual details of what women imagined themselves to do if they moved to France, Italy or Spain were hazy, and, I would add, largely insignificant to their larger scale dreaming. When I talked to them about how they perceived their future in Europe, and asked how they would cope with the potential problems of loneliness, language barriers and living in a very different and unknown cultural environment, my worries were quickly dismissed. Women demonstrated the qualities of the gòorgòorlu, and were not concerned by any of the issues that I raised, saying that they would find a way to cope. They were insistent that their new lives would be as they had imagined, and quickly accepted each disappointment when a virtual relationship ended, moving on in their search to find someone else who could offer them the future they so desired.

They talked about their future lives in terms of getting married and working, usually in commerce, and having access to a wide range of modern consumer goods. I divide my discussion into two main parts. I first discuss the material benefits migration could bring, and then how these women believe a relationship (and a future) with a European man would be different from their past experiences.

\(^{67}\) Online conversation with Safiatou, June 27th, 2007.
4.5.2 Material Benefits

As we have seen in previous chapters, economic hardship and the search for a more financially secure future were some of the main reasons that hopeful migrants give for wanting to move. Online dating women were no different, and I discuss the material benefits that they believed would be bestowed upon them if they migrated. There were overt material factors involved in wanting to migrate: when they envisaged their new lives, women in Ziguinchor talked about the houses they would live in, the designer clothes they would wear and the everyday consumer goods they hoped to purchase. Into this discussion I place the desire for modern consumer goods, a partner who can support them financially and, in some cases, the desire to have their own income and to be able to send home remittances.

I begin with an extract from an interview I carried out with Hope, a Gambian woman who uses online dating sites: 68

EV – do you ever go on the Internet?

H – yes, I go on the Internet. I talk to white people. White men. I tell them my problems, I seek help from them.

EV – why white men?

H – they can help me

EV – have you ever met any of them? Do they visit you?

H – I have met some of them. But white men don’t trust girls anymore. It is difficult to get good girls, easy to get bad ones.

EV – where are these men from?

H – Canada, the United States. Former English countries. I tell them to come here and take me but they don’t trust women. One man sent me 25,000CFA but then he fell in love with another girl. A month later he comes online and says sorry for falling in love with another girl. He was from England. They just talk, talk, talk, talk. I’m tired and I have no confidence with men here.

EV – do you think you would want to marry one of these white men?

H – if I see a man that will take care of me, I will marry him. My mother wouldn’t think anything if I married a white man.

As the above interview shows, Hope, who had been living in Ziguinchor for several months at the time of our interview, linked her use of online dating and chat websites

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68 Interview with Hope conducted on July 3rd, 2007 in a cyber café in Ziguinchor. The interview was conducted in English.
(in her case, Hi5 and Yahoo chat) with toubab men who may be able to help her. Although in this case she did not explicitly talk about asking them for money, she mentions how one man sent her 25,000CFA. Other women also told me how they directly asked for economic assistance from the men with whom they communicated online, hoping that they would receive money transfers from them. I am not trying to imply that they were dishonest – they would never invent reasons for needing money (such as a baptism or family event), but would simply plead poverty and economic hardship. They did not see anything immoral in asking for money, because they saw it as the man’s duty to provide for them.

Aissatou, a 27 year old Jola woman from Ziguinchor was communicating with a Belgian man at the time of our interview. She was very much aware of the direct financial benefits that being in a relationship with a European man could bring her, but was apprehensive about asking her current correspondent (and others) directly for money. She hoped instead that upon meeting him he would begin to make financial contributions to her rent or purchase credit for her phone, in addition to taking her out for dinner and covering her daily expenses on a short term basis.

I told him about my family situation, about how my father left us. We don’t have any money. I’ve told him this. I explained everything to him. I told him that I do petit commerce because I’m too ashamed to tell him that I’m a whore.

Aissatou was her family’s main breadwinner, and any money she made from sex-work or petty trading went towards paying the household bills. She did not have any contact with her father, and her mother did not work. She had recently transformed their courtyard into a salle de jeux, which brought in some income from local boys paying to play computer games. She was successful at school, and regretted not finishing her education, but was forced to leave as her family could no longer afford the school fees. She realised, however, that asking for economic assistance too early on in their online communications could put a man off, and make him think that she just wanted economic support.

Aissatou’s narrative echoed that of so many other women, and she saw finding a foreign husband as the route to the European lifestyle she dreamt about and a way of leaving Senegal. Even though she had not been successful in her attempts so far, she tried, and believed it was worth the effort she puts in. Aissatou told me that:
I want to get out of here. I don’t want a Senegalese boyfriend. They’re flirts. Liars. They get dressed up, put aftershave on…you think they have something, but really they have nothing. I haven’t found anyone here who can give me what I need. I want to work in Europe, send some money here to help my mother. That’s what I want. To work hard, work in Europe, send money home.

As the above quotation shows, her search for a husband was not just about her dissatisfaction with Senegalese men, but the opportunity of a new start and the possibility to earn money in a way of which she is not ashamed. She had a strong work ethic, and a commitment to supporting her mother and younger brother.

4.5.3 Romance and Love: the search for a ‘modern’ relationship

In addition to how the women in this chapter idealised and fantasised about the material and employment benefits of the West, they also had very definite ideas about what relationships with toubab would be like. Some of their imaginings were based on their own experiences with European men or those of their friends, but the majority were dependent on images gleaned from imported soap operas and magazines and their observations of male tourists (and couples) visiting Senegal. European men, regardless of nationality, were believed to be everything that Senegalese men were not. In idealising the relatively unknown, dissatisfaction with Senegalese men was vocalised.

The most common way women described Senegalese men was by saying ‘they’re not serious’ using the Wolof term sei-sei (the best translation of which would be ‘player’) to describe this perceived lack of seriousness and sincerity. As well as expressing concern with a man’s ability to be faithful, women were also linking his ‘seriousness’ with his socio-economic status. As I discussed earlier, women realised that in a town with a rising cost of living and a crisis of commerce, men too were struggling to ‘get by’ and could no longer be depended upon financially. I thus suggest that being serious implies being faithful and not a ‘player’, whilst also being hard-working and economically independent.

I found it interesting that the notion of searching for a man who is sérieux is also used by the Cameroonian women in Johnson-Hanks’ study of online dating. The women in her research are seeking foreign husbands whilst simultaneously drawing from deeply rooted, local assumptions about marriage, men and honour (Johnson-Hanks 2007: 644). The women to whom I spoke believed European men to be extremely sérieux, using a
label that incorporated ideas of honesty, loyalty, respect and trust. Most importantly, they believed that European men would be monogamous and faithful. Women wanted a man to provide not just for them but their extended families too, and they realised that having more than one wife could put a strain upon him and his ability to do so, as highlighted in the previous discussion on gender politics in Senegal.

Foreign men were also seen to be more generous than local men. As Brennan has pointed out, in the Dominican Republic what would usually be considered ‘luxury’ goods and services are easily affordable for tourists, and men can play to the stereotype that foreign men are rich and generous (Brennan 2004: 200). Women compared their own experiences, and those of their friends and families, to relationships seen in the Western media, and amongst Europeans in the Casamance. They concluded that Europeans were more faithful and financially secure than local men, and they therefore sought to form relationships with them, in this case, through the use of the Internet.

It is interesting that it was not just European men to whom Senegalese women are attracted as part of their quest to migrate. Mélanie, a 29-year-old Jola woman living and working as a serveuse (bar-tender) in one of Ziguinchor’s main hotels stated that she would also consider a relationship with a Senegalese man living and working in Europe, as she believed them to have transposed values from their ‘modern’ lives into their relationships. In this instance, it was not so much the man himself to whom women are attracted, but what he was believed to represent.

Although physical appearance was one of the qualities that attracted Senegalese women towards relationships with European men, it was not one of the main criteria they sought. It was generally considered that European men were beau, their clothes smart and their haircuts neat, but attractiveness did not feature prominently in women’s discussions of what they looked for in a partner. Age and appearance were not as important as a man’s nationality or location. I questioned Aissatou about her Belgian copain and whether or not she loved him. She replied by saying that she ‘thought highly of him’. I wondered if she found him physically attractive, after seeing his photos and talking to him via the web-cam. She said, quite bluntly and with a look of sadness in her eyes that it did not matter what he looked like because appearances were no longer

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69 Interview with Mélanie conducted on September 3rd in a cyber café in Ziguinchor. Interview conducted in French.
important to her. She shrugged off my question about the age gap between them (he is 42, she is 27), her voice trailing off as she said it did not matter, and that she had no choice anymore. She had talked about several men this way during the years that I had known her, the initial excitement of making a new contact eventually fading as emails became less frequent and communication began to die out.

Ziguinchor’s young, online women used a specific language when talking about the men with whom they communicated. Men were described as ‘copains’ or boyfriends, ‘fiancés’ and husbands, even if the couple had never met. I argue that this is an example of the hope women attached to their virtual relationships, as well as being a way of protecting themselves from the risk of judgement from wider society about the sincerity of their relationships. The use of the term copain or fiancé could also be viewed as a way of women flattering the men with whom they are communicating; it could be considered a form of flirtation as well as an attempt to express themselves in a modern language of love. They were not misleading or maliciously deceiving the men to whom they spoke, but were attempting a new kind of language as a way of competing and participating in a style of relationship with which they were unfamiliar.

In referring to their online relationships using a discourse of love, women were simultaneously marketing themselves as modern and differentiating any future relationships from the dissatisfaction they had experienced with local Senegalese men. Faier’s study (Faier 2007: 149) of Filipina migrants in Japan explores how love is a:

…term of global self-making: at once a language and a set of conditions through which these women articulated globally recognizable forms of agency and subjectivity within transnational relations of power.

Love becomes a cultural discourse, she argues, and similarly in Ziguinchor, women were using global (online) encounters to transform their lives and themselves, allowing themselves the possibility of international migration. In looking for a man who is seriene, women were rejecting traditional Senegalese relationships and using the Internet to locate themselves in a virtual world, which offered them access to European men and a modern lifestyle.

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70 I consider this idea in more detail in the following chapter on sex-workers.
Mélanie told me how she had begun looking for a partner on the Internet after being treated badly by her previous Senegalese boyfriends – she said three different men had betrayed her, one of whom was her former boss. She told me that she no longer had any confidence in forming relationships with local men, expressing the same discontent as Aissatou. Mélanie talked about how she wanted to marry a *toubab* and move away from Ziguinchor, to là-bas, where she would have a more secure future, and the kind of lifestyle she has observed through working with tourists and watching imported Latin American soap operas such as *Barbarita*. Like Aissatou, she listed the European men to whom she has talked online without being prompted to do so, talking about their nationalities and occupations with pride.

I talk to Spanish people...men from lots of different countries. As soon as I joined the site I had a message, from a 39-year-old guy looking for a ‘serious woman’. I gave him my number. He’s the director of a business. I send him my photo. I had [online contact with] a Canadian too, an only child.

As the following quotation, taken from a conversation we had in the hotel bar before she started work demonstrates, she was willing to consider a relationship with a Senegalese man if he lived in the diaspora. She viewed Senegalese men living outside of Senegal as being more ‘modern’ in their relationships and attitudes towards women, and thus more desirable to her as a husband. She told me about one of the men with whom she had communicated, and how the relationship had not worked:

There was a Senegalese guy in Spain. He promised me that he’d come here and marry me. He’d been there for 7 years. He called me all the time, but then he started being jealous of everything, always asking me where I was and who I was with. Then suddenly, nothing. Maybe his parents didn’t agree...I haven’t heard from him since then.

From the above examples, it would appear that women were dissatisfied with Senegalese men and have imagined European men to be different.

### 4.6 Conclusion

The above examples have shown how women believed that they could improve their lives through finding a *toubab* who would offer them the opportunity to live elsewhere, a fulfilling, loving relationship and financial security. I often questioned the rationality of these women’s actions: why did they keep on persisting in unsuccessful communication, and was this not emotionally draining and psychologically damaging for them? They
remained eternally hopeful that eventually they would meet the right man, and if one virtual correspondence faded away they would then replace it with another. They became accustomed to relationships dying out, and thus were not as disappointed as we may imagine when virtual chat did not lead to the crossing of international borders. These women argued that it was better for them to continue searching and waiting, than not to have tried at all. Even if they did end up marrying a Senegalese man and spending the rest of their lives in Senegal, they had at least attempted to construct a different future for themselves. Their modern, virtual identities were a step towards migration, and even if they did not succeed, they knew they had tried.

I have shown the importance of imaginative practice to women in Ziguinchor, demonstrating how dreaming of escape through the use of the Internet allowed them to construct a more optimistic future for themselves in an increasingly connected world. Even if they did not directly know of anyone who had left Senegal or found love through the Internet, they still believed online dating to be a viable migration strategy, and one that could prove to be successful. The desperation expressed by many women who felt trapped in a town that offered them very little, but which dangled imported goods and tourists temptingly in front of them, manifested itself in online flirtations and the search for escape routes.

I argue that as much as the Internet is a form of entertainment and the cyber-café an important social space, it is more than simply a way of passing time. The social space of the cyber-café is important, but so are the imagined spaces it provides. Just as in Weiss’ discussion of Tanzanian barber-shops (Weiss 2004: 226) or Ong’s discussion of women in karaoke bars (Ong 1999), people’s fantasies are real, and lie at the intersection of global possibility and local imagination. Through creating slippery, virtual relationships with men they may never meet, women were exercising agency and giving themselves hope through the connections they made, even if they were yet to realise their migratory dream.

When I spoke to Aissatou via Skype from Edinburgh after leaving the field, she told me that she had met ‘her Belgian’, as he came to visit her whilst in Senegal on business. He had told her he wanted to marry her, but she told me she was unsure if he meant it. She said that he had told her he loved her, but she did not sound convinced by his words and was not hopeful about their future together. She still persists in her search, though,
Imagining Migration:
Cyber-cafés, sex and clandestine departures in the Casamance, Senegal

Emilie Venables

Full citation:


Please contact Dr Emilie Venables for further chapters: evenables@rhru.co.za
CHAPTER 5: Migration as the route to sex-work. Sex-work as the route to migration.

5.1 Introduction
As I stated in the introduction to this thesis, I did not plan to study migration. I had planned to write an ethnography on the lives of sex-workers in Ziguinchor, but over time I became increasingly interested in the significance of the relationship between sex-work and migration. Sex-work is both cause and effect: earning money as a sex worker can be a reason for migrating to Ziguinchor in the first place, and it can be a result of migrating to Ziguinchor in search of work. Sex-work is also often a strategy for international migration, albeit an overwhelmingly unsuccessful one. The main arguments in this chapter are divided into two parts. Firstly, I provide a background to sex-work in Ziguinchor and discuss the methodological issues that arose during my research. I then discuss the relationship between sex-work and local migration, before focusing my attention on women who see sex-work as an international migration strategy. I intend to show the significance of Ziguinchor as a place to which sex-workers are attracted, but equally how they use sex-work as international migration strategy.

5.2 The Study of Sex-work
This section shows how my research in Senegal relates to some of the wider theoretical and methodological issues and debates within the study of sex-work. I discuss the problem of terminology, the relationship between sex-work and ‘work’ and the tendency to link the study of sex-work with HIV/AIDS when writing about the global South. This section serves as an introduction to the typical ways in which sex-work has been studied, but as I show in my later discussions about sex-work and migration, they are not the only important issues at stake.

5.2.1 A Terminological Discussion
The first issue that needs to be addressed is my use of the term ‘sex-work’ rather than ‘prostitution’. Despite having chosen to use the term sex-work, I still struggle with my choice of phrase and believe that there is no one word which is respectful without being inadvertently political. The first thing I am required to do after presenting my work is
to answer a question about why I talk about sex-workers, not prostitutes. I am sure that this is the same for those who talk or write about prostitutes rather than sex-workers. I avoid the term ‘prostitution’ because of the stigma that I believe surrounds it – if the word does appear in my work, it is because I am directly quoting someone else. In Senegal, the word prostitute is used as a means of judging women and is often offensive, and I seek to avoid making the same judgements myself.

An obvious question concerning naming practices would be, ‘how do they describe themselves?’ This is a complex issue, and there is no simple answer because, if at all possible, women avoided referring to themselves in relation to their work. There was no one term on which they all agreed. Sometimes they talked about ‘being a prostitute’ or propriétaire or ‘working as a prostitute’, but their occupation was usually something that went unspoken. It remained shrouded behind a vague terminology consisting of ‘what I do’, ‘when I go there’, ‘my work’ and ‘going out’. NGOs and clinic staff called them ‘the girls’ (to be endearing, rather than to be patronising) or more formally, ‘travailleuses du sexe’ (TS) or sex-workers. People who wanted to be derogatory called them putes, which means quite simply ‘whores’, or ‘belles de la nuit’ – women, or beauties, of the night. Fouquet’s work on clandestine sex-workers in Dakar also documents the use of the phrase les filles qui sortent la nuit - girls who go out at night (Fouquet 2007).

The most commonly used term by scholars is ‘prostitute’ (White 1990; Hubbard 1999), whereas others, such as Day and Ward (1987) have chosen the phrase ‘prostitute women’. In her study of a Peruvian clinic Nencel (2001: 3) alternates between the term ‘prostitute’ and the phrase ‘women who prostitute’, claiming that ‘sex-worker’ is a misrepresentation of social reality for the women at the centre of her research. Some of the older francophone literature on the subject uses the more general label of ‘femme-libre’ or ‘free woman’, which can refer to unmarried women with multiple partners as well as to women who are involved in commercial sex-work (Bujita 1986; Hassoun 1997). This was also a phrase I heard used by NGOs in Côte d’Ivoire.

I realise that by using the term sex-work I am inevitably engaging in the political debates, as I address below in more detail. Such debates provide an important frame through which to think about identity, but the non-committal attitude that sex-workers have towards their work and identities is related to their aspirations of migration rather
than a political context. They did not want or need to engage in the debates outlined above because they argue that what they do is not _forever._

### 5.2.2 Sex-work as Work?

Terminology is closely linked to another important debate in the study of sex-work: whether or not we should consider sex-work to be _work_. Unlike Leigh (1997: 225) I do not use the term ‘sex-worker’ to locate women in Ziguinchor within an activist discourse, but to represent sex-work as a way of making money.

Priscilla Alexander is one of the main advocates of the idea that ‘sex-work is work’. She argues that it should be seen as work because of the similarities it has with other occupations, citing the relationship between employer and employee, the earning of wages and designated working hours as comparable examples. In raising the status of sex-work from an immoral occupation to something which resembles any other job, women are able to demand rights and recognition for what they do (Alexander 1997: 168; Brewis and Linstead 2000b). In viewing commercial sex-work as a profession, women can claim their expertise in areas such as escort work or the provision of more specialist sexual services, and can be promoted and receive recognition for their achievements.

On the other hand, the skills which women need to earn money are not skills comparable to those taught in college courses or at school, and much like other skills typically associated with women (taking care of a home, cooking and motherhood, for example) can only be learned through self development, such as learning to say ‘no’ and being able to protect and defend oneself (Jeffreys 1997: 67). Despite suggestions that there are similarities between sex-work and other occupations, the relationship between sex-worker and client differs from the conventional employer-employee relationship. Women are dependent upon their clients for economic survival, and experience far more psychological distress than they do.

I would suggest that the extent of the emotional labour demands made upon the individual sex-worker make it difficult to place sex-work within the same category as other jobs. There are increased occupational risks compared to many other forms of employment, including the threat of violence or abuse, pregnancy, and elevated risks to the sex-worker’s health, such as contracting STIs or HIV (Sanders 2005). As Jeffreys
states, the ‘profound involvement of the woman’s body and therefore her self’, and I would add, the stigma attached to the use of the body for economic gain, make sex-work different from other types of employment (Jeffreys 1997: 186). This is a complex issue, and of course employees in many types of precarious employment (mine-workers or soldiers, for example) are also subject to risks, so these debates are not unique to the study of sex-work.

I would thus conclude, like Brewis and Linstead (2000a), that sex-work falls into a liminal category, taking on some characteristics of regular employment, but remaining distinct from other economic, social and cultural practices which form the mainstream labour market. The industry in which these women are involved is, like their identities, a liminal one, and the way in which they define themselves and their work affects the way they manage their lives and how they establish boundaries between what they do and who they are (Venables 2007). As Nencel (2005: 349) has argued, neither seeing women as the victims of sexual slavery (Barry 1995) nor portraying them as sexually assertive women (Alexander 1997) are helpful categories individually, and neither accurately portrays the complexities of these women’s lives.

None of the women with whom I spoke was controlled by a pimp, and with one exception, none was the ‘victim’ of trafficking. Studies of trafficked women, as I discussed in my theoretical introduction, undoubtedly reveal a very different side to sex-work from the one that most of the women in this chapter experienced. The context of my research is ‘adult prostitution resulting from individual decision’. Thus there is a degree of individual choice involved, even if women feel that wider social circumstance has left them with few options (Pheterson 1989: 40). Women in Ziguinchor cited the loss of a partner, having to support dependent children, displacement and having little or no formal education as reasons for first entering sex-work; their ‘lack of choice’ was related to the wider socio-economic issues discussed in chapter three.

There are clear overlaps with the issues discussed above and the idea that sex-workers can demand rights and recognition for what they do. The sex-worker rights movement demands that sex-workers receive the same status as women in other professions, and they demand empowerment for their involvement in a profession which has otherwise declared them as deviant (Kempadoo and Doezema 1998; Outshoom 2005). Organisations such as COYOTE – Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics – were established
to provide a platform upon which women could speak out about their work and attempt to bring around changes in law and attitudes which classified their behaviour as legally and morally offensive. Interestingly, and particularly relevant to my research in the STI clinic in Ziguinchor, was the pressure the COYOTE movement placed upon the San Francisco Sheriff’s Department to stop carrying out obligatory STI tests on sex-workers they had arrested. Women were forced to choose between being released and taking a course of antibiotics, or remaining in jail for two weeks until the results of their tests came back. This made me question how welcome the compulsory STI testing for sex-workers in Ziguinchor really was, and who was supposed to benefit from it. For some women it was an unwelcome intrusion, but others appreciated the access to regular health checks and the psychosocial support that the clinic gave them.

Some of the registered sex-workers in Ziguinchor were involved in HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns, but their involvement with local projects such as Association AWA was as peer educators rather than advocates (Ebin 2000). Unlike the women in Nagle’s volume (1997), the sex-workers in Ziguinchor with whom I conducted interviews did not wish to draw public attention to themselves or their work. Although many sex-workers in developing countries were beginning to fight publicly for their work to be respected and recognised, this was not something I have encountered in Senegal because there was still so much stigma attached to the occupation.

5.2.3 Methodological Issues

This section addresses some of the methodological problems I encountered during my fieldwork, and how I overcame them.

There are many methodological issues attached specifically to the study of sex-work, as there are with any group of people involved in illegal, illicit or supposedly immoral behaviour. One of the first problems I had was how to make my initial contacts with sex-workers, and admittedly, this was down to luck. My first research contact was made whilst I sat drinking beer with a friend of a friend in Ziguinchor. We were trying to decide where to go to next and I asked him to ‘take me to a bar where there are sex-workers.’ We went to what he called a ‘dodgy’ bar on the outskirts of Ziguinchor and I began talking to the bar owner about my research. He introduced me to the sex-workers working there, and they in turn told me about the STI clinic. The clinic became an important place for meeting other sex-workers, who in turn introduced me to the
places in which they worked. Although it would be extremely easy to criticise such an approach for being haphazard and unsystematic, the contacts I made on that first night were invaluable.

I used the ten interviews conducted during my MSc research as a basis on which to build my doctoral fieldwork. In total, I carried out thirty-two interviews with sex-workers and clinic staff, in addition to innumerable informal conversations and hours of participant observation in the STI clinic and in Ziguinchor’s bars, clubs and hotels. As I grew to know the women better, I spent increasing amounts of time at their houses and we would cook, eat and nap together. Formal, structured interviews were rare and I found informal, impromptu conversations and snowball sampling far more beneficial than any of my attempts to be more rigorous.

One of my main problems was finding a place in which to conduct interviews that would not draw attention to the women or their occupation. Most of them kept their work hidden from their families, which made it impossible to conduct interviews in their homes. They did not want to bring a strange toumba home and did not want to have to explain what we were talking about:

She (Aicha) told me she doesn’t mind answering my questions or talking to people because she’s not from here. Other girls, she told me, worry about their families finding out, and worry about talking to people in the same place that they frequent.

Extract from fieldwork diary, March 21st 2007

To avoid causing awkward situations such as these I talked to women whilst they were at the clinic or in the public places that they associated with their work. They were always late and I quickly learnt that it was important to phone the day of the interview, an hour before the interview, and an hour after the interview was supposed to start to remind them of our meeting! It was easier to meet with migrant sex-workers because they stayed in hotels where people were aware of their work and they did not mind my presence. I could turn up unannounced at hotels or campements, but could not do the same at women’s houses.

As well as being worried about people close to them finding out about their work, sex-workers were concerned that I was a journalist. They were scared that I would reveal their identities on national radio or television and insisted on remaining anonymous. It
is for this reason that very few of my interviews were recorded – women were uncomfortable with the presence of my recording equipment, and some believed that it was directly linked to a television station.

They also wanted to know how my research was going to be of direct benefit to them, and I had to be honest and say that it was not:

The last time I was in the clinic the atmosphere got very tense and the women were quite intimidating. Khady was very indignant about my research, saying that “people come here and they do research, they say that they want to help us but they don’t.” I tried to defend myself by saying that I wasn’t here to help, but that ended up sounding wrong too. What justification do I have for intruding without aiding?

Extract from fieldwork diary, January 22nd 2007

I had to explain that I was not attached to a funding body, and that my research would not bring them any extra money. I told them that I wanted to learn and write about their lives, and that I saw this as their chance to tell their stories to me and anyone else reading my work. Some felt proud at being asked to participate and were keen to assist me, whereas others were simply not interested.

Another problem specific to the research in this chapter was that of payment. Women would often demand money in exchange for interviews, and as I noted in my introduction, this was not something with which I felt comfortable. I would pay for their transport costs or buy them a drink when we had arranged meetings, but I did not give in to their demands for direct cash assistance. As women got to know me and trust me, their demands for money became less frequent, which made me more likely to buy small gifts for them or their children if I visited. When I left the field, I threw a party for all the women I had spoken to, but was somewhat disheartened when a close friend and informant expected me to pay for her to get home afterwards!

The research I undertook with sex-workers posed problems that I did not encounter in other areas of my research, and led me to think about and explore issues I had not previously considered to be of importance. Although sex-work now only makes up one chapter in this thesis, this initial research and the contacts I made were invaluable and gave me a great insight into female survival strategies and aspirations of migration.
5.3 Sex-work and HIV/AIDS

We cannot ignore the AIDS pandemic in Sub-Saharan Africa, but I would like to show how a study of sex-work does not have to focus upon it. I want to stress that sex-work and AIDS do not always have to be related, and in fact I argue that the problem with HIV transmission does not necessarily apply to sex-workers and their clients but to sex-workers and their non-commercial partners.

5.3.1 Theoretical Discussion of HIV/AIDS

There is a lack of literature that discusses commercial sex in Africa without making reference to HIV/AIDS. Women’s behaviour is usually put into the category of deviant and sex-workers become the ‘reservoirs of disease’. Or, if not the villains, women from the global South are the ‘victims’ and are talked about either in relation to their vulnerability or their agency in defiance of their presumed exploitation (Treichler 1999).

When I began to conduct research on sex-workers in Côte d’Ivoire during 2002, my work fitted very much into the body of literature on women and HIV/AIDS that was emerging at the time. Replacing the 1980s and 1990s literature on women as workers, household members and agents and victims of development (Clark 1994) were concerns with female empowerment and the relationship between gender and AIDS. The impact of HIV/AIDS upon the African continent led to an academic focus on female sexuality, and the urban female sex-worker featured heavily in these debates. Women were discussed in terms of their ability to negotiate safe sex with partners and clients, and, consequently, their ability to protect and ‘empower’ themselves against HIV (Haram 2004; Schoepf 1989). Sex-workers were the targets of AIDS awareness campaigns because they were seen to be one of the ‘high-risk groups’ responsible for the transmission of HIV.

Statistically, we cannot deny that women with multiple partners have a higher risk of contracting HIV (as are men with multiple partners), but by turning academic attention to certain types of ‘risky’ or ‘immoral’ behaviour, we are making moral distinctions between different types of sexual relationships. As Treichler observes, international health organisations often create Africans as Pathological Others, forcing a distinct displacement of difference upon them. Localised practices such as dry sex, female genital mutilation and lack of education are all blamed for HIV transmission.
One area of relevance to my work is how sex-workers distinguished between sex for love and sex for money. This had obvious implications for HIV/AIDS as the main way women separated sex with commercial partners and sex with lovers was to use a condom with the former but not with the latter. Salma, a sex-worker living in Ziguinchor, talked about this distinction:

When I was younger I used to love the clubs! Ooh, ladies night! There is a big difference between natural sex and sex with a condom… You don’t have natural sex with just anyone.  

Day and Ward also noted the same distinction amongst the ‘prostitute women’ in their London based study (Day and Ward 1987). Women believed clients’ semen to be dirty, so they separated clients and their bodily fluids from the social and emotional sexual relationships they had outside of the workplace. Wilton has written about the significance of unprotected sex in the era of AIDS, and for many sex-workers, sex without a condom creates intimacy outside of the workplace (Wilton 1997). Health campaigns need to re-direct their focus, because for many of the women with whom I spoke, the behaviour that put them at risk was not in the workplace, but outside of it. The significance of such distinctions is important later on in this chapter, when I talk about how turning clients into lovers could have implications for women’s health.

5.3.2 The STI clinic as a research space

The STI clinic in Ziguinchor was an important site for my research both during my MSc fieldwork in Spring 2005 and my PhD fieldwork between December 2006 and December 2007. Since 1966, sex-work in Senegal has been legal, with certain conditions: hence the existence of clinics such as the one in Ziguinchor. It is unclear to what extent this move has been responsible for the low levels of HIV prevalence in the country, which were estimated at 0.9 per cent in 2005.

Situated in a shady, walled garden, the hospital had a maternity and family planning unit and was also available for general consultations during the week. There were always

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71 Interview with Salma carried out on November 23rd, 2007 in Ziguinchor. Interview conducted in French.
72 The clinic also appears to have been used as a base for recruiting women in Buckner’s (1998) study of Bissau-Guinean prostitutes.
73 Plans to legalise sex-work in South Africa for the World Cup in 2010 have been welcomed by sex-workers, but shunned by religious groups. See http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7509357.stm for more details.
74 www.unicef.org
large queues of people waiting outside, particularly on Monday mornings or following public holidays. When I began my research in 2005, women engaged in sex-work were required to attend the STI clinic once a fortnight (on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays), but in 2007 this had been reduced to once a month.

Although I refer to it as a ‘clinic’, the language different people used to describe the place where sex-workers registered was an important issue. Women called it ‘the hospital’, talked about when they would next “faire la visite” or referred to it quite simply as ‘Mariama’, as if it were a friend whom they were visiting. Staff at the clinic called it the ‘centre IST’. Their choice of language located it within a reproductive health paradigm, whereas when sex-workers talked about the ‘hospital’, they made no reference to why they would be visiting a doctor.

At the time of my 2007 research it was estimated that 120 women were registered at the clinic, but not all of them attended as regularly as they were supposed to. The youngest women to register were 21 years old (the legal minimum) and the oldest women were in their fifties. Seven women registered at the clinic died during the course of 2007, two of whom passed away from AIDS-related illnesses. Although funded by the Senegalese government, it was not just Senegalese women who could register, and many of the women to whom I spoke were migrants from elsewhere in West Africa. The majority were Senegalese, but during the course of my research I encountered women from Senegal, the Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Guinea Conakry, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Nigeria and Mali. Buckner estimated that in 1990, approximately 40 per cent of the women attending the clinic were Bissau-Guinean (Buckner 1998), showing that the clinic has never been a solely Senegalese place, and fitting in with my hypothesis that women often do not want to be sex-workers in a place where they may know people.

On arriving at the clinic for the first time, women had to be interviewed by a member of staff, provide identification and sign a consent form stating that they:

1. are at least 21 years old

2. are registering voluntarily

75 The hospital was named after a famous Senegalese woman, whose name I have changed to ‘Mariama’ to avoid identification.
76 The exact figures were not available as they were in the process of being compiled as I left the field, and it was difficult to collect reliable data as women did not attend the clinic regularly and did not inform the staff if they no longer wanted to be registered.
3. have provided the necessary documentation:

- identity card/passport
- 4 photographs
- certificat de domicile

4. agree to routine (monthly) examinations

5. agree to attend the clinic and follow treatments as prescribed

6. will attend regular sensibilisations to inform them about HIV/AIDS and STIs

7. will inform the centre of any change in personal or work details (marital status, address, travel, migration)

After signing the consent form, the woman was then provided with a carnet that she must carry with her when she is working. This served as proof that she was legally allowed to work as a sex-worker and had to be shown to the police if she was stopped and accused of working illegally. Most women hid their faded carnets in the bottom of their handbags so that people outside the clinic did not see them. Details of their visits and any infections and treatments they have had were recorded in the carnets and in the hospital’s handwritten records. In theory, carnets should have been kept at the clinic if a woman had an infection to prevent her from working, but this did not always occur.

77 The form states that the sex-worker must be informed of their test results. However, in reality, women can only be given their results if they ask for them voluntarily, meaning that there are many HIV positive women who are unaware of their status because they do not want to know it. This obviously puts the staff in a very difficult position as well as having huge implications for the health of the women.

78 See also http://www.refer.sn/rds/article.php3?id_article=154 for legal documentation.

79 Women are not allowed to solicit on the streets, and in April 2007, three women I knew were arrested for waiting for clients outside a hotel, and had to spend the night in a police cell.

80 Interestingly, women informed me that clients rarely ask to see their carnets.
Figure 12: Nurse working at the STI clinic

Three nurses, two laboratory technicians and a doctor worked at the clinic, which consisted of a waiting room, two examination rooms and a laboratory interlinked by doors that were usually left unlocked. Women began to arrive for their consultations around 8am: some came straight from work, whereas others arrived after having had only a few hours sleep. They paid 500CFA for a consultation ticket before going to the waiting room, where they would wait until their name was called. The earliest arrivals slept on the benches lining the walls, gradually being woken as the sun shone through the rusty shutters. Consultations began around 8.30am, and women were called through from the waiting room in the order in which they arrived, handing their ticket to a nurse upon hearing their name. They went through to the examination room where a nurse entered their details in a book and conducted an internal examination. The swabs were then sent through to the laboratory next door to test for STIs. During a visite simple women returned to the waiting room to wait for their results, but if it was a bi-annual contrôle, a blood sample was also taken so that it could be tested for HIV. A short counselling session was given beforehand to ensure that the women were aware of the significance of the test they were taking.

Although HIV test results were confidential, it was obvious when a woman was being told she was HIV positive, as this was the only time the staff locked the doors of the consultation room.
HIV/AIDS awareness videos were played in the waiting room, but the number of films was limited and the women were shown the same educational messages every month. Although films such as *Le Succès d’Amab* were cleverly written and directed, relevant to the situations in which the women found themselves and fun to watch, in my opinion, they no longer had an impact on their audience. In addition to watching the films, if there were more than ten women present (myself and the staff included), an educational séance was conducted. One of the twenty sex-workers who had been trained as a peer educator would give a presentation on HIV/AIDS and STIs, and discussed how to negotiate potentially difficult situations with clients or partners. The same pictures, flip charts and dialogue were used at every séance, and it appeared that the main reason they were conducted was to benefit from the drinks and snacks provided for the participants, and to ensure that the budget was not cut for the following year.

The amount of time women had to wait for their test results depended on how many of them were present at the clinic – there could be anywhere between one and twenty-five women attending on any one day. Although women were assigned a particular day to attend, they did not always respect the rendezvous given to them. This meant that there was no way of ensuring an even spread of appointments throughout the week. If the clinic was quiet, results could be ready within an hour, but this did not happen often.

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82 See [http://www.jhuccp.org/topics/enter_ed/eeprojects/07-22.shtml](http://www.jhuccp.org/topics/enter_ed/eeprojects/07-22.shtml) for examples of some of the films shown.
Once the analyses were complete, women were individually called back into the consultation room, given their carnets with the date of their next visit, and handed a month’s supply of male and female condoms which they then hid in their handbags or in the folds of the pagnes tied around their waists.

As well as the day-time space of the STI clinic I would also talk to women in the evenings whilst they were working. I was careful not to encroach on their time with clients, and knew when to walk away if a woman was working. As I mentioned in my introduction, over time I stopped going out at night for work purposes, and relied on day-time meetings and interactions to collect my data.

5.4 Migration as the Route to Sex-work

The following sections served as an introduction to the spaces in which my research, took place in Ziguinchor, but how do they relate to migration? Female sex-workers in Ziguinchor were there for a reason – as I have stressed in previous chapters, Ziguinchor was a place where men and women moved in search of work and the women in this chapter were no exception. In this section I discuss women (from within Senegal and the wider West African region) who moved to Ziguinchor with the purpose of engaging in sex-work, before discussing those who used sex-work as a strategy for international migration. Their identity as sex-workers, and the way in which they viewed their relationships with clients, was crucial to some of the issues I will be discussing.

In the earlier theoretical discussion, I showed that migrants were drawn to Ziguinchor for many reasons. Rural dwellers moved to Ziguinchor because it was comparatively urban and they were in search of work, refugees from the Casamance and neighbouring Guinea Bissau moved to the town because they were fleeing conflict and others came simply to try and make their fortune or join their families. Sex-workers were attracted to Ziguinchor because they believed living in an urban environment would enable them to meet more clients and make more money. Smaller towns and rural enclaves in the Casamance did not attract tourists in the same way that Ziguinchor and Cap Skirring
did, so they both became attractive places for sex-workers in search of European clients, night-life and consumer goods.\textsuperscript{83}

\textbf{5.4.1 Practical reasons for migration to Ziguinchor}

Aside from the role Ziguinchor played in enticing women to the urban locus, as discussed in chapter three, there were more pragmatic reasons for coming to Ziguinchor for those who are registered, or who were hoping to register, as sex-workers. As women were required to attend the STI clinic on a monthly basis, it was easier for them to be based in Ziguinchor, rather than having to travel for their monthly appointments. Conversations with clinic staff revealed plans to set up similar clinics in Cap Skirring and Bignona, but these had not been put into place when I left the field in December 2007. Some sex-workers came from Bignona or Cap Skirring on the day of their appointments, whereas others moved back and forth between the Gambia and Senegal and stayed in Ziguinchor to work for several days around the time of their clinic visit.

As well as moving to Ziguinchor specifically for the purposes of sex-work, some women, such as Courage, became involved in sex-work upon arrival in the town.\textsuperscript{84} Her story fits into the earlier discussions of forced migration and trafficking, as she was trafficked from Nigeria to Senegal. Until I met Courage, my interviews had mostly been with Senegalese women who described their involvement in sex-work through a discourse of ‘having no choice’, and it surprised me to realise that not everyone attending the clinic was in the same situation as they were. Courage told me how her family had given their savings to a woman they did not know believing that she was going to Canada to work as a hairdresser.\textsuperscript{85} She consequently travelled to Senegal with five other women who also thought they were going to Canada. They were told that they needed to complete some paperwork in Dakar, but on arrival Courage and the other Nigerian women with whom she had travelled were abandoned. The trafficker took their passports and left them in Dakar with false identity papers. After a few

\textsuperscript{83} I want to point out that the clients are not ‘sex-tourists’ as such – they have not come to Senegal specifically to have sex and their relationships with Senegalese women are opportunistic rather than being the aim of their trip. Foreign clients were usually tourists, retired men who spend six months of the year in Senegal, or men on business trips. Local Senegalese men also paid for the services of sex-workers, but they did not frequent the same bars, clubs and restaurants as European men.

\textsuperscript{84} Main interview with Courage, March 18\textsuperscript{th} 2007 in Ziguinchor. Interview conducted in English.

\textsuperscript{85} Hairdressing, or braiding, was one of the occupations women imagined themselves to do on arrival in Europe, as they had heard from \textit{toubabs} how much they could earn if they did braiding in Europe.
weeks, Courage realised that she did not want to stay in Dakar and travelled on her own to Ziguinchor, where she had heard that it was cheaper to live.

I asked her how she had begun to work as a sex-worker:

I didn’t do it in Dakar. In Dakar there were a lot of Nigerian girls in a big house. I was begging money in Dakar. They said that if I didn’t have money I should go fuck. The other girls did it. At first I did not plan to enter this job. I arrived [in Ziguinchor] alone. I was dropped at Bignona. A Nigerian guy married to a Senegalese girl helped me. I explained my problems to him. He said there was no work in Bignona, and that I should try and find work in Ziguinchor.

Courage told me that she did not want to stay in Ziguinchor. She wanted to go back to Nigeria to be with her family, but did not have enough money to do so. She planned to stay in Ziguinchor and earn enough money through sex-work to pay for her journey, by land, back home to Nigeria.

During my time at the clinic, I also befriended a 31 year old Sierra Leonean refugee who called herself Aicha, because it was easier to pronounce than her own English name.

She had spent fourteen years moving around West Africa with her daughter after fleeing a rebel attack on her home in 1993. She had lived and worked in Liberia, Guinea-Conakry and Guinea-Bissau before coming to Senegal. She left Sierra Leone after seeing her family being brutally murdered, and she fled into the bush with her young daughter:

Before I leave, they killed my mother and father and took my two sisters. I don’t know where my sisters are now. I was raped by many men. Then they fried my hands in oil, like they were chips. Look, look at my hands. I spent 10 months in the bush. I ate bush food. I was with my daughter. She was small. She wasn’t hurt. The Red Cross found me in the bush and they took me to Liberia. I was in Liberia as a refugee. After the war ended, they said I should go back, but I have no family. I have nowhere to go. I decided to go to Guinea-Conakry. That is where I started my prostitute life. Because I have no help there, I decide to go to Guinea-Bissau. They stole my luggage, with my ID card, my Liberian refugee status and my passport. Over there, there are no good opportunities for refugees. They don’t give us no food, only water.

Aicha’s hands were disfigured; her fingers almost melted into each other where her hands had been fried. She wanted to have reconstructive surgery because her injuries had left her unable to do laundry or cook without someone helping her. She told me

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86 Interview with Aicha carried out in Ziguinchor, January 15th, 2007. The interview was conducted in English.
how she had left her daughter with a friend, and hoped to return to her after making money in Ziguinchor. She had heard that it was easier to make money through sex-work in Ziguinchor than it was in Guinea-Bissau and she wanted to earn enough money to be able to support her daughter.

Although there were women like Aicha who came to Ziguinchor because they had heard about opportunities to make money through sex-work, others such as Courage became aware of these opportunities only upon arrival. Bar-owners and hotel owners would suggest places where they could go to earn money, or would show them where the STI clinic was, as non-Senegalese women were not always aware of the need to register.

5.4.2 Remaining Anonymous: Migrant Sex-workers and ‘Anti-Networks’

Many women were ashamed by their work and concealed it from their friends and families, arguing that they needed to migrate and move away from home if they were going to make a living through sex-work. In this section I discuss the case of migrant West African sex-workers who lived and worked in Ziguinchor, and what I describe as the forming of ‘anti-networks’ as an alternative to the traditional migrant networks described in chapters two and three. The importance of social networks, particularly those of male migrants, has been emphasised in studies of transnationalism, but what happens to migrants who do not want to be integrated into the obvious support networks available to them? Migrants often talk about the importance of expanding social networks and the need for seeking out friend and family connections to create a sense of security, yet the women in this chapter did not use religious and ethnic networks to ease their transition into Ziguinchor. My work shows how these migrants sought to avoid familiar networks and break away from the familiarity of home.

The notion of ‘anti-networks’ fits into the idea that Ziguinchor was a place in which people can disappear. The town was made up of Juillard’s viens-et-vu populations (1995), and people did not have to integrate themselves if they did not want to. I am not trying to imply that the women in this chapter led solitary lives, but I show instead how the people with whom they interacted were carefully chosen and not related to home. I divide this discussion into two parts: I discuss women who integrated themselves temporarily into existing sex-worker communities before discussing those who did not integrate themselves at all.
The main way in which migrant sex-workers temporarily or partially integrated themselves was through joining sex-worker networks or communities. Sex-workers who were not from Ziguinchor shared rooms with women they met whilst working or when at the clinic, and those with children would share childcare responsibilities. Two women, Khadija (from Ziguinchor) and Fatoumata (from Mali) lived in a shared room with their children. They worked alternate nights so that their children were never left alone. Such links allowed migrant women to find places to stay and food to eat and gave them an outlet for any sex-work related problems they felt unable to discuss with others.

As well as support in the domestic sphere, membership of an alternative network also provided women with support in the workplace. Sex-workers usually went to the same bars and followed the same nightly routine, which meant they saw the same women each time they went out. They did not necessarily know where these women lived, or even what their real names were, but on a working night out there was a certain reassurance there, and someone to share taxis or from whom they could borrow cigarettes.

A common language other than French and Wolof also gave sex-workers a way of integrating themselves into networks that were not necessarily related to home. People speaking the same language were not always from the same country – Gambians and Nigerians spoke English, for instance, and this created a sense of familiarity without the risk of gossip and rumour travelling back to the migrant’s country of origin. Aicha, for example, had met several Liberian men in a bar and did not hesitate to ask them for financial assistance. They also spoke better French than she did, and thus were able to translate for her if necessary. Although English speaking, they were not linked to her life in Sierra-Leona or the people she knew in Guinea-Conakry and Guinea-Bissau; therefore, she felt secure that they would not gossip about her work with people who could tell her family.

Some migrant sex-workers, rather than remaining independent and rejecting all potential support, depended on forming relationships within the sex-work community. By being vague about where they were staying and with whom they were staying, women made themselves hard to track down (not just to me as a researcher, but to clinic staff, clients and friends), and had the tendency to disappear en voyage as suddenly as they had arrived.
They manipulated their identities and their friendships, choosing to be a part of a support network when they needed it, whilst being free to walk away when they felt ashamed by their involvement in it.

Women’s behaviour in the STI clinic also revealed the extent to which they used and integrated themselves into support networks. There were some women, such as Fatima, an older Bissau-Guinean woman, who physically set themselves apart from the other women. Fatima preferred to sit outside on the benches reserved for the rest of the hospital’s patients, instead of waiting in the darkened confines of the stigmatised sex-worker waiting room. She did not talk to any of the other sex-workers. Courage acted in a similar way. Although this distance may have been partially due to linguistic differences (she spoke English, not French), the fact that she chose not to talk to the English-speaking Gambian women suggested otherwise. She told me that she had “no connections with the other women. This is not because of the language. I don’t like the work, so I don’t want to be friends with them.”

Some women also went to the local market rather than waiting for their carnets to be returned to them. This was disapproved of by the clinic staff and was seen as unfair by those who did sit and wait for their results. The same women would leave as soon as their carnets were returned to them, rather than staying to chat or saying goodbye to the staff and the other women. They were rejecting their identities as sex-workers and removing themselves from the sex-work environment and the support it gave as much as possible in the attempt not to integrate themselves.

Other women, as well as rejecting any potential kin- and friendship- based support systems, chose not integrate themselves at all. They did not want to be reminded of their work or to be a part of the sex-work lifestyle, but equally did not want to replicate and reproduce the pasts that they had left behind, and they thus sought out random people on whom they could depend. They told me how they met people in taxis who suggested places where they could stay, hotel owners who gave them meals and bar owners who helped them to find the clinic. Migrants were able to get by without integrating themselves into any particular community or group of people. They thus used ‘anti-networks’ to survive – rejecting the familiar for others who were equally ashamed by what they did, or rejecting support altogether, leading lives which did not attach them to anyone or anything and making it easy to move on if they so desired.
5.5 Sex-work as the route to migration from Ziguinchor

The previous chapter showed how women used online dating websites as a way of meeting men. The aspirations of the women in this chapter were quite similar. Sex-workers, whether migrants or those who are working clandestinely in their hometown, found that Ziguinchor did not live up to their expectations, and they found themselves searching for somewhere else where they could make money and live the urban dream that they imagined to exist. They complained that there were not enough opportunities to make money in Ziguinchor, not enough cheap rooms to stay in and not enough clients to go around. Staying in hotels or campements for prolonged periods of time cost a significant amount of money, considering that the average passe they would earn from a client was 5,000CFA and the cheapest campements charged 2,000-3,000CFA per night. Sex-workers expected their clients to pay for the room, but this did not always happen. Some hotels would rent rooms to women by the month, but because so many of them were transient and constantly moving, this was not always economically beneficial to the women involved. Those living with their families could not work every night as this would make their families suspicious about where they were going, so their earnings were limited.

The Gambia, Cap Skirring, Dakar and Guinea-Bissau, as well as other areas in Senegal, were all locations to which women migrated temporarily, but long-term aspirations of European migration were very different from short-term strategies of economic betterment. The temporary crossing of local borders was done in order to visit friends or family, to buy and sell goods or to pay debts, whereas migrating to Europe was envisaged as a means of improving one’s future. These women also followed similar seasons to those involved in agriculture, but rather than moving to rain-soaked places to plant rice, they followed the peak tourist seasons to benefit from increased flows of European tourists. Although sex-work and migration were closely linked in the short-term, the success of aspirations of long-term migration was more restricted, and sadly, was dependent in the most part on a woman’s age and her looks.

For younger, attractive sex-workers with aspirations of European futures, Cap Skirring was also a desirable destination; it was described by people living there as being “more like Europe than Senegal”. The beach resort provided women with a rich and foreign
cliente, as well as with the chance to embark upon more permanent relationships or holiday romances with *toubabs*.

### 5.5.1 Who can migrate? Migration as a Beauty Contest

Not a day went by during my fieldwork without a request from someone, whether a taxi driver, my vegetable seller or a close friend, who wanted me to help them go to Europe. This was usually done with a smile and a glint in their eye, but for some, it was more than a joke. For many sex-workers, the dream seemed closer to reality, and their work with foreign clients became a strategy to *partir*. They were able to live the good life momentarily when with their clients, and this glimpse of another world made them want it forever.

Without wanting to make migration sound like a popularity contest that only the young and beautiful could win, and without wanting to appear judgemental, it was only a certain type of sex-worker who had the opportunity to meet foreign men. It was the younger, attractive Western-style women who spoke French and danced to European music as much as they did *mbalax* who attracted foreign clients. Older, over-weight, traditionally dressed women who could not speak French were unable to compete for younger, Western clients. They tended to stay in local bars or at home with local men where they did not earn as much money. Older women were also more likely to have children and families, and thus were not looking for a European boyfriend and a change of lifestyle in the same way that younger women were. They were looking for a source of income and had accepted that their lives were in Senegal, rather than in an unknown continent. Younger women were still hopeful for their futures and they looked upon older sex-workers with disdain because they appeared to have accepted their participation in the sex-industry and were not seeking a way out.

As the majority of tourists visiting the Casamance were from France, it was important for sex-workers to be able to speak French if they wanted to meet male tourists. Speaking French did not necessarily mean that they read or wrote French, but that they were able to converse in the language. They learnt French through spending time with tourists, and through watching television and listening to French radio, rather than through formal education. They were knowledgeable about French slang, and had picked up the nuances of a French accent. Some of their foreign clients who had spent a lot of time in Senegal were able to speak some Wolof, and I would often hear sex-
workers teaching their clients a few basic words of the language as a means of flirting with them. They giggled uncontrollably as the men mispronounced words, enjoying playing the role of teacher and being able to share their knowledge with others.

Appearance was a major factor in attracting men, and as I discuss in the next chapter on côtéman, dress is a way for people in Senegal to market themselves as modern and knowledgeable about Western culture. The female sex-workers who frequented the classier Casamance bars and hotels wore Western clothes and jewellery for this very reason. They wanted to be able to compete with Western women, and replicated their style in order to do so.

Thus it was the younger, beautiful, French-speaking sex-workers who had the most opportunities to meet and attract European men. They were more actively involved in the spaces that tourists frequented, were able to converse with them more easily and were physically more attractive. Hence the ability to migrate resembled a beauty contest.

5.5.2 Turning clients into lovers

In arguing that sex-work is a migration strategy, I need to clarify that the relationships women formed with men were no longer directly commercial ones and that the clients they were hoping to ‘convert’ into long-term lovers were toubabs rather than local men. Women hoped that their expatriate clients would become regular partners, and that tourists who had paid for their services would fall in love with them and want a long-term relationship, not just a casual sexual encounter. As we saw in the previous chapter on online dating, women used a discourse of flattery and love to pamper the men with whom they communicated. Sex-workers also disguised commercial relationships behind a language littered with terms of intimacy in trying to turn their clients into their long-term partners.

To explain this transition, or the transition that they hoped would occur, I draw on anthropological literature about exchange to exemplify the problems of the relationship between sex and money. There is a very complicated debate concerning the relationship between sex and money, particularly in literature concerning gender in Africa. I agree with Tabet’s assertion (1989) that the exchange of sex for money is situated on a continuum of patriarchal sexual behaviour between sex-work and marriage. Such a
continuum makes the boundaries between sex as a leisure activity and sex as work permeable and harder to manage because the differences between them are no longer clearly defined. Managing the immediacy of the sexual exchange and the time and place in which it occurred is not always easy, and this is further complicated when men begin to cross the divide between client and boyfriend. The dichotomy between sex for love and sex for money breaks down in such cases, and it becomes difficult to distinguish between the two, which, as I discussed above, can have an effect on HIV transmission. Spaces are no longer entirely commercial nor completely domestic and work and home become blurred.

In discussing the varying aspects of the sex/money nexus we can clearly see that the more explicit the negotiation of sex for money (in a designated sexual space such as a hotel or bar), the more stigmatised and insecure it becomes. Various anthropological studies, including most significantly Woodburn (1982) introduce the division of temporality into our understanding of exchange, differentiating between immediate and delayed return. For sex-workers, however, the way that Woodburn equates immediacy with the point of transaction becomes slightly more complex because the exchange of sex and money is longer lasting than the intercourse itself. When we consider the time spent ritually preparing the body for going to work, and the sense of ‘dirt’ and unease women describe after having sex with a client, the exchange is far more prolonged than we may at first think. Bloch and Parry, for example, have also linked the notion of morality to the differentials between long and short-term exchange (Bloch and Parry 1989). Short-term exchange, such as the interaction between a client and sex-worker, could be considered to be immoral, whereas longer lasting relationships are not. Female sex-workers sought to make the transition from ‘immediate exchange’ to ‘delayed exchange’ to make their relationships less immoral and more long-term.

In the case of these women in Ziguinchor, commercial sex-work was a way for them to ‘make contacts’ and extend their social networks to include Europeans. Just as the côtéman in the following chapter extended their social networks to include tourists, women wanted to maximise their potential to migrate by forming long-term relationships with clients. The difference is, as I have discussed elsewhere, that women were seeking a relationship of dependence when searching for a European partner,
whereas the men in the next chapter were also looking for professional or amicable relationships that could lead them to Europe.

In order to turn clients into boyfriends, partners or husbands, women needed to be persistent in their client interactions. I do not wish to imply that they were malicious or vindictive, but that they knew how to ‘play’ men, and made them feel that they were more than just clients. Calling a client ‘my darling’, ‘my love’ or ‘my boyfriend’ was a means of flattery and flirtation, but it was also a way for women to protect themselves from the gossip of others by removing the commercial element from the relationship. When I saw sex-workers in clubs or restaurants they introduced their clients to me as their boyfriends; they would look at me with an intense stare that willed me not to mention the truth. In using a language of flattery and love they were conforming to what they believed Western men expected in a relationship, as well as trying to compete in a style of courtship to which they are unaccustomed. The language they used and the way in which they referred to their clients turned men into lovers and boyfriends, and removed as much of the commercial element of the exchange as possible.

Some women, such as Maimouna, a 28 year old sex-worker living in Ziguinchor, had foreign clients who returned to Senegal or The Gambia for annual holidays. During their visits, she would act as their girlfriend. This meant that she ate out in restaurants, stayed in expensive hotels and benefitted from new clothes, phone credit and cash gifts as well as having the chance to turn a professional relationship into a migratory route. Other women, such as Mame Diarra, a 30 year old former sex-worker, met men who then transferred money to her each month, via Western Union, to cover her rent or contribute to her monthly living costs. Maimouna’s foreign boyfriends were never introduced to her family, but she talked about them freely with her female friends, who were ultimately jealous of the advantages brought by her relationships. Seeing the economic benefits of such relationships made migration seem possible and enabled local people to see the impact that remittances could have.

As we saw in the previous chapter, phone calls, text messages and chatting over the Internet through the use of instant messenger programmes and Skype have made long

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87 Interview with Maimouna conducted on February 12th, 2007 in Ziguinchor. Interview conducted in French and Wolof.
88 Interview with Mame Diarra conducted on April 6th, 2007 in Ziguinchor. Interview conducted in Wolof.
distance relationships much easier to manage. The majority of sex-workers had mobile phones, often bought as gifts from clients, and they would ‘bip’ their foreign ‘boyfriends’ and hang up in the hope that their calls will be returned (Donner 2005). Constant communication served as a reminder that they were still thinking about their clients, and many women bombarded men with text messages or phone calls when they had left Senegal, not realising that too much contact could be off-putting.

5.5.3 Cap Skirring: second best?

Although migrating across international borders was their main aim, hopeful female migrants also talked of moving permanently to Cap Skirring. They believed that living in the beach resort would provide them with an increased opportunity to make money and the chance to live a glamorous lifestyle with a European man. They believed that Cap Skirring could lead to more opportunities for working with tourists, or that they would be able to find work in a bar or a restaurant. Women thought that the large numbers of tourists and expatriates in Cap Skirring meant that there would be more opportunities to work, and that employment in the tourist industry would mean better wages than elsewhere. In a sense, Cap Skirring was ‘second best’ and provided some people with a Western lifestyle without crossing any borders. Contrary to the neo-classical approaches to migration, those who did have the economic means to leave Senegal were less concerned with becoming transnational migrants than those without capital. Some of the women I discuss below were content to remain in Ziguinchor, receive remittances from their foreign partners and have access to a disposable income and modern consumer goods. Their relationships with others provided them with a sense of economic security and migration did not seem a necessity.

Although it was smaller than Ziguinchor and was in fact a poor fishing village, Cap Skirring gave the outward impression of being much wealthier, as it was far more popular with tourists than the larger urban centre of Ziguinchor. It was easy to see the tourist wealth, which manifested itself on restaurant menus, hotel prices and the vehicles on the roads, but not the poverty of the local villagers. For sex-workers, a night spent with a European client was guaranteed to be better paid than a night with a local man, but it also came with the additional benefits of dinner in an expensive restaurant with a foreign menu and a night in an exclusive hotel, paid for in euros. There was also the benefit of being able to spend time on the beach and escape the stifling heat of
Ziguinchor whilst their transport, accommodation and living expenses were accounted for.

Aicha, the Sierra Leonean woman mentioned above, repeatedly spoke of going to Cap Skirring. She told me that she had heard about how easy it was to make money there, and how there would be “white people” (she did not use the word *toubab*) who could offer her work. She claimed that there was no more ‘work’ (meaning sex-work) in Ziguinchor, and that she had heard about Cap Skirring and wanted to see what it was like. I was not sure if she would actually go, as I had heard a lot of women talk about Cap Skirring in this way, without having the means to get there. She asked me to lend her the 1,400CFA fare for the journey, telling me she knew that her life would be better in Cap Skirring. She had completed a batik workshop whilst in a Bissau-Guinean refugee camp, and she wanted to establish her own business making and selling batiks, but she did not have the capital to do so. She was proud of her certificate in batik making, and we spent many afternoons together dying material as she talked about her life. I did not feel comfortable giving her money to go to Cap Skirring or to set up her own business, as I felt uneasy mixing friendship, money and my research, regardless of the trivial amount for which she had asked me. I did not want her to go because I did not want her to be disappointed and felt some sense of responsibility towards her and what she might find there. I knew that she would find the money from elsewhere if she really wanted to go, and so I did not feel under any obligation to provide her with the cash she requested.

A few days after she had asked me for the money to go to Cap Skirring, I went to visit her at her home in Ziguinchor. Her landlady, a sex-worker in her fifties, told me that she had left. I received a phone call from Aicha a few days later, and all she could say was ‘I’m so happy, Emilie! I’m in Cap and I’m so happy!’ She told me that she had already found a local boyfriend, and was living with him just outside Cap Skirring in the Jola village of Djembereng. She told me that she had found work doing batiks for ‘white women’, just as she had imagined. She came back to Ziguinchor the following week and moved all her belongings to Cap Skirring. She told me how happy she was that she ‘would never have to do that work again’. It all sounded too good to be true; her dream was exactly as she had imagined it would be.
For Aicha, sex-work was something that she did because she felt she had “no other choice” – she was an example of a refugee forced into a situation in which she otherwise would not have placed herself. She wanted to help her daughter, whom she planned on bringing to Cap Skirring once she had saved enough money to do so. She moved to Ziguinchor to be a sex-worker, because she had heard that she would be able to make money there, and eventually moved to Cap Skirring when Ziguinchor was not what she imagined it to be.

Not all stories had a ‘happy ending’ like Aicha’s did. I hesitate to call it an ending, because I know that she will have moved on and that she will be seeking other ways to make money and other places to go. I no longer have a valid phone number for her, so am dependent upon her sporadic phone calls for news. Cap Skirring may be the place in which some women’s dreams were made, but not everyone was so ‘lucky’. Sex-workers found themselves in a competitive environment – there were not enough clients, not enough rooms to rent and not enough money to be made, particularly outside the peak seasons. There were more hotels, and more foreign men, but many were regular visitors who came back to their Senegalese copines year after year and new sex-workers often did not have much success with clients, or if they did, this created jealousy between them and the other women. Cap Skirring was a place for younger, attractive sex-workers to meet men. It was for the beautiful and the hopeful, not the older and more cynical.

In conclusion, moving to Cap Skirring, temporarily or otherwise, was seen as one step up from Ziguinchor. The quality of life in the village of Cap Skirring was lower than that of Ziguinchor, and the overall infrastructure was less developed, but the touhbab presence meant that for those with a disposable income, Cap Skirring provided a luxurious, European experience within Senegal.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has shown how sex-work can be studied, as well as how sex-work is both a cause and a consequence of migration. For some of the women in this chapter, the move to Ziguinchor enabled them to capitalise on a profession with which they were already familiar, whereas for others, Ziguinchor left them with little choice but to become involved in a metier they had never imagined themselves to do. As much as
Ziguinchor attracted and in a sense ‘created’ sex-workers, it was also a stepping-stone to somewhere new. For those with aspirations of migration based on what they imagined to exist elsewhere, sex-work is a strategy to \textit{partir}.

It may appear that I am projecting a life upon the town of Ziguinchor or that I am personifying it and giving it the power to make or break people’s dreams. I do not think the significance of Ziguinchor as a place can be stressed enough: its hybrid of people and mix of languages, its appeal and attractiveness as a place in which fortunes can be made and its ability to leave people’s dreams shattered around them made it a symbolic place as well as one with a complex historical significance within the region and within Senegal. I am sure that migrants around the globe have, for centuries, discovered on arrival that the place they dreamt of did not meet their expectations, and Ziguinchor is no different. As soon as the Ziguinchor dream disappeared, women aimed further away. Whether Cap Skirring or Europe, young female sex-workers realised that Ziguinchor was not necessarily the place in which they would make their fortunes, and they began to dream once more, finding a new place on which to project their imagined futures and using their sexuality to do so.

One may well ask why these women, like those in the previous chapter, continued to imagine migrating despite their lack of success. I assert that in believing that they would migrate and expressing their desire to be elsewhere they were actively attempting to reshape their futures. As in the previous chapter, it was better to try and fail than not to try at all, and their migratory aspirations were a way of asserting that sex-work was only one stage on their life’s trajectory rather than something that they would do forever.

The following chapter, which discusses the lives of \textit{côtéman} in Cap Skirring, links closely with this one. Although there are clear similarities to be seen between the sex-workers in this chapter and the \textit{côtéman} discussed below, the relationship between the two categories is complex and we should be wary of seeing sex-workers and \textit{côtéman} as the female and male equivalents of each other. The next chapter focuses more directly upon sex-tourism, because although hinted at here, I feel that an in-depth discussion of the issue belongs in the next chapter.
Imagining Migration: Cyber-cafés, sex and clandestine departures in the Casamance, Senegal

Emilie Venables

Full citation:

Please contact Dr Emilie Venables for further chapters: evenables@rhru.co.za
CHAPTER 6: “It’s all about making contacts”: Côtéman and Migration

6.1 Introduction
This chapter discusses the migratory aspirations of a group of young men in Cap Skirring. Young men believed that the befriending of touhabs could be a migration strategy and I look at how they attempted to use their work and relationships with tourists as a stepping-stone to Europe. As we have seen in previous chapters, many migrants within and beyond Africa rely on social networks to help them migrate, or to support them upon arrival. This case is slightly different because the young men of the Casamance’s tourist resorts argued that in order to partir they needed to extend their social networks to include Europeans who they hoped could lead them to a new and prosperous life. They talked about people they knew in Europe in a vague way, and claimed that they had no Senegalese networks on which they could rely. Unlike the two previous chapters, this chapter discusses a male migration strategy, and although these men’s aspirations were similar to those of hopeful female migrants, their means of getting there were different. Rather than seeking a relationship of dependence, such as those discussed in the previous two chapters, men saw their work with tourists as giving them temporary assistance in their search for a European future.

Global flows of people and money, improvements in ICTs and ease of travel have created an erosion of boundaries between formal and informal economies, and labour in places such as Cap Skirring is seasonal, informal and responsive to demand. Where there are tourists, there is always a need for people to work with them, and another ‘feature’ of tourism in the Casamance was the presence of the beach-boys or informal guides known as côtémans. For some they were a benefit, but for others their presence was a hindrance.

My research with the côtémans of the Casamance took me to campements, souvenir boutiques, bars and the beach, and my interviews led me into an uneasy realm of innuendo and piercing eyes. I talked to souvenir sellers, craftsmen, hotel staff and beach-boys in the attempt to piece together the transient and somewhat fragmented lives of those working

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89 Thanks must be given to Lou de Jong for first informing me about the côtémans, and for her help and advice on conducting fieldwork in Cap Skirring.
within the tourist industry. In learning about the lives of these particular male *goorgulu*, I was invited into a previously unknown world hazy with hashish and tarnished with a slight sexual sleaziness. In discovering the tricks of their trade I also witnessed their unfathomable belief that they would succeed, despite their inability to tell me concrete stories of people who had migrated in this way.

Figure 14: Restaurant on the beach in Cap Skirring

This chapter begins with a methodological discussion, and I then go on to discuss the demographics of this particular set of men and their place within the informal sector economy. I then talk about their aspirations of migration and their strategies for leaving: some formed friendships with men and women, whereas for others, it was sexual relationships with women that they believed would lead them to Europe. I analyse how the behaviour of the *côtéman* links into existing debates on sex-tourism, and discuss how their behaviour compared to that of the sex-workers in the previous chapter. I also consider how dress and image were also used as a migration strategy, and how *côtéman* used and consumed certain styles of hair and clothing as a way of expressing their desire to migrate and to appeal to the tourists with whom they wanted to form international links.
6.2 Beachside Methods

In this section I address some of the methodological problems I faced when carrying out research with Senegal’s côtéman. I begin with a terminological discussion, before describing one particularly memorable interview, and some of the specific problems I faced in carrying out the research for this chapter and how I attempted to overcome them. Most of the research for this chapter took place in Cap Skirring, but I also spoke to people who worked in Ziguinchor, Kafountine, Abéné and on the island of Karabane. The information on which this chapter is based is taken from 31 interviews and endless hours of participant observation with those willing to share their knowledge of the tourist industry and their aspirations of migration with me.

6.2.1 Beach-Boy Terminology

Senegal is not the only country in the world in which young men’s dreams of migration are manifested through befriending and forming relationships with tourists, and there is a large body of literature that discusses the lives of beach-boys in various contexts around the world. Some of it appears in debates about ‘sex-tourism’, and some of it in discussions of ‘migration’ and as I discuss below, I found it difficult to know where to locate the actions of the côtéman. The vocabulary used to describe the sex-workers in the previous chapter was important, and it is the same for the men in this section. There are many different labels used to refer to the young men who wander the world’s tourist beaches in search of work and romance. Some of the terms are derogatory and many of them are only known locally – I did not know the term côtéman when I first went to Senegal, but by the end of my fieldwork, it had become a part of my daily vocabulary.

In Senegal, young men working in the tourist industry were referred to locally as ‘côtéman’, taken from the French word côté, meaning ‘side’, because they were, literally, found at the side of tourists. They joked that they ‘stuck’ to Europeans as they searched for business and the verb coller (to stick) appears in several of the quotations I use below.91 As well as being a noun, côtéman could also be a verb and men could ‘faire le

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90 This section forms the basis to a forthcoming paper for Anthropology Matters entitled “If you give me some sexing, I might talk to you”: researching the Senegalese beach-boys ‘by my side’. See Appendix D.

91 The word somewhat confusingly remains the same in the singular and the plural. Personal communication, Lou de Jong, 2006.
côtéman’. Dia, an established tour guide based in Ziguinchor, told me that he did not mind if people referred to him as a côtêman:

Me? No! It doesn’t bother me at all. It’s what we do to get away. The ones that won’t call themselves côtêman…it’s a load of rubbish!

Côtêman would laugh when I asked them about the word and how it related to them. Many of them initially denied knowing what it meant and claimed that it was irrelevant to them. Instead, they chose to call themselves antiquitaires or ‘antique dealers’, ‘businessmen’, ‘tourist guides’ or ‘traders’, and only used the word côtêman in front of their friends. Alpha, a restaurant owner in Cap Skirring, described himself as a restaurant owner, tour guide and côtêman. He and his friends used the word in my presence because they knew that I was aware of its meaning, but it was never said in front of tourists, unless they were talking Wolof so that the tourists could not understand.

Beach-boys were also common in neighbouring Gambia, and I have spoken to many British tourists put off from returning there because of the hassle they had experienced. In her monograph Performing Africa, Ebron refers to Gambian beach-boys as ‘bumpsters’. She defines them as young, unemployed men who form part of a ‘professional friend circuit’, hanging around hotels and beaches in search of tourists (Ebron 2002: 176; Brown 1992). Disallowed from entering hotels, just as the côtêman of Senegal were prohibited from entering Cap Skirring’s Club Med resort, they loitered in public spaces in the hope of meeting tourists and making money. Their work became restricted to the informal sector. The Lonely Planet guide to West Africa even offers a warning to tourists in its chapter on the Gambia:

One of the major annoyances in this area is the unwanted attention of ‘bumsters’, or ‘beach-boys’, who loiter in tourist areas, almost forcing their services as guides onto travellers. The lack of a welfare system, and high unemployment means that many young men see hustling as their only chance of making money. Still, their persistence can be annoying indeed, particularly to women.

Lonely Planet West Africa (2006: 306)

92 Interview conducted with Dia on November 5th, 2007 in the Perroquet Hotel, Ziguinchor. Interview conducted in French.
93 Main interview with Alpha conducted on November 11th, 2007 in Cap Skirring. Interview conducted in French and Wolof.
Much of the literature on this issue is written about beach-boys in the context of the Caribbean, where there is a much more developed and commercial sex-tourism than the opportunistic and informal nature of that in Senegal. Cabezas, writing about beach-boys in Cuba, notes the use of the label ‘rent-a-dreads’ for the young, beach-bound men who provide both companionship and sexual services to female tourists in a similar way to the côtéman of Cap Skirring (Cabezas 2004: 1002; Pruitt and LaFont 1995; de Albuquerque 1998). Elsewhere in the Caribbean, such men have been described more directly as ‘gigolos’, and the women who spend time with them ‘romance tourists’ (Dahles 1997). Returning to the work of Brennan (2004: 202), who discusses how men in the tourist resorts of the Dominican Republic are ‘players’, we can see how they use their relationships with female tourists to their advantage, ‘performing’ at being in love in the hope of being able to leave the island.

Something that all these words have in common is their connotations of negativity, trickery, dishonesty and sexual promiscuity. When reading this chapter, it is obvious that I did not necessarily agree with a lot of the côtéman’s actions, or even particularly like some of the men with whom I was spending time. Despite this, I do try to show that even though their work as informal tourist guides was unconventional, it was nonetheless a way for them to earn a living, and something of which they were proud.

6.2.2 Interview Dynamics

Lying on the beach in Cap Skirring, I shiver as a cloud passes in front of the sun. I stir, squinting, before drifting back into a lazy summer slumber. Then I hear a sing-song voice which awakens me from my siesta. “Hey, pretty lady! How are you? Ça va les vacances?!” My ‘cloud’ had dreadlocks and was wearing patchwork trousers. He was a côtéman, a West African beach-boy about to offer me his services as a guide.

Ganja, as he was known to his friends, came over, sat down and began to talk to me, asking me if I was enjoying my holiday and telling me that he could take me to a local restaurant and show me around the village. I told him, as politely and calmly as I could, that I didn’t want to talk and that I wanted to be left alone. I turned over and tried to ignore him. He was one of many men who had approached me that day and my patience was wearing somewhat thin.

He began to tell me, in a mixture of English, French and Wolof, that I was ignorant and ugly, and that I knew nothing about Senegal or how to treat people. Ganja then accused me of being racist, saying that I had come to Senegal but didn’t want to talk to anyone black. I explained to him, in Wolof, that I had lived in Senegal for over a year, wasn’t racist but simply wanted to be left alone.

94 This is not his real name, but one chosen by him. Ganja is slang for hashish. Our first interview took place on August 19th 2007 in Cap Skirring. The interview was conducted in English.
He continued to bombard me with abuse, and in the end I was forced to stand up and leave, listening to him shout obscenities after me as I walked away.

In the months that followed, I avoided him if I saw him, choosing to stay close to my campement where I knew I wouldn’t be hassled, or walking on the beach during the early afternoon, when I knew he would be in the village. One day, however, he came into a restaurant where I was sitting with another informant, who, not realising we had already met, introduced us. Ganja’s face lit up when he discovered I was British, and he began to talk to me in English, extending his hand and asking me how my holidays were going… I told him that we had already met, and that he had offended both my friends and myself on several occasions. He looked embarrassed and claimed not to remember, but apologised, saying if he had been rude, it was all part of the game, and that this was the ‘smiling coast’ where I was always welcome. He gave me a necklace and offered me a joint.

Over a period of several months, we began to talk and joke about the first time we met, but I still felt uncomfortable in his presence, and tried to avoid being alone with him as he would often ask me questions of a sexual nature, or make references to women as they walked by.

Ganja knew that I was interested in hearing more about his life and work, and seemed keen to tell me about it, asking me a stream of questions about my research, which I was happy to answer. I had pieced together parts of his story from the snippets of information he gave to me, as well as from the stories other people told me about him, but wanted to talk to him one last time before I left the field. He was purposefully making it difficult for me to do so, even though he had always been enthusiastic about being interviewed, and I did not want to force him into talking to me. One afternoon, he called me over as I walked past. He said that he was ready to talk, but that he was still suspicious about what I was going to do with my research. He said he would answer my questions, but on his terms. He told me that I wasn’t allowed to take notes in front of him, but that as soon I went home I could write things down. He told me that I was a clever girl, that he knew I could remember things.

As I sat down, he told me I had sand on my back and that I should turn around so he could brush it off. I told him that it didn’t matter, that we were on a beach, and I was used to being sandy. “Turn around,” he insisted. “I want to see you. Turn around.” I didn’t turn around, and promptly changed the subject. He stared at me throughout our conversation, telling me he had been with white women before, reassuring me that he was a good lover. “I could have had you that night,” he told me. “The night you were in the club. I could have had you but I didn’t, because you were dancing with someone else.”

He had a glint in his eye as he avoided my questions. Then he offered to continue talking to me, in exchange for sex, with the words ‘if you give me some sexing, I might talk to you’. His eyes were boring into me, and I realised that he was not joking. I politely declined his offer, slightly in shock over his proposition. I knew there was no point continuing to try and talk to him. I thanked him, shook his hand and left, feeling his eyes follow me as I walked away.

Compiled from fieldwork diary entries made throughout 2007

Before beginning to do research with côteMAN, I had only ever experienced the kind of interactions described above. I had become used to being hassled as I lay on the beach and followed as I walked through the village and over time I grew increasingly frustrated.

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95 The Gambia is often referred to as ‘the smiling coast’ by tourist guides and holiday brochures.
at their behaviour. Admittedly, my way of dealing with unwanted male attention probably aggravated the situation and my strategy of completely ignoring them fuelled their persistence and earned me the reputation of being *méchante* or ‘mean’.

I was, however, curious about the behaviour of these men, and realised I had asked myself ‘what do they want?’ and ‘why do they do it?’ many times without actually considering finding out the answers. My first and obvious response was ‘they want a visa’, but this seemed too simplistic an argument and seemed worthy of further analysis. Suddenly backtracking and having to spend time with the men I had avoided filled me with a sense of dread and panic: I was unsure of how to go about spending time with them, and anxious about the reception my research might receive. I had to change my own behaviour and try to forget my previous judgements, learning to make eye contact with the men I had once avoided as I did so. One of the problems I had throughout the earlier stages of my research was having to realise that not everybody I met was as determined as I was to travel alone, and that many tourists welcomed the opportunity to hire a guide, especially if they did not speak the local language. In order to understand the *côtéman*, I had to imagine myself as a tourist in an unknown place, and see past my identity as the independent traveller and Senegalese resident that I had become accustomed to being.

Despite my initial concerns about researching men, and despite my interactions with Ganja, I felt that I had achieved more in my first week of talking to beach-boys than I had in several months of interviewing female sex-workers:

I have started to make some progress with research in Cap – feels so much easier here – because there’s no *honte*[^96], no language barriers and people want to help me out… Very different from talking to sex-workers!

Extract from fieldwork diary, April 22nd 2007

The above diary extract is worthy of further analysis because it raises several important issues about the topic of my research, language issues and gender relations. Linguistically and practically, interviewing and talking to men was easier than I had expected. They all spoke Wolof and had a high level of French as a result of their education and work with tourists, which meant I could understand them and they could

[^96]: ‘Shame’. There were many French and Wolof words that I did not translate into English when writing my fieldwork diaries. This was either because they did not translate directly, or because it was easier to use the French or Wolof word because that was the one I was accustomed to hearing.
understand me, even if I stumbled over a phrase or incorrectly conjugated a verb. The beachside location of my research also made finding people to interview much easier than in Ziguinchor. If someone did not appear for a meeting at our agreed time, I could easily wander around until I found somebody else to talk to, rather than driving aimlessly around Ziguinchor looking for an unmarked house in an un-named street. The topic of our discussions was less sensitive than those discussed with female sex-workers, meaning that I had fewer inhibitions when asking questions, and my informants had fewer problems answering them. It was much easier to talk about migration and tourism than it was to talk about sex-work.

Rather than wanting to remain anonymous, as most women did, all but one côtéman (Ganja) wanted to keep their own names. They laughed at me when I asked if they wanted me to change their identity. They expressed pride in being asked to take part in my research, and were keen to help me if they could, curious about what I was writing and who was going to read it.

6.2.3 It’s a man’s world

Although being female was at times advantageous for my research, I found myself feeling increasingly uneasy in the male world of the côtéman. Even though most of our interactions took place on the public beach where bikinis were the norm, I dressed more conservatively than other tourists and young local women, preferring to look out of place in a holiday resort than feel uncomfortable during an interview. However, my attempts to dress conservatively were met with criticism and intrigue from local Senegalese friends and acquaintances, who openly questioned my style and wondered why I preferred to dress like an ‘old woman’. They made suggestions about what I should wear, expecting me to look like the female tourists they saw on the beach, rather than someone who wore the same 500CFA flip-flops as they did. In this respect I was a disappointment to them for not fitting neatly into the fashionable Western image to which they themselves aspired. My friends and I would joke about the neat paradox in which I wanted to ‘dress Senegalese’ and they wanted to look more Western.

As I iterated in my introduction, I felt that there was something slightly uneasy and sexual about Cap Skirring. In addition to the discomfort I felt from the male eyes directly upon me as I walked along the beach or conducted interviews, I was equally aware of the gaze of strangers. I noticed in particular how I was watched and judged by
other tourist women. I felt exposed as I walked along the beach chatting to young dread-locked men, knowing from afar it would be easy to assume that I was in a relationship with one of them, or that I was in several relationships at once! I was constantly observing the interactions between côtéman and tourist women, yet, somewhat hypocritically disliked the judgements that were made about me. I was defensive about my friendships and working relationships with local men, and was concerned about how friends and strangers perceived me, especially considering the small size of Cap Skirring’s community and the speed at which gossip and rumours spread. I was aware of how any reputation I had could affect my relationships with other people, in particular my Senegalese friends.

I’m fed up of hearing about it! I told you not to go near him. I haven’t spoken to him for months now, because of you, but you always talk to him, come back and tell me how he spoke to you badly, then go back again. I don’t want to hear about it. You can talk to all the others but not him. Just leave him alone!

Extract from fieldwork diary, December 5th, 2007

The above words were spoken by Aziz, a male friend of mine who worked in the small, family-run campement where I stayed whenever I went to Cap Skirring. The day I wrote these comments, I had returned from the beach in tears after being followed by Ganja. I was looking for sympathy, which Aziz was clearly not going to give. He had originally helped me with my research, introducing me to his friends and enthusiastically telling me as much as he could about life in Cap Skirring, but over time his attitude changed, and, as the above quotation shows, our friendship became affected by my work. He did not understand why I needed to spend time with the côtéman on the beach after having complained about them so many times, nor could he comprehend how spending time drinking tea in souvenir shops deserved the label ‘work’. My attempts to explain ethnographic fieldwork and anthropological research were futile because, to his eyes, even with my constant note-taking, I was not engaging in work.

Despite my protests that the côtéman had interesting stories that I wanted to hear, my reputation was at stake by spending time with them. In undertaking research with men who had a bad reputation, I too had become tainted. Aziz considered my repeated trips

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97 There was one occasion during my fieldwork when two American friends of mine stayed in a luxurious hotel further down the beach from my campement. I decided to treat myself to a night of luxury and stay with them, even though one night there cost the same as ten nights in the campement. I felt embarrassed about staying there, and told Aliou that my friends had paid for me. I did not want him to know that I could afford to stay there, and felt guilty about being able to do so.
to the beach as a personal rejection of himself and his family. To him, I had forgotten my ‘real’ friends and was no more than a tourist. I was seen to be rejecting the people who had eased my transition into Senegal by replacing them with hustlers.

I managed the situation as best I could, trying to be loyal to my friends, my work and myself. I did not go out with the côtéman at night, partially for my own safety and because I did not enjoy spending time with them in the highly sexualised club ambience, but also so that I could spend more time with Aziz and his family. I made an effort to eat with them, and contributed to campement life as much as I could. I saw the campement as my safe space, in which I was protected from the côtéman, and could hide on the terrace looking out over the beach without being seen.

My interactions with these men revealed a lot to me about how they treated women, how they viewed tourists and how it would be easy to fall for their charms if one so wanted. Not all of my experiences were as negative or extreme as the interview described above, and I had many constructive, informative conversations with my interviewees, which form the basis to the following section.

6.3 Côtéman and Senegal

This section looks at beach-boys in Senegal and what brought them to Cap Skirring. I consider their role within the tourist industry, and how they fit into debates on sex-tourism.

6.3.1 Côtéman in Cap Skirring: the lure of the beach

I came here when I was 25. I came because I’d heard about Cap from other people. I thought I’d see what it was like. I’m an artist and I thought I might be able to make things better for myself. I like it here because life isn’t expensive like it is in Dakar. Rent and food are cheaper… Dakar is too much.

Boy Jola, artist, Cap Skirring

If I had nothing, I’d do it too… it’s not always their fault. It’s the place that makes them do it. Tourist places are always the same.

Balla, souvenir seller, Cap Skirring

98 Interview with Boy Jola conducted in Cap Skirring on December 1st, 2007. Interview conducted in Wolof and French.
99 Interview with Balla conducted in Cap Skirring on November 19th, 2007. Interview conducted in French.
I know a Senegalese guy in the UK. He earns so much money! I want to try and go too. He did the Rasta thing. You can see how well he lives now. His English wife is pregnant. He gave me £60. It’s an adventure, life. I hold onto all the contacts I have because you never know. You see?

Diouf Junior, boutique owner, Cap Skirring

We can see why tourists are drawn to Cap Skirring, but what attracted young, Senegalese men? The lack of viable work either in rural Casamance or in Ziguinchor led young men and women to move to Cap Skirring. As well as giving them the opportunity to earn a living, the beach resort provided young people with new sites of recreation, consumption, experimentation, discovery and the opportunity to travel as they accompanied tourists around the region (Cabezas 2004). As I have discussed above, young migrants were drawn to urban, ‘modern’ environments out of curiosity and the desire for economic betterment. The beach resort of Cap Skirring had taken on an almost mythical quality (as had Europe) and people believed it was the place within the Casamance in which to make their fortunes. As I discussed in the previous chapter about sex-workers, it was seen as ‘second best’ in relation to Europe, but a place people desired to migrate to nonetheless.

People living in the Casamance felt that their region has been systematically neglected in comparison to the rest of the country. Cap Skirring differed greatly from the rural Casamance and offered people a glimpse of what urban life in Senegal was like without the need to travel to Dakar. Young, unemployed men came to Cap Skirring because they were disenchanted with rural life, disillusioned with Ziguinchor life and were looking for urban glamour without going too far from home. Young men enjoyed the life that they had in Cap Skirring as a hopeful migrant and they used their aspirations of migration and status as hopeful migrants to explain their presence in the informal sector and their lack of permanent employment. If they were going to Europe, they argued that they would not need a permanent job in Senegal.

Young men were under pressure from their families to find work, and turning to the illegal and immoral world of the côtéman gave them a chance to earn money and also make the contacts that could lead them to Europe. As much as their income allowed

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100 Interview with Diouf Junior conducted on December 1st, 2007 in Cap Skirring. Interview conducted in French and Wolof.
them to lead a relatively luxurious lifestyle, some côtéman, like sex-workers, were careful to stress that the money they earned was not just for themselves, and that they were doing their work for the benefit of their families, rather than individual gain.

I give money to my parents, or for the kids to go to school. I buy rice, or medicine if someone is ill. I’m responsible – it’s not for going to Bombolong or Rubis\(^\text{101}\), it’s for the family.

Bakaye, 26 year old tour guide, Ziguinchor

The material benefits to their work, as I show throughout this chapter, were a great incentive to be a côtéman – Alioune was learning to drive as a result of a contact he made whilst working in Cap Skirring:

They sent me 150,000CFA for me to get my driving licence. I’m lucky – I have lots of friends over there. A French guy in Lille paid for my driving lessons. He works in the champagne business with his wife. She’s French too. They’re really nice, a really nice couple. When they come, I’m at their disposition…we’ve done pirogue trips, visited the old church.\(^\text{102}\)

Maintaining a côtéman lifestyle required some economic investment, and because a daily income was not guaranteed it was important for hopeful migrants to ensure that they saved some of their earnings for the quieter tourist seasons.

### 6.3.2 Côtéman in the Informal Economy

Tourism created formal local employment within the service industry, but it also created informal, unofficial ways of making money and ways of benefiting from the presence of tourists. It is into this category that the stories in this chapter fit. We have seen how young West African women became sex-workers in response to their economic situation, and the case of the côtéman is similar. The informal work in which they are involved was also a response to their exclusion from more formal kinds of employment, despite many of them having educational qualifications.

Hotel employees, bar staff, airport workers, registered tour guides, craftsmen and souvenir sellers with their own boutiques fit into my category of ‘official’ and formal

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\(^\text{101}\) Bombolong and Rubis are the two main night clubs in Ziguinchor.

\(^\text{102}\) Interview with Alioune conducted on 23rd July 2007 in Ziguinchor. The interview was conducted in French and Wolof.
whereas côtéman, living their lives on the uncertain margins of the informal economy, did not.

Figure 15: Yaya, a sculpter, at work

Since 1994, official tourist guides in Senegal have had to go through a rigorous training programme in an attempt to stop men working illegitimately and to avoid Senegal having a reputation similar to that of the Gambia. Formal guides had to be at least 18 years old and hold Senegalese nationality. They were required to be ‘correctly dressed’, must not be seen drinking or in a drunk state and they must not hassle or behave inappropriately towards tourists. According to Ziguinchor’s tourist minister, côtéman are a large problem for legitimate guides and people who work in the formal tourist industry because they took work away from those with training and even deterred tourists from visiting.  

Each category of informal workers was defensive about their work and everyone saw himself as being more qualified or legitimate than competitors. Official guides looked

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103 Interview with tourist minister conducted on November 28th, 2007 in Ziguinchor. Interview conducted in French.
down on those who were not trained, just as sculptors and craftsmen with their own boutiques saw themselves as superior to ambulant traders. Senegalese côtéman believed that they were more honest and knowledgeable than Gambian beach-boys and Senegalese guides from outside the region. “We know the Casamance better than anyone else”, Bakaye told me. “There is nobody who works at Club Med who knows it better than me,” he said, emphasising the difference between his local, self-taught knowledge and the official, trained guides at Club Med.\textsuperscript{104} Ambulant traders were harder to categorise because, although like the côtéman, they strolled along the beach in search of business, they had a genuine product to sell and were recognisable for selling the same product at the same time each day. The côtéman worked more haphazardly and sold whatever they could find. As one boutique owner said scathingly as we watched a côtéman walk along the beach, “selling one necklace doesn’t make you an antiquaire.”

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{cap-skirring-sand-paintings.png}
\caption{Sand paintings for sale in Cap Skirring}
\end{figure}

As well as unofficial, free-lance work, Europeans who wanted to buy land or property employed local Senegalese men to assist them with their paperwork and negotiations. It was cheaper to pay someone local to facilitate the process than to pay the toubab price

\textsuperscript{104} Interview with Bakaye conducted on July 23\textsuperscript{rd}, 2007 in Ziguinchor. Interview conducted in French and Wolof.
for land. Others were employed to look after European-owned businesses during the summer months of July and August, when most toubabs went back to Europe to escape the rain.

The men with whom I conversed all had similar life histories; they were disillusioned with rural life and were used to temporary, informal sector employment. Some did come from long established trading families – Yaya, for example, was Pulaar and his family had been involved in circular migration between Senegal and France for decades, so he was accustomed to seeing his relatives moving back and forth between the two continents.105

The côtéman were mostly Senegalese, but there were also several Gambian men (one of my informants estimated that there were ten of them but I only ever met three) who travelled back and forth across the border in search of work because they could not find employment in the Gambia. The côtéman with whom I spent my time were on average between the ages of 18 and 30 and were not yet married, although they had all had casual local or foreign girlfriends. They often spoke French, Spanish or Italian in addition to their vernacular tongue and some also spoke English, although this was less common amongst the non-Gambians. As we have seen, Wolof has become the most commonly spoken language throughout Senegal, and even those who were Pulaar or Jola conversed with each other using Wolof (Cruise O’Brien 1998).

Côtéman lived either in rented rooms in the village, stayed with friends and family, or slept on the beach in roughly constructed huts or shelters. Rooms in Cap Skiriring were difficult to find and some men preferred to pay rent for the whole year, even if they were not there, to ensure they would have accommodation during the peak season.

Côtéman were trying to earn a living, and they described their work as a harmless game, despite being very aware that many tourists, especially women, complained about being hassled by them.106 They did provide a genuine service to people, acting as guides and accompanying tourists to the market or out to restaurants, and employing a guide, official or otherwise, acted as a deterrent to other potential hustlers and ensured a certain degree of protection throughout one’s stay. It can be difficult to see how being

105 Main interview with Yaya conducted on June 1st, 2007 in Ziguinchor. Interview conducted in French.
106 An Irish woman who was staying at the same campement as me told me that she had made an official complaint to the police about being followed and shouted at by côtéman as she walked along the beach.
a beach-boy was work, yet, when I talked to the men at the heart of the tourist industry, it was clear that they had pride in what they did, and genuinely wanted to give tourists a positive experience of Senegal. In talking about their day-to-day business as a ‘job’, they simultaneously prided themselves on the services that they provided and protected themselves from accusations of laziness and dishonesty. They were proud of their country, and wanted to share their knowledge with other people, but were equally willing to exploit tourists in order to make money out of their local culture and their culture to make money out of tourists. They cannot, however, be criticised for wanting to get the highest price possible for their labour.

The main attraction of working with tourists was economic gain, and côtêman could earn in a day what it took most people several months, if not longer, to earn. The money that côtêman earned through direct payment for their services varied according to the season and how much tourists were willing to pay, but in general, they earned a good wage. If each person in a group of six was charged 25,000CFA for a day’s pirogue trip, a guide could earn over 100,000CFA even after paying for the hire of the pirogue, transport and lunch. By comparison, a barman working in a luxury hotel would expect to earn 30,000CFA a month. Tourists also offered drinks and cigarettes to their guides throughout the day and souvenir sellers gave them commission on any items sold. The financial reward they received in exchange for their services was vital to them, but I argue that the potential long-term benefits of making European connections were far more important than the small but immediate financial gain they obtained on a day-to-day basis.

6.4 “It’s all about making contacts”

Even though the lifestyle and economic benefits that accompanied life in Cap Skirring were attractive, they were not as significant as the potential to migrate. Their work occupied their time and enabled côtêman to make money, but more importantly it enabled them to ‘make contacts’ and extend their social networks. As we have seen in other chapters, this thesis is not about the success of people’s attempts to leave, but their attempts to do so, and this section exemplifies how the côtêman used their work as a migration strategy. Firstly I discuss how côtêman used their work as a way of meeting toubabs in the belief that these friendships will lead them to Europe. I then discuss how
they hoped that ‘professional holiday romances’ with older European women may work as a migration strategy. It was these relationships that were more problematic.

6.4.1 Making Contacts through Work

Hopeful côtéman used their work as unofficial tour guides, restaurateurs and souvenir sellers to expand their social networks in the hope of migrating. I suggest that their desperation to leave Senegal went some way to explaining their persistence when interacting with clients: there was a limit to the number of tourists needing or wanting guides at any one time and côtéman were in direct competition for them. Some relied on former clients for verbal recommendations or written reviews on travel websites such as www.lonelyplanet.com, but the majority touted for new customers along the beach. They were all struggling to make a living and did not hesitate to use underhand tactics to try and ‘win’ clients, especially during the low tourist season when there were fewer tourists with whom to work.

Côtéman waited for tourists outside hotels and along the beach, but they also hung around at the airport and the taxi/bus station hoping to meet tourists as they arrived in Cap Skirring. One man even went as far as keeping binoculars so that he could see potential clients as they walked along the beach! In Ziguinchor, they could be found touting for business at the airport, and around the main hotels and souvenir boutiques. The bars and restaurants featured in guidebooks also attracted côtéman and tourists – more expensive hotels did not let côtéman in, because of the problems they caused, but cheaper bars and restaurants welcomed the business. I would often sit and watch single dread-locked men enter bars and restaurants known to attract tourists, walk around and then strike up conversations with lone touhabs. They would be ignored, told to leave, or welcomed and bought a drink.

Alioune told me that he ‘won’ his clients by waking up as early as possible, in order to be the first guide on the beach, or by waiting for them at the airport:

If there is a plane arriving, we wait. The plane arrives around midday, so at 2pm we go down to the beach, say hello to people, try to chat to them, asking them where they come from…. We try to convince them, propose our work to them. We’re in competition with Club Med. We don’t have the right, but we steal their clients. At

107 The colour of a person’s skin was used as an indicator as to how long they had been in Senegal. The whiter they were, the more likely they were to have just arrived, and the more likely they were to want a guide!
Club Med, the first night, they are warned about us, and people are told to watch out. They say that the villagers aren’t vaccinated! But, when we do get clients, and they come out with us, they see that it isn’t true.

Cheikh, a souvenir seller who worked at the Village Artisanale in Ziguinchor, also had a souvenir boutique on the beach where he worked during the peak season. He defended the behaviour of the côtéman, whilst talking about his own tactics for attracting clients:

You have to be like that. They only do it to earn their bread. Everyone has their work. Everyone likes beautiful girls. They’re not aggressive, but they do ‘stick’. I get up early in the morning to look for clients, because if I didn’t, how would they know that I have an exposition? I bring them to my boutique. I don’t stay still, I tease people. You have to tease them, especially the girls. It’s all part of the work. You have to have a go...ask after their holidays. Once you go to them, they have to listen to you. There are other people who come and look at the souvenirs, but they don’t have a clue...you have to bring them to the boutique to make them buy stuff. We’re collant but only to advertise our work, afterwards, you’ll have contacts and they’ll tell their friends about you too.... Yes, I’m collant, collant, collant...there you go, we know each other now!

What I found interesting about Cheikh’s words was the way that he firstly separated his work from that of the côtéman, before beginning to talk about himself as being one of them.

Boy Jola also told me about his strategies for talking to tourists:

To get tourists you need to be a sei-sei. You have to be open... It’s not an easy job. You have to be open, not shy. If someone is shy, or stressed, they won’t get the clients. Côtêman run after tourists...they ask people to come to their home or on visits with them.

Some of the more entrepreneurial côtéman had books to publicise the kinds of services that they offered. Lamine showed me his ‘press book’, an album containing faded photos of the places he had visited with tourists and images ‘borrowed’ from tourist websites that he used as ‘proof’ of his work. Using photos sent to them by previous clients, photocopied maps and testimonies about their services written in several languages, they attempted to entice their customers. He and his friends claimed to be able to show tourists the ‘real’ Senegal. They stressed the originality of their services despite doing the same excursions and organising the same drumming workshops week after week. One man, known as ‘Mr Cool’, walked along the beach with photos of

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108 Interview with Cheikh conducted on November 8th 2007 in the Village Artisanale, Ziguinchor. Interview conducted in French and Wolof.

109 Interview conducted with Lamine on July 23rd, 2007 in Ziguinchor. Interview conducted in French and Wolof.
grilled lobster to advertise his restaurant. Even clothing served as an advertisement for their services. Ganja had a T-shirt with a photo of himself and a middle-aged Belgian tourist printed upon it. His T-shirt was old and faded, but he was proud of how it turned him into a walking billboard. By wearing evidence of his friends across his chest he was trying to prove to future clients that he was trustworthy and likeable.

Although some of the tactics used by côtémans to attract their clients may have been somewhat underhand and their flirtation and ‘teasing’ misplaced, they still prided themselves on giving a good service as tour guides. They knew that in order to migrate they had to impress their clients both socially and professionally. They had to be likeable, but also show themselves to be professional and invaluable as tour guides, hosts, cooks and translators.

*Côtéman* can be considered as ‘cultural brokers’ who ease the transition into Senegal for their clients. Borrowing from Eric Cohen (1985: 10), Schoss talks about the benefits that a tour-guide, official or otherwise, can bring as ‘pathfinder’ and ‘mentor’. In Senegal, they acted as translators in a linguistic sense (most tourists do not speak Wolof and some do not speak French), but more significantly, they served as mediators between locals and tourists. The tour-guide, Schoss writes, creates a physical and cultural landscape for the tourist, controlling what the visitor sees. In these examples, the côtémans decided what the tourist saw, where they went and how much they paid for it. Senegal, like anywhere new can be, was intimidating for visitors, and the presence of a tour guide eased the transition process for those who desired it.

The côtémans were adept at making their services seen indispensable. The pride they had in their work went some way to explaining their on-going entrepreneurial success, and why tourists continued to employ them, despite the complaints made about them. A combination of the services they provided and their social presence made tourists believe in and befriend them. Despite many finding them to be an annoyance, the côtémans were liked by many more.

### 6.4.2 Making Contacts: *Côtéman* as professional holiday romancers

Some of them get lucky…they’ve found wives, friends, tourists… There are lots of côtémans who live in Europe now. If you act like a Rasta, you’ll get a French wife – you need to behave badly! There are lots of women who prefer côtémans. If you behave properly women don’t come near you. Before they used to think the Rastas
were bandits, but now they like them. That’s what makes them all grow their hair like that…to get a French wife. They never wear proper clothes.

Cheikh, Souvenir seller, Ziguinchor

If you want to go to Europe you have to have a white girlfriend…

Lamine, côtéman, Cap Skirring

I have struggled to work out the relationship between the côtéman of the Casamance and literature on sex or romance tourism and I am wary of making potentially incriminating statements about my informants and their European companions. By the time I had realised the potential link between the côtéman and sex-tourism, I was deeply entrenched in their world and I would have considered it to be a betrayal of them and the level of working relationship we had built up to interview the tourists with whom they spent time about their sexual relationships. Just as talking to clients was a ‘no-go area’ when I interviewed sex-workers, female tourists, I felt, were also off limits in the case of this chapter. This does not mean that I avoided talking to to female tourists, but that I did not systematically interview them. When discussions did take place, I was always entirely honest about the subject of my work.

Sex-tourism was an issue shrouded in mystery. Formal employees of the tourist industry talked to me about sex-tourism but the côtéman did not, unless they wanted to implicate someone else. Likewise, tourists talked about sex-tourism, unless they themselves were having a holiday romance with a local man. When I discussed the issue of commercial sex with the côtéman whom I considered to be professional romancers, they were defensive and my questions were dismissed. They did not like the fact that I saw them with different ‘girlfriends’ on a weekly basis, and I in turn felt uncomfortable that I had access this information. I felt uneasy when I saw them interacting with female tourists, knowing that they were not as faithful as they were promising to be. I also knew that it was not my place to inform the women of these men’s infidelities, nor judge their relationships.

Although the words of these men echoed those of the female sex-workers to whom I had spoken, there are several reasons prohibiting me from drawing direct parallels between côtéman and female sex-workers. Female sex-workers were registered and legally permitted to engage in their work, whereas men were not, meaning that the
côtéman who did engage in sexual relations with tourists did so under the guise of a holiday romance rather than as a direct commercial exchange. The regularisation of female sex-work in Senegal meant that male behaviour, even if it appeared parallel to that of women, was harder to classify because it was informal and not officially recognised. Female sex-workers attempted to segregate their lives so that the commercial and domestic did not overlap and sex-work was restricted to well defined and known red-light zones and bars and, at least initially, their sexual encounters were commercial rather than personal (Brewis and Linstead 2000; Sanders 2005). Monetary gain for the côtémans was far more subtle and indirect, from what I was told. They were taken out to dinner by female tourists, given material gifts and invited to spend the night in luxury hotels but they denied that a direct exchange of sex for money took place. As Cabezas writes, in Cuba, new patterns of sexual commerce are opportunistic, fluid and ambiguous. I would suggest the same was true in Cap Skirring, where the landscape of the beach made it difficult to interpret the exchange of sex for money as a formal transaction rather than a romantic adventure. She suggests that one reason why young men and women in Cuba’s beach resorts preferred to receive informal gifts rather than money may have been to exempt them from a sex-worker identity. Direct commercial transactions confirmed that they were part of the formal sex-industry, whereas informal liaisons did not. We could suggest that they, too, were purposely occupying liminal spaces to avoid being stigmatised as sex-workers and by keeping their relationships only partially commercial they avoided judgement from wider society (Cabezas 2004: 999).

Like the male clients of female sex-workers, the women who had relationships with the côtémans of Cap Skirring did not see the purchasing of sexual services as the primary reason for their travel. Nor did côtémans talk about them as ‘clients’. De Albuquerque (1998: 51) writes about how beach-boys in Barbados also rejected the idea that they their sexual exchanges were commercial and saw relationships as part of the cultural experience they provide:

[Most beach-boys spend their days leading tourists to water: renting out jet skis, giving water-skiing lessons, organizing sailboat trips, staffing glass bottom boats. These jobs, if attractive, are usually part-time or seasonal, and the relatively low wages are insufficient to maintain the enviable beach-boy lifestyle. They require the latest clothes and shoes, immodest jeweller, meals and drinks at pricey tourist restaurants and nightclubs. Hustling female tourists earns them these necessities. But beach-boys reject the notion that they are male prostitutes: they claim that they
simply give the women a ‘good time’, show them around Barbados, and ‘sex dem up as only a black man can do’.

Sex-workers and côtéman alike were convinced that making contacts with toubabs was a way of leaving Senegal and used their sexuality in the attempt to do so. There were definite similarities between the behaviour and future aspirations of côtéman and those of female sex-workers, but their use of sexuality was less direct and I do not place their relationships with tourists into the category ‘sex-tourism’. We cannot justify placing a label upon people who did not describe themselves as such, but because female sex-workers were prescribed their identifying label by the state they were given a status that they could not deny.

6.4.3 Image as a Migratory Tool

Anthropology has long focused on the symbolism of clothing and body image, and we have already seen amongst the sapeurs how dress can be used to construct a particular image and convey a certain message (Hendrickson 1996; Newell 2005). The clothes that West African beach-boys wore were an example of both their future aspirations and a demonstration of their upward social ability, as well as a means of making themselves attractive to Westerners. Obviously, there was some variation amongst the clothes worn by the côtéman in the Casamance, and I cannot claim that all men dressed in exactly the same way for the same reason, but there were general styles which were adopted, and certain ways in which styles were manipulated and transformed which were important (see also de Albuquerque 1998: 51)

Côtéman were easily recognisable, wearing an unofficial, laid-back uniform that set them apart from those around them: what they wore was important as a marker of style and for what it represented. Côtéman usually had dreadlocks, and were extremely athletic in physique. Long hair was tied back with scarves or bandannas in Rastafarian colours, and jewellery made from beads and shells adorned their necks and wrists. Many wore long, baggy patchwork trousers or clothes printed with motifs of djembés or dancing figures on brightly coloured batik backgrounds that were produced specifically for the tourist market. Others wore clothes that were Western in style, such as jeans and designer brand name T-shirts and trainers, which were often received as gifts from tourists leaving Senegal. When I interviewed Lamine he was wearing jeans and a D&G
T shirt. He proudly showed me his mobile phone, which had been a gift from a tourist. He knew the importance of conforming to an image which tourists would find attractive, and extended the competitive element of his work to his clothing:

We like our work, because the tourists help us out financially. When they get home, là-bas, where you live, they send us mobile phones and clothes. Now, I don’t buy clothes anymore. I hardly ever wear clothes from here.

As Schoss (1996) observes, although local Kenyans also wore brand names, they did not wear complete, co-ordinated outfits, unlike the Kenyan beach-boys, who construct styled, matching outfits for themselves. Côtéman in Senegal also observed tourists and the way in which they constructed whole outfits. They gave themselves a complete ‘look’ rather than a cultural patchwork of designer labels and local second hand clothes.

As well as mimicking and adopting styles of dress worn by tourists to try and make themselves seem more ‘modern’ and approachable to potential clients, their choice of clothing was a way of standing out in Senegalese society and making a statement about upward social mobility and future aspirations. Styles of dress and hairstyle were linked to the desire to migrate, and they were Senegalese consumers of Western culture emulating an as yet undiscovered Europe. As Scheld has pointed out, dress is a way for people in Dakar to shape their own identities within the space of the city. In this case I would add that wearing Western clothing was linked to the côtéman’s imaginings of a life in Europe and their aspirations of modernity (Scheld, 2007: 299; Heath 1992).

Having dreadlocked hair was one of the main markers of being a côtéman, and Diouf, one of the souvenir sellers whom I interviewed at the village artisanale in Ziguinchor, told me “if you want a white girlfriend, you need to have dreadlocks” when I asked him why the hairstyle was so popular amongst young men in the tourist trade.110 However, as much as the image of the dreadlocked man fitted into the image of the exotic Other sought by many female tourists, côtéman faced judgement from wider society for their choice of look. The men that worked formally in the tourist industry (employees of luxury hotels, restaurants or bars, and registered tour guides, for example) shunned dreadlocks, as they felt that they were inappropriate and indicated that someone was not ‘serious’.111 As Kempadoo writes, the romanticisation of the racial, ethnic or cultural

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110 Interview with Diouf conducted on August 14th, 2007 in the Village Artisanale, Ziguinchor. Interview conducted in French.
111 This is the same notion of ‘seriousness’ discussed in previous chapters.
Other has a long colonial and imperialist history. Racial and cultural differences can be seen to have a link with sexual desirability, and this is something of which the côtéman were very much aware (Kempadoo 2004). As well as racial attraction, there was also an attraction to a certain kind of laid-back, beach-boy image, which was where the aforementioned label of ‘rent-a-dread’ was relevant. Once the domain of male imaginings, women from the global North were also involved in imagining the Exotic and local male bodies were not just tour guides for some women, but part of their quest for an authentic holiday experience.

There is an obvious relationship with côtéman culture and the Mourides discussed in the introductory section on Senegal that should be noted here. The Baay Fall, a branch of the Mouride brotherhood discussed above, are known for what Cruise O’Brien has described as “flamboyant displays of unorthodoxy” – they do not respect the interdictions of most Mourides and smoke, drink and do not fast during Ramadan. The most significant thing relating to the côtéman chapter is the apparel of a minority the Baay Fall talibés, who wore their hair in long, matted tresses and vibrant, patchwork robes (Cruise O’Brien 1971: 151). The côtéman were jokingly called ‘Baay Faux’ (Baay False) in reference to the way they adapted the brotherhood for their own means, in particular being able to drink, smoke and wear their hair in dreadlocks without adhering to any other of the brotherhood’s values. Most of the independent travellers who came to Cap Skirring were looking for what Alpha described as a ‘roots’ experience. Tourists believed that Rastafarianism represented the real Africa and were keen to befriend those whom they believed to represent this vision, which was part of the reason Alpha had dreadlocks and played Bob Marley cassettes all day.112.

There was a careful balance to be reached in terms of their appearance – their clothing had to be ‘Senegalese’ enough to appeal to people who were looking for ‘authentic’ guides or boyfriends, but it also had to be Western to demonstrate their upwards mobility and desires to migrate.113

The beach-boys aspired to migrate to Europe, and their dress suggested that they were modern and educated in the values and fashions of Western society. They mimicked

112 The English word ‘roots’ was used in French and has not been translated.
113 I found it interesting that in a Miss Cap Skirring contest held in a night-club, there were two different rounds for the women. They firstly had to dress in traditional clothes, and carry a calabash as a village ‘prop’, before dressing in tighter, sexier Western clothes.
the comportment, accent and clothing of tourists in an attempt to demonstrate that they could ‘be like them’ and would not be out of place in Europe. They performed what they believed Western life would be like, using dress as a symbol of their modernity and access to consumer goods, as well as a way of conforming to how they believed Europeans to dress. This did not particularly conform to Rastafarian values, showing that it was an image they had picked up, rather than a total lifestyle choice.

6.5 Conclusion

Despite some hesitancy and uncertainty about the details, the goal for the cotéman was, without doubt, to partir. They, like the women in previous chapters, did not know how or when they would realise their dreams but remained certain that they would.

This chapter has shown how these men had an ambiguous position within theoretical debates about sex-work, partially because international tourism has led to the relationship between labour and romance becoming permeable. For female sex-workers, the spaces in which sex was sold were well defined and regulated, but for men, the liminal space of the beach and their ambiguous identities as unofficial tour guides enabled them to locate their relationships within a framework of love and informal exchange, not commercial sex. Female sex-workers were trying to make their relationships permeable so that they did not have to define themselves as sex-workers, whereas men were able to avoid the label in the first place. Nor were their relationships and hopes for migration completely about sex, and befriending tourists, as I have shown, was as (in)efficient a migration strategy as romantic liaisons were.

We can see clear similarities in the way that men and women alike depended upon making connections with toubabs to migrate as well as similarities in the way that their image and clothing were used as a way of appealing to these contacts. The advances in ICTs again had an impact on the relationships that cotéman had with tourists who have left Senegal. It was cheap and easy to send an international text message or bip somebody, and email was also an immediate way of staying in touch across international borders. The development of ICTs had in some respects made the migratory dream seem easier to realise, because Europe and their European contacts were made to appear closer than they really were. Bakaye’s communications with tourists exemplify this point:
Every month, we call each other, or I *bip* them and they call me back. They send me presents, wrap things up and send them to me. I got 4 calls today, and that’s why we go down [to the beach], because often they can help us. In three years, four years, we’ll get there. Some of them buy property in Dakar and employ us to help, others have ‘projects’. We make sure we stay in touch.

Lamine’s words about destiny are very poignant here, and his mention of irregular migration should also be noted:

We don’t know… We believe that we’ll go to Europe, but we don’t know when. We’re waiting for someone to finance us. We leave it to destiny, to fate. If the work is good, we’re happy. We believe we’ll leave, we know one day we will… We can work with our clients, that’s the advantage we have. That’s why we’re not in any hurry to take the *pirogue*, but if I didn’t do this, I’d be in Spain by now. Here, there’s nothing else to do. If you want to work in the rice fields, you need money, and the rice is growing badly. Nobody is earning money anymore, not even the fishermen. There are no fish, not even in the *bolongs*. We don’t have a life. It’s not easy. Here, there’s nothing. Suffering. There’s nothing for us to do here. All the factories are closed. In Dakar, it’s easy to find a job, but impossible to find somewhere to live. There’s nothing we can do. I know someone who has a project in France, though. Come back and see me in October! I’ll be gone. That’s when we’ll have convinced the tourists…with our words…

As the above words demonstrate, they talked about migration in terms of *when* not *if*. Like online-dating women and sex-workers, it was hope that made them persist in their attempts to migrate, even if they were yet to succeed. It is important to make the point that these men did not risk their lives on *pirogue* crossings because they believed that they would ‘make it’ to Europe through their connections and social links with *toubabs*. They were also happy to exist in the temporary middle ground of Cap Skirring, expressing their aspirations of migration through their image and lifestyle and believing that they would not be *côtéman* forever. I have used the three chapters already outlined to show some of the creative ways that people in Senegal talked about and imagined migrating. The following chapter focuses on men who had left Senegal but been repatriated. It differs from the examples that I have discussed above because their stories involved actual mobility, albeit unsuccessful.
Imagining Migration:
Cyber-cafés, sex and clandestine departures in the Casamance, Senegal

Emilie Venables

Full citation:

Please contact Dr Emilie Venables for further chapters: evenables@rhru.co.za
CHAPTER 7: Irregular Migration: ‘Barza mba barsakh’

One of my favourite places to walk in Ziguinchor is the riverside quartier of Boudody. Families sit outside their houses drinking attaya, enjoying the cool breeze drifting across the water. The streets are lined with palm trees, and rows of brightly coloured fishing boats rest on the shore, their weather-beaten flags flapping proudly in the wind. The ground is littered with wood shavings discarded by carpenters as they carve beautiful curved lines from the solid planks of timber at their feet. A radio rich with static blares out tinny music as they work, the air heavy with the sickly sweet smell of sugary tea and sweat. Weathered Jola women sit nearby, shelling fresh-water oysters and watching the carpenters at work.

Occasionally my heart sinks as I pick my way through the discarded shells and delicate wooden ringlets at my feet, my eyes spotting a larger than life skeleton of a boat standing tall and sinister amongst its smaller, brighter neighbours. Larger, sturdier boats like this don’t just appear out of nowhere: the imposing high sides and deep hull mean that it is bound for the sea. No longer just for fishing, pirogues are a potential route to Europe, destined to end up lost in salty waters or battered and broken on a Tenerife beach.

International news has begun to take on a much more local meaning.

Figure 17: Pirogues along the river in Ziguinchor

114 Barcelona or Death. The phrase has also been used by Scheld (2007) and was the title for an international conference on irregular migration.
7.1 Introduction

In this chapter I move away from looking at the previously discussed imaginings of migration and examine male attempts to realise the dream of living *ailleurs* (Fouquet 2007). I use the stories of men who have migrated ‘irregularly’ and, interlocking their experiences with the voices and opinions of other Senegalese men and women, I exemplify the darker side of transnational movement flows and migratory desires. I show how some young men went further than those in previous chapters and entered into a world involving physical risk, extraordinary courage and determination. Were they simply the “*fous de la mer*” or was there a more logical explanation for the apparent ‘craziness’ of their departures (Willems 2008)?

There is an obvious gendered element to this discussion, as the majority of irregular migrants were men, not women, and those with whom I have discussed the issue were appalled that men ‘allowed’ their female relatives to make such a journey. The *pirogue* was a very masculine symbol not just in terms of its practical use as a mode of subsistence, but in relation to who could migrate in its hollowed-out wooden shell. It seems over simplistic to argue that women were the ones ‘left behind’ or that aspiring female migrants were resigned to seeking relationships of dependency through sex or in the virtual world of cyber-cafés, but in this chapter, it is only men who migrated ‘irregularly’. Women to whom I spoke did not imagine themselves in *pirogues* and did not show the same degree of bravado and confidence in themselves as the men to whom I spoke, and thus they sought other ways to migrate, as we have seen above.

Although I could be criticised for writing about something that was and continues to be a ‘trendy’ topic, I defend my decision to write about irregular migration because my ethnographic data found me. The material for this chapter was hidden in conversations about other things and eventually became a chapter in its own right. This chapter begins with a discussion of some of the main issues surrounding the study of irregular migration, before addressing the scale of irregular migration from Senegal to the Canary Islands from the context of contemporary Ziguinchor. I address why men felt propelled to migrate, and the experiences of their journey.

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115 During 2006, seven pregnant women were accosted on the Canary Islands, out of a total of 30,000 migrants. Pregnant women make the crossing hoping firstly to avoid being repatriated, and secondly to be able to give birth on European territory to secure a European nationality for their child.
7.2 Fieldwork: researching the irregular

There are many methodological issues involved in researching the irregular or clandestine, whether researching street children, sex-workers or illegal or taboo behaviour (MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga 2000; Tourigny 2004). Problems range from the researcher’s inability to access ‘informants’, risks to the researcher and the informants, as well as the potential of having to be involved in illicit or immoral behaviour. As we have seen in previous chapters, accessing hidden or marginal populations was difficult and this is the main reason why I rely on conversations with only three return migrants throughout this chapter. I was more interested in people’s opinions about irregular pirogue migration than I was with collecting huge numbers of testimonies from return migrants, because this forms just one part of the Senegalese migration story. Instead, I have woven together the argument in this chapter by using extracts from my fieldwork diaries and informal, everyday conversations to exemplify why the pirogue was so important in Senegal.

7.2.1 Diary Extracts: The Pirogue in Senegalese Life

I begin this section with extracts from my fieldwork diaries to exemplify the presence of the pirogue not just as an inanimate object with a practical use, but as a migratory tool. These examples show how irregular migration was a topic of intense debate in Senegal, and how it was something that occupied people’s thoughts even if they had no direct experience of migration themselves.

I sat in Aicha’s cyber-café waiting for the torrential downpour falling from the sky to end, the air hot and clammy from other damp bodies doing the same. A young guy sat down next to me and I minimised the open windows on my computer screen to prevent him from seeing my email address, realising he was looking at what I was writing. ‘You’re writing about clandestine immigration, aren’t you?’ he asked me in English. I gave him a non-committal reply, unsure of how much of my email he had read, suspicious of many of the English speaking Nigerian men in the cyber and the fake identity cards they produced. He carried on talking. ‘I am a clandestine migrant. I took the pirogue twice, from Gambia. I could tell you all about it. What do you want to know?’ I was shocked by his statement, and by his over-the-shoulder espionage. I declined his offer to talk, because, as well as feeling uncomfortable in his presence (something I often experienced when men approached me), I didn’t believe him. It seemed too convenient for both me and for him that we were sitting side by side; too coincidental that the words he used to describe himself were the very words I had just typed. Clandestine migration in Senegal has become a trend of sorts, a buzzword, and I didn’t believe this young, English speaking man who told me he had tried to get to Europe and failed.

Fieldwork diary extract, August 2nd 2007
A blazing hot morning in September. I was in the figgy-jaay\textsuperscript{116}, or second-hand section of Ziguinchor market with Flora, looking through the mounds of mismatched Western clothes that had ended up there, delivered in bales after being rejected from elsewhere.\textsuperscript{117} Cat in the Hat t-shirts lay alongside outmoded airhostess blouses; faded dresses with shoulder pads were strewn amongst fraying summer skirts. As I walked through the stalls searching for hidden gems I heard the Wolof word for pirogue: ‘gaal’. I automatically turned my head, my ears finely tuned to pick out the words my mind deemed to be relevant to my research, and saw a man in his forties talking to two women of around the same age. As he saw me, he grinned and aimed his words in my direction, saying ‘don’t worry, I’m in no rush to take a pirogue, even if everyone else is!’

Fieldwork diary extract, September 10\textsuperscript{th} 2007

I went to the village artisanale in Ziguinchor to talk to some of the sculptors and boutique owners. Yaya, [a sculptor friend of mine], showed me around, introducing me to the people that I didn’t know, and explaining to them what I was doing. I took notes as he spoke, writing down names, the kind of boutiques the men worked in, what they sold. One man asked me what I was writing, and before I could tell him, Yaya cut me short, the hint of a secret smile creeping across his face. ‘She’s making a list of people who want to go to Spain. She has a pirogue leaving tonight and needs to know who wants to go,’ he told them. Without hesitation, they scrambled to get their names on my make-believe list, talking over each other and vying excitedly for my attention. I was amazed by the impatience in their voices and the hope in their eyes and looked at Yaya in disbelief, begging him to let me tell them the truth about what I was writing, not finding it as funny as he was. He let them believe they were going to Spain, before I told them that he was joking. Their faces fell and they looked embarrassed to have fallen for Yaya’s trick, whilst I looked on astonished at how easily they had wanted to commit themselves to an illegal voyage.

Fieldwork diary extract, June 21\textsuperscript{st} 2007

\textsuperscript{116} A Wolof term meaning ‘shake and sell’, used in reference to second-hand clothing.
\textsuperscript{117} See Tranberg Hansen and Scheld for theoretical discussions on the meaning of second-hand clothes in Africa (Tranberg Hansen 2000; Scheld 2007).
The three examples above show how *pirogue* departures had become a part of everyday parlance for Senegalese men and women and it was their ubiquitous presence that made me feel propelled to write about them. As I noted the impact that these wooden boats had on those around me, I became aware of a shift in my own ways of thinking and writing about irregular migration. Over time, I claimed the same sense of pride Senegalese people had towards their *pirogues* for myself. I felt an attachment to the boats I saw regularly in Ziguinchor, picking out the flags that I knew and recognising their distinctive paintwork as they hummed across the river. I spotted the occasional Ghanaian fishing boat far from home in the harbour at Elinkine and was excited by the fact that I knew where it had come from and who owned it. The *Village Artisanale’s* small table-top boats were a best-selling souvenir in *boutiques* and hotels and once I began to look for it, the *pirogue* seemed to be everywhere.
In addition to a growing awareness of the fishing boat’s significance as a mode of subsistence and a symbol of national pride, I more worryingly began to take on the same flippancy people used when talking about irregular migration. I had to force myself to step back from Ziguinchor and try to remember how I first reacted upon seeing the media images of dehydrated, delirious Africans stumbling out of wooden fishing boats on the beaches of the Canary Islands. The shock and sense of injustice I once felt became replaced by the images of the people I had interviewed and my memory of the pride in their voices, and I sought to regain the wider picture. Today, as I write, I remain torn between wanting and needing to portray the normal, unremarkable, semi-joking way in which irregular migration was discussed, whilst having to remind myself that it remains an important humanitarian issue that was and continues to be saddening and unjust, not to mention illegal.

7.2.2 ‘Irregular’ Interviewing

Due to the illegal and secretive nature of irregular migration, several methodological issues arose during my research, and I do not claim this to be a thorough account of the situation, but a reflection upon irregular migration from Senegal to the Western world. Unlike Hallaire, I was not carrying out a large-scale quantitative study, nor collecting data to inform government policy, but was trying to make sense of local attitudes and experiences of irregular migration (Hallaire 2007). In addition to finding it difficult to
meet people whom were willing to talk about their experiences, I was once again plagued and almost defeated by my own assumptions that they would not want to talk. I found myself whispering the word ‘clandestine’ as if it was forbidden, as I tried to drop it casually into the conversation un-noticed as if it should not be said out loud.

Just as in the previous chapters, everyone with whom I spoke claimed to know people who had ‘made it’, but no one could tell me of their whereabouts. Some claimed they had friends or family in Spain, and others said they knew of people who had been repatriated, but did not know where to find them. It was not only the reliance on friends of friends and luck to meet return-migrants that was problematic, but the way in which stories were told to me. As the first diary entry shows, people talked about their experiences or attitudes towards irregular migration in what appeared to be an overly rehearsed way. I wondered about the authenticity of the words I was hearing and the reasons their stories seemed rehearsed: had they told them before, maybe? Had someone else interviewed them, and if so, would this make my research less ‘valid’? My fieldwork notes, written late one night as the rain pounded on my roof and drowned out the clicking of my laptop keys, reflected upon one man’s bravado:

He is proud as he talks, and excited. I wonder if this is a coping strategy, a way of making a story hurt less, a way of blocking out his real feelings? The way a narrator tells their story, their silences, pauses, hesitations; these are all as important as the words themselves.

Fieldwork diary, July 12th 2007

I searched for hints of sentimentality when talking to return migrants, pushed for details about their journeys that they did not expect me to ask about. Why did I want to know what they took with them? Why did I want to know how they felt as they made the crossing? Inspired by the visit to the immigration museum on Ellis Island I mentioned in an earlier chapter, I wanted to know what belongings they cherished, what it was they packed when they left, whether or not they thought they would be coming back. Their presence as transnationals was unclear – hopeful migrants could only talk vaguely about their plans to return to Senegal because the details of the voyage were vague and its success was uncertain. Material goods and personal possessions from Senegal were not important to the men with whom I spoke – instead it was their Spanish identification papers, laminated and folded into tight compact squares which they pulled from their pockets to show me. Their papers showed that they had ‘made it’, albeit briefly, and
that they had survived the journey and almost realised their dreams. Their papers were proof of their agency and served as a reminder of their epic journey, in the same way that Aicha’s refugee papers were important to her. What they brought back with them from their potential futures was far more important to them than what they had taken from their pasts. For Washington, a Guinean man who migrated not by pirogue but as a stowaway on a cargo ship, it was his spoken English that told his story. The language we conversed in was his equivalent of Spanish identification papers and proof of a decade spent in America.

7.3 Irregular Migration in the context of Senegal

7.3.1 A background to pirogue departures

When writing my fieldwork notes I used the term ‘clandestine migration’, taking from the discussions that I had, in French, on a daily basis. My choice of language was based on both the words that migrants used to talk about themselves, as well as how others talked about them. When taken out of the context in which I was writing, the term ‘clandestine’ no longer fits, and has a degree of stigmatisation attached to it that was not apparent when I was in the field. I have decided, therefore, to use the more widely known and politically sensitive term ‘irregular migration’ throughout this discussion, even though it was at first a term unfamiliar to me (Jordan and Duvell 2002).

There is no universally accepted definition for irregular migration, and different authors use the term in varying ways (Perruchoud 2007: 46). According to Amnesty International (2006), an irregular migrant is someone who does not have permission to enter, remain or work in any given host country. A migrant’s status becomes irregular in different ways and migrants can ‘slip in and out of irregularity’ along the migration journey, depending on the government policies and visa regulations of the countries in which they are in transit. They may enter a country legally, but become ‘irregular’ when their documentation expires. An undocumented migrant is defined as someone who lacks the documentation to enter or stay in a country lawfully (Amnesty International 2006).

Irregular migration from Senegal is by no means the only incidence of illegal migration

118 Interview with Washington conducted on November 10th, 2007 in Cap Skirring. Interview conducted in English.
in the world, but in recent years the channels between Senegal and the Canary Islands have become one of the most highly documented departure routes. According to the Spanish government, in 2006, 31,863 irregular migrants arrived in the Canary Islands by boat. It was estimated that 7,736 of these arrivals occurred in September alone, which could be due to seasonal factors and changing tides. Twenty thousand of these migrants were believed to be from Sub-Saharan Africa and 1,379 Senegalese men and 26 Senegalese minors made up these figures (Carrera 2007). Although relatively few Senegalese boys made the journey, the increasing numbers of irregular child migrants from Morocco and Sub-Saharan Africa have also become an issue of concern and in 2006, four emergency centres were opened to house 900 unaccompanied children (Human Rights Watch 2007).

Migrants pay for their place in a pirogue – money is handled by a middleman, and the owner of the pirogue and the voyage organisers are rarely seen. Sea-faring boats or loco pirogues are much larger than the fresh-water fishing boats seen along Ziguinchor’s river – locos are between 12-25m long, and around 15m wide. A sea-bound pirogue costs between 2.5 and 5 million CFA to buy and the motor costs approximately 600,000CFA. Normally a boat would take three motors with them in case of mechanical problems along the way, as well as a GPS system, available in Ziguinchor’s local market for around 60,000CFA. It is interesting to note that the technological advances that have enabled people to stay in touch with each other over international borders have also created more ways for migrants to migrate. Migrants pay an average of 300,000-400,000CFA for a place on a boat, and boats can carry up to 100 people.

Senegal is the nearest Sub-Saharan African country to Europe, creating an illusion of closeness and fuelling the belief that it was possible to migrate. Stricter maritime controls around the Moroccan coast have made it more difficult for migrants to get to Spain, so the Canary Islands have increased in popularity as a destination for irregular migrants. What was once a Dakar-based phenomenon has spread further south because northern beaches were patrolled more frequently and migrants want to avoid being caught by the Senegalese authorities. FRONTEX is a European community body aiming to put EU border strategies into operation, in the attempt to control the occurrence of irregular migration. Migrants are often seen as a challenge to the nation state that they are trying to enter (which in this instance was Spain) and air and sea
surveillance was in operation to prevent migrants landing on Spanish shores. By avoiding the stricter controls at airports, sea migrants are trying to avoid border controls, not realising that the waters were also being patrolled to reinforce borders and prevent migrants from landing.

Scholars studying the issue must be commended for their attempts to offer original perspectives on what has become a heavily documented humanitarian issue. Irregular migration and clandestine *pingue* departures have become almost a ‘trend’ in academia and it seems that any mention of Senegal and migration must make reference to them. Literature falls into different categories – humanitarian aid agency reports look at the plight of irregular migrants and their lives in their host countries (Human Rights Watch 2007; Amnesty International 2006), whereas Africanists try to ascertain why migrants are taking the risk and how this type of migration links to remittance flows and gender relations as well as wider socio-economic circumstance (Sall and Morand 2008; Willems 2008). Bouilly in particular has written about the importance of gender to irregular migration, noting that even though it is a male phenomenon, women should not be excluded from the debates (Bouilly 2008). It is interesting to compare these studies of irregular migration with Carrera’s paper on EU border control and the ‘challenge’ of such irregular migration where the voices of migrants do not appear (Carrera 2007).

7.3.2 The Decision to Leave

There are lots of young people who want to go to...what do you call it? Spain. Young people die going to Spain. You go out into the middle of the sea... I wouldn’t want anyone to do that. You go, just like that, how are you going to cope with the cold? You’ll die. It’s God that gives people work. There are young guys who don’t think that though. They leave their parents and their parents lose them twice over. That’s not good. They don’t say anything to anyone in case their parents stop them from going. People don’t want them to go. People go because they’re tired. We don’t have anything here, but you’ve got everything over there. If I had the chance I’d go. To discover, sell and come back.

Fatoumata, dressmaker, Village Artisanale

119 Interview with Fatoumata conducted on November 7th 2007 at the Village Artisanale. Interview conducted in Wolof.
I have lots of friends there who work or sell stuff. One of my older brothers is there and he does really well for himself. He was one of the first to leave from Elinkine, but it’s not something you tell people about. It was in secret. They found him and he phoned to tell us he was there. Me? Nah! I want to go with the proper papers.

Diouf, souvenir seller, Cap Skirring

As the previous chapters have outlined, migratory desires for Senegalese men and women were explained as escaping something and simultaneously looking for something else. The aspiring migrants in this and the previous chapters shared similar dreams and expectations, but the difference lay in the fact that pirogue departures were more than just imagined. Young Senegalese men and women talked about their desire to go to Europe on an almost daily basis, but these thoughts were usually restricted to the realm of dreams and the imaginary. They consumed the idea of migration and stressed their desire to leave, but did not want to live such a dangerous reality of it.

Was there anything different about these hopeful migrants’ lives that explained their decision to leave, or were they simply braver and more willing to take the risk than the other people I have discussed? Even after talking to return migrants and hopeful migrants about migration to the Canary Islands, the decision process is still somewhat unclear. The occurrence of such illegal departures from different points along the Senegalese and Gambian coasts makes it hard to formulate an argument which blames migration upon the situation in any one particular region of or any ethnic group within Senegal, and I would suggest that the general sense of discontent felt in the Casamance exists across not only throughout Senegal but West Africa and other parts of the global South. What began as a Senegalese pattern of migration now involves migrants from across Africa, many of whom make perilous journeys overland so that they can embark on an even more perilous journey by sea (Vium 2008). Some of these migrants will, depending upon their nationality, move in and out of irregularity as they cross international borders, as I discussed earlier.

I asked Atabou, a Jola man living in Ziguinchor, what it was that pushed him into taking a pirogue.\textsuperscript{120} Twenty-eight year old Atabou’s family situation was a very typical one, and his narrative echoed not only those of my other informants, but those talking about poverty and their difficult economic situations in other areas of Senegalese literature

\textsuperscript{120} Interview with Atabou carried out on July 16th, 2007 in Ziguinchor. Interview conducted in French and Wolof.
Atabou lived with his mother, older sister and her husband in Peyrissac, the quartier of Ziguinchor where he was born. His father, a carpenter, had died in 2004 and Atabou did not have a wife or children. His mother did not work, and Atabou was financially responsible for her.

My father had high hopes for me, but he’s dead. I saw [looked at] my family… I saw that work wasn’t going well. I’m a man. My mother had hope [in me].

Atabou trained as a carpenter before becoming a fisherman. His knowledge of the sea, and networks of friends working in the fishing industry, made it easy for him to find out about potential departures and he was able to make contacts without arousing too much suspicion. It is estimated that 44.5 per cent of Senegal’s irregular migrants are fisherman, or have links with the fishing industry, and although departures are no longer solely organised by fishermen, and have become larger-scale and multi-national, attracting migrants from across West Africa, Atabou’s occupation and the crisis surrounding traditional modes of fishing were definitely causal factors in his departure even if they were not the defining ones (Hallaire 2007: 35).

Figure 20: Unloading fish from a pirogue

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121 Peyrissac’s name is linked back to the French colonial period, being the title of a maison de commerce (Juillard 1995: 45).
I also interviewed Manou, a 34 year old taxi driver or *taksimann* living and working in Ziguinchor about his experiences of irregular migration.122 Like Atabou, his father had died, and he was the sole breadwinner for his elderly mother. He had a three year old son in Dakar from an affair with a married woman, and he sent money to him as often as he could. His mother was elderly and lived in a village on the outskirts of Ziguinchor; he visited her every month, and sent money to her, because she was no longer able to work in the rice fields and earn money as she once had.

The previous chapters have shown the importance of the informal sector to people in Senegal, and many hopeful migrants, whether *côtéman*, sex-workers or taxi-drivers, were used to undertaking temporary and informal work. Manou, for example, listed a long line of work he had carried out before becoming a taxi-driver. He went to school in Ziguinchor, and in the holidays he worked as an apprentice in a garage. He wanted to become a professional footballer, but was encouraged by his parents to train as a mechanic instead. He spent several years selling spare parts in a garage in Dakar before returning to Ziguinchor where he had been working as a *taksimann* since 2001. On average, he earned between 2,000 and 3,000CFA a day, after paying a daily rate of 10,000CFA for use of his friend’s taxi and buying petrol for the vehicle. If we compare this to the potential daily earnings of the *côtéman* we can see how good their ‘salaries’ really were and why they were so desperate in their attempts to ‘win’ clients. Fuel prices were constantly rising whilst I was in the field, which made it even harder for him and other taxi drivers to earn money. This was especially true in Ziguinchor where taxi prices were fixed and taxi drivers could not bargain with their clients for a higher fare to cover their costs. Hopeful migrants were used to living on the margins of society and were used to ‘getting by’ and believed that they would be able to do the same in Europe. They had an unshakable confidence in themselves and their belief that they would succeed. The realities of the journey did not seem to concern them.

There is another problematic element in this debate. Although people in Senegal talked about how terrible irregular migration was and how they would not want their loved ones to leave, the men who did attempt to migrate claimed they felt under pressure from their families to depart, because of situations such as those described above. A

122 Interview with Manou carried out on July 24th, 2007 at the Perroquet Hotel, Ziguinchor. Interview conducted in Wolof.
A well-known and oft-cited organisation protesting against clandestine departures is the *Association des Femmes pour la Lutte Contre l’émigration Clandestine* established by the mothers of young men who have disappeared at sea whilst attempting to migrate. Based in Thiaroye-sur-Mer, a suburb on the outskirts of Dakar, the organisation has attracted considerable public interest from academics and international media bodies alike. Supported by the Spanish Red Cross and local religious leaders, the campaign attempts to educate migrants about what conditions would really be like for them as irregular migrants in Europe in an attempt to stop them from leaving. The Thiaroye-sur-Mer organisation is interesting because it shows the reaction of women to what is a male migration strategy and because we can see how their anti-immigration stance echoes that of states trying to control and restrict the flow of migrants to the global North (Bouilly 2008).

There is a curious and complex relationship between migration and the self. Was migration a selfish act, even though migrants claimed it is for the benefit of others, or did the remittances migrants talk of sending home make it a collective rather than an individual choice? Those involved in illegal or immoral activities often justified their actions using a discourse of selflessness. It could be argued that, similar to the sex-worker narratives I have heard, this is what they felt *obliged* to say to defend their illegal or immoral activities. Unlike Tall who claims that young Senegalese men are interested firstly in meeting their basic needs (food and health) before they turn their attentions to their clothing, *attaya* drinking, smoking and socialising, these men were talking about their wider obligations to others (Tall 2008: 145). He rather simplistically, I feel, links the desire for financial betterment with the desire to consume a modern identity and does not consider the dilemma young men found themselves in as they tried to manage their own needs with those of others.

Aziz Mbaye, a local NGO worker campaigning to stop irregular migration from Senegal (whom I cited earlier in this thesis) told me that:

> They say that they have to leave. Because they don’t have work which enables them to meet their basic needs, or those of their family. You need to understand too that there are families who deprive themselves so that their child can study. He gets his diploma, and what does he do? Nothing at all. Because there are no jobs. So, he depends on mum and dad. *Voilà.* What is he going to do? What is his future? Where is the work?
His words emphasised a sense of dissatisfaction and despair that were not unique to Senegal; even if people studied, they were not guaranteed a job. Jeffrey et al. (2004) assert that for young men in North India, education does not necessarily lead to secure employment, and, that like the Senegalese men and women to whom I spoke, they were disillusioned at being unable to find work despite having formal qualifications. Jeffrey et al. also note that the failure to obtain white-collar jobs is voiced not just as a ‘personal loss’ but as a temporal loss known as ‘timepass’, similar to the notion of *yiluñña* discussed above by Mains (Jeffrey, Jeffery, and Jeffery 2004). Being educated but unable to provide for their families was extremely frustrating for young men in the Casamance and irregular migration was a way of proving themselves and their worth.

Although differing somewhat from the stories I discussed above, I also want to draw on the example of ‘Washington’, a 30-year-old Guinean man I met in Cap Skirring for this discussion. Like so many of the stories of irregular migration I heard, I was not expecting to hear his, meeting him by chance on the beach in Cap Skirring as he practised drumming for a performance in a hotel later that day. We talked in English, perching on *djembés* in the shade of the beach hut he had built for himself. He spoke with a strong American accent after spending ten years in the United States, and was fluent in English as well as French. I asked him what made him leave:

> I left in February 1997. I don’t know why. I just wanted to travel, y’know. I was a stowaway on a ship. I spent two weeks in the Atlantic Ocean, in a container. I went with a friend and we hid. When we arrived the container was moved on a truck, and then we ran out and hid. It was February and it was so cold. I didn’t tell my parents at first. They didn’t know that I was there for almost two years.

He also talked about having a responsibility to his family, and a lack of prospects in Guinea. He said he had heard about friends of friends in the United States and wanted to see for himself whether he could migrate too, demonstrating the element of curiosity seen in other migrants’ stories.

Migrants had ambiguous material situations – they were able to find significant sums of money to fund their journey, yet complained that poverty and lack of employment were the determining factors in their decision to leave. This seemed strange to me: how could they afford the sea passage, but not their children’s school fees? Was there a missing link somewhere in the story? If migrants did not tell their friends and families of their plans, how did they get the money together to leave? Atabou told me that his
decision to leave Senegal was an individual one – nobody else knew of his plans and nobody pressured him into leaving. He did not say anything to people living in his quartier because he did not want them to try to stop him. Often, pirogue departures were communal decisions rather than individual ones, and the fee for the voyage was paid for through a combination of borrowed money, savings and remittances. The real reason for needing money was not always given to those asked for loans (Hallaire 2007).

As I have discussed in earlier chapters, men have traditionally been the breadwinners in Senegalese families, and a constantly decreasing lack of economic security, failure to find work despite having an education and an obligation to support their families led them to try to migrate. Like the older sex-workers who were excluded from relationships with younger men, men such as Manou and Atabou who did not want to befriend or form relationships with toubabs saw irregular migration as their only way out.

### 7.4 The Journey

As I asserted in my theoretical discussion of migration, the migrant journey is an important part of studies of migration and in the case of unsuccessful irregular migration from Senegal, the journey was the only experience of migrating that many men had. I use the case-studies of three return migrants, Atabou, Manou and Washington, all of whom had tried to migrate by boat, with varying degrees of success. Unlike Atabou and Manou, Washington did not take a pirogue, but travelled illegally to the United States on a cargo ship. I have included his story in this chapter because he showed the same sense of pride and nonchalance as Atabou and Manou and had interesting views about irregular migration.

The experiences of the sea crossing are often documented in humanitarian agency reports and in the media, and the horrific conditions that people experienced during what can be a two week journey make disturbing reading (Human Rights Watch 2007). However, the matter-of-fact way in which the men to whom I spoke told their stories made equally uncomfortable listening because of what they were describing, and how they were describing it. The FRONTEX reported cited above also makes disturbing reading and we can see how migrants are seen by some authorities as ‘threats to the state’ or problems to be solved rather than people with deeply entrenched reasons for their illegal actions.
7.4.1 Leaving by Pirogue

Atabou attempted to leave Senegal by pirogue on two separate occasions. The first journey cost him 450,000 CFA and the second 420,000 CFA; the lower price for his second passage was because he assisted with steering the boat. Atabou’s first attempt to migrate to Europe was in August 2006: the boat got as far as Moroccan waters before being repatriated by people whom he believed to be Moroccan authorities. The second time he left, their boat landed in Santa Cruz in Tenerife, but was intercepted by Spanish police. He told me that this was in December 2006, but the papers that he showed me stated that he was in a residential centre for illegal immigrants in Tenerife during May 2007.

He talked in most detail about the second time he left Senegal, when he took the pirogue from Diogué, a fishing village at the mouth of the Casamance River. Departures usually occurred at night to arouse as little suspicion within the local community as possible and details of the departure were often not revealed to migrants until the last minute.

His boat left from Diogué at around 8am with 120 people on board. The passengers were all men, apart from six boys. Twenty men, including Atabou, formed a relay team for navigating the boat and doing the cooking. The experienced fishermen amongst them took it in turns to stand in the small cabin at the stern of the boat and they steered whilst everyone else on board huddled under a makeshift tarpaulin that protected them from the sun and the waves. In the pirogue, people sat in-between each other’s legs and found it uncomfortable and painful.

Manou also attempted to migrate to Europe twice, the first time by plane in 2000, when he was 27 and the second by pirogue in 2007. In 2000, he had been working in neighbouring Guinea-Bissau and he was given the chance to buy a fake visa through a friend of a friend, which enabled him to board a plane bound for Lisbon. He worked for four cashew seasons to save the money to pay for the visa – he did not want to tell me how much it cost, but said it was more expensive than taking a pirogue. There were several men with fake visas on his flight, but he was the only Senegalese national. The

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123 Although he used the word ‘police’, it is unclear whether he meant police, border patrols or other officials such as FRONTEX, or from which country they originated.
124 I have taken the term ‘residential centre’, as used by Human Rights Watch, to refer to any centre in which migrants are housed upon arrival.
rest were Bissau-Guinean, demonstrating the colonial and linguistic links which many migrants follow when they migrate. When they arrived in Lisbon, immigration officials realised that he and his companions had fake visas. Manou’s passport was taken away from him and he was unable to leave the airport. He was detained in Lisbon for a week before being sent back to Bissau. Shortly after being repatriated to the capital city of Bissau he returned to Ziguinchor. The thing that I found most poignant about his story was that he did not tell his friends and family in Ziguinchor where he had been. He was too ashamed to tell them that his attempt to migrate had failed, and told them that he had simply been en voyage.

Manou’s second attempt to migrate to Europe was seven years later and he paid 300,000CFA for a place in a pirogue carrying 78 men and children. Only four of the men onboard were Senegalese, the rest being from other West African countries. This suggests that the voyage was a much more professional, organised departure, rather than a spontaneous, local one. This also helps to explain the presence of migrants from the wider West African region in Ziguinchor – the Casamance had become a known departure point for illegal voyages and Ziguinchor was a temporary stopping point for people on their way to Europe.

Manou, like Atabou, hoped to arrive on Spanish territory, but only got as far as Mauritania before the boat started leaking. They had to turn back to Diogué and wait for several days for their vessel to be mended, unsure of whether or not they would be able to continue. Eventually, another pirogue was found, but it was stopped in waters around the Cape Verde peninsular. Manou was repatriated and sent back to Senegal, by authorities whom he described as the ‘police’

I asked both men whether or not they were afraid during their journeys, and wondered what it felt like to be on the boat. Atabou laughed when I asked him if he was scared, looking surprised that I would pose such a question. “Other people were scared,” he said. He told me how people were afraid of what they were experiencing, as, for many people, it was their first time at sea:

One time, it was night - I was in the cabin. Suddenly we saw a white pagne in front of us. It turned around in the wind and suddenly disappeared. No-one knew what it was. After we saw it, we carried on driving for three or four hours, until 4am the next day, and then we saw the lights of Tenerife. I saw the light first, because I was the one in the cabin. I carried on steering the boat, and waited, then I tapped on the
heads of the people under the tarpaulin. I knew they would be happy to see the light, knew they would be happy to have arrived. When they saw the lights they were happy. People who were sick were cured and the people who were tired weren’t tired anymore.

Manou also shrugged off my concerns about the risks he had taken, and was unwilling, or unable, to talk about the journey itself in great detail. When I suggested to him that he might have needlessly risked his life for the unknown, he seemed aware but unconcerned of the risks, talking about having had no choice but to do what he did. He saw it as his duty to help his family and felt the risk was a necessary one to take.

7.4.2 On arrival

Unsuccessful irregular migrants spent a limited amount of time in their host country and the majority were returned by the nearest authorities before they were able to experience the Europe they imagined to exist. My earlier discussion of the relationship between migrants and their host country is of relevance to this section not because of what migrants actually experienced, but what they expected to experience. Atabou told me that the busload of migrants had famous landmarks and street names pointed out to them on the way to the airport before being repatriated: this and the journey were his only experiences of the Europe he had imagined.

Irregular migrants were usually spotted by authorities before they arrived on land, and were then escorted to residential centres where they were detained before being repatriated, or given papers allowing them to stay. The men on Atabou’s boat were taken to a residential centre where they were looked after and treated for exhaustion. He said he spent three weeks there and that even though the centre was full due to the high numbers of boats arriving, they were well treated and looked after, contrary to humanitarian reports claiming otherwise. There were people from across West Africa in the residential centre, including nationals from Guinea-Conakry, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Mali and Senegal, all of whom had left from Diogue at varying times.

Twenty people from Atabou’s boat stayed in Spain, but the rest were repatriated to Senegal – he did not know what factors allowed people to stay, likening it to a lottery. Atabou told me how everyone from his boat was handed tickets for an ‘Air Barca’
flight, thinking that they were going to Barcelona. He said that everyone was excited about receiving their tickets, not realising that this was their flight back to Senegal. Atabou told me that everyone in the plane cried when they realised that they were going home. He said that he did not cry because he was thinking about going back to Senegal, and what he would tell his family when he arrived.

I asked him if he still wanted to migrate, after his experiences, and he told me that:

Today, today, today… I want to go. It’s like eating. Like someone has taken the bowl away before you have finished.

“Gaal gi, moo gu gisee…damay dem. Maa bëgg dell. (If I see a pirogue, I’m going back. I want to return.)” He told me how he was simply waiting for another boat and the right weather conditions – as I mentioned above, the majority of pirogues made the journey when the tides were more favourable.

I asked Atabou what he would do if he did manage to ‘make it’. He, unlike many hopeful migrants, remained somewhat realistic in his expectations of finding work and securing a future for himself. He realised that he would not be able to find well paid work easily but had not given up hope:

If I go there, my job doesn’t exist, so I’ll do whatever was given to me. If I stay here [in Spain], I can work, I can succeed. There are some things which will never disappear.

Manou insisted that he had made the journey to help his family, that he saw it as his last hope.

Life is too hard. I had problems with my family. My father is dead, my mother is old. If you can earn a little… Risks?! Ha! That’s life! It’s hard…there’s nothing here. There’s nothing. We’re tired here, tired.

When I asked him what he would have done if he had stayed in Europe, he told me:

I can do so many different jobs. Chauffeur, mechanic, anything! If God gives me the means and the legal papers…

However, as Manou’s words show, unlike many repatriated clandestines he did not want to migrate again unless he could do so legally and with the correct documentation, although he expressed an ability and willingness to ‘get by’ if he did migrate successfully. His mother found out about his attempts to leave Senegal, and has told him to stop

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125 Neither ‘Air Barca’ nor Air Barcelona appear to exist, so I am unsure of the actual name of the airline with which he flew.
taking unnecessary risks, and he himself has realised that it is not worth the expense. Manou did however, talk wistfully about friends who had ‘made it’, and who, after successfully leaving Senegal, came back and built houses, investing their money into construction and small businesses, and providing for their families. He has never asked them what kind of work they did, nor where their money came from. For him, the visual signs of remittances were enough of an incentive to make the sea crossing.

Washington’s story differed from Manou and Atabou’s experiences, and enables this thesis to end on a slightly more ‘positive’ note. He is an example of someone who was successful in their irregularity and who was able to forge a life for himself outside West Africa. When the ship on which he stowed away arrived in the United States, Washington and his friend escaped the port authorities, and they lived illegally on the streets trying to find food and work.

When we got there [to the United States] we walk around and we ask for food – leftover food. We keep asking the restaurant people and one day we meet a homeless person who told us where to eat for free, you know, like the kitchens. Like the migrant sex-workers in Ziguinchor, Washington and his friend survived through the kindness of people whom they met by chance rather than with the support of existing social networks. Washington eventually found work as a carpenter for the equivalent of £2.50 an hour, despite being unable to speak English. His employer helped him to obtain a fake birth certificate and driving licence – it was helpful to him if Washington could drive and make deliveries, so procuring a fake ID card for him was not an entirely selfless act.

When Washington began to make money through an array of part-time jobs, and to feel settled in his American life, he began to send money back to his family in the form of remittances. Once he considered himself to have been ‘successful’, he felt able to tell them where he was:

I was in New York but I ended up in North Carolina because I met other African people who were there. It was too cold in New York when I was living there! It started getting easier for me – I met one girl and she became my girlfriend and she started teaching me English everyday. She worked for a car dealership. I eventually phoned my family and they were shocked. I screamed and screamed. I must have spent $100 that day, on call cards! It was the happiest day for me!

He still had his American bank account and his credit cards, his friends and his work
contacts and one day was sure that he would return, telling me how he would re-activate his credit cards and continue his life where it left off. When I talked to him, he was working in Cap Skirring to earn money – he was a musician and gave *djembe* lessons as well as giving concerts in the larger hotels along the beach. He also made and sold *djembés*, and he had recently completed an order of 100 miniature drums that he needed to ship to the United States.

He talked about his time in the United States positively, and wanted to go back, but legally. I asked him what he thought about people taking *pirogues*, and whether or not he would do it himself. He told me that:

> It’s not a good idea. I did it [stowaway] one time, but you can’t judge something you have done one time before. I think they should keep trying, though. I’m not going to do it anymore, but I won’t tell people not to. People want to try and see what happens.

When I arrived, it was like, wow! This is where I want to live! If I can make it here, I’ll never go back. But I started getting in *djembés*, so I had to come back. I stay in touch with my friends, and maybe in 2008 I will go back and stay. I have to start working on my papers, because I don’t know how it will be. When I started working I was the simple maintenance guy, and by the end I was the chief engineer. In the morning people would ask me what they could do. An African guy came all this way from Africa and now he tells us what to do – they think it’s funny!

Washington did not seem shaken or regretful of his experiences, and talked about his time in the United States with pride, but his story had a happy ending, and had the potential for a happy future too. He talked about stowing away with a grin on his face, as if he still could not believe that he was successful – he achieved what Atabou and Manou did not. He did talk about some of the problems he faced when he returned, though, mainly feeling under constant pressure to give money to his friends and family, despite sending them regular remittances over the years. He joked that he was hiding in Senegal to get away from people’s demands for things and the jealousy of others back in Guinea.

As the above examples have shown, migration and pride were very much linked – the upward social mobility achieved in migrating and ‘making it’ abroad was something of which people were proud. Just as people were proud of their brightly coloured *pirogues*, they were also proud of their attempts to migrate, even if they were unsuccessful. Trying and being repatriated was better than not trying at all, and as Washington showed, some irregular migrants could be successful and build lives for themselves in a
different country.

7.5 Conclusion

This chapter has shown the role of the humble wooden *pirogue* in irregular, transnational migration. Relative poverty and seemingly few future prospects combined with the imagined eldorado migrants believed to be waiting for them caused more and more young Senegalese men to make the sea voyage in what has grown into an increasingly large and profitable industry. The men who left were the young *góorgóorlu* of Senegal; they were used to ‘getting by’, whether through harvesting cashews in neighbouring Guinea-Bissau or driving a taxi. They were men who became actively and illegally mobile as a means of expressing their discontent in a society that they felt offered them very little.

They felt excluded or unable to take advantage of existing networks, and they were not looking for a relationship with a *toubab* in the same way as the hopeful migrants in the previous chapter. These men stressed that their decision to board a *pirogue* for the Canary Islands was their own, but that they felt indirectly pressured by their families.

Migration of this kind was risky – it was illegal, expensive and potentially life-threatening, but migrants continued to believe that it was worth it. They were exercising their agency in a much more direct way than the men and women we have seen in other chapters, but had the same motivations. These migrants did not try to make ‘contacts’ with *toubabs*, and showed a degree of desperation not seen in the other chapters of this thesis.

The hopeful migrants in each chapter of this thesis have tried and failed to migrate, but the financial commitment and risk to life that this particular form of migration took made their situations seem far worse. Failed irregular migrants reached international waters, if not another continent, which made their attempts more visible even though they were still unsuccessful.
Imagining Migration:
Cyber-cafés, sex and clandestine departures in the Casamance, Senegal

Emilie Venables

Full citation:

Please contact Dr Emilie Venables for further chapters: evenables@rhru.co.za
CHAPTER 8: Conclusion

In the introduction to this thesis I stated that what was remarkable about these migratory stories was the lack of actual migration that had taken place. Imaginary migration is, however, a form of travel in its own right – even if this thesis has not been about migration *per se* it has been about migratory desires and attempts to migrate. Studying the desire to migrate is just as beneficial to understandings of Senegalese life as studying migrants who have physically transcended the borders of their nation state, and I have shown how the imaginary can play a role in academic studies of mobility. I wrote a thesis about migratory aspirations and failed attempts to be internationally mobile, because for many young Senegalese people, imagining migration was the closest they came to realising their dreams. Imagined lives and failed sea crossings were these peoples’ migratory stories. In drawing all the strands of this thesis together, there are still some perplexing and confusing issues, because, by its very nature, the world of the imaginary is fluid and slippery and hard to pin down. In this conclusion, I summarise the main findings of this thesis and consider their implications whilst showing how the ethnographic cases used throughout this thesis differ from other literature of a similar genre.

I have attempted to allow the voices of those to whom I talked dominate my writing, and as stated in my introduction, I have tried to demonstrate an awareness of my own presence in the field and how this may have affected my research throughout my discussions. In allowing the words of my informants to speak for themselves, they hopefully appear neither as victims nor as men and women who should be ‘pitied’. I have tried to show the perseverance and determination behind their aspirations and failed attempts to migrate, showing these people to be actively shaping their own futures, albeit in what have so far been unsuccessful ways. In demonstrating how many young men and women in the Casamance expressed their discontent through their migratory desires I have shown them to be agents rather than victims, attempting to secure a future for themselves in an uncertain economic climate.

The new migration strategies discussed throughout this thesis took place within a West African country that has a long and complex history of migrations within and beyond its
borders. These peoples’ aspirations did not simply appear out of nowhere, and as I have shown in previous chapters, Senegal’s long history of internal and international migration (particularly the patterns of locally rooted Jola migration discussed in chapter three) has led people to believe that migration is possible. We have seen how generations of Senegalese men and women have traversed geographical boundaries and crossed political borders not just in response to economic or ecological crises but as part of their daily routines; migration was and is an integral part of everyday life for people throughout Senegal. The long-established Mouride trade diaspora is an important example of a Senegalese migrant network, and has made an important contribution to migration literature within and beyond Africanist academia, yet it is not something from which my Ziguinchorois informants could benefit (Babou 2002; Diouf 2000). As much as networks such as these are useful for helping us to understand transnational spaces and cross-border relationships, not everybody in Senegal had access to them. Hopeful migrants who were excluded from or unattached to such networks were required to seek other ways of migrating, as the individual ethnographic chapters have exemplified. They have realised that they cannot ‘make it’ to Europe on their own, and throughout this thesis I have shown the various ways in which online daters, sex-workers and côtèman formed, or attempted to form, relationships with toubabs as a means of realising their dreams. The case of clandestine departures is different. The mobility of these men did not involve making links with toubabs because they were excluded from ‘making contacts’ and had to resort to what was an incredibly dangerous means of making their dreams come true.

Whilst dreaming, one can transcend spatial or temporal boundaries. Any potential practical obstacles to migration were ignored or forgotten and replaced by an incredible determination to succeed. Near-impossible visa application processes or unfavourable ‘lottery odds’, extortionate European living costs and the existence of unemployment and poverty outside of Africa could be ignored in the world of dreams. Hopeful migrants refused to be deterred by their unrealistic aspirations. Fatou, a close friend and ‘key-informant’ of mine in Ziguinchor cited earlier in this thesis, would often ask me questions to which she already knew the answers. She knew that she was goading me but wanted to see how far she could push me with her questions. “What do you mean, there are people who don’t have jobs in England? Are you sure?” Then she would question my knowledge of levels of homelessness. “Of course people don’t live on the streets! Everyone has
homes in England. But if they don’t, I guess it’s because of drugs…” She wanted me to tell her that England was how she envisaged it to be, and wanted to hear that it was as she imagined. We frequently went round in circles as I tried to explain to her some of the harsh realities of being a migrant in an unknown country without wanting to shatter her dreams. But she chose not to hear, preferring instead to believe and to imagine that the life that she wanted really did exist and that one day she would live it.

Fouquet’s work (2007) reveals the same questions and the same ethical dilemmas that I faced. He talks about how his informants still insisted that they wanted to migrate, despite listening to him talk about what the realities of life as an illegal immigrant in Europe could be like. As we both discovered through our parallel research trajectories, when life is hard – ḋiiɗay metti – the imaginary becomes a means of escape. It may seem illogical and irrational to imagine and keep on attempting something that has yet to materialise (in this case, a life ailleurs), but young people persist. Senegalese youth no longer have faith in the government’s promises of investment and employment, and no longer believe that they will make their fortune in Senegal. If one has no firsthand experience of what is being imagined (Europe) and only has second-hand information and urban myths on which to base utopian visions, the future is bound to be brighter than one dulled by Senegalese dust and real-life experience.

This thesis has attempted to fill a gap in Senegalese migration literature and, more specifically, in ethnographic studies of the Casamance. New research from the region is often related to older patterns of migration (Lambert 2002), the impact of the civil conflict (Evans 2003) or ethnographic work on the autochthon Jola population (de Jong 2007). I have moved away from studying the Casamance in relation to rural migration and civil conflict, because as much as these features have played an integral role in shaping the region, I wanted to explore the Casamance through a new lens, and write an ethnography that reflected contemporary responses and aspirations of migration outside of the capital of Dakar. Throughout this thesis, I have shown how the Casamance, although a mainly rural area, can be studied as an urban locus, and that Dakar is not the only urban centre in Senegal deserving of study. The Casamance may have been ‘forgotten’ in comparison to the north of the country, but it has also, to a certain extent, been ‘forgotten’ academically. Each of my ethnographic chapters has attempted to offer a new way of studying an already existing issue, and I now discuss each chapter
individually to show how my research differs from other work of a similar genre and what the implications of my study are.

Internet dating in Senegal is a relatively new phenomenon and this thesis has gone some way to discovering an emerging trend within areas with Internet access. As I showed in chapter four, Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) have revolutionised social and romantic relationships across the world, and Senegal is no exception. The fact that women, through text messages and emails, were able to maintain contact with toubab men across international borders has made the migratory dream seem more real than it once was. Studies of Internet dating have tended to focus on the dynamics of successful relationships (Constable 2003), rather than the unsuccessful ones that I have discussed. I have argued that this study is important because of what it has revealed to us about female aspirations and women’s dissatisfaction with their current circumstances rather than because of what it can teach us about cross-cultural relationships or ‘mail-order brides’. This thesis has also shown how technology can revolutionise methodologies, and that like the women talking to their online partners, researchers and their informants do not have to be in the same room.

Throughout the discussion of sex-workers in chapter five, I demonstrated how a biomedical setting can be studied as a social space, and how the study of sex-workers does not necessarily have to be about HIV/AIDS. Women are obligated to register as sex-workers in order to work, which means that terminological discussions and issues of identity are more complex than they may be in other situations. Rather than focusing on HIV/AIDS or relating my research to that of local NGOs working to ‘empower’ women (Renaud 1997), I have discussed the relationship between sex-work and migration, and how women believe that commercial sex can be a strategy for crossing international borders. For the women in this chapter, as it was for the women in Brennan’s study (Brennan 2004) sex-work was not just a means of making money, but a way of meeting men who they hoped could lead them to Europe.

In chapter six I showed how the beach-boys of Cap Skirring were also aspiring migrants and how some of them used their sexuality in the attempt to cross international borders. Disliked and not trusted by those employed formally within the tourist industry, they defended their actions by claiming, like sex-workers, that their work was just a temporary solution to fulfil their economic needs. I discussed the difficulties in locating
the behaviour of the côtémans within theoretical debates on sex-tourism, because having sexual relationships with tourists formed only one part of their migration strategies. As in the other examples, they had no definite knowledge that this worked, but were still convinced that other people had achieved what they desired.

Chapter seven attempted to offer a different perspective on the study of irregular pirouge departures from Senegal to the Canary Islands. I have tried to show the desperation that led some people to migrate, and how this desperation was, in some cases, caused by the very people who condemned such sea voyages. By using the voices of local Ziguinchorois as well as those of return migrants, I have shown that irregular migration is not just something that has penetrated the national Senegalese imagination, nor just the imaginations of hopeful migrants. The difference is that this kind of migration has been observed by others and reported in the media. Consequently it appears more real than the other strategies I have discussed, and men continue to take the risk because they have more concrete examples of its success. This chapter has added to studies of clandestine migration in the context of Senegal because of its focus not just on the migrants themselves, but the people around them.

Throughout the ethnographic chapters, I have shown how hopeful migrants from Senegal directly voiced their aspirations to migrate and their hopes of upward social mobility and international movement. In addition to controlling their image and wearing clothes that suggested they were modern, aspiring and en route to Europe, some people lived a toubab lifestyle within the Casamance (Scheld 2007). By living in Cap Skirring and by participating in the semi-urban landscape of Ziguinchor rather than its rural surroundings, young men and women constructed what they believed to be a European lifestyle for themselves. Yet, even migrants who had moved to Cap Skirring found themselves wanting more, and the ‘second best’ beachside paradise was not always the final stage on their migratory journeys. In taking the elements of ‘modern’ consumer culture that they knew – the high heeled shoes, the use of the Internet and the designer label clothes – they, like the sapeurs of Congo, were living what they imagine the life of a migrant to be like, without crossing any spatial boundaries.

Young men and women expressed their discontent using migratory desires and bodily practices, and migration for them was about more than simply moving to a different country. Expressing migratory desire has become a near-obligation in Senegal. It has
become a way of displaying agency whilst simultaneously refusing to accept a life of poverty and economic hardship. Having the potential to do something is important, and in this thesis, migrants claimed that it is better for them to have tried and failed to migrate, than not to have tried at all.

There are many questions that remain unanswered. Are people always unsuccessful or do people actually migrate through these means? Why do Senegalese men and women continue to do something that does not appear to work? I believe, like my informants, that there are Senegalese women who meet European partners online, and that there are sex-workers who successfully transform clients into lovers. I also believe that there are côtêman who have succeeded in their migratory dreams, whether through a professional connection or a romantic one. There are certainly irregular migrants who have made the sea crossing and been allowed to stay on the European shores on which they landed. The very nature of the urban myth is that it is impossible to trace its roots, yet the determination the men and women in this thesis showed managed to convince me, as they themselves had been convinced, that one day they would go là-bas. Although the people to whom I spoke were mostly unsuccessful in their attempts to leave Senegal, I too believe that there were people who have successfully migrated but whom I did not encounter.

There were many other paths along which I could have chosen to take this piece of research, and there are many areas in which it could still go. I would like to follow the stories of successful migrants, to discover whether or not their lives in Europe are as they imagined them to be. I would like to tell the missing stories – those of the clients, the tourists and the Internet-dating men on their European computers. This thesis tells the stories of a selection of Senegalese individuals in a certain period of time, and whilst I cannot claim that their words and lives reflect those of men and women across the country, the dreams of men and women of the Casamance are by no means unique. In the theoretical discussion earlier in this thesis I showed that people all over the world have made real and imagined migration a part of their lives, and the people of the Casamance are no exception.

I worked, on the whole, with young Senegalese men and women, but this thesis and their experiences echoes literature from contexts as diverse as India, Ethiopia and the Congo and is reflective of a worldwide crisis of youth unemployment and
disillusionment. Young men and women are disenchanted with their current states, and migration has become the way in which they believe they will improve their lives. Local gender politics also have a role to play in people’s migratory aspirations, and throughout this thesis I have shown how my own work in Senegal echoes that of other scholars working across the global South. Men and women experience migration differently – women were excluded from pirogue migration, because, like the fishing that the boats were originally used for, it was a male domain. Instead, women sought out more creative and newly emerging spaces in which to manifest and express their discontent with not just their socio-economic situation, but with local men.

This thesis has been about the imaginary, an issue which I believe has an important role to play in theoretical debates upon migration, yet does not often play a central role within academia. As much as studies of migrants in their countries of origin and their destination countries enable us to understand people’s motivations and experiences of migration, they do not enable us to see the importance of migration for those who do not or cannot leave. Theoretical contributions to migration have shown the need to study both the country of departure and the destination country for the migrant, and ethnographic studies of migration have allowed us to see that increased flows of people have an affect not just upon global economies, but upon local households.

This thesis supports the need for studies of transnationalism and international mobility, whilst equally seeing the need to understand unsuccessful and imagined migration. Studies of transnational migration discuss the liminal position many migrants find themselves in, but for the hopeful migrants in this thesis, their liminal status comes from the uncertainty of waiting to depart, not from being caught between two nation-states (Glick Schiller 1995). Transnationalism is an important concept to think about migration with, but this thesis is about the hope of migration, not the lived experiences of it and my informants were not yet in a transnational state. Scholars have begun to note the importance of the imaginary in considering youth aspirations, and like my own work ethnographic studies such as those of Mains (2007) and Newell (2005) show the importance of imagined movement and desire within academic studies of migration. Even if no physical borders are crossed, young peoples’ expression and consumption of the idea of migration go a long way toward helping to explain youth disillusionment at wider socio-economic circumstance not just in Senegal but throughout the global South.
Chapter seven of this thesis was particularly significant because although it was about a very real form of irregular migration, the words of people who did not migrate were just as significant of the words of those who did. I have tried to demonstrate that migration affects even those who do not migrate – across the Casamance, people reflect upon, gain from and lose from migration upon a daily basis. If they had not already left, they aspired to. If they were not directly receiving or benefiting from remittances, they know someone who was. If a woman was not the proud mother of a migrant son, she was mourning the loss of one. This thesis has shown a subtler way in which migration can be studied – I did not expect to study migration, because I had not realised its significance, but once I did, I, like my informants, knew that I could not ignore it.