“Barcelona or Death”: A multidimensional analysis of Senegalese irregular migration and post-colonial transnationalism

A Senior Undergraduate Thesis
by
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Abstract

In the mid-2000s, thousands of young men from Senegal and other West African countries began migrating to Europe in a way that was considered peculiar to some, and insane to others, and extreme to most. Known colloquially as “Barça walla Barzakh,” Wolof for “Barcelona or Death,” these migrants travelled for days at sea on small wooden fishing boats, some reaching Europe where they faced new struggles of making a living as irregular migrants, some being detained and deported before they could try their hand at this, and others dying en route in a neither-here-nor-there limbo. While these migrations were a spectacle that captured the attention of Senegal and many other nations, in this thesis I shift attention toward what it meant for these men to return from Europe back to Senegal – often by forcible deportation, in the case of the majority of my informants. I take post-colonial transnationalism as a theoretical framework for understanding the complexity and contradiction that found and color these experiences, in particular how colonial structures of oppression and value systems persist and come into conflict with “traditional” Senegalese structures and value systems, as well as the how transnationalism widens the field of social imagination, identity, and connection to engender multiform and contradicting pressures and loyalties. In looking at political and economic structures, negotiations of masculinity, experiences of return migration, and Senegalese narratives about irregular migration, I argue that the complex dynamics that cause Barça/Barzakh migrants to depart not only persist through migrants’ returns, but are often further complicated by migrants’ particular experiences abroad. Instead, migrants may be drawn into cyclical migration as a way of constantly negotiating and balancing conflicting pressures, and those who are unable to re-migrate are often left imagining the possibility of doing so while dealing with frustration, disappointment, and shame when unable to satisfy familial and societal expectations.
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Thank you to my Mom and Dad, who have encouraged and supported me not only in this thesis but in everything I’ve done in my whole life. I truly could never have accomplished the things I’ve done or seen the places I’ve been if you had not been behind me at every moment, nurturing and encouraging me and all of my endeavors. Thank you for teaching me to mix hard work with fun (and sleep), for supporting me in all types of education, travel, and relationships, for instilling strong and good values in me, for being happy and willing to answer the phone any time to talk and understanding when I told you I was too busy. Your unwavering love and support means the world to me.

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**Glossary and Terms**

*Foreign words are also explained in text or in footnotes the first time they appear in text

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>attaya</td>
<td>an elaborate tea-making process that is a local tradition in Senegal, and involves at least three rounds of increasingly sweet tea; this process and last for several hours and often serves as a background to casual conversations; <em>attaya</em> is also the name of the tea, itself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>alxamdulilaay</td>
<td>“Thank God” or “thanks be to God”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barça walla Barzakh</td>
<td>“Barcelona or Death,” the colloquial term for a wave of irregular migrations to Europe by pirogues in the 2000s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>borom kër</td>
<td>head of household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>boubou</td>
<td>a flowing, floor-length, wide sleeved robe (traditional Senegalese dress)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>boutique</td>
<td>a small store selling a wide range of quotidian necessities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bul faale</td>
<td>“I don’t care” or “whatever”; also the popular name of a Senegalese urban youth movement in the 1990s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>café touba</td>
<td>a popular, heavily spiced drip coffee local to Senegal, served in small cups all over Dakar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ceeb bu jën</td>
<td>“rice and fish”; a common and very popular Senegalese dish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFA</td>
<td><em>Communauté financière africaine</em> (French Community of Africa), the currency of Senegal and other formerly French West and Central African countries; as of April 15 2014, 1 US dollar = 475 CFA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>copine</td>
<td>“girlfriend” or “friend” (who is a girl)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>crue-décruve farming</td>
<td>“flood/flood-recession” farming. This technique was dependent on the saturation of sunken or low, valley-like area in the Senegal River Valley during rainy season floods. Then, when these floods receded during the long dry season, the land would be fertile enough to cultivate a number of crops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dahira</td>
<td>religious association in the Mouride brotherhood (an order of Islam common in Senegal and greater West Africa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dibi</td>
<td>grilled meat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECOWAS</td>
<td>Economic Community Of West African States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>goorgoorlu</td>
<td>to get by, to work hard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>goôr yombul</td>
<td>“it’s hard to be a man”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>griot</td>
<td>members of an elite caste in West Africa whose social role includes acting as oral historians, musicians, praise-singers, political advisors, and genealogists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMF</td>
<td>The International Monetary Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>marabout</td>
<td>a West African Muslim religious leader and teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mbalax</td>
<td>a highly popular form of dance music developed in Senegal in the 1970s. It is a fusion of Cuban, Congolese, and American music played to the rhythm of a sabar, a traditional Senegalese drum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>modou-modou</td>
<td>international Senegalese traders and entrepreneurs (often informal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pagne</td>
<td>a large, rectangular piece of fabric wrapped around the waist as a skirt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pirogue</td>
<td>a small, wooden, canoe-like fishing boat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poco poco [es nada]</td>
<td>step by step / little by little [means nothing]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quartier</td>
<td>neighborhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAP</td>
<td>structural adjustment program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sept-place</td>
<td>“seven-seats”; a small car with eight seats (the driver’s seat and seven passenger seats) that takes passengers on relatively long-distance trips within Senegal for a fee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sunugaal</td>
<td>“our boat” or “Senegal”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teranga</td>
<td>a central cultural value in Senegal of showing hospitality to all, often with financial undercurrents such as charitable giving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tirailleurs</td>
<td>a corps of colonial infantry in the French Army recruited from Senegal meal at sunset to break fast during Ramadan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tontine</td>
<td>a rotating savings and credit association that is a key feature of local, informal Senegalese finance, and are almost exclusively dominated by women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>waxaale</td>
<td>to haggle, bargain, or negotiate (how much informal exchange is done in Senegal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>weccit</td>
<td>spare change</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Political & Economic Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Political</th>
<th>Economic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1500s-1850</td>
<td></td>
<td>Slave trade (198,200 and 336,880 slaves exported from the Senegambia region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>3.8 million non-European migrants in Europe (1.7% of population)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850s-1960</td>
<td>French colonialism in Senegal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>Senegalese independence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yaoundé convention expands export markets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td></td>
<td>-80,000 fish caught (domestic and foreign waters)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Lomé Convention gives Senegalese products preferential access to EU markets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>Coup in Ghana</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td></td>
<td>Beginning of chronic droughts in Sahel Region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>Migrants expelled from Ghana</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>10.9 million non-European migrants in Europe (3.3% of population)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970s</td>
<td>Senegal switches from an “immigration” to an “emigration” country (sends more migrants than it receives)</td>
<td>Over 90% of Senegalese fishing fleet motorized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td></td>
<td>OPEC embargo causes oil crisis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Authoritarian rule in Spain ends</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>ECOWAS established</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Political</td>
<td>Economic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980s</td>
<td>France enacts many restrictive immigration policies under conservative leadership; growing xenophobia in country</td>
<td>-Beginning of IMF- structural adjustment plans in Senegal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Senegalese government begins granting fishing licenses to foreign governments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td></td>
<td>150,000 tons of fish caught (domestic and foreign)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Migrants expelled from Nigeria</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>-Schengen Agreement signed</td>
<td>End of chronic droughts in Sahel region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-All Senegalese required to have visa to enter France</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Migrants expelled from Nigeria (second time)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>-Italy legalizes all irregular migrants</td>
<td>Senegalese CFA devalued by half when linked to the franc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-16 million non-European migrants in Europe (4.5% of population)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Spain legalizes irregular migrants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>France signs “Pasqua Law” (severely limits Senegalese immigration)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Spain and Italy legalize irregular migrants (second time)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Civil war in Côte d’Ivoire (migrants flee)</td>
<td>EU signs 4-year fishing contract with Senegal in exchange for $16 million/year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Spain legalizes irregular migrants (third time)</td>
<td>-Estimated 500,000 tons of fish caught (400,000 domestic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-8</td>
<td></td>
<td>Barça/Barzakh migrations peak and gain wide-scale attention</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Maps of Senegal

Senegal. Courtesy of CIA WorldFactoy

Senegal. Courtesy of Wikipedia.
Maps of Barça/Barzakh Routes

Routes of unauthorized migration from Africa to Spain. (Carling 2007)
Routes of unauthorized migration from Africa to Spain. (Carling 2007)
Chapter One

Introduction

“I was in Spain once, too.”

In a rickety shore-side lean-to in Yarakh — a fishing town thirty minutes out of Dakar — a group of five or six young mechanics were taking a break from their work in sweltering heat, sitting on benches and passing around a jug of water. Over loud American pop music playing from a ‘90s-style boom-box, ocean waves crashed on the shore and chatter hummed from inside the neighborhood. From the lean-to, one has a good view of shore life: small kids wearing tattered t-shirts or miniature European soccer jerseys play soccer in thick sand, skirting around piles of trash and roaming goats. Every once and awhile a woman dressed in a brightly colored pagne\(^1\) walks down to the shore to empty the tub of water balanced on her head. To the left, a group of shrieking girls sits together skinning fish and cutting up vegetables under the supervision of an unphased grandmother. A nearby, closet-sized boutique\(^2\) — every inch of its walls lined with canned foods, spices, laundry soap, rice, and whatever else one might possibly need to get through the day — houses two men busily weighing out and adding up items on shopping lists for a number of gossiping women. Walking slowly along the shore is the local a marabout\(^3\) and his companion for the afternoon, both dressed in formal but worn boubous\(^4\) with heads bowed in conversation and hands clasped behind their backs. Behind them is a long row of beached pirogues\(^5\) painted in bright but chipping blues, reds, yellows, and greens; chickens

\(^1\) *pagne*: a large, rectangular piece of fabric wrapped around the waist as a skirt

\(^2\) *boutique*: a small store selling a wide range of quotidian necessities

\(^3\) *marabout*: a West African Muslim religious leader and teacher

\(^4\) *boubou*: a flowing, floor-length, wide sleeved robe (traditional Senegalese dress)

\(^5\) *pirogue*: a small, wooden, canoe-like fishing boat
and goats have taken up residency in a number of them, climbing to the stern and looking out over the expansive and endless ocean before them.

Inside the lean-to, my friend Cheikh started to boil water to make an extremely strong and sweet green tea called *attaya*, a local tradition and preferred way to pass long afternoons. A friend of his, Babacar, came over to join us and introduced himself to me, laughing with surprise when I responded in broken Wolof.

“*Deedeet, moom Senegalaise la!*” Cheikh interjected, joking that I was “Senegalese” based on the way I was dressed, my ability to speak basic Wolof (the most common of several local languages spoken in Dakar), and having produced an entire round of *attaya* for him and some friends a couple days earlier. “This is Mariama, she’s here to learn about Barça walla Barzakh.”

“Oh, really?” said Cheikh. “You know, I was in Spain once, too.”

“You were?” I asked, somewhat surprised by his nonchalance.

“Let me see… it was 2000… 2008? How many years ago is that? 2008. Yes, I took a pirogue up there; we left from right here at this shore! I went with a couple other friends from the *quartier*[^6], and there were about fifty people in the boat…” Babacar plunged into the long story of his migration to Spain — a long, physically grueling, and highly dangerous voyage that had him at sea for nine days in a wooden boat meant for short-distance fishing — and, upon arrival at the Spanish shoreline, his immediate detention by the Coast Guard and consequent deportation to Senegal. Hearing that this particular mode of migration was my research focus in Dakar, Babacar expressed gratitude that I was paying attention to the issue and described his

[^6]: *quartier*: neighborhood
frustration with getting other people, namely the Senegalese government, to address it sufficiently.

“You know what, thank you! Good. Thank you very much! When I came back here, I wrote lots of letters to the newspapers trying to raise consciousness (sensibiliser) about the difficulties we face here. But the government, they don’t budge, they don’t do anything for us. We should make a documentary. You, you bring the camera and you can film us, right here, and then everyone will see how we are living. I can tell my story, and Cheikh, too, he can tell his story… I know a couple more guys in the quartier who would be happy talk, too. We can show what it’s like to live here, and maybe they’ll listen to you, you know, since you’re American.”

I told Cheikh that I neither owned a film camera nor had any experience with film production, but he agreed to participate in my research as the next best option for the time being.

• • •

The type of migration that Babacar, Cheikh, and thousands of other West Africans took part in is popularly known in Senegal as “Barça walla Barzakh,” which is Wolof for “Barcelona or Death.” Barça walla Barzakh (hereafter referred to as Barça/Barzakh) refers to a wave of irregular migrations from West Africa to Europe that largely took place in the mid-2000s. Participants in these migrations typically travelled this distance by sea on pirogues, which are fairly small, wooden boats traditionally used by fishermen in the area (see Figure 1.1). At their peak, these migrations involved an enormous number of people: In just the year 2006, over 30,000 migrants attempted to make the journey to Europe (Willems 2008). Moreover, this tally only takes into account those migrants who were found or detained; untold thousands more are thought to have died en route or to be currently living in Europe. While passengers on these

7 An imprecise translation, but the most common. Other versions include variations such as “Barcelona or the cemeteries,” or “Barcelona or the hereafter.”
journeys included a variety of West African nationalities, over half of the migrants were Senegalese and the vast majority were men (*ibid.*). Even within Senegal, these migrations particularly affected fishing villages where individuals were used to being at sea or otherwise had easy access to departing pirogues; in some suburbs like Thiaroye-sur-Mer, Yoff, and Pikine, the departure of massive number of men in Barça/Barzakh migrations palpably affected the demographics.⁸ While overwhelmingly economic migrants, these men were nevertheless far from the poorest of the poor. A typical pirogue migration could cost anywhere from 350,000 – 600,000 CFA (US $735 – 1,260) — a considerable amount of money for most people in Senegal — which included everything from the construction or purchase of the pirogue; fuel, food, and water for the journey; and payments to the boat drivers, trip coordinators, and other middle men.

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This means that most migrants had access to some sort of wealth (such as within a family or social network, or in invested capital like livestock or property) and were able to “invest” this money in the voyage to Europe. As will be discussed at length in following chapters, however, economic interests and financial resources were far from the only concern or motivation fueling the surge of Barça/Barzakh migrations.

**Transnationalism, post-colonialism, and migrating men**

I originally began my research with an interest in learning specifically about return migration for Barça/Barzakh migrants, in part because of the vast number of men who had been forcibly deported back to Senegal after investing all their savings in this migration strategy, and in part because of the relative scarcity of anthropological consideration of this leg of migration. What research has focused on this topic has tended, most recently, to do so in an attempt to problematize the simplicity of return — that is, the idea that migrants are returning “home” or to their “roots” and thus resolve whatever tensions may have been produced in the experience of being “uprooted” through migration (Black and Koser 1999; Malkki 1995; Sepulveda 1995; Long and Oxfeld, 2004). Whether as students going “home” after four years of school or as young men deported after a week-long boat journey, the experiences migrants incur in migration and abroad exert a constant influence and molding pressure over them, such that “homecoming is a complex and contested experience” (Stefansson 2004:7) in which one finds oneself a changed person in a familiar environment.

In the same vein, literature on return migration also increasingly emphasizes that the experience of return cannot be generalized and differs dramatically depending on the nature and dynamic of one’s migration, including factors such as the type of migrant under consideration
(labor migrant, student, refugee, family, etc.), their legal status at a number of levels, the resources that they may mobilize (savings, personal contacts, knowledge and skills, etc.), and the length of their stay (Cassarino 2004). Simultaneously with the internal changes the migrant experiences, a migrant’s original home, family, and community may also continuously undergo new developments in their absence, such that a “homecoming” might involve a return to a social and physical landscape that is not familiar. People are born and married and die, buildings are constructed and torn down, governments change, new songs and dances and artwork become fashionable while previous ones become relics of an older time. Accordingly, return may well be an experience of rupture, shock, and alienation just as much as in travels to places “not-home,” to such a degree that even the very nature of the return as a “homecoming” is contested; in as much, one might question the very existence of such a thing as genuine, uncomplicated return home. (Said 2000).

My thesis supports these views on return migration, arguing that the complex dynamics that cause Barça/Barzakh migrants to depart not only persist through migrants’ returns, but are often further complicated by migrants’ particular experiences abroad. Senegalese men, whether deported immediately from Spain or returning voluntarily after many years abroad, return to Senegal to navigate a field just as complex as the one that pushed them to leave, and consequently often find themselves unsettled or drawn into cyclical migration in which return is never definite or permanent.

In this respect, my research draws heavily on transnational theory, which examines migration as a multi-sited process and argues against simplistic or one-dimensional notions of loyalties, identities, desires, and relationships. Some have suggested that the complexity of return migration is “structurally invisible” due its encompassment within transnational studies:
the notion of permanent, one-way migration is increasingly under question as scholars note the growing prevalence of ongoing global circulation (Stefansson 2004:7). Like return migration theory, transnationalism rebuts the notion that migrants are “uprooted,” instead showing how they experience belonging and hold loyalties that extend beyond the town or country conventionally considered “home”; transnational migrants are woven into globally interconnected webs in which their daily lives involve constant and repeated interactions that traverse political, geographic, and cultural borders, consequently constructing relationships and identities that transcend singular or localized loyalties (Glick Schiller et al. 1995; Al-Ali and Koser 2002; Basch et al. 1994; Faist et al. 2013). Thus, while migrants may feel an eventual need to return and resettle “home,” the very act of having migrated generates a host of other considerations that complicate the straightforwardness of this choice.

Even for those individuals left behind while family or friends migrate elsewhere, they become equally connected to transnational networks through the exchange of phone calls, photos, letters, monetary remittances, and physical objects or souvenirs. Likewise, the rise of Internet accessibility and social media networks over the past two decades has also contributed to a dramatically greater and more instantaneous ability to learn about, share, and communicate with people all over the world (Bailey et al. 2007). While human migration may provide the most viscerally obvious form of transnationalism with people being carriers, mediators, and creators of culture, relationships, money, and so forth, transnationalism is “a broader phenomenon of globalization,” in which the growth of telecommunications and the global economy increases the possibility for interaction with and consumption of many different cultures, politics, and economies, and the creation of “world cities that serve as key nodes of flexible accumulation, communication, and control” (Glick Schiller et al. 1995:49). In Dakar,
for example, Senegalese consume American and European brands, popular culture, and news, and in doing so link themselves to Western civilization; this connection contributes to imaginations of the “Western” world. In this way, transnationalism not only generates new ties for migrants themselves, but also transforms ideas and expectations of “the West” for Senegalese communities in Senegal, in such a way that might cause people to see migration as a particularly advantageous or undesirable undertaking.

While this thesis emphasizes Senegalese experiences both before and after one’s literal migration and time abroad, the interaction between migrants and foreign states is crucial to understanding the constraints that shape migrants’ voyages and thus the complexities and decisions they face before and after migration. As a result of cross-border flows, transnationalism has led to a symbolic “devaluation” or “deterritorialization” of the nation-state in which its sovereignty and regulatory powers are dramatically reduced (Sassen 1996; Lazăr 2011; Appadurai 1991). The ability for a citizen of India to live in the United States from age three to adulthood and be fluent in American culture but not in that of India, or the ability of an Ethiopian to work in London and send all of his earnings back to family where the money will circulate in Ethiopian markets, all threaten to unravel the cohesion of a sovereign and contained nation-state economy, identity, and politics. The growing influence of globalization and transnational flows (of people, money, commodities, and “culture” more generally speaking) has thus prompted reactionary attempts on the part of state governments to regain control, at the very

9 “Imaginations” of the Western — or Euro-American — world is the key concept here: transnationalism equally means that countries and communities that receive migrants are also heterogeneous and cannot be simplified or generalized to those peoples who are culturally, politically, and/or economically dominant. Accordingly, the term “Western” or “the West” is problematic; however, I use it to describe not only the particular and selective aspects of these cultures that are exported to non-Western regions such as West Africa, but also to describe the way that Senegalese and others come to understand and generalize what “Western life” entails.
least, over who and what enters or leaves its territorial borders, at what times, and under what circumstances (de Genova 2002). In practice, this has particularly entailed the imposition of more dramatically restrictive migration policies, including a greater emphasis on official documentation for entry into a foreign country and a more conservative distribution of visas and permissions to migrate. In practice for Senegalese men, this involves taking on greater risks and dangers in order to migrate to wealthy European countries, which in turn translates to greater complexity around one’s departure from and return to Senegal.

The notion of migrant “illegality” in relation to one’s simple presence in a nation-state was born around the 1960s, serving as a tool of negative reinforcement for states to use to maintain their sovereignty, such as by “disciplining and othering all non-citizens, and thus perpetuating monolithic normative notions of national identity for citizens themselves” (de Genova 2002:425). In this way, the very existence of legal forms of migration and citizenship produced *de facto* “illegal” designations, applied to all actions that do not fall under the umbrella of legality (*ibid.*). Many scholars have eloquently traced the dialectical consequences of this binary for migrants, in particular the notion that the illegality of a migrant’s entry into a foreign state becomes inscribed on the migrant’s body and thus the migrant him or herself becomes “illegal” (de Genova 2002; Coutin 2005; Ngai 2005; Khosravi 2007; Willen 2007). I quote Mae Ngai at length in this respect:

Restriction… invariably generated illegal immigration and introduced the problem into the internal spaces of the nation. Immigration restriction produced the illegal alien as a *new legal and political subject*, whose inclusion within the nation was simultaneously a social reality and a legal impossibility — a subject barred from citizenship and without rights. Moreover, the need of state authorities to identify and distinguish between citizens, lawfully resident immigrants, and illegal aliens posed enforcement, political, and constitutional problems for the modern state. The illegal alien is thus an “impossible subject,” a person who cannot be and a problem that cannot be resolved. (Ngai 2005: 4-5)
In thus seeing human beings as illegal as opposed reserving this condemnation for their actions, the presence of “illegal” (referred to in this paper as “irregular”; see discussion of terminology later in this chapter) migrants have thus become a massive and flagrant threat, not only theoretically for the danger they represent to nation-state sovereignty, but also on a more local and interpersonal level as the social meanings people associate with the notion of “illegality” become ascribed to the migrants in basic, quotidian interactions. Consequently, for Senegalese and other “undesirable” migrants who are increasingly restricted from legal entry or residence abroad, the implications of migrating illegally further complicate decisions to leave by heightening the risks involved in migration and by contributing to a hostile and discriminatory environment for them once abroad.

The problem of restricted migration permissions and ensuing illegal migration is not an issue common to all transnational migrants, however. Rather, it is a phenomenon that disproportionately affects labor migrants or migrants of otherwise economically disadvantaged backgrounds, who tend to migrate into wealthy countries and areas of concentrated economic activity. This dynamic is frequently referred to as “metropole-periphery” relationship, in which the central and highly powerful metropole determines the economic and political character of periphery states and communities; as a center of power and economic production, the metropole attracts migrants from the periphery (Cooper and Stoler 1997). In many cases (such as for this thesis), metropole-periphery linkages begin as colonizer-colony relationships, in which the control exerted by the metropole/colonizer over the periphery/colony is simply more explicit and direct.

I draw on post-colonial theory to emphasize that the long periods of colonization imposed on Senegal and many other countries engendered not only robust, but hegemonic transnational
relations with European nations that continue to play powerfully into the dynamic of contemporary interactions. As post-colonial theorist Bill Ashcroft observes, “global mobility promises to be a major feature of post-colonial study because this mobility is a consequence, either directly or indirectly, of the restructuring of the world by Western imperialism” (Ashcroft in Dwivedi et al. 2013:42). This is to say that the social, economic, and political havoc wreaked on states as a result of colonialism do not disappear with independence (in fact, these situations are in many cases *exacerbated* with the withdrawal of colonial resources and reconfigurations of international relations that result), such that migration from former colonies to former colonizers is a symptom and consequence of those interactions rather than a coincidence.

In this vein, the very term “post-colonial” has been criticized by many (see, for example, McClintock 1992; Parry et al. 1999; Ella Shoshat 1992), who make the distinction between “post-colonial” and “post-independence,” contending that the term “post-colonial” suggests a state of having transcended colonial power dynamics when really this has only happened nominally. Gayatri Spivak, for example, quipped that “we live in a post-colonial neo-colonized world” eloquently articulating the sense of a shift from one form of colonialism — traditional, formally acknowledged colonialism — to newer types of colonialism that function similarly but are masked by other names and justifications (Spivak 1990:166). My thesis aims to support and reinforce the claims of Spivak and others by likewise revealing some of the ways in which colonial relationships are re-created in the present. For, while formal, political recognition of colonial possession is for the most part a thing of the past, the metropole-periphery dynamic that colonialism produces continues to exert power over former colonies in devastating ways. Peter Childs and R.J Patrick Williams, among others (see Wallerstein 1983; Hoogvelt, 2001), point to capitalist expansion and globalization as constant driving factors in this transition (Childs and
Williams 1997). Citing Marxist theory, they highlight colonization as a form of capitalist imperialism in which the perpetual search for new markets and cheap labor gives capitalist powers an interest in maintaining control over colonies. The end of colonialist control “does not automatically mean an end to the patterns of diasporic displacement which had been established,” but rather inspires the imposition of new forms of control under economic and political policies which promote Western interests in relation to former colonies (ibid., 6). These policies damage former colonies (already disadvantaged by the process of colonialism itself), and in doing so, also prompt the movement of workers from colonial peripheries into capitalist metropoles as labor migrants. Childs and Williams point to the way in which such policies both serve capitalist interests while further exploiting migrants:

While these movements still help to provide a potential pool of low-cost labour, the fact that they are not directly regulated by capitalism means that they tend to be unwelcome and subject to obstructive or repressive measures by state authorities (ibid.).

If anything, then, the notion of “post-colonialism” obscures the ongoing oppressive relationships that exist between former colonies and colonizers that make transnationalism both an imposed state of being and an immediate necessity.

Neither is the destructiveness of colonialism purely political and economic: scholars have equally explored the consequences of colonial encounters in cultural production, including values, constructions of identity and selfhood, and social structures and hierarchies. Keya Ganguly writes that “in treating immigrant, postcolonial subjectivity one has to deal with all of the ways in which colonial experience is interiorized, as well as with the fragmentation imposed by the conditions of migrant marginality” (Ganguly 1992:32). Colonial subjects and colonized cultures develop in an environment that regards them with suspicion and denigration while simultaneously attempting to assimilate or reform them. In the “post-colonial era,” these
populations are left to disentangle their own cultural and social traditions from that of their oppressors, often finding that the line between these camps has blurred beyond recognition. From a privileging of whiteness to an education in French or English to an inexplicable taste for Coca-Cola and other foreign goods, the power of colonization to penetrate the very core of a person and culture cannot be understated. As Ganguly writes, “disambiguating the past permits people to make sense of uncertainties in the present” (*ibid*). In light of this, in this thesis (particularly in Chapter 3) I attempt to trace the historical roots and evolution of certain values and constructions — such as that of “success” — and the way in which colonial encounters influenced Senegalese culture, with the aim of understanding some of the social complexities and contradictions these influences have given rise to in the present.

Thus, while technically not “colonized,” former colonies continue to experience similarly exploitative and otherwise oppressive power dynamics. Given that Barça/Barzakh migrations not only occurred between a former colony and colonizer but also took the form of labor migration, I take the backdrop of colonial relationships as a crucial framework for making sense of the complexities of Senegalese migrations even where colonial relationships might not necessarily be explicitly present, and argue that these historical power dynamics play a significant role in continuing to place Senegalese migrants at a political, economic, and social disadvantage in the transnational sphere.

These are some of the conceptual and intersecting frameworks that I apply to understand the emergence of the Senegalese irregular migration movement known as “Barça walla Barzakh.”\(^{10}\) The focus of my research and fieldwork leaned toward return migration and the

\(^{10}\) It is necessary to emphasize here that Barça/Barzakh migration is far from the only type of migration experienced by Senegalese. For example, urban-rural migration accounts for
processes of meaning-making to which returns gave rise in Senegal; however, I benefited enormously from the substantial groundwork other academics and researchers have laid on Barça/Barzakh (and West African irregular migration, generally speaking), illuminating the immense political, economic, and social significance of these migrations in Senegal, in West Africa and the Sahel region, and in Europe or otherwise global contexts. Understandably, a large portion of scholarly research has focused on trying to understand and articulate the complex causes that converged to create the circumstances for what is a very particular form of migration.

Among countless others, Senegalese sociologist Cheikh Oumar Bâ has extensively documented poor economic conditions in Senegal, including high unemployment and poverty, a lack of professional opportunities in tandem with an enormous and growing young population, poor agricultural conditions, and economic turbulence ensuing from structural adjustment programs (SAPs) (Bâ 2007; Bâ and Ndiaye 2008; see also Maggi et al. 2008; Tall and Tandian 2010; Mbodji 2012). Mirjam de Bruijin has nevertheless pointed out that, while the circumstances at play in Barça/Barzakh migrations may be unique, migration itself is “an old strategy” that is deeply embedded in Sahelian cultures as a response to a wide variety of social and environmental factors (de Buijn 2007). Thus, regardless of the particular aptness of migration as a response to the factors at play in Barça/Barzakh migration, this possibility was significant movement within the country, including seasonal migration based on agricultural outputs. This is not to deny the existence of a sizeable population of Senegalese overseas: In a 2004 household survey by the Senegalese Ministry of Economy and Finance, results estimate that “76% of urban households and 70% of households nationwide have at least one family member abroad” (République du Senegal 2004). However, much of this migration takes place within West Africa or the African continent (ibid.). Moreover, the majority of Senegalese migration is entirely “legal” and serves a vast range of purposes: going to a good university, working in a professional job, visiting relatives and friends, tourism, etc. It would be naïve to suggest that the experiences of these migrants don’t bear an influence on irregular migrants, such as in mythologizing the reality of life abroad and the wealth of possibility that exists there; however, due to a variety of constraints this paper will only focus on Barça/Barzakh migration.
already a highly present and tested tactic in the “toolbox” of possible ways of managing those circumstances.

Often in tandem with forays into the causes of Barça/Barzakh migrations, scholars and non-scholars alike have also vividly described the migratory journey itself. Just before my arrival in Dakar in the fall of 2012, Senegalese film director Moussa Touré released a drama called La Pirogue (Touré 2011), which was accredited internationally and nominated for several awards, including at the Cannes Film Festival. The film portrays the punishing voyage at sea for thirty men and one woman: scarce food and water resources as well as ethnic and religious differences cause constant tension; some passengers become sick and die, while others are thrown overboard when an ocean storm wreaks havoc on the boat; the migrants face a moral crisis upon refusing to save another stranded pirogue they come across at sea, and then face this dilemma themselves when their boat’s engines die and all are left to drift powerlessly. While Touré’s representation of Barça/Barzakh is the most classic (see also: Tall and Tandian 2010), others, such as Jørgen Carling, have noted that migrants increasingly take inland routes due to greater patrolling of coastal borders and seas (Carling 2007). The development of inland migration has effectively involved the reorganization of Sahelian space as a territory of transit, including the rise of key gateway cities where critical migration decisions are made and other pockets or informal “bridges” that serve as an informal infrastructure to support irregular migration (Carling 2007; Brachet 2005; Collyer 2007). These contributions thus collectively develop a strong sense of the drama of Barça/Barzakh migrations and the geographical and social effects of their continuing presence.

Also useful to understanding the context or causes of migrants’ returns is a broad array of research considering irregular migration from the perspective of Europe, including how
European policies have restricted mobility for irregular migrants and how these migrants have found ways to navigate around these restrictions. This scholarship has highlighted hostile and xenophobic attitudes toward migrants as well increasingly militaristic border control practices (especially through the EU agency FRONTEX) (Andersson 2014; de Haas 2008; Gabrielli 2011). Irregular migrants often struggle if they manage to make it abroad as a result of these developments, which increasingly limit the avenues through which the men can seek work, support, and protection. This is significant with regard to return migration, as many migrants consequently lie or misrepresent their experience abroad to their families, creating false or misleading expectations and imaginations of what they are doing and are capable of earning or bringing back to their families. In order to deal with the restrictions they face in Europe, Senegalese migrants have come to rely on informal social networks and organizational structures. Notable among these are dahiras, a form of religious association in the Mouride brotherhood (an order of Islam common in Senegal and greater West Africa). Dahiras provide solidarity through a combination of economic, social, and spiritual support, substituting for traditional kin structures and easing both the migrants’ transition into urban life abroad as well as his communication or remittances back to Senegal (Barbali 2009; Diouf 2000; Fall 1998; Tall 2002).

The story of men’s migrations takes place not only in physical space of their journeys, but also in the symbolic presences and representations they finance and inspire in Senegal. From women who wear and physically parade the wealth earned by their husbands abroad (Buggenhagen 2012) to the gradual construction of new houses that act as a measure of migrants’ growing riches (Melly 2010), the effects of migrations abroad — in the instance of being able to insert oneself abroad and find paid work — have a massive impact on Senegalese
Fatou Cisse’s 2011 report on Senegalese remittances suggests that remittances have become so significant as to exceed all other sources of external financing for Senegal, including foreign direct investment, external borrowing, and foreign aid (Cisse 2011). In some instances, migrants have even taken on traditional state roles where the government has failed to provide adequate services, such as in Abdoulaye Kane’s exposition on village-based migrant communities in France that fund a variety of public services and infrastructural projects through their remittances (Kane, 2002). This line of inquiry also tends to unveil the powerful role Senegalese women play in organizing and overseeing the application of their husbands’, sons’, brothers’, and fiancés’ earnings abroad. The very minimal amount of information on women’s irregular migrations in Barça/Barzakh (such as in Sakho and Dial 2010) matches the very minimal real occurrence of this, but other research articulates that, as opposed to not participating in Barça/Barzakh, women conversely played a different role. In Muslim Families in Global Senegal, Beth Buggenhaggen shows how women both play an essential part in encouraging men to leave, and then are responsible for acting out men’s prestige in Senegal in their absence (2012).

Given the enormity of migrants’ influence on Senegalese life, it is unsurprising that stories of their pursuits have seeped into popular culture and folklore. Musical tributes speak to migrants’ suffering and their contributions to Senegalese society, and stories told while waiting for the bus marvel at the rapid and lavish wealth of friends and neighbors. These songs and stories of migration construct a mythology of migrants’ experiences and feats that serves doubly as a measure for changing public opinion on the merits or morality of irregular migration (Riccio 2005; Ludl 2008; Rofheart 2010). As news reports unceasingly published accounts of deaths at sea and families lost fortunes when sons were deported empty-handed, public mythologies and
representations of migration gradually became more apprehensive and distrustful. Regardless of the tenor or truth of these songs, however, the pervasiveness of “pirogue tales” and myths reposition absent migrants “spectacularly present,” thus rendering a significant social visibility and reputation upon men who otherwise might be forgotten (Melly 2011).

Towards a multidimensional ethnography of migration

The research already done on Barça/Barzakh, as well as in other migration studies, demonstrates an incredible range in focus: from the stage of migration, to a physical location, to a particular population, to forms and modes of interaction, to historical and structural conditions, to mythologies, and more. This speaks to what a complex, rich, and spatially- and temporally-vast project migration is. Through the physical movement of their bodies and possessions, and the metaphysical movement of ideas, relationships, beliefs, and desires, migrants do the hard work of connecting diverse and contradicting points of the world; they are found at the intersection of vast and important matrices of culture, space, time, and power.

Perhaps due to the complexity of migrations, many studies of this process understandably tend to zero in on one sole factor or perspective of migration, such as the physical journey, the influence of financial remittances, story-telling and myth-making practices, structural limitations, and so on. Each of these inquiries illuminates the minute inner workings of a system that is, however, exactly that: a system. While a narrower perspective is essential to understanding how this system plays out day-by-day through subtle words and actions, this focus on finer points or select parts of migratory processes tends to obscure the multitude and infinite array of elements that are all simultaneously at play and influencing each other migration and meaning-making of those experiences. The result is a multidimensional field of concurring pushes and pulls that
migrants must navigate in order to make decisions that otherwise seem simple at their surface: should you stay, or go? The choice one makes and all and those that follow it congeal the structural and the personal, the global and the local, the political and the mythological.

This thesis is an attempt to move towards a multidimensional analysis of migration. As mentioned earlier, I began my research intending to study experiences of return as an isolated stage of migration, but in pursuit of the topic I found return experiences to be inextricably entangled with all other components and aspects of both migration and other seemingly distinct issues of politics, economics, social dynamics, and cultural production. The deeper and deeper I dove into this research both during my fieldwork in Senegal and in personal reflections afterward, the more I came to realize that I was looking into an issue that touched everything. Following leads on Barça/Barzakh took me from cosmopolitan downtown Dakar to the sandy beaches of Yarakh to the expansive peanut fields of central Senegal. One day I found myself being led by a friend through the twisty, unmarked halls of the Ministry of the Interior for a meeting with the head of Senegal’s border security police, and the next I was invited out fishing for an afternoon to experience what it felt like to be tossed and jostled by the ocean in a wooden pirogue (only lightly, in my case). In the morning I might be working on a report with a coworker in a quiet NGO office, and by early evening I’d be sitting on a shredded floor mat with thirty other gabbing women at their weekly credit association meeting. Some of my interviewees were illiterate and lived hand-to-mouth, while others had PhDs or lived in towering houses that were the envy of the neighborhood. The variety of social spheres that intersected in this project left me with very practical conflicts as I tried to adapt to all of them: varying degrees of professionalism and westernization had me switching from boubous in the morning to slacks in the afternoon to casual t-shirts and jeans in the evening. Similarly, a group of wives who chatted
with me while preparing lunch in Yarakh often taught me new Wolof vocabulary and idioms that then became a source of immense humor when I used them around my young friends in Dakar, who considered the phrases antiquated and overly traditional.

Senegalese migration — and surely many if not all other types of migration — ties together diverse people, places, structures, histories, and ideologies, all of which complicate decisions to or not to migrate and leave no easy answer as to what to do or how to satisfy a vast range of conflicting needs, desires, and constraints. In attempting to articulate these complexities, I argue against a notion of return migration as a simple and direct process of resettlement. Instead, migrants may be drawn into cyclical migration as a way of constantly negotiating and balancing conflicting pressures, and those who are unable to re-migrate are often left imagining the possibility of doing so while dealing with frustration, disappointment, and shame when unable to satisfy familial and societal expectations. I attempt to present return migration as a period that mirrors one’s original departure in its complexity, not only because the same factors that pushed one to leave are still at play, but also because these conditions exist simultaneously along with shifts in public imaginations and ideas about migration. The very act of migrating introduces new expectations for these men;

11 As will be discussed at greater length over the course of this thesis (especially Chapter 3), Barça/Barzakh migrants were overwhelmingly men. Women certainly played an important and constant role in these migrations, but the migrants themselves (with exceptions) tended to be men. Therefore, I sometimes conflate Barça/Barzakh migrants with men, particularly because particular perspective on Barça/Barzakh migration detailed here is a male perspective, coming from interviews with all male returned migrants. It is possible and likely that female Barça/Barzakh migrations had different experiences and motivations for leaving, but exploring this question would require a different research focus than mine in this thesis.
consequently, many migrants find themselves constantly chasing after a balance while never fully satisfying all of the demands and social constructions around which they work.

**Methodology and reflexivity**

While my argumentative assertion rests on complicating understandings of experiences of return, I also see this thesis as a defense of the methodological approach of multidimensional analysis. My position on return migration depends on an understanding of the multiform and contradicting tensions that produce unsettlement and necessitate negotiation, which would be impossible without an equally multidimensional approach to the causes, consequences, and lived experiences of migration.

The majority of the research and learning expressed in this paper occurred over nearly a year of living in Dakar, Senegal, from September 2012 to mid-August 2013. For the first nine months of this time I was enrolled in a study-abroad program through Kalamazoo College, which placed me with a Senegalese host family and through which I took a variety of courses both at the ACI Baobab Center in Dakar and at the Université de Cheikh Anta Diop (UCAD). Part of my academic program involved courses in Wolof, a widely spoken language local to Senegal (along with French and local languages), which proved to be immensely helpful in communicating with people outside of Dakar. Another component of this program involved an independent research project, for which I was placed as an intern at the human rights NGO *la Rencontre Africaine pour la Défense des Droits de l’Homme* (RADDHO).

RADDHO’s stated mission is to “promote, defend, and protect the human rights of people in Senegal and Africa,” and the organization includes a variety of departments that address issues from women’s and children’s rights to education to good governance. Within
RADDHO, I worked in the immigration department with Souleymane Sembène\textsuperscript{12}, who, though not the department’s official head and director, was its most present member on a daily basis at RADDHO’s headquarters in Dakar. During my time working with RADDHO on immigration, the organization was wrapping up a two-year initiative titled “Local Development and Legal Migration as an Alternative to Clandestine Migration,” a project that involved engaging in advocacy and organizing community discussions about Barça/Barzakh migration, as well as the implementation of professional skill-building workshops for smaller groups of people considered to be candidates for irregular migration.\textsuperscript{13} Through my work with RADDHO I was able to sit in on many of these community discussions, which was a rich source of information for how different community members lived or related to irregular migration. Moreover, these discussions proved to be a convenient way to meet individuals who were open to identifying as returned migrants and speaking about their experiences as such.

In addition to working directly with RADDHO on their migration projects, I also conducted independent fieldwork, including participant observation and formal interviews. My colleagues at RADDHO certainly helped me find my way to some of the key communities where I did my research by sharing their extensive contacts with both formal and informal migrant networks, civic associations, and organizations that worked with or for migrants; Souleymane, in particular, introduced me to a handful of community leaders who worked with returned migrants and occasionally accompanied me upon meeting them for the first time. There is an obvious risk that my informants associated me with RADDHO as a result of this connection. I worked to clarify myself as an independent researcher unassociated with RADDHO in these instances,

\textsuperscript{12} I use pseudonyms for all people who participated in or are otherwise referred to in this research, with the exception of people and organizations too well-known to be masked, primarily in the case of key political figures.

\textsuperscript{13} For greater detail on these community discussions, see Chapter 5.
which was aided by my constant return to visit people in these communities without other representatives and without any concrete agenda. Over time, my conversations with them drifted away from pointed and deliberate discussions of Barça/Barzakh such as what we talked about in community discussions, and turned more toward the banter of daily life, from who was dating who to predictions on the outcome of upcoming wrestling and soccer matches. As I came to know returned migrants and other individuals in these small communities, they often introduced me to further people, and so my network grew.

In addition to ways in which I deliberately sought out individuals tied to this subject, I also benefited enormously from the unanticipated willingness of people to identify themselves to me as migrants or to offer to introduce me to friends and relatives who had migrated upon hearing that this was a topic of interest for me. After casually describing my research to a classmate at UCAD one day, another student nearby came up to me and told me that he had

Figure 1.2 — My coworkers at RADDHO (Souleymane in center).
taken a pirogue to Europe several years ago and would be happy to talk about it with me. In another instance, I was sitting on a bench chatting about the progress of my research with a man who regularly sold me café touba,14 when another young man sitting on the bench with me told me that a friend of his had been deported from Spain two years ago and was currently living in his house. A variety of reports estimate that about 70-80% of Senegalese households have at least one member abroad at any given point, and this statistic quickly became a practical reality for me as I witnessed the near ubiquity of people’s ties to migrants, including irregular Barbà/Barzakh migrants. Thanks to the openness and eagerness of people around me to help me with my research, I quickly developed a sizeable network of contacts in a number of different areas of Dakar and its suburbs.

I spent the majority of my time simply visiting and “hanging out” with my informants, who I now see more as friends and family than as informants. I frequently passed long afternoons in people’s houses and verandas over lunch and attaya, over the course of which I would be introduced to the entire extended family and sometimes sent off to spend time with people (usually wives and sisters) with whom I had not expected to spend the day. At times, this was a frustrating aspect of doing my research as a young woman: my typically male informants saw my “place” as being in female spaces — such as the kitchen, the foyer, backrooms and bedrooms — and often shepherded me away, insisting that I get to know their wives and sisters better. While frustrating, however, the very experience of being “shepherded” into female spaces and the experiences and conversations I had with women in these instances also broadened my understanding of the complex gender dynamics at play in Senegalese society and

14 café touba: a popular, heavily spiced drip coffee local to Senegal, served in small cups all over Dakar. It is named after Saint Touba (also known as Cheikh Amadou Bamba, a Senegalese religious leader), who first produced the drink for medicinal purposes.
in what is, at its surface, overwhelmingly male Barça/Barzakh migration. Through many afternoons with them and through their comments about their brothers’ and husbands’ migrations, I came to understand the great influence that women exert behind decisions to migrate, and that what often appears to be deference to men is in constant tension with other ways of deploying power.

I learned to be more assertive as a researcher in order to keep my place among rowdier and grittier crowds of young men, however, and also benefited from my informants’ awareness that I am American and grew up with a different set of gender norms, and thus was excused for not acting completely in line with standard Senegalese etiquette for women. Nevertheless, my gender continued to be a key shaping factor in most of my relationships. I was incessantly questioned about my marital status, and at one point was told that there was an informal waiting list of people hoping to date me. Part of this may have been due to cultural tendencies to marry young; to some people, particularly outside of downtown Dakar, it was strange that I was in my twenties and still single. Moreover, and especially given the population with which I was working, this dynamic was certainly also related to the fact that I hold an American citizenship: anyone who married me would then have a significantly easier time getting a highly desirous visa to the United States. I began claiming to be married or dating someone in order to ward off this attention, but it undoubtedly marked many of my relationships. Stephanie Maher, who was conducting research on Barça/Barzakh in Dakar at roughly the same time as me, describes this kind of positioning as a “small move”: an intentional attempt to situate oneself strategically in order to claim new positions and advantages within and against structures of power (Maher 2013). The community prestige accorded to having a close relationship with an American, as well as the potential that this position offered for future benefits, both eased my ability to meet
and get to know a variety of people, but it also burdened my relationships with other unspoken goals and calculations that were a source of constant negotiation.

In addition to visiting and hanging out with people without any direct point of investigation, I also conducted 23 formal interviews with a variety of people, roughly divided into categories of returned migrants; individuals who worked with NGOs, government projects, and civic associations whose work was related to migration; and a very broad and general category of “community members” who represented a range of economic classes, levels of education, professions, ages (from 18 – 65), and genders. In interviewing such a broad population (which effectively included everyone over 18 years old), I hoped to gain access to the gamut of attitudes toward and experiences with Barça/Barzakh migration (i.e. as a participant, a distanced observer, a relative of a migrant, an advocate or employee working with migrants, etc.). Interviews typically lasted an hour and a half, with the longest interview being two and a half hours and the shortest being twenty minutes. I came to these interviews with pre-determined questions, but in most cases interviewees digressed from these and I followed their leads in coming up with new points of investigation on the spot. The majority of these interviews were held in French, recorded, and transcribed into English. Some interviewees requested that I not record their interviews with a digital audio recorder, but allowed me to take notes during the interview instead.

Finally, I also conducted some documentary research in various archives in Senegal, including at UCAD and the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) to complement the research I did in the field. This documentary research included information on government policies and actions relating to migration (both regular and

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15 Preliminary interview questions for formal interviews can be found in the appendices
irregular), programs developed to support migrants, and news articles on the subject. However, I conducted the majority of documentary and scholarly research for this thesis through my university, Swarthmore College, after returning to the US from Senegal in September 2013.

Notes on terminology: irregular, illegal, and clandestine migration

This thesis addresses transnational irregular migration, a type of migration that is particularly sensitive and contested for the ways that it challenges structures of legality, authorization, and global political power structures (all three of which are in many ways synonymous). Given the degree of controversy surrounding this form of migration, it is unsurprising that the terminology used to describe it is equally politicized, serving as a tool in defining its nuances and connotations. The topic of irregular migration is an immensely political linguistic battle at least in the context in which I am writing this thesis (the United States), where irregular migration is more widely known as “illegal migration” and irregular migrants thus become known as “illegal migrants.” As described earlier in this chapter in the discussion on migrant illegality, this term carries destructive criminal connotation that conflates the migrant’s act of violating a legal regulation with his or her person and characteristics as a human being. As activists encouraging an end to the use of this term say, “an act can be illegal, a person cannot.”

In Senegal at the time of my research, irregular migration was nearly ubiquitously referred to as migration clandestine (“clandestine migration”), which does not bear the same theoretical contradiction that “illegal migrant” does (an act can be clandestine; a person can also be clandestine). However, the term “clandestine” continued to make me uneasy: like “illegal,” it carries a connotation of criminality, covertness, and even illegality in such a way as to characterize migrants as delinquent and even dangerous people, solely by the fact of their having
participated in this form of migration. While clandestine migration describes the nature of Barça/Barzakh migrations extremely well, I feared that its application to describe people predisposed others to criminalize migrants without any other knowledge of or openness to their decisions.

Consequently, in translating people’s ideas from French and in discussing Barça/Barzakh migration in my own words, I’ve chosen to use the term “irregular migration” and “irregular migrants,” referring to migrations and migrants that move outside of the regulatory norms enforced by any or all countries implicated in a migration. This involves entry, stay, or work in a country where one has not been authorized to do so, including crossing international boundaries without required travel documents or a passport and overstaying visas. Use of other terms such as “unauthorized migration” and “undocumented migration” has equally attempted to skirt the political implications of “illegality” or “clandestinity,” but these terms neglect that an irregular migrant may very well have documentation (even if it is not valid or the right kind) and may very well have been authorized to migrate (even if not by a traditional authority such as the state, but rather by a local authority such as a family member). Consequently, I see “irregular migration” as both the most neutral and the most encompassing term to describe the migrations at the heart of this paper. I sparingly use the term “illegal” to describe isolated actions, but this should not be conflated with descriptions of migrants, themselves.

Roadmap

Before I arrived in Dakar and before I began researching Barça/Barzakh, I had never heard of this wave of irregular migration; especially in the realm of return migration, I thought I was paving a new direction of research on this subject. Retrospectively, I’ve come to see my
study not as new, but as standing on the shoulders of many excellent and insightful scholars who have come before me, which I’ve attempted to show and celebrate over the course of this introduction. With the advantageous perspective that “standing on the shoulders” of others provides me, I hope to shed further light on this subject through not only contributing findings from my own fieldwork, but also through the work of synthesizing other scholarship, showing how various factors described in isolation by others merge and blend in powerful ways in the practical reality I perceived and experienced during my fieldwork.

Chapter 2 delves into the historical confluence of macro political and economic forces prior to the rise of Barça/Barzakh migration in the mid-2000s, which limited opportunities for both profitable living conditions in Senegal as well as legal migration to Spain. In this chapter, I show that structural conditions and a variety of forces effectively shut down staple economic activities for many Senegalese, including farming, fishing, and urban employment. Simultaneously, political developments and crises elsewhere in Africa and in Europe limited legal and safe opportunities to seek work outside of Senegal. Consequently, I argue that these developments had a “funneling” effect that literally and symbolically moved Senegalese progressively toward irregular migration to Europe. Through the precise convergence of the structural developments outlined I also hope to represent the particular form of Barça/Barzakh migrations — which may seem to be an extraordinarily extreme, illogical, and even accidental trend on the surface — as a response perfectly suited (albeit still dangerous and risky) to the conditions out of which it arose.

In Chapter 3, I turn toward the social and local dynamics that underlay motivations to migrate. In particular, I argue that Barça/Barzakh migrations were a particularly male phenomenon because they related to a history of “destabilized” masculinities that prompted men
to seek new models for economic success and consequent social affirmation of their masculinity. I look at how post-colonial reforms and changes subverted traditional sites of male power and financial security, which consequently destabilized men’s masculinity by reducing abilities to reciprocate in *teranga* relations, weakening their roles as family “breadwinners,” impeding their ability to construct houses, and minimizing their eligibility as boyfriends and husbands in the eyes of women. I argue that these insecurities around one’s manhood existed long before the rise of Barça/Barzakh migration, and look at how men turned to a range of models of success before finally turning to irregular migration to Europe as a solution.

Building on the constructions and social performances of success and masculinity outlined in Chapter 3, Chapter 4 explores the way in which returned migrants experience personal and community judgments of their success or failure in migration. I argue that return migration is a crucial moment — a rite of return in the overarching rite of passage that is migration — in which migrants are evaluated for specific achievements and performances, and consequently painted as “successes” or “failures” in a way that reduces and simplifies a much larger range of individual experiences, achievements, and subjective feelings about migration. I examine the ways in which deported migrants struggle with and negotiate negative community judgments, as well as the persistence of social pressures on “successful” migrants that make their reputation as such provisional and uncertain. By demonstrating the ways in which return is a stage of contestation and judgment for both “successful” and “failed” migrants, I aim to account for tendencies to engage in cyclical and perpetual migration, in which migrants chase after “success” through a negotiation of the benefits offered by being abroad and the social pressures to establish themselves and resettle at “home” in Senegal.
Finally, Chapter 5 turns to the various perspectives on and narratives of migration constructed by communities and community members in Senegal. Specifically, this chapter considers how irregular migration is portrayed and evaluated in news journalism, music, formal community discussions, and informal talk. I argue that these narratives — initiated as a way of discouraging people from migrating irregularly by highlighting the riskiness and danger it involved — opened up a discursive space for conversation about more vast and abstract questions and predicaments facing Senegal as a country. As people increasingly come to see Barça/Barzakh migration (and even migration of all forms) as a symptom of more fundamental and insidious dilemmas, narrative construction and dissemination becomes a vanguard for attitudinal repositioning and social change.

While this thesis aims to provide a synthesized and more comprehensive examination of Barça/Barzakh migration, I recognize that such a project can never be “complete.” Up until my last day in Dakar and beyond, I’ve continued to recognize and see new factors that contribute to Senegalese migration (regular and irregular) and different possible perspectives and approaches that shine light on the issue in unique and interesting ways. Due to both an ultimate need to leave Dakar and end my fieldwork, as well as constraints in the amount of time I’ve had to write this thesis, there are many facets of Barça/Barzakh migration introduced here that I was not able to elaborate on to my satisfaction and which I would love to see picked up in future research. This frustration represents the fundamental struggle between fine, focused, and narrow research versus the broad, macro, and comprehensive. I battled with myself and my own intentions in this thesis to provide some of both: “thick” description that could be thicker, and broad syntheses that could be more comprehensive.
Wherever this thesis falls on anthropological scales of research and scholastic achievement, however, I ultimately only hope to have fulfilled the wishes of Babacar and other individuals with whom I spoke: to let their voices and stories be heard, and to raise awareness of the complicated dynamics within which they live. I was never able to interview Babacar. As is normal for Senegalese whose lives are constantly open to change, Babacar moved to Louga (in north-eastern Senegal) to be with family after the death of a brother. However, in accordance with his hopes and desires, I’ve made the greatest effort in this thesis to let the stories of migrants and their families and friends speak for themselves, in their own words and with their intended meanings. While not the same as film, I hope to have drawn strong enough portraits to let these migrants be imagined, the inflections in their voices heard, and their pain, struggles, and frustrations felt. As they continue to live and negotiate these complexities from day to day, this thesis does the work of bringing their stories to people of a dramatically different world — a privileged and powerful world — and developing a sense of connectivity in between them, both as members of an intertwined world system, and as sympathetic human beings.
Chapter Two

“We’ve got our backs to the wall”: Political and economic contexts for Senegalese migrations

Sometimes people tell me that I’m crazy, or that I’m reckless. But if they knew what I’m living here in Senegal, for example, if they knew what many people are living here, they wouldn’t judge us, you see. At least they would try to understand. And if you need to shoot someone down, it should be the State that you shoot down, not the people, not us migrants. Because our backs are against the wall. We are against the wall. Do you understand this? It’s like, you flee, you run somewhere, and there’s someone pursuing you. You keep going, you keep running until you’re in a cul-de-sac. What do you do? You can’t stay there, waiting until he kills you. You have no other options, your back is against the wall, and your face is to the enemy. What are you going to do? You can’t stay there, waiting for him to kill you. You at least have to try to defend yourself. That’s a little bit like the situation we’re living in. We’ve got our backs to the wall... You have to confront the danger to survive. And for us, all means are fair game for survival. So, whether it’s by pirogues, whether it’s by the desert, in any event, the essential is... is to get to Europe.¹⁶

Moussa Ndiaye, like many other young Senegalese men in the early 2000s, felt cornered by a perfect storm of forces beyond his control. There was no work, he said, and where there was work, there was no money. With a family to feed and support, he joined a wave of thousands of other sub-Saharan African migrants who, over the course of several years, were leaving their homes for similar reasons, taking wooden fishing boats called pirogues from the West African coast to Europe in search of work.

Moussa’s description of his departure, like the accounts of many other migrants who shared their stories with me, focused on the immediate sense of desperation and entrapment he felt before deciding that leaving for Europe was his best hope. However, the history of how he and many other migrants came to have their “backs against the wall” involves a much longer and more complex story of intersecting structural developments. This chapter, in particular, examines the coalescence of political and economic developments that effectively “closed off” staple economic opportunities for many Senegalese men, including deteriorating agricultural and

financial conditions in Senegal and an increasingly hostile and restrictive political environment outside of the country. At the same time that European attitudes toward migration were becoming increasingly hostile and exclusive, Senegalese agriculture suffered, leaving huge populations of men in search of new livelihoods. Many of these individuals (and their families) moved into urban centers and coastal areas, which were already suffering from urban poverty and overfishing. Others, who had previously migrated elsewhere in Africa for work, found these options dwindling as a result of other African crises and conflicts and were instead attracted northward to booming labor opportunities in Libya and elsewhere in northern Africa.

I argue that these conditions both literally and metaphorically funneled Senegalese men toward Europe: the structural developments discussed here engendered both very physical and geographical pulls toward economic openings on the coasts and in northern Africa, as well as defeated mental and emotional attitudes in which many migrants felt that they had no choice but to migrate to make a living.

**Setting the stage: Senegalese slavery and colonial eras**

Senegal’s entire history (even prior to it being a country as it appears today) is marked by exchanges of migrants with foreign nations and states, and each exchange or stage of exchange has carried with it implications that play out on grander political, economic, and social scales. Notable here is the term “exchange,” because for all of the modern significance lent to the experiences and effects of Senegalese out-migration, migrants coming in to Senegal from other regions have also had a profound influence on the shape and dynamic of the country today. Up to the fifteenth century, for example, Moor and Berber traders involved in the trans-Saharan trade would cross the Sahara Desert in caravans to engage in trade in sub-Saharan West Africa, where modern-day Senegal was a key stopping point. Caravans that arrived in what is now
Senegal offered an exchange in goods crucial to the growth of the economy, and the encounters also allowed for exchange of ideas and news. Sometimes members of these caravans would stay in Senegal and establish hospitals or Quranic schools, and through these interactions the traders gradually introduced Islam to the region by combining Islamic teachings with the educational and health services they helped to develop.

Forcible migration through the slave trade is another extremely important historical backdrop for understanding Senegal’s position within modern migration movements and global economies. For three hundred years spanning from the mid-1500s to the mid-1800s (especially in the latter half of this range), an insatiable demand for slave labor prompted the exportation of hundreds of thousands of West Africans. A range of estimates suggests that in just the 18th century, somewhere between 198,200 and 336,880 slaves were exported from the Senegambia region alone (Searing 1993). Aside from the horrific abuses of freedom and humanity that characterized the trans-Atlantic slave trade, this period also contributed to a dramatic skewing of the global economy, draining labor and other resources from African and other nations and exploiting them to the great advantage of European, American, and other economies. Though the slave trade ended some 160 years ago, its unbalancing effects continue to be plainly evident in the modern global economic order; it is no coincidence that the direction of modern economic migration is overwhelmingly from former sites of slave exportation to those states that organized and exploited the slave trade to their economic benefit.

Senegal’s relationship with Europe and other African states shifted in the later 1800s as the slave trade ended and was replaced by colonial rule. Throughout the European territorial battles over Senegal and the ensuing decades of French colonialism, Senegal experienced an influx of European immigrants (in particular missionaries, administrators, and military
personnel) who prompted greater development of infrastructure and social services, including construction of roads, schools, and hospitals (Gellar 1995). The development of such services under French colonial rule consequently attracted a significant degree of migration to Senegal from elsewhere in West Africa — including Cape Verde, Guinea and Guinea Bissau, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Mauritania — who sought to benefit from the country’s relatively good university system as well as to cultivate the fertile land in the Senegal River Valley and in peanut growing regions throughout the country (Castagnone et al. 2013, Gerdes 2010).

While this period was marked by infrastructural developments in Senegal, the colonial era — like the preceding slave trade — was also an indisputably exploitative time that continued and exacerbated Senegal’s economic disadvantage to European states. As is standard for colonial states, the French were primarily concerned with extracting profit from Senegal, and consequently structured and restructured the Senegalese economy to suit their own needs. In particular, this involved streamlining the production of groundnuts (a cash crop in France), at the expense of which many dietary staples such as rice were destroyed and other industrial development projects were significantly curbed (Burchard 2005). As a monoculture, Senegal thus became reliant on Europe and other states for the import of necessities; this dependency did not end with colonialism, but rather continues to exist in the present and is a modern-day point of leverage for European states in economic agreements and treaties with Senegal.

Simultaneously, French colonialism also provided (even invited) a number of opportunities for Senegalese to voluntarily migrate to Europe. Thousands of Senegalese men, known as *tirailleurs*, joined the French colonial army and fought for France in several wars, including both World War I and II (Robin et al. 2000). While these experiences were often disillusioning due to high levels of racism, discrimination, and consequent economic and social
struggle, many Senegalese *tirailleurs* nevertheless chose to stay in the country after finishing their service (*ibid.*). The Marseilles harbor in particular drew many such men, and this area then became a central Senegalese community in Europe as later Senegalese migrants were attracted to the social network and support it offered.

These developments are meant to demonstrate that the modern inequalities that drive economic migration from Senegal to Europe are based on a long history of structural and literal oppression. Not only did slave trading and colonialism debilitate Senegalese economics, but these events also forged relations between Senegal and Europe that made the latter into a primary and necessary source of economic aid and resources. While these conditions did not necessitate migration to Europe in and of themselves, they nevertheless were among the first major steps implicated in limiting Senegal’s economic strength, and have had ramifications that spin out far beyond the concrete periods of slavery or colonialism.

**Post-colonial migration to Europe: xenophobia and “immigration zero”**

One of the most obvious “closures” involved in channeling Senegalese migrants into irregular Barça/Barzakh migration was the rapid turn-around between encouraging migrant labor in Europe and then abruptly and severely restricting it in tandem with economic booms and busts. This generated a large population of Senegalese migrants in Europe and thus a trend in earning one’s keep abroad, such that ensuing political turns against migration failed to eliminate migration altogether, but rather diverted it into illegal routes and means.

The first Senegalese *tirailleurs* in France developed the foundation for much of future Senegalese migration to Europe, even after Senegal gained its independence from France in 1960. For example, emigration of Senegalese to Europe intensified immediately after World War II in response to the emerging auto industry (Castagnone et al. 2013). Due to the lingual,
political, and economic connection established between Senegal and France through French colonialism, France was overwhelmingly the most important destination for Senegalese migrants during and immediately following colonialism. However, in 1985, France began mandating that every Senegalese migrant have a visa to enter the country (“compulsory visa”), prompting migrants to diversify their destinations (Gerdes 2010). Italy quickly became another popular destination after it passed laws legalizing the status of all irregular migrants in 1990 and again in 1994 (ibid.). Spain, conversely, did not become a significant destination until the late 1990s, but its construction and agricultural sectors did ultimately attract a sizeable Senegalese population.17 Accordingly, in the decades following Senegalese independence, the country gradually shifted from a “receiving” country to a “sending” country with regard to international migration trends, especially as worsening socio-economic conditions led to a decrease in incoming migrants (di Bartolomeo et al. 2010).

Generally friendly European immigration policies in the decade following Senegalese independence led to an influx of Senegalese migrants abroad and established labor migration as a possible source of income for many Senegalese families; however, the boom in demand for foreign labor later began reversing as early as the 1970s and created considerable new restrictions for migrants in its wake. In particular, the first oil shock of 1973 threw many European immigration destination countries into economic crises. France — up to this point the key migration destination for Senegalese migrants — experienced a severe economic downturn because of the oil crisis, and ensuing high employment and socioeconomic restructuring during

17 Throughout this period, the United States also gained popularity as a potential migration destination (likely due to an increased exportation of its products and popular culture to other regions). However, due to the geographic distance between the two countries, migration from Senegal to the US was mostly limited to younger members of the middle class. The largest population of Senegalese in America is currently located in Harlem, New York
this period eliminated the need to recruit foreign labor (Baizán et al. 2013). Moreover, high unemployment also generated “xenophobic sentiments in public opinion and populist rhetoric” with regard to migrants, generating a hostile attitude toward Senegalese now thought to be stealing French jobs (Guiraudon 2002:2). Over the course of the 1980s in France and throughout Europe, restrictive migration policies proliferated as public xenophobia began to seep into national politics. Immigration was in turn further dramatized in political battles, in which parties would protest and scandalize other parties’ “political ineptness in coping with the unexpected social repercussions of migratory processes, which fostered greater aggression” (Bade 2004:345).

Xenophobic attitudes contributed significantly to the shut-down of many migration avenues from outside of Europe, in addition to creating an inhospitable environment for those Senegalese and African migrants already abroad. As foreign populations continued to grow in size in Europe, European countries had to confront the reality that Senegalese and other African migrants were not temporary labor migrants but actually settling long-term, and were giving rise to emergence of ethnic minority populations from colonial and post-colonial immigration (Bade 2004). Moreover, in addition to labor migrants, refugees and asylum demanders also surged in the 1980s as a result of numerous violent conflicts in Africa at this time. The growth of Europe’s population of “third-world” migrants consequently engendered a shift in European cultural definitions of “foreigners” (ibid.). Whereas as late as the 1960s, all European labor migrants (such as Romanians in France) had been considered “outsiders,” the introduction of “third-world,” mostly black and Arab migrants shifted aversion to these migrants while

18 From 1950-90, the total resident foreign populations in the EU grew more than fourfold: from 3.8 million (1.7% of population) in 1950, to 10.9 million (3.3% of population) in 1970, to 16 million (4.5%) in 1990. France had the second largest foreign population after Germany in 1995 with 3.6 million foreigners, or 6.3% of its population. (Bade 2004)
simultaneously fostering new sense of “European” identity. This new identity was reinforced by concerted efforts to promote cooperation and connection among European states while improving security against “outsiders” – such as by the Schengen agreement, which loosened internal European borders while heightening security around its most external peripheries, especially at the Mediterranean (ibid.).

In some cases, the policy outcomes of public xenophobia were so extreme as to eliminate almost all legal avenues for Senegalese migration. Ultranationalist sentiments bled into the political sphere, empowering extreme-right parties throughout Europe that advocated for a literal elimination of migration through the policy “immigration zero.” Among the laws passed under this strategy was the “Pasqua Law” of 1993, which stemmed former gateways of immigration to France such as by prohibiting foreign graduate students from accepting job offers by French employers and denying them stable residence status, doubling the waiting period for family reunification from one to two years, and denying residency permits to foreign spouses who had illegally been in the country prior to marrying (Guiraudon 2002). This did not succeed in halting migration, however, but only forced many Senegalese and others into irregular situations in their attempt to continue making a living abroad as they had been doing previously.

Spain stood in contrast to the increasingly exclusive and hostile attitudes toward migration in much of the rest of Europe from the 1980s onward, which accounts for its rise in popularity among Senegalese and thus at least the “Barça” (Barcelona) half of “Barça walla Barzakh.” Spain, which had been an authoritarian state for most of the 20th century, had been a “sending,” labor-exporting country until the 1970s, when “emigration dwindled… and [Spanish] return migration began” (Balch 2010:24). Spain’s weak economy benefited from foreign labor, and restrictive migration guidelines imposed by the exclusionist EU ultimately failed to prevent
many migrants from entering the country irregularly. Accordingly, and in a break from the EU immigration mentality of the time, the Spanish government oversaw a series of mass “regularization” campaigns—in 1991, 1994, and again in 2005—to resolve its massive and growing irregular migrant populations (ibid.). Additionally, the Spanish government moved issues of labor migration from the Ministry of the Interior to the Ministry for Employment, thus changing the frame of thinking about migration from one of national security to one of welcoming opportunities for economic growth (ibid.). Consequently, Spain was lauded internationally as a migrant-positive state.

The trajectory of post-colonial European migration policy is one of first drawing Senegalese and other migrants in during periods of economic strength, and then rapidly shutting them out as economies began to suffer and growth African migrants triggered xenophobic anxieties. Severe restrictions on allowable migration in tandem with a strengthening of external European borders through the Schengen agreement meant that irregular migration was increasingly the only option for those who insisted on traveling to Europe (a growing population, as will be seen over the course of following sections).

**Agricultural droughts and Senegal’s “rural exodus”**

It is worthwhile to understand evolving attitudes on migration in Europe first, as a context for events that transpired in West Africa, given that Europe’s colonial relationship with Africa meant that economic and political turmoil in Europe were often in part responsible for consequent effects on African economies, politics, and daily life. But while the closure of opportunities for legal migration to Europe was certainly a key element in the mix of intersecting limitations for Senegalese migrants, more practically important were the developments that occurred on a level more local to Senegal and West Africa. In particular, the agricultural crises
of the late 20th century in Senegal shook the economic balance of the country and left many men looking for work. As described earlier, Senegal’s colonial history resulted in both an economic emphasis on agriculture, and within that emphasis, a concentration on a limited number of agricultural crops (such as groundnuts). As such, agriculture represents a vital part of the Senegalese economy as well as Senegalese people’s daily lives; a 2007 report by USAID estimated that agricultural activities account for 75% of the national workforce (Ndiaye 2007). Moreover, the same report affirmed that the majority of these workers are subsistence farmers. Consequently, the deterioration of agricultural conditions stripped huge populations of Senegalese of their economic livelihoods, and prompted a massive internal migration from rural western and central Senegal into urban centers and coasts.
Given Senegal’s geographical position at the very southern edge of the Sahel region (semiarid region of western and north-central Africa extending from Senegal eastward to the Sudan), many if not most farmers in northern and western Senegal regularly face water deficits and had developed their own strategies for dealing with the region’s long dry seasons. In particular, members of the Senegal River Valley (in the north) developed a method of *crue-décrued* farming, or “flood/flood-recession” farming.\(^{19}\) This technique was dependent on the saturation of sunken or low, valley-like area in the Senegal River Valley during rainy season floods. Then, when these floods receded during the long dry season, the land would be fertile enough to cultivate a number of crops.

\(^{19}\) I learned about this system over the course of an academic class I took on the Senegal River Valley economy as part of my study abroad program.
However, the Sahel region experienced abnormally long and severe droughts from 1968 to 1985, especially from 1970-73, 1976-77, and again from 1983-84 (Roquet 2008). The standard level of precipitation in the Senegal River Valley had been previously established at about 13.5 inches annually, but over the “great drought” of the 1970s, rainfall levels fell 50-60% to about 5.3-6.7 inches per year (Roquet 2008). The duration and severity of this drought devastated both the environment and the agricultural economy that depended on it. Some estimate that about 50% of the region’s tree-cover was lost, to the extent that entire forests disappeared in some parts of the Senegal River Valley (ibid.). Moreover, the seasonal water saturation of the Senegal River Valley necessary for crue-décruèe farming was drastically reduced, causing a similarly severe reduction of cultivable land as well as the quality of the land that could be cultivated. For example, in 1972, flood recession cultivation was only possible on over 37,065 acres of land, whereas previously somewhere between 197,000 to 445,000 acres were cultivated (ibid.). This deterioration prompted farmers to “prioritize using all available cultivable land, to the detriment of the fallow\textsuperscript{20} and grazing lands” (ibid., 43). Over-farming of the available lands further aggravated the detrimental effects of the drought itself by exhausting the soil’s nutrients, and caused social conflict as farmers and pastoralists increasingly had to compete for priority use of the remaining “good” land.

Even after the worst of the drought lifted in the mid-1980s, the regional environment and climate still never returned to “normal” pre-drought levels. The annual rainfall is currently approximately 7.8-11.8 inches annually, and the dry season has lengthened to the point that it now lasts for about ten months each year. According to a report by the Global Assessment of

\textsuperscript{20}Fallow is the land plowed and harrowed but not sowed, or where the type of crop sowed is changed regularly. This is a technique employed to restore the land’s natural fertility.
Human-induced Soil Degradation (GLASOD), Senegal is now one of the West African countries most affected by land degradation, with 24.93% of the land in Senegal considered degraded, and 15.95% of this considered severely degraded (Hummel et al. 2012).

The deterioration of agriculture in rural regions prompted a mass “rural exodus” of individuals from these regions, particularly to cities and urban areas like Dakar (Figure 2.3). Even prior to the droughts of the 1970s, however, individuals from rural farming communities would seasonally migrate to urban areas during the off-seasons for farming, especially young men seeking to earn some money in preparation for marriage and starting a family. These migrations were almost always short-term, with migrants returning to their rural communities for the new farming season and to start their families (Roquet 2008). However, with the onset of severe droughts, these migrations both increased in number and became much more permanent in nature. This resulted in a significant geographic redistribution of the national population, which was rapidly becoming concentrated in major urban centers such as Dakar, Ziguinchor, and Tambacounda, such that by 1999, just short of half the national population was living in urban or relatively urban areas (ibid.). Many former farmers also moved to coastal towns with strong

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<td>18,000</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>-2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kolda</td>
<td>9,000</td>
<td>9,000</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louga</td>
<td>7,000</td>
<td>19,000</td>
<td>-12,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saint-Louis</td>
<td>11,000</td>
<td>18,000</td>
<td>-7,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tambacounda</td>
<td>8,000</td>
<td>7,000</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thiès</td>
<td>23,000</td>
<td>29,000</td>
<td>-6,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ziguinchor</td>
<td>22,000</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>7,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2.3 — Net migration in the five years preceding the 1988 census, by region (Roquet 2008)
fishing economies, as this was one of the most “welcoming” sectors for former farmers and was a more familiar trade than some other urban opportunities (Binet et al. 2012).

Senegal’s agricultural crises presented economic upheaval at both local and national levels (more on its national effects in the next section). The exodus of rural farming regions is a quite powerful manifestation of the “closing of doors” for many Senegalese, who sometimes literally closed the doors of their homes in farming regions to move to larger economic centers and coastal towns. The moves *en masse* to urban areas equally represented a very literal type of “funneling,” as large and fairly dispersed populations became increasingly concentrated in a move towards the shore. Both fishing community populations and urban populations grew drastically (the fishing population multiplied 3-4 times over a decade), putting new stressors on each population in a move that effectively transferred and exacerbated economic struggles.

**Urban struggles: Structural adjustment and poverty**

Around the same time that more rural areas of Senegal were experiencing tremendous agricultural problems that prompted internal migration to coastal urban areas, these urban areas were also struggling a mostly losing battle against urban poverty. While the influx of migrants from agricultural regions did not help the situation, urban economic crises were more rooted in the effect of macro-economic changes from “above” — including European policies and impositions from international institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank. These changes exacerbated pre-existing poverty and unemployment, limiting economic options for a growing number of urban residents.

Senegal has continuously struggled with poverty and unemployment, and is currently described in most places as “impoverished,” “third-world,” “developing,” “under-developed,” and “least-developed” (depending on the source). For example, the United Nations Development
Program has listed Senegal among the world’s “least-developed” countries since 2001, and estimated the national poverty rate to be 52.5% in 2005 (Maouloud 2006). At least some if not much or most of this reality can be attributed to the debilitating effects of French colonialism described earlier, which Senegal has been unable to overcome even after achieving independence in 1960.

The economy never ‘took off’ in the post-colonial period. The market for groundnuts [...] originally the major cash crop, fell dramatically after independence, and exports in the agricultural sector shrank under price controls, centralized marketing boards, over-regulation, and the importation of cheap rice by-products from South East Asia. Senegalese agriculture was also devastated by repeated droughts in the 1970s and 1980s. Industry fared somewhat better but still was not very successful. (Creevey et al. 1995:674)

Indeed, the droughts of the 1970s provided for a rough start to the newly independent Senegal, prompting a national economic struggle that collided with the 1973 oil shocks, which dramatically destabilized many national economies around the world. Given that Senegal — like many other newly independent countries — was still dependent on France and Europe for economic support, the impact of the oil crisis in Europe, in particular, created strong ripple effects for the Senegalese economy. As Creevey writes,

Especially after the oil price rises of 1973, all the CFA21 countries went into economic decline. All suffered from unproductive investments, an over-extended state sector with a bloated bureaucracy, over-valued exchange rates, and disincentives to producers in the form of price controls. As a result, their economies stagnated and their external debt climbed. (ibid., 670)

When European countries, which had held up the Senegalese economy as investors, creditors, and importers of Senegalese products, could no longer extend this privilege due to their own economic misfortune, conditions in Senegal deteriorated.

21 The CFA franc (described in this paper simply as CFA) is the currency of Senegal and other West and Central African countries. As of April 15 2014, 1 US dollar = 475 CFA.
A significant consequence of the 1973 oil crisis was a shift in the role of international financial giants like the IMF and the World Bank. While the IMF’s initial purpose (established at the Bretton Woods conference in 1944) was to maintain fixed exchange rates, world financial crises beginning in the 1970s caused the IMF to cancel this policy and shift instead into a larger role that currently includes overseeing the international monetary system, ensuring compliance by member states with new obligations, and engaging lending and financial regulation programs (Weiss 2012). The lattermost of these roles – credit lending and financial regulation – have had considerable repercussions for “developing” countries such as Senegal, particularly in the form of “structural adjustment programs” in which the IMF provides loans on the basis of large-scale changes to the structure of the national economy, usually in the direction of deregulation, privatization, and liberalization of the economy.

Following on the economic turbulence of the 1970s caused by persistent droughts in agricultural regions, the implementation of structural adjustment programs in Senegal in the 1980s introduced a new source of economic unrest to the national economy, resulting, in particular, in a decline in industry and in peanut production (Creevey et al. 1995; Castagnone et al. 2013). While the structural adjustments did lead to growth on a long-term, national and macro-economic framework, they also caused a “perceptible slowdown in growth from 1979-1993,” with a GDP growth rate of only 2.9% in 1994 (see Figure 2.4) (Maouloud 2006:7).

Moreover, the macro-trend of mostly economic growth did not mirror the ways in which individual Senegalese — especially those in urban areas — experienced and lived with the economic changes from day to day. One of the most significant aspects of the structural adjustment programs implemented in Senegal came in 1994 when the CFA was linked at a fixed rate to the then-French franc currency, devaluing the CFA by half (from 50 CFA to the franc, to
This reform was intended to stabilize the Senegalese currency and prevent dramatic inflation, thereby ideally attracting investors. This approach can be a beneficial policy for countries with strong export industries, as a fixed-rate currency can raise the value of exports to foreign countries. In fact, the Senegalese GDP did grow by an average of 5% every year from 1994-2005, and devaluation also supported economic development on a macro-level in other ways. For example, devaluation of the Franc CFA prompted a drop in the real wages of formal, and especially public sector workers, which enabled the Senegalese government to use savings from these wage reductions to finance a “major increase” in public investment, which “stretched out the post-devaluation boom in time, and managed to tide the Senegalese economy over the regional recession of the year 2000” (Azam et al. 2007:65).

However, despite all of the signs pointing toward economic growth and greater public investment following the 1994 currency devaluation, many scholars have highlighted that this

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Figure 2.4 — Senegal's Growth Experience 1974-2002, percent per annum (Azam et al. 2007)

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22 The Senegalese CFA is still linked to French currency, although the French now use the euro. Accordingly, 100 CFA francs = 1 former French franc = 0.152449 euro; or 1 euro = 655.957 CFA francs exactly.
growth was not “pro-poor” and did not “trickle down” to poorer communities; rather, poorer communities, especially poor urban communities, were extremely adversely affected by devaluation. This is because urban Senegalese households tend to consume large quantities of imported products, particularly food products such as rice, milk, sugar, and bread (made with imported flour); when the CFA was linked to French currency, the price of these products doubled overnight with devaluation (Diagana and Reardon 1999). Moreover, food expenditures occupy a relatively high proportion of household budgets, so the dramatic increase in essential food prices overturned the balance in many urban household budgets, which were usually fine-tuned and tight even before devaluation. One Senegalese woman recalled her reaction to devaluation:

You know, ceeb bujên\(^{23}\) is the main dish in Senegal. You can’t have ceeb bujên without ceeb! Then you just have the jên, just fish. We eat rice every day. Every plate has ceeb. Ceeb bujên, yassa, mafé, soupakanka… all of them need rice! Are we supposed to stop buying it?\(^{24}\)

While options did and do exist to buy domestically-produced products, most urban households have developed preferences for imported products and did not switch to local products, as was predicted by the IMF, when imported prices skyrocketed. This was partially due to the practical attractiveness of some imported products, such as rice, which could be processed and prepared more rapidly. In the eyes of some, however, the unwillingness to switch to local products comes down to sheer stubbornness:

If you go into any boutique, there are multiple options. You can buy local sugar, or imported sugar. You can buy local rice, or imported rice. You can buy local oil, or imported oil. The local products are even cheaper than the imported ones! But what do people buy every time? Imported rice, imported sugar, imported oil. It tastes the same, but people think the imported stuff is better. This country

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\(^{23}\) ceeb bujên: literally, “rice and fish” (a common and very popular Senegalese dish)

would be in a much better position economically if people would buy domestic products, but people will never change!”

Though this may be true to a certain extent (with implications reaching into the social and attitudinal effects of colonialism, to be discussed in the next chapter), the repercussions of the CFA devaluation went beyond household food products. The doubling in costs of imported products also had important ramifications for small businesses, for whom the costs of necessary machine components, tools, and fuel also skyrocketed (Creevey et al. 1995). In Creevey’s study on the effects of devaluation on small business owners, she finds that the “majority of small business owners interviewed felt that their small businesses were negatively affected by devaluation-related increases in transportation and electricity costs,” with many business owners fearing bankruptcy due to the disproportionate rise in costs compared with minimal if any rise in revenue (ibid., 679).

Accordingly, while fixed-rate currencies can strong export economies where the increase in value of exports can balance out, or even surmount, the increase in cost of imported products, Senegal struggled due to the fact that, at this point in particular, consumption of imported products like rice far outweighed the exportation of peanut or fish products, both of where were struggling industries in the 1990s and 2000s (Kelly et al. 1995). This imbalance raises questions as to who devaluation aimed to benefit: the majority of ordinary Senegalese citizens do not operate significant businesses in exporting national products, and those that do often operate through middle-men who absorb much of the potential profit of this transaction. Rather, devaluation created money at the state government level, both in the form of aid received for complying with structural adjustment programs, as well as in the “savings” from these wage

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reductions which allowed the government to increase public spending at the expense (literally and figuratively) of wage workers.

Economic crises in Europe and the ensuing structural adjustment programs and devaluation accordingly had significant immediate consequences in the daily lives of urban Senegalese, heightening uncertainty about how to pay for daily necessities or keep small businesses and boutiques running. While not a total “closure” in the sense that legal immigration routes or agricultural droughts “closed” avenues for subsistence, the effects of economic restructuring in Senegal prompted many families to seek and sometimes need supplemental income in order to get by.

**Labor migration in Africa: a northward shift**

Both rural agricultural and urban financial crises were central factors in the turn towards Bança/Barzakh migration, but emphases on Africa-Europe migrations often neglect the fact that the vast majority of African migrations are regional, taking place within the African continent (Mbodji 2012). As a member of the Economic Community of Western African States (ECOWAS, established in 1979), Senegalese are able to circulate freely among fifteen other states, and did so for many years before Bança/Barzakh migration became a phenomenon. However, as violent conflicts erupted throughout West Africa in the 1990s, intra-African migration no longer presented a strong option for labor activities. In contrast, developments in northern Africa (Libya, in particular) provided a boom for labor migrants. Accordingly, late twentieth century political turmoil in Africa played a huge role in the literal process of “funneling” migrants toward Europe, not only in eliminating the possibility of labor activities within ECOWAS, but also in redirecting those activities north and putting Europe within reach.
The West African region has a long history of internal migration dating back to times before the slave trade or colonialism, but the imposition of colonial structures and projects in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was influential in transforming much of this movement into wage labor migration. The development of new and more expansive farms, mines, infrastructural projects created new work opportunities, and the growth of major cities like Dakar, Accra, Lagos, and Abidjan both attracted individuals to urban employment as well as provided more powerful markets for goods (de Haas 2008). Senegalese tended to migrate to wealthier countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, and Côte d’Ivoire, and these migrations continued to flourish in the post-colonial period particularly as governments welcomed migrants as workers and residents in the spirit of pan-Africanism and development (ibid.).

However, civil conflicts throughout West Africa in the 1990s resulted in the eviction of foreigners, or otherwise produced conditions in hospitable to economic migration. A major coup in 1966 in Ghana marked the beginning of new repressive governance under Ghanaian leaders matched by deteriorating economic conditions, for which migrants were blamed and consequently expelled in 1969 (de Haas 2008). Nigeria, rich from the 1973 oil crisis, replaced Ghana as a migration pole, but when its financial boom crashed in 1981 migrants were again blamed for economic and political problems, and likewise expelled in 1983 and again in 1985 (ibid.). Finally, Côte d’Ivoire (for whom migrants and their descendants comprised a quarter of the population) followed suit in the 1990s, expressing growing militaristic nationalism and xenophobia until a coup and the outbreak of civil war in 2002, causing hundreds of thousands of migrants to flee the country (ibid.).

As West Africa was becoming an increasingly unviable region for migrant labor, Northern Africa was simultaneously opening up to these flows. Libya was at the forefront of
this, as “the [1992] UN [air and arms] embargo against Libya and its international isolation led to a re-orientation of the country’s foreign policy, with President Gaddafi re-inventing himself as an African leader” (Hummel et al. 2012:38). Like in West Africa (and arguably all countries that receive massive flows of in-migration), Libya saw an anti-immigrant backlash in the early 2000s (by no coincidence around the same time as the UN embargo was lifted in 2000) (ibid.). This prompted migrants to shift to nearby countries like Algiers, Morocco, and Tunisia, but few migrants abandoned the area altogether because there was a great need for immigrant labor (ibid.). In his eloquent work on the “myth of invasion” of Europe by African immigrants, Hein de Haas notes that migrants often see north Africa as a destination in its own right more than a mere passageway to Europe, with only 20-38% of migrants in the Maghreb estimated to pass into Europe (de Haas 2008). However, the establishment of migrants in northern Africa undoubtedly contributed to some of the irregular migration in Spain in the mid-2000s, particularly the more indirect form of reinforcing migration routes and creating migrant networks in the north.

West African conflicts thus equally exerted a force on intra-African migrations in the late twentieth century, limiting options for Senegalese migrants to labor in the region and instead shifting the pole of migration northward into Libya and Morocco.

“El Dorado?”: Overfishing and the blur into Barça/Barzakh migration

Finally, and in what might be considered the “final straw,” Senegal’s fishing industry suffered from overexploitation of its local waters. As increasing numbers of foreign countries began fishing in Senegalese waters — often overwhelming the comparatively modest catches of Senegalese working out of pirogues — fishermen were forced to boat farther and farther ashore in order to find sufficient fish populations. In the process of doing so, it became apparent that under good conditions and the direction of an experienced captain, small boats could make it all
the way up to the coasts of northern Africa and Spain, ushering in the first Barça/Barzakh migrants.

As with inland agriculture, Senegal’s fishing sector has been an integral part of people’s daily lives and the national economy for centuries. The industry today supplies more than 600,000 jobs, accounting for 1.7% of the national GDP and 13% of Senegalese exports (Ramzi 2012). In addition to the sector’s national and international importance, it is also a “way of life” for over 200,000 Senegalese whose livelihoods revolve around the sector. As Magar Seck, a fisherman in the fishing region of Kayar (just northeast of Dakar), explains: “I’m a fisherman, my father was a fisherman, my sons are fishermen. Here in the village we’re all fishermen, in my family we’re all fishermen. We all live on fishing” (Cry Sea 2007). Women, who traditionally don’t engage in the literal act of fishing, are nevertheless equally essential to this sector, complementing and in a sense completing men’s work by taking over the processing and selling of fish. Accordingly, the fishing sector pays an essential role in this and many other communities, being the core around which fishing communities’ history, economy, social relations, and daily routines revolve.

Given the sector’s profitability, many Senegalese turned to it when other sectors began to suffer. In particular, as previously mentioned, the fishing sector absorbed huge populations of farmers who found themselves unable to subsist off of the land during the persistent droughts of the 1970s. As the number of people engaged in fishing grew, so, too, did the sector grow in breadth (literally and metaphorically, in expanding over coasts and ocean waters as well as taking on a greater significance in Senegalese life). A number of national development programs subsidized the fishing sector, allowing new fishermen to buy pirogues and fishing gear at low costs (Johnstone 1996). This financial support and preference for newer technologies meant that
by the 1970s, over 90% of the artisanal Senegalese fishing fleet was motorized, allowing fishermen to go farther in the same amount of time and enabling them access to new fishing grounds with both greater quantities of fish as well as fish of greater value. Additionally, the Yaoundé convention of 1963 and the Lomé Convention of 1965 expanded export markets, giving preferential access to European markets for Senegalese primary products, such as fish (Binet et al. 2012). This preference further encouraged fishermen to migrate over greater distances in search of valuable fish.

Throughout the 1980s and 90s, the Senegalese government began to grant fishing licenses to a number of foreign countries — such as France, Spain, Italy, China, Russia, and Korea — which allowed them access to fish in Senegalese waters. As the Senegalese economy suffered from turbulence under structural adjustment programs and the economic losses tied to the intense droughts in agricultural regions and the 1994 devaluation of the CFA, these licenses were viewed politically as an easy source of revenue. As Fabrizio Donatella, the General Director for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries on the European Commission, summarized: “as far as compensation is concerned, each year the EU pays Senegal 16-18 million euros. In addition, the ship owners pay another 2-3 million euros in fishing licenses” (Cry Sea 2007). Speaking more widely of West Africa, Pierre Chavance, a researcher with the French Institute for Research and Development, says “I don’t know a government [in the region] that can say no [to the fishing agreements]. This is good money, and they need it” (Lafraniere 2008). These agreements were also seen as essential to European countries, who sought to gain access to new fishing regions on the grounds that fish had largely been exhausted in the North Sea and the North Eastern Atlantic. Donatella continued:

The fishing agreements are commercial agreements, we’re not providing development cooperation. We act in keeping with development cooperation, but
the EU must have a commercial interest in a fishing agreement... As I said before, the agreement with Senegal is an agreement that... ensures us a future. I am convinced that there will be a new agreement that is even more interesting than the present one (Cry Sea 2007).

However, while the fishing agreements may have been profitable at a national or international level, they were not regulated on a practical level and resulted in dramatic overfishing of Senegalese and other West African waters. In 1965, fishermen caught an estimated 80,000 tons of fish in an aggregate of both domestic fishing and fishing in foreign zones. By 1981 this number had almost doubled to an aggregate catch of 150,000 tons of fish, and current estimates point to aggregate catches of 500,000 tons a year, with 400,000 tons caught in domestic Senegalese waters (Binet et al. 2012).

The escalation of fishing could not go on indefinitely, though, and by the 1990s fishermen began to note considerable reductions in the amount of fish in the sea. From 1996-2007, fishing catches across West Africa declined 20-40% under intensive, long-distance fishing by both local artisanal fishers and, to a larger extent, foreign industrial fleets operating under bilateral access agreements (Binet et al. 2012). Some fish stocks were seriously overfished — like the highly popular grouper fish, which dropped 80% drop in population in the 1990s — and others disappeared altogether (ibid.). Poor regulation and limits on fishing contributed immensely to this overfishing, especially on the part of European fleets that have the power — physically and technologically — to take huge amounts of fish. Moreover, the ability of European governments to pay high prices for fishing licenses and the appeal of this money to poor governments meant that the ecological consequences of bilateral fishing agreements were often subordinated: despite growing concern and published reports on overfishing, in 2002 the EU signed another four-year fishing contract with Senegal that paid the country $16 million a year for permission to fish for (the highly-depleted) bottom-dwelling species and tuna.
Senegalese artisanal fishermen struggled to keep up as the industry became increasingly competitive, some adopting illegal measures out of desperation. For example, some fishermen have begun using “chemicals, including pesticides, to indiscriminately kill fish which are then scooped out of the waters”; in such cases, fishermen may partner with traders to pay for the chemicals, and also share the cost of fines with the traders when fishermen are caught using these chemicals” (Ramzi 2012).

The result has been devastating for local fishermen. Maty N’dao, a Senegalese fishery worker, cried, “all the big, high quality fish, the fish you could catch near the cost, it has all disappeared! All disappeared! We did rituals to bring the fish back, but it was no good! The situation gets worse by the day” (Cry Sea 2007). Another Senegalese fisherman, Amadi Die Ye, added that the problem goes beyond catching high quality fish, but now simply concerns catching any fish at all: “sometimes we’re out for two days before we find any fish...Now only the lower quality fish is left and it’s not worth much, and only the big boats manage to catch something” (ibid.). In some cases, the diminishing value of the fish caught combined with the minimal quantity fishermen are able to catch has meant that the industry is no longer profitable — it can even cost fisherman more than it earns them. “You never know how the fishing will go,” says Magar Seck. “Sometimes you catch some fish and you manage to sell it, sometimes you just don’t find any fish. With the fish we caught yesterday, we didn’t even pay for the fuel [for the boat]!” (ibid.). With similar results, another fisherman calculated his losses:

We caught 22 crates of fish. We managed to sell each crate for 1 euro. We earned 22 euro in all, for 22 crates: Nothing!... But a tank of petrol is 100 liters and costs 30 euro. And so, in the end, you’ve worked a whole night, you’ve got cold and you’ve worn yourself out to earn nothing! (ibid.)

So, as the sustainability of the fishing sector dwindled for those who depended on it the most, some fishermen chose to take their fishing boats to sea in a new way, and migrated abroad
in search of new work. This, however, was in no way an arbitrary decision: Senegalese fishermen were already highly familiar with the seas owing to an extensive history of long-distance migrations as well as traveling long distances in search of fish. Long-distance boat fishing has been a key characteristic of the industry since at least the fifteenth century, and by the end of the nineteenth century migration of Senegalese fishers extended across the entire West African coast, from Mauritania to Sierra Leone (Binet et al. 2012). Motorization of fishing pirogues in the 1960s and 70s, the incentivization of high-value fish with the development of European export markets, and the increasing depletion of fish in more domestic waters all pushed fishermen to invest in longer trips at sea. In fact, long-distance fishing became so normal that “fishing camps” sprouted up in many destination countries, which were communities specifically designed to host fishermen and allow them to rest and refuel before returning to their original communities (ibid.). This has grown to such an extent that 15,000 Senegalese fishers, or over 30% of the national fishing labor force, have sailed into foreign waters for about ten-day long fishing trips (ibid.)

Accordingly, migrating to Europe on a pirogue struck many fishermen as a logical “next-step” — it was, after all, only a slightly longer version of trips they were already making. This also explains why fishing villages disproportionately experienced and were affected by this particular wave of migration: fishermen were often entrusted with driving and guiding the boats to Europe, and made accordingly made money out of these trips for doing something that they were already doing on a regular basis. This option was also extremely attractive to many young men, many of whom were just beginning to reach the age where they needed to start earning a
living to support their families; finding the fishing sector unprofitable from the start, many were tempted by the plentiful opportunities to “simply” get on a boat and go to Europe. Mamadu Mbaye, a former fisherman now working in Italy, recounts his personal history in line with this reasoning:

Before [coming to Italy], I used to go fishing at night! I was a fisherman; my father is a great fisherman at Yoff in Senegal. We used to go fishing as far as Kayar, and even further. Things used to go so well and I saw them go fishing. There was fish and they made good money. But later, when I finished school, I went fishing with them for a year and a half but the situation had deteriorated. Before, we lived well, but not anymore. You could see there was less fish, and as time went on things got worse. So I decided to make something of my life and not go fishing anymore. That’s why I decided to emigrate. So that I would have money to help my family. If the fishing had been good, I would have stayed in Senegal, and worked peacefully near my family. I would have done that willingly. (Cry Sea 2007)

Ahmadou Wade, a Senegalese representative of a fisherman’s union in Kayar, also commented on this phenomenon:

There are a lot of people who have emigrated to Italy and other countries. They are people who come from fishing families. Me, I have some of them. Three have gone from my family and from others, too. There, people went fishing but they say fishing no longer provides a living. So they left [with] their pirogues, they say you can’t live here anymore, and Europe is the land of plenty, it’s the ‘El Dorado.’” (Cry Sea 2007)

Ahmadou’s use of the term “El Dorado” here is highly ironic and fitting on many levels. “El Dorado” literally means “the gilded one,” and generally refers to a legendary city of immeasurable riches. However, the original “El Dorado” of the Spanish conquistador era has still not been found to date, and so the idea of this city now also carries a mythical or imaginary connotation — a city of wealth that ultimately does not exist or is unattainable. As will become apparent through following chapters, this is an extremely appropriate metaphor for the disparity

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26 Chapter 3 provides more detail on the social pressures that contributed to Barça/Barzakh migrations, especially with regard to the social roles of young men.
between Senegalese’s ideas of Europe and their lived experiences there. The greater irony of this term in relation to the topic of overfishing, however, is that “dorado” (or “dorade,” in French) is also species of fish native to Senegalese waters and popular in fishing markets. The dorado was among the fish that were overfished from the 1980s onward, and became rare as a result of overexploitation. Thus, to talk of Europe as an “El Dorado” can also be literally translated as Europe being considered the new fish to catch, the new object to hunt and chase after, the new source of wealth and livelihood for professional fishermen. The shift in the meaning of “El Dorado” from that of a type of fish to that of a mythical city also indicates the abandonment of the fishing industry for work abroad in European urban centers.

Conclusion

Migrants frequently described their reasons for leaving to me on relatively short-term scales of experiencing immediate poverty and being unsure of how to support themselves and their families (again, more on how men’s social roles were implicated in these pressures is discussed in the following chapter). This framework feeds into the stereotype in Senegal of Barça/Barzakh migrants as impulsive and reckless, and simplifies an extensive history of structural political and economic forces that built upon each other and congealed to limit what were previously a wide range of securer economic activities: rural farming, fishing, and urban employment, in particular, and potentially more profitable iterations of these options elsewhere in Africa and in Europe.

Through reconstructing the particular evolution and convergence of these factors I hope not only to give a sense of some of the reasons for Barça/Barzakh migrations, but more importantly, to suggest that Barça/Barzakh was not a “freak” or “impulsive” outgrowth of admittedly poor conditions, and rather that these conditions built up to Barça/Barzakh migrations.
in a coherent way. Not only did forms of income generation alternative to irregular migration figuratively close off, but the physical, geographical fashion in which this occurred also literally “funneled” or induced the shift of people from rural Senegal to coastal Senegal and then into northern African waters, or from West Africa into Northern Africa into Europe more generally. This argument risks overemphasizing macro-structural forces at the expense of affording credit to individuals’ own agency and will, which were certainly also at play: some or several of these conditions affected almost all Senegalese, and yet not everyone left; therefore the notion that migrants were “forced” or truly had “not choice” but to leave for Spain on pirogues is obviously too extreme. However, this historical examination of the conditions that gave rise to Barça/Barzakh aims to develop a sympathetic perspective to the feeling of many men that their “backs were against the wall.” Moreover, this framework for understanding migration also reveals the continuing influence of colonialism, which underlies many of the difficulties attributed to causing irregular migration aside of “natural” and environmental crises such as droughts (which could nevertheless be tied to climate change, a global struggle that has been disproportionately exacerbated by industrial states such as the United States and European countries). While these elements thus cannot be said to mandate or necessitate any particular type of action, they nevertheless are essential to understanding a part of the context, constraints, and structures in which migrants were obliged to consider and decide their course of action.
Chapter Three

“Goor yombul” (“It’s hard to be a man”): Destabilized masculinities and Senegalese archetypes of success

One morning in early May 2013, I walked into RADDHO — the human rights NGO in Dakar where I worked as an intern and research assistant with the immigration department — to find my colleague Souleymane in a heated but playful argument with Issa, the man who was (not without irony) in charge of the gender rights department — in effect a women’s rights department. Issa was frequently the butt of joking comments for his advocacy for women in an office that was dominated by men,27 and on this particular morning he was defending his complaint over recent news that female Senegalese politicians and community members had been underrepresented in an important political meeting.28 Issa had apparently been drafting a news release in protest of an allegedly deliberate failure to invite women to this meeting, to which Souleymane and another colleague, Makhtar, were loudly complaining that women were spoiled in their rights under parity and consequently received special privileges when they “make a big fuss” about gender inequalities.

“Women make such a fuss over everything these days!” Makhtar exclaimed. “It was just an accident that they didn’t have enough representation. Probably someone forgot to call them. Anywhere else, women would be happy to have so much equality! Hardly any countries have governments as equal as Senegal.” He nodded in my direction: “In the United States, the most powerful and democratic country in the world,

27 During my time at RADDHO, there were perhaps 3 or 4 women employees out of a regular staff of 25 or 30, only one of whom I knew to have a research or advocacy job and the rest of whom worked in secretarial positions.
28 Senegalese law requires political gender parity, which orders political parties to ensure that at least half their candidates in local and national elections are women.
do you have equal numbers of men and women in the government?” When I shook my head, he turned back to Issa. “You see! They should be grateful. They’re slowing things down, anyways.”

Souleymane chimed in, jokingly. “Yeah! You know, it’s the men that are marginalized here! Women, whenever they complain, they get money. From USAID, they get mountains of money. From the government, they get mountains of money. From NGOs, they get mountains of money. What do I get when I ask for my salary? Nothing!”

“Listen, Mariama,” said Makhtar, trying to win me over to their side. “All the NGOs want to support women’s microcredit projects. Well, a man could bring in the same microcredit project proposal as a women and he wouldn’t get anything, because they [the NGO] think it will look better if a woman gets it.” Chuckling, he pounded his fist on the table in a show of defiance and cried, “we are the oppressed!”

Issa shook his head, laughing, and Souleymane gave him a playful slap on the shoulder. “Tomorrow, Makhtar and I will found Senegal’s first men’s rights department!”

As Souleymane and I left to talk about our plan for the day, I took up Issa’s perspective, arguing that equality between women and men couldn’t be conflated with men’s oppression. Souleymane, though clearly not entirely serious about his position, refused to budge from his standpoint.
“Maybe, but men still have to provide for their families, and now it’s harder and harder to find work when you compete with women. Why do you think all of the clandestins are men? Maria, goôr yombul torop waay! 29

Barça/Barzakh was an overwhelmingly male migration movement. This cannot be taken to signify that Senegalese women do not also migrate: the International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimates that 51.1% of Senegalese migrants were women as of 2013, and a range of scholarly studies have explored the dynamics of women’s migration (see for example Babou 2008, Adepoju 2003, and Brockerhoff 1990). These and other studies demonstrate that not only do Senegalese women migrate regularly, but that they also engage in many of the same types of migration as men do (although not always at the same rates), including internal rural-urban migration, economic and entrepreneurial migration within Africa, academic migration to Europe and the United States, and irregular migration, sometimes in the company of family or acquaintances, and sometimes independently. The normality of women’s migration in these realms highlights their significant absence or minority in the literal human migrations of Barça/Barzakh.

The clear line between men migrating and women staying behind in Barça/Barzakh migrations clearly delineates these voyages as gendered, but it also calls for a divergence from the trope of instinctively focusing gender studies on women or the refusal to see men as equally constrained by gender norms such that “in a situation of social equality men are implicitly assumed to be the ones holding privilege and power” (Sinatti 2014:218). Sinatti appropriately describes Senegal as a society of “hegemonic masculinity”: a socially-legitimated dominant patriarchal model that is “currently [the] most honored way of being a man, [and] requires all

29 goôr yombul torop waay!: It is too hard, being a man!
other men to position themselves in relation to it, and it ideologically legitimates the global subordination of women to men” (ibid.). However, and in line with Sinatti’s findings, my experiences among Senegalese men suggest that while hegemonic masculinity ultimately favors the dominance of men, men still experience this construct in oppressive ways when unable to meet the expectations for them created by and around it.

In this chapter, I trace the ways in which the end of colonial rule in Senegal prompted economic and political changes that disrupted men’s traditional roles as breadwinners and consequently “destabilized” senses of one’s masculinity. Men experienced this destabilization on financial, territorial, and interpersonal and romantic levels, and consequently experienced immense pressure to regain financial security or excess and consequently recover the role of “breadwinner.” In line with the existence of this predicament since early post-colonial days or even before, I point to the prevalence of men’s anxieties about being unable to provide for others as a strong undercurrent in not only Barça/Barzakh migrations, but also in a variety of other economic endeavors that preceded this wave. In particular, I examine three distinct archetypes of success to explore how men elevated a variety of popular archetypes of success as models for resolving destabilized masculinities, which eventually gave rise to massive Barça/Barzakh migrations.

Post-colonial turmoil in sites of male power

The foundation of Senegalese men’s patriarchal power lies at the level of the family structure in their traditional roles as family “breadwinners” and, closely related, as borom kër (heads of household). This centrality is established plainly by the tradition of patrilocality, in which “upon marriage, the wife traditionally moves into her husband’s home, which involves
living with in-laws” (Sinatti 2014:219). As heads of household, Senegalese men bear the economic and moral responsibility of ensuring the welfare of their family, including both their family of origin (parents, grandparents, and siblings) as well as their “independent” household (wife[s] and children, as well as in-laws) (ibid.). Given the enduring establishment of this role over long periods of time, men’s fulfillment of “breadwinner” or borom kêr responsibilities has come to be equally indicative of one’s masculinity, signifying a transition from adolescence into mature manhood, and breeds respect and status for men within their families and communities. Sinatti notes how the connection between work and masculinity even manifests itself linguistically, such as in the phrase goorgoorlu, which is Wolof for “to get by” or “to work hard” (as in mangiy goorgoorlu: “I’m working hard” or “I’m getting by”). Though both women and men use this phrase, the morpheme goôr means “man,” such that goorgoorlu literally signifies “to behave like a man” (ibid., 220)

In the years following the end of French colonialism in 1960, reforms around land inheritance and credit distribution resulted in the disturbance of men’s traditional roles as breadwinners and borom kêr. Faced with the dilemma of how to restructure its government and economy in such a way as to promote itself as a strong and independent new nation, Senegal passed a number of post-colonial reforms that dramatically altered rural agriculture life, beginning with the National Domain Law of 1964 (la Loi Relative au Domaine Nationale). With this law, intended to break up longstanding patrilineages and traditional landlordism, the state nationalized nearly 97% of its territory, prohibited land sales, and assumed the sole right to grant titles to land (Buggenhagen 2012). Prior to this reform, men — in the role of landlords — had total control over land and used it as a form of capital which could be passed on to male members of younger generations. In eliminating this mode of intergenerational land tenure the
Senegalese state sought to encourage development and enable greater agricultural outputs, because under the patrilineage system much of the land went uncultivated and was simply held in place for the upcoming generation. However, this reform prompted a significant transformation of the social order, as it physically displaced many men whose power came from their control over the use and allocation of their land, and also disrupted the symbolic connection of the land to the integrity of the (patrarchal) lineages that controlled them.

Following the National Domain Law, the structural adjustment programs beginning in the 1980s also included reforms which considerably diminished men’s financial — and thus, social — power. The SAPs called for states to “disengage from economic supports and to privatize marketing structures…[and] the Senegalese state abolished agricultural cooperatives, dissolving a crucial channel through which farmers received government support” (Perry 2005:212). In practice, this meant that small farmers no longer had as much, if any access to agricultural credit systems, and so were more likely to default on loans or not have enough money to invest in materials from the beginning. This became a serious problem both in light of the poor agricultural returns during and after the droughts of the 70s, as well as the doubled costs of imported goods such as fertilizer, agricultural machinery, and rice when the CFA was devalued in 1994 (ibid.). Given men’s decreased ability to borrow and make money through agriculture, they tended to reduce their crop production, and in doing so scaled back the extent of their economic power in the household.

Simultaneously, women’s involvement in petty trade, manufacturing, and service jobs grew, partly in response to diminished income from men as well as in response to the growth of work opportunities for women thanks to investments from foreign aid and NGOs. The 1980s saw the rise of “women’s empowerment” movements in NGO efforts and microcredit initiatives.
in particular, such as in the case of Grameen Bank, which in many senses gave birth to the modern microfinance system and for which women make up approximately 95% of its clients; it is estimated that internationally, women make up 75% of microcredit loan recipients (Armendariz 2005). In some cases, as will be seen in some of the following accounts from my field research, the simultaneous loss of economic opportunity for men and the gain of this among women meant that women replaced men fairly comprehensively as the source of income and economic support within family networks; perhaps more common was the development of a greater balance between women’s and men’s income, however, this was still considered to be an offensive or shameful encroachment upon the traditional realm and boundaries of male power.

Consequently, land reforms, privatization and economic change under SAPs, and the introduction of non-governmental microfinance institutions with an independent agenda of “women’s empowerment” effectively gave rise to a restructuring of both women’s and men’s participation in economic activities. Though women’s empowerment initiatives, in particular, were intended to counter hegemonic, patriarchal structures that limited women’s involvement, they often did so at the expense of men, such that many men were deliberately refused loans to the advantage of women and then struggled to insert themselves economically whatsoever.

“Destabilized masculinities”:

Many of the individuals who I heard criticize migrants of the Barça/Barzakh wave argued that, while there potentially is an opportunity to earn a significant amount of money in Europe, these potential gains do not offset the costs and risks involved in the migrations at sea, and also that there are still many money-making opportunities available in Senegal. However, this approach assumes a rational cost-benefit analysis to migrants’ decisions that fails to account for
the additional social pressures migrants face, and the way that less “rational” social and cultural considerations are factored into decisions to migrate in the same way that monetary aspects are considered. The shift in the gendered power balance of Senegalese households thus left many men unsettled about their position in society: the loss of their position as “breadwinners” (or at least, the indisputability and totality of their ownership of this role) consequently “destabilized” their senses of their own masculinity, which was usually inextricably linked to their role as borom kër and the secondary reputations and social connotations that grew out of this position. One man from anthropologist Donna Lynn Perry’s research on this subject exclaimed that “life’s been turned upside down” and that “women and kids think they own themselves now”; others asserted that “when the millet isn’t there, you’ll never be a real man, ever!” (meaning that without effectively cultivating the land, and being able to provide for one’s family, one is not a “real” or “masculine” man) (Perry 2005:209). In this section, I explore manifestations of this “destabilization” and the ways in which men acutely experienced it in four different (though very much overlapping and intersecting) ways: the inability to reciprocate in exchanges of teranga; the struggle to financially support “dependents”; the lack of a territorial, spatial site of power; and the difficulty of finding and holding onto a girlfriend, fiancé, or wife.

Social destabilization: Teranga and reciprocity

One of the first and most regular, daily, and concrete interactions in which any given person’s (man’s or woman’s) wealth comes under scrutiny is in charitable giving through teranga. Teranga is a particularly cherished cultural value (many incorporate it into a national motto in which Senegal is “le pays de teranga,” or “the country of teranga”) that signifies hospitality, tolerance, and acceptance of all. While teranga is typically taken to be a general
attitude that one holds toward others, the innumerable people who discussed the importance of
this value with me over my year in Senegal frequently described financial undercurrents to its
expression, in that teranga involves putting the comfort and needs of others before oneself, no
matter the cost. As a friend, Ibrahima, explained to me by example one day over tea:

Senegal is the pays de teranga, you know. The ‘country of hospitality.’ That
means you are generous and welcoming to everyone. That is why people here
make so much food at each meal: because you never know who will come by for
lunch, and you want to be able to feed anyone who wants to eat! That’s what
teranga is! And maybe if your neighbor is struggling, maybe he doesn’t have a
job right now, he might stop by to eat lunch at your house, but he will pretend just
to be checking in on you. But you know he is struggling, you can see it in his
eyes. He just doesn’t want anyone to know. So when he leaves, you give him a
big hug and a handshake like this [gesturing] and you slip a 5,000 [CFA] bill or
10,000 into his hand so that nobody sees it.

As Ibrahima’s description suggests, the practice of teranga is not solely about welcoming
strangers, but also has a prominent financial aid character. Drawing on the hospitality of another
individual is a way for people to eat meals when they do not have enough money to feed
themselves, or have a place to sleep if they can’t afford rent, and generally have their basic needs
met. Moreover, the idea of showing teranga to someone is often a way to gloss over an
individual’s financial struggles, given that teranga is a widely held and reciprocated cultural
value and does not necessarily identify someone as poor or struggling financially.

Exchanges of teranga were essential to building one’s public reputation and social
capital, where the more teranga people show to others, the better they are perceived publicly and
the greater social cushion they have in times of need. Souleymane, in particular, was someone
who I frequently saw “showing teranga” to other people — such as by buying coffee and fruit for
his coworkers and men on the street, taking people (including myself, on several occasions) out
for lunch, buying candy for children, and giving sizeable sums of money to refugees who came

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to RADDHO asking for support. After one such instance of the latter, I asked him whether
RADDHO reimbursed him for the financial aid he was giving to individuals out of his own pocket, and he answered:

No, at RADDHO, they never reimburse! They hardly even pay me for my actual work. But how could I say no to him [the refugee]? He has nothing, even less than me, and I have the money in my pocket. It’s not a big deal, it’s just basic humanity. No no no, RADDHO never reimburses, but between people—for example, yesterday, yesterday I saw [Aro.]. He gave me 2,000. He told me, okay [S.], you take a taxi home today. Why did he do it? Because we’re friends! So we help each other out. Here at RADDHO, for example when I go on a mission for the migration project, I earn 50,000 CFA per day for the mission. So for five days, that makes… 250,000 CFA. I take 50,000 and I leave it here. I give each person 5,000, 5,000, 5,000. Then I leave. If I do it, it’s because the others, they don’t have anything, no no no! It’s because me, I have a sense, an opportunity to earn some money, I have the opportunity to share it with others. That’s why we say, when you share, you will never be in the [darkness]. Because when you are in the [darkness], people will come help you, too, they’ll help you if you’ve also helped them. You see. Today, me, I don’t have work, but I’m not suffering too much because I have friends who are there for me, who frequently come to my aid. You see? For example, I have a friend, two friends who work at a bank. One is in Casamance, the other is here in Dakar. We were in the same room at the University. Me, I had a scholarship when I was there, but them, they didn’t. So it was my room at the University, it was me who paid for the room, and I hosted them, because they were my friends. They came to my room, and I paid for the rent, the restoration, the furniture… I paid for all of that. They ate, I paid the [bills] for the restaurants. Now, they are working, and I don’t have work! Every day, they call me. “Boye! Do you have a problem?” Me, I say no, I don’t have a problem. But if someone sends me money, I take it. Because otherwise it’s poorly-considered. It means that you are an egotist. You, you help me, every day you gave me money, and today I want to help you in return, but you refuse. Yeah, it’s egotism, that’s what it is. 31

While teranga is a value shared by a broad spectrum of Senegalese and is not restricted to young men, displays of charitableness and generosity have a distinct effect on men, establishing not only one’s moral righteousness and upstanding social reputation, but also contributing indirectly to masculine identities. The financial support of general community members and extended family serves as a public indication of a man’s capability to act as “breadwinner,” and establishes

him as mature and adult in as much as he is not only financially independent but also wealthy enough to be giving away this wealth.

This being said, Marcel Mauss’s work on reciprocal gift-giving is useful in understanding both the potential reluctance of an individual to be on the receiving end of such exchanges (such as Souleymane implied above), as well as the social consequences or social debts that come with doing so. In his classic ethnologic piece, *The Gift*, Mauss observes that the giving of a gift is accompanied by a complementary, though often unspoken, obligation to reciprocate in kind or to an even greater extent, the continuing cycle of which builds social alliances and community solidarity. “Obligation and liberty intermingle” in these exchanges, he writes, such that

The unreciprocated gift still makes the person who has accepted it inferior, particularly when it has been accepted with no thought of returning it… Charity is still wounding for him who has accepted it, and the whole tendency of our morality is to strive away from the unconscious and injurious patronage of the rich almsgiver. (Mauss 1954:65)

While one might accept a gift out of need or for the simple recognition of being in a relationship with others in which charity and gift-giving is normal behavior, the moral “high” of giving a gift to someone is complemented by the moral obligation of the recipient to reciprocate, and thus shifts a social burden onto that individual in balance with the concrete and immediate benefits of the material gift, itself.

As much as *teranga* was a prized and understood part of Senegalese culture, individuals — and arguably men, in particular — often found it humiliating to be frequently on the receiving end of others’ hospitality. Moussa Ndiaye, a returned migrant, described such a discomfort in feeling that he was accepting too much from others without being able to give anything back:

> If I keep going to other people’s houses, I know that they will always feed me. If I have no money, I know they will offer to help me or loan me some. But you can only do this for so long before you know that you start to feel a rock inside of you. Even if they are rich, even if they are extremely gracious, I will start to
dread every time I need to ask them for something. Sometimes I would rather not eat than to have people know that I don’t have enough money to feed myself.  

For Moussa, the degree of guilt and social burden he felt as an overwhelming recipient of charity was so strong that his need to avoid further receipt of others’ goodwill became more powerful than even physical needs to eat. Moreover, not only did his persistent dependence on the *teranga* of others not contribute to the construction of his reputation as a masculine “breadwinner,” but this ongoing reliance actually feminized him in a sense by putting him in the role often assumed by women or children, in which he was regularly provided for.

Souleymane described another poignant account of the stress he felt around reciprocating on acts of *teranga* (despite already being someone who was known for his generosity) explaining his anxiety about being unable to reciprocate the charitable acts of his neighbors even to the extent of taking deliberate and inconvenient steps (like Moussa above) to avoid them seeing him:

[My salary] is barely enough for me, it doesn’t account for the neighbors, the mothers who are also there, who see you every day when you leave for work, sometimes even on Sundays. You know, here in Senegal, your neighbors are your first parents, they are your family […], especially for people like me who rent rooms in an apartment. In an apartment, everyone has his own room. If on one side there’s a married woman, on Sundays for example, if you aren’t working, she’ll put a plate [of food] aside and she’ll give this to you. It’s neighborly, you know! It keeps the peace. But if this woman comes to knock on your door one day, and she says ‘Souleymane, today I have a problem…,’ what are you going to do? What are you going to do? You give it [money] to her, because she’s shown you the same thing, her generosity and her bounty. For us, that’s a little bit what kills us. We are over-solicited… They know that you are not married. But [if] each day you take your bag to go to work, well, to them you have money. So every day, people are asking you for money. This is why so often, sometimes I work overtime—I’m fleeing the house! When I return around 2:00 or 3:00am, when everyone is sleeping, I come back and enter the house, I take a quick shower and go to bed. The next day I get up in the morning and rush off to work again. We are too solicited, we are too solicited. Because everyone is struggling now. Everyone is struggling now.  

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Souleymane’s feeling that he is “over-solicited” speaks to the particular financial pressures put on men even outside of familial “breadwinner” contexts: while both men and women participate in exchanges of gifts, hospitality, and money, men’s additional roles — imagined or real — as providers (especially of financial resources) color cultural expectations of their ability to support a wider spectrum of people. Displays of teranga (or the lack thereof) are thus a constant, public, and practically inescapable demonstration or test of one’s wealth and hence an implication of one’s “breadwinner potential.”

Familial destabilization: “Breadwinning” and family support

While teranga is a constant, but relatively general and diffuse source of financial pressure and consequent performances of masculinity, these stresses are even more concentrated and pronounced within the family structure, where men face enormous expectations to financially support their families. Senegalese households are generally quite large, with an average 9.5 people per household in rural areas and 8.2 people per household in urban areas, with 44% of all households including at least nine individuals (Beauchemin et al. 2013). Part of the reason that households tend to be so large is that they include multiple generations of the same family as well as occasional friends or relatives who may be in the area for work or school, and children continue to live with their parents through adulthood in order to support them through their old age.

As described earlier, Senegal is a “patrilocal” society where the responsibility of supporting one’s family tends to fall on sons and men (particularly first-born sons), as daughters move out upon marriage and new wives move in to be with their husbands. Daouda, for example,
(a returned migrant), described such a household dynamic prior to his migration to Spain and the consequent responsibility he felt to step into the role of primary provider:

I saw my father, how he was working so hard even while he was sick. Everybody in our family was struggling... You know, there’s this belief in Senegal — except here, it’s more than a belief, it’s a reality. As far as you are a man — and I don’t mean, like, a child — as far as you are a man, your parents expect more [financially] of you than of your sisters. Because we believe that if you are a girl, one day when you are older you will probably leave the family. But a son, you are the one who has to rescue your father, you have to protect him and take care of him when he is old. So, this is the belief. And at times... it’s painful when you see your dad still earning for you, your dad still being the breadwinner of the family. You know. Really, for me, it’s what pushed me. Really. They were suffering, and there was nobody there to help them. So I think, maybe me? I’ll try to be the one.34

As Daouda describes here, seeing one’s mother, wife, and elders work is a significant source of insecurity and discomfort for many men as it creates a sense of having “failed” one’s family in being unable to move from a dependent to a providing role, and as such, this felt shortcoming was often a significant aspect in men’s motivations to migrate to Europe.

Souleymane, who had never migrated outside of Senegal, nevertheless confessed to relating strongly to the emasculation migrants described in their inability to support their families:

When I was at the university I didn’t sleep. From morning to night, I never played or goofed off. I sacrificed all pleasure to study, you know, to succeed. Because I think of everything that my family has done for me, the sacrifices that they have endured... It’s true, they are my parents, so it is an obligation for them to do this. But us, our culture tells us that when we grow up, we should be grateful to our parents. It’s part of the culture. Today for example, if my mother called me on the phone to say, ‘I have such-and-such a problem, for example, I have a problem of 50,000 francs [CFA]. Souleymane dear, uh, can you help me? Even if you send me 15,000 francs, it’s okay?’ Me, if I can’t help her, I won’t sleep. It’s that, she hasn’t imposed on me, she’s just asked for help. ‘If you can’t help, it’s not worth the bother,’ she might say. And that’s why my mother never asks me for money. Yes, she never asks me for money. My father also, the same thing. Sometimes he calls me to say, Souleymane, listen, I’m going to send you

some money, and I say no, but he says “no, no, no, I insist, I’m going to send it to you...Sometimes one needs money.” Voilà, it’s because he knows a little bit about the situation I’ve come into. And he knows that never, never in the grandest of nevers, I will never call him to ask, “Papa, can I ask you to send me a little bit of money?” Because for me, today, it’s me who should be sending money to him, not the contrary. He’s done everything for me. He’s done everything, everything, everything for me, and me, I’m grateful to him for that. Sometimes, Maria, seriously... when I sleep, I—at night, I have these worries. I look at the sky and all night long I can’t sleep, because I’m thinking, I’m reflecting. I worry about it all.\textsuperscript{35}

For Souleymane, his inability to provide for his parents — in addition to continuing to rely on the support of his parents — indicated a serious and shameful male failing.

Moreover, not all parents are as forgiving as his; rather, many are highly demanding of their sons in a very blunt way. Marie Ndiaye, an elderly woman who regularly sold fruit to me on a corner near my apartment, felt that

young people are emigrating because they can’t bear to see their parents living in poverty. Especially mothers can make their sons feel very guilty. One might say, “please, son, help me buy something to eat.” Or “please, son, I don’t have enough money to buy rice for dinner, could you buy it for me tonight?”

The openness and directness of these kinds of demands puts the responsibility for one’s parents and family unquestionably on the shoulders of men, prodding and exacerbating what might otherwise have been latent guilt at their own recognition of their inability to take on this role.

In every single interview I conducted with a return migrant in my research, the men cited the overwhelming shame they felt in being unable to satisfy their parents’ desires. One migrant, Malick, recounted how he “did not know where to go or what to do with myself. I had no work to go out to. If I sat on the streets everyone will know that I have no work. But if I stay in my house, I will see how unhappy my mother is, I will see her poverty and I will remember how it is

\textsuperscript{35} Sembène, Souleymane. Unpublished interview. Dakar, 28 April 2013.
my fault that she is living so poorly.”36 As Malick’s concern suggests, the guilt and sense of emasculation felt when unable to provide for one’s family was particularly severe when the person men were “failing” was a woman — including mothers, wives, and sisters — and even more so when a woman began to work and act as provider in place of a man.

Souleymane felt so strongly that men should provide for women that he sometimes thought of himself as a “provider” even for women who weren’t relatives, and occasionally took on this role even when it was not an easy thing for him to do financially nor an inherent familial responsibility:

Men, they can’t ask for money, if they’re struggling with their family. Yes, for me, it’s really too hard to ask for money from a man. That’s why often, it’s the women who ask for money. They might say that “today, the kids aren’t going to eat. You need to help us.” So, okay, pa-ta-ta, I give it to her. Because when I look at her, I tell myself: that could be my mother. But alxamdulilaa/7 that my mother isn’t in this situation. You see. So I help her out. Because she’s the mother of a family, and you want to make sure that her kids eat. That means you have to do something, I have to do something, and if it’s not for her than it’s for her kids.38

Other migrants suggested that, while it isn’t necessarily a bad thing that women are working to earn their keep, there is something twisted about this development, and that they would prefer the traditional dynamic in which men were the chief earners and provided for their wives and families:

My mother, she would get up at four in the morning and wouldn’t come back until very late at night, in order to meet our needs. I saw this every day, how difficult it was for her. And I thought, maybe God has forgotten us. Because she should never have to work like that. It should be me working all day long.39

37 “Thank God” or “Thanks be to God”
In this instance, Malick’s mother took on the role that he, himself, was supposed to occupy, and it struck him as wrong — practically to the point of immorality — that a woman should have to work so hard to be self-sufficient and support a family. Here, his mother had assumed the traditionally male role of breadwinner, while Malick’s position seemed to be reduced to that of a dependent, such as a child or even a woman, and thus “destabilized” his position as a powerful male and center of the household.

Even when men were able to provide the basic necessities for their families, however, a need to provide more was always present, particularly in light of the “public eye” and community competition. Many individuals — migrant and non-migrant alike — described a “keeping up with the Joneses” type of dynamic, whereby there was a persistent pressure to show off one’s wealth, accomplishments, and material accumulation. More formally or academically known as “conspicuous consumption,” this involves the open, visible consumption of commodities and experiences considered greatly desirable (such as for having a high manufacturing cost, sale price, and/or scarcity in the market), to the effect of establishing a higher social status (Veblen 1973). Accordingly, when the immediate, subsistence needs of a family were satisfactorily met, men often found themselves under new pressures to support their family’s conspicuous consumption, thus elevating the prestige of their family in the eyes of their community. “A friend of mine, a neighbor, he went to Spain,” recounted a returned migrant named Cheikh. “When he came back, he bought a car, and built a new villa for his mother. My mother and his mother are good friends, and I know that she [my mother] was jealous of everything Madame Diouf had received from her son; she would tell me about it all the time.”

This pressure was even greater in polygamous families, where the distinct families of individual wives came into close contact and often experienced rivalries or competition. Polygamous families are inscribed within multiple hierarchies, including both internal family hierarchies that involve gendered and age roles, as well as cross-family hierarchies, where the first wife and her family theoretically hold the highest rank, followed by the second wife and her family, and so on. Ruptures or transgressions of these hierarchies, or even one’s mere subordinate place within the presumed rank, represent serious social concerns of public status and reputation, and it often falls on men (as the traditional breadwinners within the internal family structure) to negotiate these dynamics and elevate the social status and prestige of his mother and family. One migrant, Ibou, recounted such a situation:

You know, my father, he took two wives. My mother, she was the first wife. But his second wife — she doesn’t live with us — she won a tontine and she used it to send her son to Europe. I think he was in Mallorca. Anyways, he started to send her remittances, and also Western clothes and creams and jewelry. Well, my mother, she was so furious! She said that she was the first wife, and so it was embarrassing to be worse-off. What could I do? It was an embarrassment to her and to our family, for us to be living under them.

Although Ibou supported his mother and family and was able to meet their basic needs, he struggled to compete with comparatively significant remittances sent back to the family of his father’s second wife, a social rival of his own mother. Consequently, Ibou’s mother (and thus, his family) lost status in finding themselves poorer or less well-off than

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41 *tontine*: rotating savings and credit associations that have been a key feature of local, informal Senegalese finance since the late 1980s, and are almost exclusively dominated by women. Each week every member of the *tontine* gives a fixed amount (usually between 500 and 2000CFA) and on a monthly or more frequent basis, one member wins a significant portion of these contributions. This system allows members to periodically win large sums of money, which can then be used for higher-barrier investments rather than day-to-day expenses.

42 Western products — even fairly cheap and mundane ones — are often perceived as a sign of status in Senegal, in line with Veblen’s theory that rare or generally unattainable commodities are more prestigious. This idea is explored in greater length in a coming section of this chapter.

the second wife’s family, who theoretically should have been subordinate to Ibou’s
mother and family because they were “first.” This represented almost as serious a social
pressure and social failing to Ibou as an inability to provide for his family whatsoever,
and Ibou cited this pressure as the principal motivation for his ensuing irregular migration
to Spain: “It is my responsibility to support my family, so if my mother loses face, it
means I have not been a good enough man.”

As Ibou’s self-criticism demonstrates, the inability to provide for one’s family and
maintain their public reputation was thought of as a failure to fulfill the responsibilities of the
traditional male role, and consequently contributed to a “destabilized” masculinity in which this
shortcoming meant that one was not “a good enough man” — a concern that most returned
migrants described to me as either directly or indirectly contributing to their decision to take a
pirogue to Europe.

**Territorial destabilization: housing and public presence**

While a man’s ability to provide for others through the giving or distribution of financial
resources was a key component of his perceived masculinity, this identity was also strongly
related to spatial power. As described earlier in this chapter, one of the key developments that
shook men’s traditional holds on power was the nationalization of land in 1964 broke up
traditional patrilineage systems in which land was passed on from male landlords to men in the
next generations. Agricultural land had previously been a source of stable male power, but when
approximately 97% of this land transferred to the state, men no longer had the ability to pass this
resource on to sons. When this circumstance combined with the rural droughts of the 1970s and

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44 ibid.
80s and more and more rural Senegalese began leaving agriculture behind, it could be said that the dilemma of land or farm ownership shifted into urban areas, where it concerned ownership of smaller but still highly significant plots of urban space and structures (houses, shops, etc.).

The concern for having one’s own space, especially as a man, was first brought to my attention by Malick Diop, the first returned migrant I met during my time in Senegal. We were hanging out at his friend’s house in Dakar where Malick was living for the time being, sleeping

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45 See “Agricultural droughts and Senegal’s ‘rural exodus’” in Chapter 2
46 At the very least, urban housing presents a kind of parallel to rural land ownership that may help to understand the sense of loss men felt when their land was nationalized. However, men also built houses on rural farmland, and (of course) invested resourced in building houses long before the droughts of the 1970s and 80s, which speaks to the enduring and distinct significance of this activity – certainly a fascinating research topic for another time!
on a cot set up for him on the rooftop. While talking about his experiences in migrating to Spain and the pressures he faced before he left, he pointed across the street to a building several stories taller than the one we were on, and which had tidy-looking balconies and a fresh coat of tan paint. “Every morning when I wake up, that house is the first thing I see,” he told me. “A migrant built it — well, his family built it with the money he sent them from Spain.”

For Malick and other men, home ownership is a hugely significant indication of adulthood and masculinity, marking a departure from being a dependent member of one’s blood-family to the point at which one is able to start building a family of one’s own. Moreover, the ability to manage the costs of house construction equally implies that one is financially strong enough to support a family’s more immediate needs, and thus indirectly contributes to the reputation of men being secure enough to act as family providers (in this case, providing not only food and daily necessities, but also shelter). As Caroline Melly writes, building a house allows for “a complete reorientation of capital, priorities, and expectations,” such that the owner can

Figure 3.2 — A house under construction in Saint Louis, Senegal.
begin to make projections about the future growth of his family rather than being preoccupied with “daily expenses and ‘getting by’” (Melly 2010:55). The construction of a house is then understood as a mature investment and a sign that it will eventually become a home, filled with a family of one’s own; it also bears the linked assumption that he who builds the house will eventually be a (or the) dominant member of that space. It is, as Melly says, a way by which men and their families “staked claim to future economic and social presence in the city” (ibid.).

For men who were already struggling to make even the most basic ends meet, the idea of building a house is often little more than a dream or a far-off possibility, and yet, they are constantly reminded of their inability to engage in this practice by the presence of houses being built all around them by other people — many of them migrants. Melly provides an excellent articulation of this dynamic with the notion of “inside-out houses,” in which housing construction serves as a visible reminder to urban residents of the growing (or, in an equally large number of cases, halted) finances of migrants abroad. The “insides” of these houses “are not private or contained but rather spill into public spaces, where they are the focus of intense scrutiny and speculation” and have “profound impacts... on imaginations and experiences of the city as a shared space” (Melly 2010:38). For poor men in Dakar, these house construction projects are a constant reminder of that which they cannot have: the house itself, but also the family to put in it and the wealth that underlies them both. Moreover, the proliferation of migrant-built houses and structures (including stores, apartments, and even mosques) suggests that poor Dakarois are being left out of a city increasingly built by other men in other countries, such that “building a house emerges not so much as a call by migrants for visibility and inclusion, but rather as a prerequisite for male urban belonging and individualized participation, one that is available only to those who have left” (ibid., 39).
Thus, in the same way that migrant men’s construction of houses is a visual sign to the urban Dakar public of their growing wealth, power, and stature abroad, the lack of housing signified the opposite: one’s continuing poverty and social insignificance at a point when one “being a good man” entails stepping into a position of providing for others, paying back favors and generosity, and starting one’s own family. As, Cheikh, a friend and returned migrant, quipped to me once, “you can’t be borom kër if you don’t have a kër!” (“you can’t be the master of your house if you don’t have a house at all!”). As housing both symbolized and enabled much of these classic achievements of adult manhood, the fact that many migrants in Europe seemed to succeed at funding house construction in Dakar made the idea of migrating to Spain ever more tempting for young men unsure of their opportunities in Senegal and eager to establish themselves both socially and spatially in their communities.

Destabilized relationships: Crises of courtship and marriage

Finally, and well interwoven with the other causes of “destabilized masculinities” described heretofore, men’s financial struggles also led to difficulties in finding or holding onto a girlfriend or wife, and thus challenged their masculinities in the most explicitly gendered way — through the judgments and rejection passed over them by members of the other sex. Just as the pressure to provide for family members (and particularly women) pronounced the guilt and insecurity many men felt regarding their financial capabilities, so too did this pressure exist in the case of courtship. Young women often place demands on men for money and gifts in a similar way to that of men’s mothers, but the stakes in a courtship situation are different because the requests for money and gifts may be dangled as a prerequisite for marriage. Beth Buggenhagen, for example, notes some Senegalese men’s allegations that “young women will
ignore a suitor who is not an international trader; they are charged with having a dominant interest in the affluence and social position that such marriages promise” (Buggenhagen 2012:131). This is certainly exaggerated in instances where women are not heavily involved in income-generating labor, but even where they are working and can more or less provide for themselves, having a wealthy boyfriend or husband is seen as a gateway to the riches that will enhance women’s social status.

Many of my male friends reiterated this allegation at one point or another, such as a friend, Thomas, who once bemoaned that “only the rich guys get the pretty girls. You know, I may be nice and intelligent and hard-working, but if I can’t buy her lots of gifts and clothes and take her out to eat, she’ll leave me in a second for someone who can.” Cheikh similarly recounted the following story, which he found at once hilarious and tragic:

I was dating a girl, Rama, once. She was a really beautiful girl, and from a good family. I was in love with her, and I did everything I could for her! I cooked, I bought her clothes. I went to see her one time while it was raining and I was soaked through! I thought we were getting along okay, but then one day she broke up with me for no reason. I was heartbroken! I kept calling her and calling her, no answer. Well, two weeks later, I saw her again, and she was with a migrant to Barcelona! [shaking head] Barcelona, it stole my girlfriend! Mariama, I am sorry to say this, but Senegalese women are crazy. They’re crazy! Trying to win over a woman is a long trial of buying them presents, doing them little favors, doing them big favors. They want to be treated like queens. We, we here in
Dakar — it’s hard to make enough money to keep up with people who can send their wives euros and Gucci bags. I swear to God, I swear I did everything right, but it is never enough!  

The threat of having one’s girlfriend “stolen” by migrants was one with which most young men were familiar and could relate a similar story. In Cheikh’s case and that of others, his pride and sense of masculinity were injured not only by the abrupt break-up with Rama, a girl for whom he was “doing everything,” but were further insulted by his rapid replacement by a migrant in Barcelona. In the inevitable comparisons he made between himself and the new boyfriend, he appeared to be the inferior or less desirable boyfriend, apparently for his lack of resources with which to bestow lavish gifts on Rama.

To be fair, relationships such as courtship or marriage between men and women are of a reciprocal, give-and-take nature. Having a wife or girlfriend certainly contributes to a man’s social status and reputation — and this is primarily what is the focus of this thesis — but so, too, is women’s standing tied to men. While many men complained about unending demands of women and their requirements for all kinds of expensive and “impractical” gifts, these items play an important role in the construction of women’s social status. As Buggenhagen writes, the remittance of foreign (especially European or American) products such as “cosmetic products, cloth, and accessories […] play into the promotion of female beauty as a social value and which women circulate as an important form of social relations. [Migrants] thus provide both the means for and the forms of new economies of prestige” (Buggenhagen 2012:141). Women’s status (especially urban women’s status) is thus in many ways dependent on their own conspicuous consumption, and their conspicuous consumption is dependent on their access to resources (often through a migrant boyfriend or husband).

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and occasionally found myself enabling others’ conspicuous consumption to their social advantage. When my parents came to visit me for a week, they gave my host sisters a package of highly coveted natural hair extensions from the US; one sister, Eveline, returned from work gushing to me about how her friends were so impressed with the hair quality and were jealous of her fortune to have received the gift. Accordingly, repeated transactions like this for families with members living abroad present an avenue for women to distinguish themselves socially. Senegalese women enjoy the reflected glory of migrants in Europe, and their receipt of foreign goods breeds a certain envy — especially among close social relations such as friends, neighbors, and in-laws — that fuels the desire to have a social and material connection to an external or additional source of wealth.

While this discussion of women’s status in Dakar may read as somewhat of a digression from the key issue under question in this chapter and section — men’s destabilized masculinities —

\[48\] Moments like these were some of the instances in I was most aware —sometimes most uncomfortably aware — of my positionality in this research: my situation as a wealthy American was undoubtedly factored into most of my relationships, and in some cases (such as this one), served to privilege some individuals socially. I was necessarily a player in schemas of wealth and prestige in this way, at the same time that I was studying them. The week of my parents’ visit was one of significant conflict for me, as I debated whether it was better to play down gift-giving, therefore minimizing apparent differences in privilege, or to give many gifts, as a sincere display of gratitude to my family (and of which my American family was perfectly capable, and my host family already aware that these were not unreasonable things for my parents to bring). I worried that my parents’ visit would jeopardized the dynamic of many of the relations I had built up until that point, in which I had tried to live as my informants lived or otherwise maintain a neutral persona: not spending lavishly and not wearing clothing or other items that were extremely visible signs of wealth and privilege. The presence of my parents, and the visibility of their much more extravagant spending habits, was conflicting for me at times, as I worried that it might create a barrier between me and the poorer individuals with whom I was working, in addition to actively and directly contributing to the class stratification. There is no easy “fix” or conclusion to this conflict — it is the simple dilemma of one’s positionality that all anthropologists must confront — so I bring attention to it here not to resolve it, but rather to make more transparent the complicated intersections of race, class, and citizenship that necessarily influenced my relationships and research.
— women’s social reputation in Dakar bears relevance here as it feeds reciprocally back into men’s status and reputation. Given that men are assumed to be their wives’ and girlfriends’ providers, a well-dressed, well-groomed, and generally well-reputed woman consequently glorifies her boyfriend or husband as well. Thus men’s status rests not only on having the capability to “win over” a woman, but also on his ability to pamper and indulge her — both of which seem to come down to financial resources, the likes of which are increasingly assumed only to be attainable in Europe or other industrialized countries. Further, Buggenhagen describes some women as specifically desiring migrant husbands, as this created a dynamic for wives of greater liberty than would be possible if their husbands remained with them in Senegal.

Buggenhagen writes:

> [some] young women contend that they prize unions with migrants because they allow for more autonomy since the husband is often away and the wife is able to put his remittances, which arrive monthly, to her own use; the possibility of control over remittances of cash and goods (such as cloth and cosmetic products) is appealing in the context of an inadequate local economy (Buggenhagen 2012:131).

In this sense, migrant men hold a particular, if ironic, advantage over non-migrant men, with which even a man who is able to pamper his wife or girlfriend from the vantage point of Dakar cannot compete.

> It should be noted that this analysis paints a rather pessimistic picture of romance in Senegal; surely, not all relationships are driven purely by material means even if this may be a recurring theme in both men’s and women’s accounts. What is more important here, however, are the perceptions, ideas, and perhaps exaggerated stereotypes that men formed about what would be necessary to be a more eligible bachelor, and likewise how their lack of a wife or girlfriend might also be judged by others as an indication of those men’s flaws or shortcomings. Though I remain optimistic that most of the returned migrants with whom I spoke would have
found wives without ever having migrated, their pessimism in this respect contributed to the attitude in which migration seemed to be a panacea as well as the only possible solution for a variety of struggles. Due to innumerable stories and experiences like those of Cheikh, many men felt that the only way to remain a competitive candidate for a good marriage was to go abroad and make a fortune there, after which they could come back to Senegal having “proven” themselves, ideally also with a small fortune to spend on their wives and families.

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In response to post-colonial reforms that collided inopportunely with a series of economic crises, many men found themselves facing a crisis of masculinity, or perhaps more accurately, a crisis of patriarchy, in the latter half of the 20th century. This created intense feelings of destabilization as men saw their traditional social power — which was founded in the reliance of others on men for their financial strength — crumble, and they thereby became “dependent on their dependents” (Perry 2005:209). Suffering under guilt and shame from their dependence on charity; from seeing their mothers and elders work in their place to support their families; from their lack of housing and faltering sense of urban belonging; and from the difficulty of or inability to participate in expensive courtship affairs, men sought new, reliable sources of income and social prestige that would help to assuage these overwhelming social anxieties.

In pursuit of a role model: Senegalese archetypes of male “success”

The existence and particular forms of men’s destabilized masculinities were not new at the point that stories of Barça/Barzakh migrations began flooding newspapers and informal conversations. Rather, these destabilizations represent insecurities that men have constantly negotiated at least since the exit of French colonials, and most certainly prior to this point, as well. Moreover, Senegalese migrations of all kinds have taken place for centuries with a strong
history of positive outcomes, and yet migration has not always been idealized as the route to wealth, success, and social prestige in the way that is has been in the past decade. Rather, I argue that the crisis of destabilized masculinities caused men to elevate and appropriate a series of male models of success that each seemed to respond to uncertainties as to how and where one could attain the wealth and status necessary to “be a good man” and improve one’s position in society. In particular, I examine the historical models of the “educated public servant” embodied by Léopold Sédar Senghor, the “self-made man” embodied by the wrestler Tyson (Mohammed Ndao), and the “international entrepreneur” represented more generally by modou-modou migrants. While all of these models have coexisted in time and none of them were universally glorified, I argue that general popular interest in a given model has shifted from one to next, most recently settling on migratory models of success out of which Barça/Barzakh migrations came.

*Léopold Sédar Senghor: the educated public servant*

Until the 1990s, notions of prestige largely seemed to take cue from values exhorted throughout French colonialism, particularly privileging knowledge and education as a key to success and social prestige. As Christine Ludl writes in her work on representations of success in Senegal, these preferences stemmed from a democratic discourse formulated by the country’s elite partly before, and mainly after independence. In this context, education, symbolized by [a] diploma, French language, and a Western lifestyle, was a powerful sign of social distinction. It gave access to political power and to employment within the administration that was very much sought-after but limited to a small elite as it required access to the (neo)colonial educational system and a privileged position within the social hierarchy. (Ludl 2008:102)
While this mode of success was certainly modeled by any number of French colonial administrators and was inculcated as a mentality in the proliferation of schools and formal education, Senegal’s first president Léopold Sédar Senghor, represented a particularly glorified representation of the possibilities for African “ascendance” through education (Havard 2001:63).

Still known today as one of the preeminent African intellectuals of the 20th century and an icon of African liberation struggles, Senghor’s life was one of particular academic and political achievement. He was notably the only African to graduate from the French lycée (secondary school) in Dakar in 1928, after which he went on to an extensive formal education over the course of 16 years at various prestigious institutions in France. His poetry and other literature won him world renown, and coincided with his entrance into Senegalese politics. Senghor’s ascension to not only the highest office in Senegal — President of the Republic — but also the enormous symbolism of his being the first president in an independent Senegal, fashioned him into a triumphant figure and a model for the aspirations of other Senegalese for a similar (if not quite so extreme) ascension in status and prestige, even though Senghor’s time in power did not radically challenge the policies, institutions, and values of the preceding colonial period.

In this sense — and in a newly independent Senegal where people were optimistic that the official end of colonialism would bring significant change to Senegalese life — a university (or otherwise “hearty”) education was perceived as the primary necessity to finding a reliable and salaried job, potentially with future opportunities to distinguish oneself professionally. Moreover, in line was the model Senghor set through his education and ensuing political career and advocacy, educated public servants were seen as the people responsible for “lifting Senegal
up” in the wake of colonial rule, and thus the role was also accorded prestige for its significance in contributing to the political greatness of the country.

Figure 3.4 Students at the Université de Cheikh Anta Diop, the largest university in Dakar

“Tyson”: the self-made man

The hope and potential for African ascension that Senghor represented began to wane shortly after he selected his successor, Abdou Diouf, and left office in 1981. Diouf’s presidency coincided with a series of national crises, such as the agricultural devastation caused by severe droughts, economic turbulence ensuing from the implementation of structural adjustment programs, and a “failing educational system [which] slowly eradicated the exclusiveness of education and knowledge as a way to success and social prestige” (Ludl 2008:102).\(^{49}\) Dissatisfaction with Diouf’s government and growing frustration with entrenched social hierarchies accordingly gave rise to new notions of success and how to succeed, largely driven by urban youth.

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\(^{49}\) See political/economic timeline on pgs. vii-viii and more detailed description in Chapter 2
This change in spirit, commonly referred to as the *bul faale* movement, emphasized individuation, youth emancipation, and political change.\(^5\) Rap emerged as an extremely popular musical form for its promotion of African solidarity and radical critiques of politics, religious hypocrisy, and inequality and injustice in Senegalese society, such that the more radical and far-reaching the critique a rap artist or group gave of government and social structures, the more popular they were likely to be (Havard 2001). Out of these ideals and critiques emerged a new model suggesting that all one needed to succeed was “individual effort and hard work, and therefore [one] can do without the social hierarchies and money, which used to limit access to social prestige to a small elite. In other words, the *bul faale* movement ‘democratized’ success that was now within everyone’s reach” (Ludl 2008:103). Just as Senghor served as a figurehead for post-colonial success after independence, the *bul faale* movement latched onto its own idols, notably the wrestler Mohammed Ndao, who symbolically called himself “Tyson” after the American wrestling champion Mike Tyson. In Jean-François Havard’s analysis of the *bul faale* ethos, he discusses how Tyson became an important icon of the youth generation and an emblem of success through individual effort and persistence, and how this new representation of success drew heavily upon American ideology:

Born of a common family, [N dao] had to stop his studies before obtaining his baccalaureate and he found himself unemployed, like all stuck youths of his generation. Profoundly influenced by myths driven by the American “self-made man” ideology, M. N dao was determined to strong-hand his destiny… Without the fortune of “entryways” into the field of wrestling,\(^5\) Mohammed N dao chose instead to train alone, constructing his own dumbbells with cans, and iron bar, and some cement. From his first success, Tyson associated himself with *bul faale* — “don’t worry!” — which was for him a response to everyone who attempted to

\(^{50}\) The term *bul faale* is Wolof, and roughly translates to “whatever,” “don’t worry,” or “I don’t care.” The term was popularized and adopted as the name of the social movement after the rap group Positive Black Soul released an album under that title in 1994.

\(^{51}\) Senegalese wrestling often necessitates an elite social status and great wealth in order to fund training at private wrestling clubs known for producing champions.
obstruct his path. He strove to promote the image of a young man having succeeded solely through his own hard work and without worrying about the prejudices of his elders... He responded first of all to the attractive effect that an idealized Black American success had on Senegalese youth — of course, calling himself Tyson in reference to the Black American boxer of the same name... to solidify his references, he adopted the habit of entering the wrestling arena wrapped in the American Stars and Stripes. (Havard 2001:66-7)

In addition to the interest Tyson holds as an embodiment of the values of individual effort and persistence that characterized the bul faale movement, his story is also notable for its demonstration of growing esteem for and appropriation of Western or American popular culture and ideology. The bul faale movement bears unmistakable similarities to the narrative of the “American dream,” and in the case of Tyson, explicit valorization of American icons like Mike Tyson and the American flag, as well as the adoption of other aspects of American culture, such as rap music and western clothing.

However, in contrast to these preferences being contradictory to the simultaneously professed vision of African solidarity and strength, these two concepts should be understood as “a logic of reformulation and hybridization” (Havard 2001:73), resulting from both increased contact with “external” societies through radio, television, news, international trade and globalization. Speaking to this “recycling” of identities, Havard writes

![Figure 3.5 "Tyson" (Mohammed Ndao) at a wrestling match. (Photo courtesy of seneweb.com)](image-url)
that

The figure-type of a bul faale youth is thus a social hybrid who we can situate, 
grosso modo, between an Islamo-Wolof model and an idealization of Black 
Americans, between Islamic modesty and a attempt at celebration of the body, 
between Cheikh Amadou Bamba and Tyson. The bul faale youth also affirms 
emancipatory desire which returns to the contemporary dynamics of individuation 
in urban Africa, at the same time as the search for new symbolic families by way 
of dahiras but also through rap groups, the neighborhood, or the ASC (the Sports 
and Cultural Association). To do this, the bul faale youth had to have a 
remarkable innovative capacity. These figures are thus not dominated but rather 
the result of an identity reconstruction effort that responds to the multifaceted 
crisis affecting the country since some fifteen years ago (ibid.)

In contrast to preceding models of success that assimilated and followed from values expounded 
during the colonial era, the bul faale movement involved a creative, deliberate choosing and 
synthesis of ideas and trends from both African and Western societies. The result glorified 
Africanism but also challenged the injustices and inequalities internal to Senegalese politics and 
society, promoting success based on individual work in response to disillusionment with the 
inaccessibility of many institutionalized opportunities for advancement.

Modou-modou traders: the international entrepreneurs

Just as optimism around the possibility for prestigious professional success under the 
Senghorian model began to seem idealistic and infeasible with time, so too did the hope and 
momentum of the bul faale movement began to wane. Beliefs that politics could be improved 
through grassroots political activism faded into disappointment as promising political candidates 
appeared to be more of the same once in office. While listening to my Senegalese host brother, 
Émile, talk about problems in Senegalese politics one day, I joked that he should run for office 
himself. “No, no, no,” he said, shaking his head. “Everyone here is the same, it doesn’t matter 
who runs. As soon as you’re presented with the opportunity to line your pockets, you do! At
first just a little here and there, but then more and more. You could be the most moral
Senegalese in the country, but once you’re in politics it’s hard to resist.”

Moreover, as with the American dream in the United States, many Senegalese found the realization of their self-made aspirations to be much more elusive than they had expected based on representations of this ascension such as that of Tyson. Many lost hope that their economic or social ambitions were attainable in Senegal, prompting the idea that to be Senegalese in Senegal is to be unable to have what one wants, such that “one is obligated to go search for it elsewhere” (Ludl 2008:104).

This new wave in popular thought coincided with the increasingly visible success of one particular subset of “self-made men”: international traders known as modou-modou, who tended to come from poor or rural areas and be relatively uneducated, but achieved significant economic gains through their international trading affairs (Ludl 2008, Havard 2001, Banégas and Warnier 2001). Many modou-modou traders were able to find their way abroad through familial connections or through Islamic dahiras, and capitalized on growing Senegalese demand for Western products by buying European products and reselling them in Senegal, and conversely by selling Senegalese wares in Europe. The modou-modou were “archetypes of the economy of getting by” (Banégas and Warnier 2001:8) and exemplified the dream of “making it” or becoming rich solely through one’s sheer cunning and business savviness. Moreover, accompanying their economic success was an “ostentatious” (or conspicuous) fashion of consumption as well as an image of adventure as a result of their travels to and across Europe on business. These representations of modou-modou life quickly embedded themselves in the Senegalese imaginary, especially given modou-modou traders’ ability to thrive in a state of legal

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53 Even Tyson’s popularity began to fade, particularly after he was seen with a candidate of the Parti Socialiste, which had been rejected by bul faale youth; Tyson was consequently rejected as a traitor of the bul faale movement for which he had become a key symbol. (Fall 2000)
ambiguity and their apparent “ease in moving within the commercial and financial fluxes of
globalization” (ibid.).

In the wake of new frustrations and disillusionment following from the *bul faale*
movement, which many supporters had lauded as an attempt to resolve Senegalese or African
struggles by working through them “at home,” the possibilities for attaining significant “success”
within Senegal looked increasingly dim. In this sense migration arose as the new key to wealth
and prestige, drawing on the already-established success of *modou-modou* traders. This shift
represented not only men’s persistent struggle to overcome structural obstacles, but also
indicates a development in people’s mentality about and expectations for success formulated
during the *bul faale* movement. Christine Ludl’s work on changing representations of success
details three of these, specifically that 1) people conceived of both their aspirations and what
they think their actual situation offers to realize them as extremes; 2) that people aimed to
achieve these high end goals very quickly and at all costs; and 3) that when confronted with
difficulties, migration seemed to be the first and only solution (Ludl 2008). This mentality is
perhaps a logical fit with the decades of adverse conditions that Senegalese men had
experienced, in which no other rational or tempered approaches to success — education, hard
work, political advocacy, etc. — seemed to lead them anywhere or provide them with significant
progress toward their goal, consequently causing them to see their situation as one which could
only be resolved through extreme and radical action.

**Conclusion**

The idea of “gender” is often instinctively taken to refer to women — especially in
“developing” countries like Senegal where innumerable NGOs provide services to support
women’s rights, education, economic activities, and general “empowerment.” Without intending to dismiss the importance of supporting women’s activities or the various significant forms of oppression that Senegalese women encounter, I hope to bring light to the ways in which upsetting patriarchal traditions have significant, harmful repercussions for men. Men’s loss of spatial sites of power and the erosion of their bases of financial security effectively destabilized their masculinities, in that men consequently struggled to fulfill many of the traditional performances of manhood including showing generosity and wealth through exchanges of teranga; acting as “breadwinner” for one’s family and holding up their social reputation; building a house where one could start one’s own family; and “winning over” and taking care of a girlfriend and eventually a wife.

These struggles and destabilizations are in part directly caused by colonial and neocolonial policies, in that national economic changes under structural adjustment programs played a significant role in the decay of men’s financial opportunities and supports, and the nationalization of land that upset traditional strongholds of male power was a response to the need to reorganize national resources in response to colonial policies. However, the effect of colonialisation also plays a subtler role in this case, such as the way in which French and European values seeped into Senegalese constructions of “success,” and how desire for European goods created additional demands for men to fulfill in satisfying their families and wives. In this respect, Keya Ganguly’s assertion that “disambiguating the past permits people to make sense of uncertainties in the present” (Ganguly 1992:32) is relevant in its reminder that colonial pasts are inextricably intertwined with the dilemmas of the “post-colonial” present, and that modern-day struggles in former colonies are not autonomous from former modes of oppression even though the present form may appear dramatically different.
It’s also worth considering whether the move toward Barça/Barzakh migration — even after the danger of the journey and the difficulty of finding work abroad had become well-known — represented to some degree an attempt to escape the suffocating social environment where men not only experienced constant judgment by others, but also personally felt immense shame and guilt in their struggles to meet their families’ and communities’ expectations for them. As many returned migrants told me, they “couldn’t bear” to see their mothers, sisters, and wives work in their place, neither could they bear the disgrace of being dependent on others as fully grown men. This possibility somewhat clarifies the notion of “Barça walla Barzakh,” or “Barcelona or Death”: the phrase can be taken as a resignation to leave Dakar by whatever means possible, such that if one makes it abroad one is lucky, but dying at sea is still preferable to being alive to a figurative, social death as a man in Senegal.

However, though some men may have settled on migration as a manner of addressing or escaping social pressures and “failures” of masculinity, the act of their migration also generated new dilemmas, such that they now faced the struggle of asserting their masculinity from a distance. Instead of asserting their role as “breadwinner” as present human beings, their position in the home was replaced with the presence of liquid resources, and, in some cases, the gradual construction of houses. As such, the social pressures to achieve economic security and reassert one’s masculinity prompted men to migrate, but in migrating, men confronted entirely new predicaments of masculinity and continued to find their savings rapidly used up by anyone they attempted to support.
Chapter Four

“Poco poco es nada”: Rites of return and slippery success in Barça/Barzakh migrations

Early the spring of 2013, I was on a rickety ndiaga ndiaye bus, crammed between two of my colleagues from RADDHO — Souleymane, the immigration project’s unofficial director, and a young Spanish woman named Pamela who had come to work with migrants in Dakar after having worked with primarily West African migrants in Madrid. She had received a report from a Spanish organization that there had been a mass deportation of African migrants two days earlier, and was in touch with one of the migrants who had been on the plane.

“He’s not too well,” Pamela shouted over the bus din, in heavily Spanish-accented French. “He’s not too well in the head, that’s why we’re visiting him in the hospital.”

When we arrived in Guediawaye, a poor and dusty suburb of Dakar, we got off at an unmarked stop and began asking street vendors for directions to the hospital, chatting with people along the way and quickly accruing a small following of children curious about the two toubabs (foreigners) in a region well off the beaten tourist path. The clinic was a small, open-air cinderblock building like the others around it, painted with a light blue that was peeling away to show the grey concrete beneath. A staff worker met us at the door, leading us past a crowd of mostly elder women sitting around the floor and into a small adjunct room, where Alpha sat on a bed with a plastic covered mattress, the sole furniture in the room aside from a few plastic folding chairs and a basic writing desk. The staff member told Alpha who we were, and Alpha nodded slowly, expressionless and staring out the small window.


54 Phrases for “how are you?” in Spanish and Wolof, respectively.
Alpha shrugged. “Mangiy fii rekk.” This is the standard response in Wolof to “how are you,” but in Alpha’s case, its literal translation was particularly significant: “I’m here.”

Alpha had been in Spain for the past seven years, first arriving in Europe in 2006 on a pirogue that had departed from Senegal. He worked several jobs in the informal sector there over this time, most recently selling CDs on the street in Oviedo, Spain. Three weeks earlier, he had been stopped by police on the street, who, finding Alpha undocumented, arrested him and sent him to a detention center in Madrid. He had been stopped and detained once before, but was let go after three days without explanation; this time, he wasn’t so lucky.

Alpha was shaking his head, brow furrowed. “You know, the rule is that they’re allowed to hold you for forty days. If you’re still there after forty days, they have to let you go. That’s the law. Well, I was there for two weeks. One day, and officer came up to me in the detention center and he told me that my plane — my plane to Senegal — was leaving today. I couldn’t believe it. So I took a knife out that a friend of mine had and I did this.” Turning the inside of his left arm to us, Alpha revealed raw wounds all over his left arm, including a deep cut across his palm and a thin, bright pink cut from his wrist to his elbow, with dots along the side where it had been stitched together. Pamela took Alpha’s arm to examine the cuts, and he winced despite her gentle touch.

“Someone told me that if it’s clear you’re not completely sane, if it’s clear you’re not healthy, they can’t deport you. They didn’t care though. I did everything I could to not be deported but they didn’t care.”

Souleymane and Pamela continued to ask Alpha questions about his situation in a confusing whirlwind of French, Spanish, and Wolof. Alpha furrowed his brow and would cringe
when giving his short, pessimistic answers, as if experiencing pain even in responding, shifting in and out of a dreary, glazed-over state.

“Alpha, it’s going to be okay,” Pamela reassured him in Spanish. “Poco a poco.”

Alpha started banging his head lightly against the wall, protesting, “poco poco es nada. Poco poco es nada.”

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Alpha’s refusal of Pamela’s comfort and advice — “take things one step at a time” — speaks to the overwhelming sense of defeat that he felt in this moment, and that which many other migrants similarly described as feeling upon their deportations. The temperedness of the suggestion to look at the situation “little by little” jarred with the severity of the change in migrants’ lives marked by deportation, as well as the enormity of the loss that deportation involves. However, Alpha’s lack of consolation in the notion of “poco a poco” may also have come from the possibility that his deportation had a more decisive meaning than that of a basic setback, and was not something that he felt could be resolved simply through slow, hard work.

In particular, the experience of return for Barça/Barzakh migrants is a point of significant judgment and scrutiny as the end of a rite of passage. In Arnold van Gennep’s foundational text, The Rites of Passage, he introduces the theory of rites of passage as a critical experience of socialization that marks a person’s transition from one status to another. A “complete” rite of passage involves three distinct stages, each imbued with their own traditions and processes, labeled by van Gennep as rites of separation, rites of transition, and rites of incorporation (van Gennep 1960). In the first stage (the separation), the one’s ties to his or her familiar environment and former role are abruptly ruptured, resulting in the loss of the identity associated with this...

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55 Poco a poco: “step by step” / poco poco es nada: “‘step by step’ is nothing.”
former self. In the second stage (the liminal stage), one undergoes a transition, but rests in an ambiguous and isolated state, and not yet re-incorporated into any particular community. In the final stage of incorporation, the individual moves out of isolation and back into his or her community, only now with a new identity, such as a new position in the social hierarchy. Moreover, van Gennep writes that such rites are nearly always also “identified with a territorial passage, such as the entrance into a village or a house, the movement from one room to another, or the crossing of streets and squares… Change of social categories involves a change of residence, and this fact is expressed by the rites in their various forms” (ibid., 192). Examples of rites involving these stages are countless, including weddings, graduations, pregnancies, bat mitzvahs, debutante balls, baptisms, and, pertinent for this analysis, migrations.

The first time it occurred to me to think of Barça/Barzakh migrations in the frame of rites of passage, a hundred different pieces suddenly fell into place. Not only does migration clearly follow the conventional stages of a rite of passage, but it also is a process that engenders significant change in one’s identity and social status. Among Senegalese men, many left for Spain hoping that migration would enable their rise in Senegalese social hierarchies, and others left because they increasingly saw migration as the only mode through which this transition could happen. In the idea of Barcelona, migrants saw the promise of a liminal realm from which they would triumphantly return to Senegal as esteemed men — household champions and exemplars of masculinity. However, in the sense that migration as a whole operates as a rite of passage and return migration represents a rite of (re-)incorporation, both must be understood as performative ceremonies in which the rite is completed through the satisfactory demonstration of certain expectations. In the same way that weddings, baptisms, graduations, and other rites of passage all involve ceremonies in which one’s transition in status is completed as a public or
semi-public spectacle, return migration is also a performative event in which migrants must prove their satisfactory fulfillment of the expectations of migratory rites.

In this regard, return migration tends to involve black-and-white judgments of migrants as either having “succeeded” or “failed.” This language was employed unanimously among everyone I interviewed or talked with on this matter, despite the enormous range and diversity of individual migrants’ experiences, achievements, and subjective feelings about migration, and expectations for their trip. Alpha’s insistence that “poco poco es nada” (“step by step’ means nothing”) speaks to this strict dichotomy, in that one either returns “successful” or “failed” and very little if any “gray” middle ground exists. In this chapter, I examine the ways in which both deported migrants and voluntarily-returned migrants experienced, struggled with, and negotiated the typically unequivocal judgments passed on them by their community members, particularly as measured by migrants’ abilities to perform certain expectations such as enriching one’s family, building a house, and getting married. Ultimately, returned migrants’ experiences suggest that “success” by these measures is a slippery status to achieve and maintain, even for those who appear “successful” at first. Consequently, a true or definitive conclusion to migration through reincorporation into one’s community is highly elusive, often resulting in migrants’ feelings of unsettlement or further migrations in attempts to find resolution.

**Rites of Return: the family-house-wife complex**

While van Gennep’s *The Rites of Passage* tends to be held up as the first and foundational text on rites of passage, countless other sociologists, anthropologists, and even scholars from other disciplines have specified his theories with case studies relating to distinct practices of and variations on such rites. Of interest for this chapter is O. Alexander Miller’s
work Migration Can Fall Apart, a study on the experiences of return for Jamaican emigrants. For Miller, social expectations for migratory rites of passage come from the assumption that migrants will be transformed in an upwardly-mobile way during their time abroad, particularly given their contact with and access to the greater social and financial capital available there (thus including not only liquid wages from work, but also opportunities to get job training or a better education, allowing the migrant to become a more skilled and versatile member of society).

To complete one’s rite of passage, migrants must demonstrate their ability to perform a particular set of feats more or less immediately upon return (and even while abroad, as some of the following cases will demonstrate). Specifically, these expectations demand that migrants lift up their immediate family financially and socially, construct a house for themselves or their family, and get married and start a family of their own. Both migrants and non-migrant Senegalese also talked about buying a car as an element of success, but this is a much rarer achievement and is less crucial to one’s status than having a well-off family, a house, and a wife. I describe these expectations in terms of a family-house-wife complex: a tri-partite system of visible, public performances through which migrants’ rite of passage is successfully completed. It is no coincidence that these expectations are closely related to the crises of masculinity described in the preceding chapter. In the sense that destabilized masculinities derive from economic struggles, and migrations to Europe were an attempt to address both of these dilemmas at once, the “resolution” of migration is necessarily one that demonstrates both economic and masculine strength (themselves already tightly associated).

Miller argues that “in the absence of material resources to complete rites of return passage which are necessary for negotiating re-entry into Jamaican life,” a returned migrant might reasonably continue to make do by relying on or sharing the resources of others such as
family or friends; however, this does “not meet the community’s standard for reacceptance into community life” (Miller 2008:69). This is to say that in going abroad, migrants enter a new field of raised social expectations and standards, such that even by experiencing no real change in their situation in Senegal, migrants are considered failures in relation to the new potential for achievement by which they are judged. For example, the construction of houses morphed from a favorable side-effect of migrant wealth and remittances into a necessary performance required in order to satisfactorily fulfill community expectations (expectations that evolved out of such side-effects). In this sense, return migration became a process of evaluation that in many ways simplified migrants’ complex experiences to the assessment of three standard performances implicated in the family-house-wife complex; migrants who were unable to visibly satisfy these expectations were judged “failures” despite other abstract or past accomplishments, and migrants who were able to perform these rites were judged “successful” regardless of the depth or sustainability of their performance.

Dealing with deportation: experiences of “failure” among forcibly returned migrants

“Starting from zero” and faltering performances of return

Given the understanding of return migration as a performative rite in which visible, public displays of one’s advancement and new (presumably higher) status are central to meeting social expectations, one of the first and most palpable struggles that forcibly deported migrants confront is that they often return with nothing. Migrants will often be “picked up” by immigration control officers in Europe while on the street or at work, and consequently have no opportunity to return to where they are living to collect their belongings. For migrants who have

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56 The notion of “neutral” or no change in one’s situation was almost never a reality, given that significant amounts of money were invested in migrations and being deported or not making money abroad meant that men’s family’s lost substantial capital.
been abroad for a fairly long time, this can entail a significant loss. In the same meeting with Alpha recounted above, for example, he also described losing all of his possessions and valuables:

All of my things — my work shoes, my clothes, my savings, they’re all still in Oviedo. My savings, my documents, my photographs. Everything is there… I tried to call a friend to ask him to send me just the cash and papers, but I couldn’t get ahold of him and now I’m here… Imagine your house burned down. Everything you’ve collected and earned and saved, over several years, it’s all gone. I only have the clothes I’m wearing now.\footnote{Diallo, Alpha. Unpublished interview. Guediawaye, 15 March 2013.}

Even for migrants who were in Spain for shorter periods of time, and who accordingly might have accumulated less possessions abroad, things acquired still hold immense value as the only possessions the migrant had — whether additional liquid savings; material possessions and acquisitions; merchandise or other goods for sale; and, in some cases, forms of false documentation that could potentially allow for greater mobility and freedom, or partial documentation that was part of working toward obtaining an officially legal status.

Alioune, a migrant who arrived in Spain undocumented but later obtained official legal status through a marriage, described having put the equivalent of thousands of dollars of his family’s money into paying intermediaries to help him procure legal documentation in Spain, as well as money he had put into having false documentation created for himself on the black market. Although he was not deported and was able to complete the process of applying for legal residency, it is not hard to imagine that the potential loss of this documentation (both valid and falsified) would be devastating, as both are the result of long periods of painstaking work and huge financial investments, and the achievement of legal mobility abroad is a point of high esteem in Senegal.
Although deported migrants sometimes have luck in finding a friend or another contact who could recuperate the migrants’ possessions (or some of them), there appeared to be an equal number of obstacles that could foil such attempts, such as that individual being a “false friend” and stealing the deported migrants’ valuables, or people on both ends moving around so frequently and so widely that it could be very difficult to coordinate an exchange.\textsuperscript{58} Similarly, depending on what information was on the migrants’ body and the moment of arrest, they might not even have contact information, such as phone numbers and addresses, for people that could help them. Elaborating on the loss of his possessions, Alpha said that he thought his friend had not sent his possessions to the detention center, “because he’s undocumented, too, so he wouldn’t want to risk being found out. But if he did send things and they deported me, they’ll just keep it for themselves.”\textsuperscript{59} Even for migrants who are fortunate enough to recover some of their possessions, they rarely recover everything. For example, a detained migrant might be able to get ahold of someone who could send them essentials and valuables — such as liquid cash, documents, and personally significant items like photographs — but for people who have lived in the region for many years, it would be virtually impossible to transfer everything, which could include entire store’s worth of unsold merchandise or an entire apartment’s worth of personal items and furnishings.

The loss of these material things is not only and economic one — although the extent of economic loss in deportation cannot be overstated — but also a social one. As described in Chapter 3, the possession of European or otherwise “western” products plays a significant role in the construction of an individual’s social status, such as for women who literally wear their status in the form of expensive western clothing, cosmetics, jewelry, hair extensions, etc.

\textsuperscript{58} Camara, Cheikh. Unpublished interview. Yarakh, 2 July 2013.
Accordingly, part of the community imagination around migrants’ departures to Europe involved not only the expectation that these men would be transformed into a certain type of esteemed person by way of the migratory rite of passage, but also the hope that migrants’ material wealth abroad would trickle down through cash and material remittances. This is reminiscent of the situation of *sapeurs* in the Congo, a generation of youths who migrated to Paris and invested heavily (sometimes totally) in flashy designer clothing (MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga 2000). Upon returning to the Congo they were praised and admired for their style and visible prestige — they literally wore their wealth as their sleeves — even if they had saved no money for other essentials to support the development of their and their families’ socio-economic situations. In this sense, *sapeurs* were able to satisfy the immediate expectations of rites of return in coming back *visibly* transformed in a manner than commanded respect and admiration, even if this change was entirely based in image and didn’t having significant underlying stability.

The importance of the visual and stylistic transformation for Senegalese migrants is similar, but their case also involves the expectation that the social status of the migrant’s entire family will rise though the remittance of European products shared with other members. This point was not lost on Alpha. While hanging out with him at his cousin’s house in Keur Massar about a week after I first met him in the Guediawaye medical clinic, he brought out a stack of photos including some of his life in Spain that he had sent to his cousin in Senegal while he was still living abroad. As we went though the photos, he stopped frequently to point out his nice clothes — which all looked clean, new, and bright, in contrast to the well-worn, stained and torn pants and shirt he wore at the moment. He stopped at one photo of himself, which he noted had only been taken three or four months earlier, in which he was pictured leaning against a wall, smiling, in a bright yellow and official-looking tracksuit.
“That was the Barcelona jersey. The Barcelona soccer team jersey. I was planning on giving that to my younger brother. Barcelona is his favorite team. He would have loved it.” He considered the photo for a moment. “Abdou, you mind if I hold onto this?” His cousin agreed, and Alpha pocketed the photo.

The photo was a poor replacement for the real past it represented, but at the very least it offered some testament to the material heights Alpha had once achieved and the wealth he could have brought to his family had he not been in the wrong place at the wrong time. Rather than returning to Senegal in a way that enhanced the socioeconomic position of everyone around him, however, Alpha became immediately dependent on others upon return, needing to lean on the support and teranga of others in order to eat and have somewhere to sleep.60

The photograph was also significant in that it provided Alpha with some documentation of his history and identity. Although documentation is less significant to an individual’s identity in Senegal than it is in places like Europe or the United States, many Senegalese deported migrants returned to the country without a single form of identifying information. Most Senegalese living in relatively urban parts of the country have at least an identity card that includes their name, photograph, and birthday, and which they are required by law to carry with them at all times. However, on pirogue trips to Europe, migrants are frequently directed to throw these identifiers into the ocean, so that if the boat is intercepted upon or before their arrival, Senegalese could lie about their nationality and pretend to be from another country more likely to win them political asylum, such as the Gambia. Accordingly, many deportees return to Senegal with no formal — or even informal — record of who they are, whether that be official documentation of Senegalese citizenship, papers that they may have accrued while abroad, or

60 See previous chapter (Chapter 3) for explanation of teranga.
even basic photographs that capture the places they have been and people they have known. Instead of migrants’ personas being built-up and enhanced by their migration or this voyage facilitating their advancement in social hierarchies, therefore, migrants’ identities are instead stripped down and erased, arriving in Senegal with no significant possessions or markers of status and identity other than those things that were on their body at the time of deportation.

In addition to returning to Senegal dispossessed of any wealth and possessions that they may have accumulated abroad, Senegalese migrants also received minimal support from institutions and organizations that might reasonably be expected to help them get back on their feet. Every single migrant with whom I spoke expressed outrage and disillusionment with the government for their hands-off relationship with migrants after their deportation to Senegal. Malick Diop, a deported migrant living in Dakar, ranted to me about his deportation experience in a narrative that was repeated over and over again in accounts I heard from both deportees and others alike:

We heard that, in exchange for our return to Senegal, we would at least get some help. You know, help finding work or something, or help for our families since we had been sending them money from Spain. Well, can you imagine: Nothing! When we stepped off the plane, they gave each of us 5,000 CFA and a sandwich, and then they left. Can you believe it! They didn’t even give us a ride home. Well, I spent most of my money on the taxi, just to get to my friend’s house for the night.61

This narrative became somewhat of a rallying point in discussions about perceived injustices in the process of return migration, serving as an emotionally charged and nearly universal experience of what one migrant described as “a slap in the face” by the government.62 Migrants’ complaint that they were entirely ignored is not wholly true — the Senegalese government did

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62 See Chapter 4 for further elaboration on migrant narratives and feelings toward the Senegalese government
institute some programs for returned migrants, notably “Plan REVA” (*Plan de Retour Vers l’Agriculture*, or the Plan for Return to Agriculture), which funded training and supporting returned migrants in agricultural work. However, this and other smaller programs were widely criticized for their inefficiency, lack of concern for returned migrants’ needs and abilities, and minimal influence (many programs only had enough funding to support 30-100 men).

Moreover, in my investigation of governmental programs for returned migrants, I found that programs for returned migrants were often, in fact, programs generally aimed at national development and creating job opportunities (“these programs work to give men opportunities so that they don’t have to migrate,” as one government official told me), and were not specific to supporting returned migrants. The comparative lack of government programs to support returned migrants might be taken as indicative of the expectation that returned migrants shouldn’t need help — presumably, one who has migrated to Europe returns to Senegal wealthy enough to easily support himself and an extensive family network; to set aside resources to help returned migrants when they already have the “privilege” of having been abroad would then represent an inefficient use of government resources. As such, this example provides another poignant look at the sense of loss migrants experienced in being stripped of their financial and material resources and abruptly returned to Senegal, where many were unsympathetic to their loss and few systems of financial (or psychological, as will be discussed shortly) support were in place.

Without any financial stipend or aid to support their return, most migrants became “dependent on their dependents,” to use once more the term coined by Donna Lynn Perry for men’s experiences during the hard agricultural and economic years throughout the last decades of the 20th century. Alpha, for example, shifted though a number of houses depending on when
and where there was space, relying on the teranga of others for most of his meals and clothing; additionally, his cousin footed his entire medical bill at the clinic where we met him in Guediawaye, including the costs of stitching up his cuts and providing intravenous fluids. Alpha expressed shame at how much others were doing for him, feeling that he was a huge burden on their lives:

Like I said! The reason why I left for Spain was so that I could help them, so that I could send them money. Look at where I am now. I’m eating all of their money, I’m costing them a fortune. I, you know, I can’t stay here very long. I have to get out of here. I’m costing them a fortune.63

Rather than ascending through social hierarchies as a result of migration — such as becoming a more capable provider for his family and thus a more socially esteemed and “adult” man — Alpha found himself even more dependent and less capable of providing for others than when he left for Spain. Regardless of the many years of remittances that Alpha had sent his family while he was abroad in Spain, he ultimately felt that he was judged on the basis of how his status had changed in comparison to who he was when he left Senegal for the first time, and in this sense, he had “fallen” dramatically: not only was he financially worse-off upon his deportation than he was upon his departure, but his family’s and community’s expectations for him had simultaneously risen as a result of the anticipated riches and prestige that are assumed to accompany migratory voyages.

In an attempt to consolidate efforts to improve their situations, returned migrants in some neighborhoods and regions occasionally formed civic associations through which they hoped to collectively lobby or protest the government and work together to find or create job opportunities for themselves. In some areas — especially those most affected by irregular migration, such as

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fishing villages — these groups grew to have huge membership, such as Association of Young Repatriates of Thiaroye-Sur-Mer, which was described to me as once having three to four hundred members. However, many of these organizations are now defunct, apparently for reasons of inefficiency or political infighting.

When I arrived in Yarakh for the first time for a project of RADDHO, I thought I was being put into contact with the regional migrant association, only to find that it had completely dissolved. Souleymane led me into a house where we met with two long-deported migrants, Cheikh and Djibril.

“So, is this where the association meets?” I asked.

“What?” They looked confused, so I repeated the question, thinking maybe it was my French that they didn’t understand.

“The association for returned migrants,” I clarified. Djibril laughed, and then explained:

Oh… the association. It doesn’t exist anymore. You know, we thought we could work through this together, but in reality everyone is just looking out for himself. Everyone is doing everything they can for themselves and their families, and they’re not so much looking out for the other returnees. The association, we chose a president and he was the spokesperson to the government, but he just used it for his personal connections. He only talked about himself. I think the government awarded him a job on some development project in Tambacounda. One day, we all gathered for our assembly and he was gone. Gone! And we had all paid him 2000 CFA so that we could create a project for the community, and he took that, too. Everything. So we don’t meet anymore. Everyone was mad, mad, mad. We haven’t really met since then, no, not really.

When I tried to get in touch with civic associations in other regions, I encountered similar stories. I asked Souleymane one week if he could help put me in touch with the large migrant association in Thiaroye, but after calling every contact number we could find for the group listed in various directories and news articles, we found them all disconnected or unresponsive. Not discouraged yet, we set out for the suburb to meet a friend of Souleymane who lived in the area and was
familiar with the group’s building. After a long walk through the Thiaroye’s winding, sandy streets, we arrived at a crumbling building with “Association de Jeunes Rapatriés de Thiaroye-sur-Mer” painted in stenciled letters over the door. The building was open so we walked inside and found two men working at a desk in the front room. They said they believed the organization didn’t meet anymore, and they were using the office for other work. When Pamela arrived in Dakar from Spain several months later, she mentioned that she had met the association’s founder through a friend on an earlier trip to Dakar.

“If you want, I’ll put you in touch with him!” she offered. “But he doesn’t work on the association anymore. I tried to get information on it the first time I met him, but I ended up just staying for a long lunch with his family.” So, even migrant associations proved to be an ineffective measure for supporting deportees, vulnerable to power-grabbing or otherwise general disillusionment as their members found them ineffective at dramatically improving conditions or either recently- or long-returned migrants.

Accordingly, deported migrants’ returns to Senegal were met with extreme concrete difficulty: often coming back with nothing but the clothes on their backs and a negligible “stipend” from the government upon arrival, their poverty defied community imaginations for their return and “failed” rites of passage in which migrants were expected to return as more formidable breadwinners and representatives of family pride and prestige — without financial resources, they were unable to complete any of the family-house-wife performances required as displays of “success.” Instead, migrants often found themselves having to rely on those individuals they had intended to support, and were responsible for organizing and lobbying for themselves as they technically did not represent a “marginalized” or underprivileged population.
Grappling with failure: trauma and emotional struggles in return

If men’s time in migration or abroad is understood as a liminal stage of transition in the overall arc of one’s rite of passage, then deportation represents a premature end to an undertaking still in process and not yet ready to be ended, and this rupture and abrupt return to one’s community for judgment is the source of immense emotional trauma for migrants. Potentially still struggling with unresolved stress from the migration itself — such as witnessing friends suffer or die on the journey, or experiencing poor living conditions and even abuse abroad — migrants are further thrust back into their original communities, where the fact of their “failure” in the eyes of others is not lost on them and adds a new level of anxiety.

Alpha, for example, described the trauma he witnessed among the other passengers on the plane of migrants upon their deportation back to Senegal. I was visiting him for lunch at his cousin’s house in Keur Massar, and he mentioned his hopes to go back to Spain in the future. I pushed back on him and said, “but Alpha, isn’t it at least a little bit nice to be here with your family for now and check in with people, and you even get to eat some real ceeb bu jën?” He responded that he had in no way wanted to come back to Senegal yet, growing more and more agitated as he recounted his deportation:

You know that I was forced to come here, right? I was forced to return here. It was not my choice. Otherwise, I’d still be in Spain. You know, I was forced. When I came here, there were three police for each person on the plane. They put our hands like this behind our backs, and for each person there were three police officers who led them onto the plane. It’s because everyone was fighting it. Some people were trying to fight the police officers. We were forced. There was one guy, I saw him standing in the middle of the room [at the Senegalese airport], he was just standing there with a brief case. I though he was lost so I went and tapped him on the shoulder. He just kept standing there, he didn’t even respond. He didn’t even respond.64

It is hard to imagine the unique sense of fracture and deported men must experience in their sudden return back to Senegal. Having lived in Spain continuously for seven years, Alpha and others like him found themselves back in a different world in a matter of days — driving over sandy, pot-hole ridden pavement in place of enormous and well-kept boulevards, surrounded by crowded *boutiques* and street fruit vendors instead of glistening department stores, sweating through the stifling heat and humidity of Dakar instead of the cooler Mediterranean weather of Barcelona. The shock of this sudden change and the social implications it carried was the source of mental illness in many returned migrants, including depression of varying intensity and even insanity.

The proliferation and severity of psychological trauma ensuing from any or all parts of migrants’ journeys is something I heard about frequently but only personally witnessed in the instance of Alpha’s self-harm and depression. This was likely due, at least in part, to my positionality as a young white woman, and accordingly what people felt they should or could share with me, rather than this being indicative of a lack of people experiencing psychological trauma in areas where I was working. Additionally, one can reasonably expect that individuals struggling with severe trauma would be less likely to be open about this with anyone, even including close relationships. In multiple cases of individuals committing suicide, family and friends had not even realized the extent of the migrant’s trauma until it was too late — a testament to how hard it can be for migrants to talk about the most extreme or hard parts of their journeys and their struggles in coming to peace with this upon return to Senegal.

Nevertheless, stories of migrants who returned or were deported from abroad to experience severe depression or insanity abounded, particularly in newspapers, which had a penchant to publish dramatic and sensational stories. For example, on March 21st, 2013,
l’Observateur, one of the more established and widely-read newspapers in Senegal, published an article describing the suicide of the emigrant Modou Fall Sylla, who, fifteen days after being deported from Italy, threw himself in front of a semi-truck on the Route Nationale. The article cites a conversation between Fall and his father, as recounted by his nephew:

In the opinion of a nephew, the defunct, suffering from a terrible headache, had refused to take his medicine. To his father, he had said, “Papa, don’t give me the medicine, I’d rather take poison.” Certainly taken aback, his father tried to dissuade him but he [Modou] held his ground… These affirmations were finally taken seriously by his family, who began to monitor him like milk over a flame. (Mbodj 2013)

To a certain extent in this excerpt but also at other points in the news story, the article implies the lack of awareness of even close family members of Fall’s emotional struggle, and their consequent shock upon discovering that this was a genuine problem. Even the article itself sensationalizes Fall’s (presumably) severe depression, providing minimal context or explanation for his words and instead presenting him as extreme and out of control.

This tone is indicative of wider attitudes on this topic across Senegal, where mental health can be a highly taboo topic of discussion and experiencing a mental health problem is considered more as an indication that something is “wrong,” with the individual than as a natural or explainable occurrence. Asking people about instances or individuals they knew of who suffered psychologically upon return often invited caricatures of these individuals, in which their mental health problem became a source of comedy. A friend, for example, who I asked about this subject, laughed:

Sometimes, you see there are people who are crazy from that [deportation]. Look at what happens, they become crazy! Like, there was this guy who was on the same street as me, who was deported from Spain. [Imitating crazy person, huffs and mumbles inaudible things, and looks around wildly.] You see! No, they’ve all left for another world!
When I first told my Senegalese host sister, Anaïs, that both of my parents were psychologists, she laughed and shook her head, saying that she couldn’t ever imagine a Senegalese going to see a psychologist, and didn’t think that there were very many in the city.

“Why would you go talk to a stranger about your problems when you could just talk to your family?” she laughed. “And you have to pay them! Right? You pay someone to listen to you talk about how you are sad. Ay, Maria!…”

While Anaïs’s point about the cost of hiring a psychologist raises an important question about the financial accessibility of professional help for individuals dealing with trauma or other mental health issues, her dismissal of professional psychology suggests a common failure to recognize how hard it can be for returned migrants to discuss their trauma with family or other close relations, especially when some of that trauma or depression may result from having disappointed that very family.

For example, Daouda Seck, a teenaged Gambian-Senegalese migrant who was deported from Spain in 2008, recounted his decision not to share his experiences in migration with his family, in part out of shame and in part out of his personal reluctance to revisit his experiences:

The first thing I saw [when I arrived at my house] was that my mom was crying, my mom. And I really felt that everyone was so let down by me. All I saw was disappointment. After something so big, it’s just like… “boom.” From grace to grass. And really, I felt so bad, horrible. For one week, one complete week, I didn’t talk at all. I didn’t talk to anybody, I just stayed in my house, I never went out. So, it was really difficult. Really, really difficult. And my father too, I could read his disappointment in his eyes. It was really difficult, too, because by then all we were thinking about was all the money we had lost, you know, after paying such a large amount of money… Really. It was so difficult for me. So, this was the most difficult part for me, the first contact I had with my family [after being deported]. When I entered my house, I wondered, “what will I say?” … In fact, you see, up to date — me, with my family, I never speak to anybody about it. I never say, “this is what happened in the journey, this is how it was, this is what was hard, this is what I saw…” Because I don’t want them to know. So. That’s
really difficult. Particularly with my father, what could I say? But thanks to God, they never asked me. No. No. I swear to God, I never like to talk about it.\textsuperscript{65}

Talking about one’s migration would necessarily mean confronting the reality of its unsuccessful termination, and consequently many people like Daouda opted instead to avoid or ignore it; such conversations not only drew attention to one’s “failure,” but also painted men as weak and faint-hearted (as suggested by my friend’s ridiculing imitation of an insane man, above), detracting further from masculine identities that were already a point of concern.

Moreover, when one’s struggles with mental health were visibly apparent — such as in cases of insanity — the individual tended to be publically dismissed more broadly speaking, and so hiding or denying mental or emotional struggles was in some cases a necessary maneuver to preserve one’s ability to recover from the social consequences of deportation. Ibou, a migrant who had been deported from Italy in 2009, remarked on this separation of his public and private persona:

When I’m with my friends now, or with my family, I put on a smile so that they won’t worry about me, I make jokes and laugh with them so that they will feel comfortable with me. But really, you know… like I said, you’ve lost hope for life. You’ve lost hope. There’s something that happens, something that changes, between the departure and the return. I don’t know how to say it… but it’s like you live with this secret. You want to hide away where no one can find you. So, this whole time, you are hiding. At every moment in your life, they think they see you happy. But in fact there are a lot of things in your head. You see, you have this hatred of yourself. You know, it’s like being in hell! People see you happy, but you, only you know what has happened to you. You have something hidden. All of this, it’s because of the journey, it’s because of what happened to you in the journey! And there are people who live this case, and who commit suicide because of it. Who commit suicide! Me, I’m pretty okay now, because it’s been a long time since I left. But sometimes still, when I’m alone I remember that journey. I remember throwing people overboard who had died on the boat. Those are things you can never forget… no, never.\textsuperscript{66}

\textsuperscript{66} Diakhate, Ibou. Unpublished interview. Dakar, 6 July 2013.
Because of the inability or unwillingness of migrants to talk about their experiences and potential trauma with family members or other close relations, then, the return process is often one of further isolation, rather than reincorporation in a triumphant conclusion (exacerbated by the fact that many support groups specifically for returned migrants are also unreliable\(^67\)). The struggle for returned migrants and their communities to communicate sincerely about these experiences likely plays a large role in the caricaturing of what an individual’s experience abroad did or did not include, further distorting expectations for what irregular migrants are reasonably capable of achieving and the real constraints that they face in Europe.\(^68\)

Nevertheless, migrants’ experiences are naturally far from generalizable, and in many cases individuals are met with sensitivity and care, even if this may take a form other than overt discussion of a returnee’s experiences or feelings upon return. Daouda, for example, described his gratitude for his sister, who helped keep him occupied when it was clear that he was getting overwhelmed:

My sister, she called and let me come to Dakar and stay with her there. So I went to Dakar, and I thank God for every moment I spent with her. We went to the beach together, sometimes we would go to a club. You know? Thanks to her, from time to time… every now and then, we would go to some places just for fun, you know? I think she was doing all that just so that I would forget about my migration. Every one or two months, I would have something on my mind again, and she would say to me, “okay, right now what we should do is, let’s go to a bar and get a Coke. Then, tomorrow, we’ll go buy some materials so you can start selling. Now all I want you to do is — just relax, and I’ll buy some materials for you so that you can start selling at Sandaga.”\(^69\)\(^70\)

\(^67\) Some migrants also expressed reluctance to join these groups because they didn’t want to be associated with return migration or the Barça/Barzakh movement, but rather, hoped to “turn a new page”.

\(^68\) Chapter 4 includes further elaboration on narratives and myths of migration.

\(^69\) Sandaga is a large market in downtown Dakar that includes a variety of formal and informal merchants.

Here, Daouda’s sister served multiple roles in not only finding activities to distract him from dwelling on his own hardship, but through these activities, also helped Daouda get back on his feet in terms of finding a way to make an income (in this case, selling merchandise at the downtown market). Nevertheless, even in this case Daouda’s struggle with depression was something to be smoothed over or avoided, rather than something that could be addressed directly and considered as something that was okay for him to experience. As a result, even with the support of his sister, Daouda was largely left to confront and process the difficult emotional residue of his migration experiences by himself.

Rather than returning to Senegal having transcended to a higher status or as stronger, more dominant individuals, the migrants’ deportations were a source of serious emotional and psychological suffering. These struggles were a wedge in migrants’ ability to reintegrate to their communities, preventing them from open communication with their families and old friends, and inciting a certain degree of reclusion from social events and interactions. Thus while migrants were technically “returned,” they remained unsettled and unincorporated in the way popularly imagined and expected of return migration.

Familial confrontations: suffering, negotiating, and avoiding others’ disappointment

In addition to struggling personally and internally from trauma after their deportation, migrants also suffered from the critical, public condemning or shaming judgments passed on them by community members. The very fact of men’s deportations was a source of immense community and family disappointment or criticism, as deportation is more or less considered synonymous with failure, no matter how long a migrant had been abroad and how much he had been able to support their family financially over this time. As Ibou explained to me,
“deportation is when they force you out, and you can’t come back because you are illegal. Well, you can try to come back. But it is a very bad thing. They force you to leave, before you are ready. So yes, deportation is a failure. It means you failed.” While Senegalese did not have a tendency to criminalize irregular migrants and migrants who had been deported as is more common in populations who host and deport irregular migrants, there was nevertheless a strong tendency to view deportation as the ultimate failure that could become of the migratory experience, aside from death.

Migrants who were abroad but were making no money — or even irregular migrants who were being held in deportation centers but had not officially been given deportation notices — were exempt from judgment and considered still to have potential for improvement in their situation (as they continued to exist in an ambiguous, liminal stage of transition, and were therefore pre-judgment). However, deportation was a final and decisive rejection and termination of “the journey,” which, for families, offered an ultimate verdict on the balance of gains versus losses over the course of the migration and the migrant’s consequent “success” at accomplishing he was expected to do. Daouda, recounting the day that he returned to his parent’s house after being deported, said that

Early in the morning the following day, I took a sept-place and arrived in Saly, where I my arrival was a huge surprise to my family. Seeing me, everybody was crying, it was such a disappointment to everyone. I was crying too, because I knew life wouldn’t be the same for me anymore, after trying [to migrate] and failing. In fact, it was like jumping from bad to worse. We had sold everything we had, just for a journey. And in the end, it was unsuccessful. Well, I stayed there in my village for one or two months, but in the end it was very hard for me to stay there. You know, in African society, if you are deported, people will try to peg you as someone who is unfortunate, a misfortunate guy. People will always look at you like that. And you, too, you will always feel the same way when you

72 sept-place: “seven-seats”; a small car with eight seats (the driver’s seat and seven passenger seats) that takes passengers on relatively long-distance trips within Senegal for a fee
are passing people, because they will always look at you with that eye. “Ah! This guy, he is very unfortunate. He went to Europe, and he was deported. Now look at him. He’s here.” This is what they will say. Really! People will look at you with that eye, like you are someone who’s unfortunate. Sometimes in passing, you will hear someone talking about you. So that’s why I came here to Dakar. It was not easy at all for me to leave, but I had to come to Dakar. Right now, I can sit here and I feel much better. Because here, nobody knows about my past, about my history. Nobody knows about my family. Back at the village, I feel like I’m treated unequally, that there is always the eye on me. But here, since people don’t know much about me, I feel more comfortable to live here. Last time [I was in Saly] I even met one of my friends who is from that village, and he said to me, “You! Since 2007 you left and haven’t come back here! Why!?” I told him, “No, it’s just because I like to stay here in the city, there is no opportunity in the village.” Maybe when I’m staying here [in Dakar] I have more opportunities to forget, to turn that page. When I stayed there, well, I can’t be happy at all. But when I stay here, I am sleeping okay! We are trying to move on, we are trying hard. We are really hustling hard! Yeah, it’s sort of like that, the reason I don’t go to Saly anymore.

Daouda’s description of going back to his hometown speaks poignantly of the impact of deportation on a migrant’s social reputation, where the fact of being deported becomes an essential and inextricable part of their identity and social reputation (in the same way that to return having “successfully” fulfilled the rites of return would have also resulted in a (positive) change in identity), and thus that individual becomes an embodiment of failure and of lost investments.

In Daouda’s description — as well as in narratives of many other returned migrants — he speaks of “the eye” of the public that scrutinizes and judges him for his deportation, such that he struggled to reintegrate as a “normal” or neutral member of his community. The deportation outcome of Daouda’s migration transformed him into somewhat of an outcast, especially in contrast to the positive attention he received prior to his departure for Spain:

In fact, before I left, many people knew that I was trying to go to Spain. So you know, I felt like I had a lot of friends, and a lot of lovers coming to me! But since I’m deported, some of them... Ah! I think most of them were trying to make a

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friendship, you know, so that I would not forget them when I left or when I return rich, right? When I have money, you know? But ever since I’ve been back… ha. Maybe they lost their hope in me. ⁷⁴

The extent of differences between Daouda’s “friends and lovers” before his departure and after his deportation served to further exacerbate the sense that his entire life had been turned upside down upon his return, and the decisive rejection he faced from people who had allegedly been interested in him solely for his potential wealth served to heighten his awareness about just how dire his economic situation was and just how far he had fallen from public graces. In as much, his migration had been a test of character or of manhood, and when he was deported and returned unable to fulfill the expected rites of return, he was turned into a social pariah as opposed to a family and community hero.

The constant recognition of his experience of being deported served as an impediment to forgetting or even simply coming to terms with this past, and his identity as a “failed migrant” overwhelmed all other identities he may have been able to project as a member of his community. This was the same case even within his family, where others’ frustration in his losing the investment they had put into Daouda’s migration was expressed in the form of blame or criticism of Daouda for being deported:

Finally, if you are deported, you will lose the money and when you come back not only you but your whole family will begin again from nothing… Sometimes, I feel so bad whenever there is a problem in my family. Because sometimes my dad will say, “if only you had not been deported… had I known what it would be like today, I would not have sold my cow for this journey.” It makes me feel so bad, because I’m the reason they lost their investment, I feel so embarrassed. Sometimes, I would be at breakfast and my mom would tell me, “another day that you have no job? Would you like a second breakfast to keep you busy then?” Really, I feel so embarrassed, so I put the blame on me. I say, maybe if my parents are suffering, it’s because of me… If the family’s suffering, I’m the cause. ⁷⁵

⁷⁵ ibid.
Migrants facing this severity of social judgment found various ways of negotiating or avoiding it. Some, potentially struggling with depression or other mental health concerns as a result of this social pressure, retreated from social situations entirely and generally did not reintegrate into normal daily life at all.

In other cases, such as that of Daouda, religion and belief-systems served to provide a framework to that allowed both the migrant and his family and community to process and come to terms with the misfortune of being deported. For example, Daouda explained how his mother had taken him to see a marabout in search of an explanation for his deportation from Spain:

The first thing I did when I got back, in fact, before I came back— ...you know, for us in Africa we have realities. One day, my mother went to see a marabout. And the marabout said, “your son, you see, we believe he may have been cursed.” I don’t know how to explain this! Say, for example, you really want to have something. Well, someone can curse you so that you don’t have it. So, the marabout told my mother, there’s somebody who’s trying to destroy your son. And it was just after that, that I was deported back to Senegal! And myself, when I came back, I wasn’t myself at all. I felt so mad, I didn’t want to see any member of my family. Before, I used to sleep in the same room as my brother, but I couldn’t anymore because I would hit him in my sleep. It was like I went completely crazy, like they predicted. So I went to see the marabout with my mother in Tambacounda, I think Nouké was his name. He looked at me and he told me, you know, I can see that it is true, that someone was trying to destroy your life. This is even why you were deported. And it makes sense that that’s what happened, because me, too, I was surprised [when I was deported]. Because in fact, there was somebody who said to me [in the Spanish detention center] that I was lucky, because most of the time they will not deport people who are underage, and me, I was only sixteen. So it was really surprising when I was deported. Not only for me but for my whole family... So thank God, like I said, that I went to this marabout and he could do something for me, and I started to feel comfortable again. I started to regain consciousness.

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76 Marabouts are religious leaders in Islamic West African countries who also maintain and practice traditional religion.  
As a way of negotiating or minimizing judgments of Daouda’s failure, he and his family drew upon their religious beliefs in which ill-intentioned people are believed to be able to manipulate spiritual forces to affect the lives of others. Senegalese beliefs in witchcraft such as this — which operates in tandem with, rather than in opposition to beliefs and practices of Islam — provided an important framework for understanding and explaining one’s failures and misfortunes to others as well as to oneself. Moreover, the explanation that the migrants’ “failure” in migration via deportation was actually the result of external forces which cursed the individual and made his failure inevitable relieves the migrant of personal responsibility in this outcome, allowing them to shift blame for their deportation — and thus also the failure to made a profit on their family’s investment — to another individual or force that for any given reason might have a vendetta against the migrant. In fact, then, the notion of witchcraft and being cursed serves as a highly productive way of articulating systems of uncontrollable forces that migrants face in the process of migration, such as structural and political oppression on a global scale that overwhelmingly serve to disadvantage migrants (and irregular migrants to an even greater extent). In addition to offering a way explain a migrant’s
deportation, religion also serves to justify mental health struggles faced by many returned migrants, wherein struggles with depression or insanity might be explained as a curse or possession by ill-intentioned forces or spirits.

While some returned migrants actively searched to bring meaning or explanation to their deportation through religion in order to justify their experiences to potentially hostile or disappointed families and communities, others attempted to side-step confronting the issue entirely. For example, a young entrepreneur and a close friend of mine named Ibrahima Cissé joked one day about how a deported migrant had lied outright to him about his deportation in order to save face:

When he [a returned migrant] is a failure, he comes here and he makes people believe, “yeah, it’s so good over there, things are going smoothly, c’est la vie — I’m only here for vacation!” [laughing] They say — they say they’re just here for vacation! They’re too ashamed to say that they’ve been deported! [laughing] I knew a guy like that... I saw him, and he told me, “yeah, me, I’m only here for vacation, I have to go back in one month.” Then, he waits one week, and he comes to me to say “hey man, I brought these shoes with me from Europe but I don’t like them, I don’t really want to wear them... can I sell them to you?” [laughing] There, he doesn’t have anything more than the "weccit" he brought back with him from Europe! And he’s almost run through it, you see! Because he was showing off, showing off, and he was too ashamed to say that he’d been deported, you see? So he started to have money problems, he started to sell his clothes, his shoes, just like that, until he reached the end, and then he said that he had misplaced his immigration papers or something like that. While in reality he was deported. The majority of people — when they’re deported, they won’t tell you the truth.

In this instance, however, the migrant was unable to present a convincing lie to Ibrahima and ended up facing even more ridicule for his avoidance of his reality. In other cases, migrants evaded facing these situations by refusing to return or stay at home at all, thus avoiding judgment by their families and friends. In several excerpts from Daouda above, he talks extensively about

78 weccit: spare change (Wolof)
how the disappointment and stigmatization he faced from his community made living there unbearable for him, and so he moved in with his sister in Dakar where his past was largely unknown to his community, and where he could consequently have something of a “fresh start.”

For others, though, return to their original communities was much more belabored or didn’t happen at all. Alpha, for example, had a very drawn-out itinerary to his hometown, which he attributed to an anxiety in seeing his family for the first time in seven years and in confronting their reactions to his deportation. Originally from a small village in Kayar, he first went to the house of a friend in the suburb of Guediawaye (where he received medical care), and from there to a cousin’s house in Keur Massar, and from there planned to travel to visit a brother who was living in the holy city of Touba, and from there to his original village in Kayar.

I haven’t called my parents yet. Unless someone else told them I’m deported, I don’t think they know yet. It’s because, you know, everyone depended on me. I sent them remittances from Spain every month. They needed that money to survive, and they depend on it now. Can you even imagine what they’ll think when they see me? How can I tell them that I’ve been deported? I mean, I will. I will go back. I’m just waiting until I’m better, until I’m back on my feet. 80

For Alpha, this return home also carried connotations of going “backwards” or “undoing” what he considered to be significant progress and social advancement in his life. He described how rural the village he came from was, and how much effort it had taken to move out from there:

You, you live in Dakar, so you don’t know what life is like in the villages! It’s so different. Many of the houses don’t even have electricity or [running] water. I think things are better now, but it’s not Dakar. And it’s not Oviedo! Can you imagine, one month ago I was in Oviedo, with cars and stores and electricity and everything you could need, and now I’m going back to Kayar. I think, maybe that was my one chance to get out? Traveling from Kayar to Dakar isn’t simple, you know. You don’t usually go there just for a visit. 81

81 ibid.
At other points, Alpha suggested that he might stay awhile longer in Dakar and its suburbs to work and earn money before returning to Kayar, so that he at least could bring something home to his family there and would have some funds to work with while he resettled there. He ultimately did not do this, and left for Touba\textsuperscript{82} about a month after his arrival in Dakar; others, however, did stay in the city to work, sometimes getting so caught up in needing to earn “enough” that they never returned at all.

Such was the case for Malick Diop, the first returned migrant I met in Dakar, and who had been deported from Spain in 2009. When I met him, he was living with the family of one of his friends in Grand Dakar, sleeping on a cot they had set up for him on the rooftop.

You know, my family lives in Saint Louis. That’s actually where I took the boat from. And like I said, when I left, to pay for the cost of the trip, I stole the money my mother had won from a tontine, and I was planning to pay her back when I started working in Europe. Well, our boat was stopped in the Canary Islands and I never even got to Spain before they sent me back here. How could I go back [home]? It’s so difficult, it’s really too difficult.\textsuperscript{83}

Malick made and sold leather sandals in a Dakar market, but he admitted that business was not very strong.

The shoes, for every one I sell, I profit, maybe, 500 CFA, depending on the waxaale.\textsuperscript{84} Some days, I’m sitting there all day and I never sell one! There are many people selling shoes like this, you know, so it can be hard to have customers. On a good day, I might sell five or six pairs of shoes. 1500 CFA! That’s nothing. I’m looking for other work, but this is all I have right now. But thanks to God that I have Sam here, so I don’t have to pay rent. That way, I’m able to save and send the money back to my family.\textsuperscript{85}

And yet, Malick had a long way to go in saving money to pay back his family. The trip to Europe by pirogue is not a cheap one despite catering to economic migrants, and (based

\textsuperscript{82} Touba: a large city in central Dakar, which is also the holy city of Mouridism.


\textsuperscript{84} Waxaale is the Wolof word for bargaining or negotiating.

\textsuperscript{85} ibid.
approximations I heard throughout my research) can range in price from 300,000-800,000 CFA, or approximately $600-1,600 USD. The tontine Malick had stolen from his mother had been 350,000 CFA, to which he added money from other sources to pay for a pirogue trip that cost 400,000 CFA. At the rate of making 1,500 CFA a day, minus daily expenditures such as food and transportation, the day when he would have made up for the stolen tontine (plus additional money to support his family, like Alpha discussed) was far off. Although he believed he could do the same work for more or less the same earnings where his family lived in Saint Louis, he said that he was too ashamed to go back before he could make up for what he had cost the family.

No. No, I can’t go back yet. When I called my mother to tell her that I had been deported, she was furious! She was so mad, and I couldn’t sleep for months after talking to her. No, I decided that it’s better if I can stay here and work. If I go home, she…. No, I can’t go home, not yet. I know it wasn’t the right thing to do [stealing the money], but I can’t go back now. I’ll go back when I can pay her back for everything. 86

Migrants like Malick justified their decisions not to return to their families or hometowns after deportation on the basis of the overwhelming shame they felt in being unable to meet expectations for them in that return, which prevented their full reincorporation into their communities; from the perspective of Malick, it was better to stay away completely than to return and as a social pariah.

However, the decision not to return was not without its own set of consequences and difficulties: first of all, this meant that returned migrants, already “starting from zero” having lost any work or savings they might have had before their departure, were also largely starting from zero with regard to social networks. While migrants like Malick and Alpha had some connections in Dakar, these tended to be only one or a handful of people instead of an entire

community of friends and family that they had known for their entire lives. While this new community was something many individuals said they wanted, it also meant that they had little social support in establishing themselves, such as in finding work or a place to live independently. In this sense, instead of facing the consequences of failure among people who knew them and held certain expectations for them, these and other deported men chose to “start fresh,” opting for a less shame-ridden but by no means easy route; rather than following through with their migratory rite of passage and accepting a poor outcome, they chose to begin a new life somewhere else where new relationships and ensuing rites of passage through which to establish their social status could begin from scratch.

Nevertheless, the social networks they gave up play a huge role in daily life, where someone might create a job out of charity for a personal relationship at cost to themselves, or might offer whatever available jobs already do exist to family and friends before opening it to the general public. Similarly, many informal businesses — such as boutiques, which sell daily necessities like rice or soap — allow customers to buy items on credit if the store-owners have an established and trusting relationship with the customer; this is very significant for customers, as it allows them to continue to purchase items — including items that may be essential to finding or completing income-generating work — in between payments or in lower earning periods. So, “starting anew” puts returned migrants at a huge disadvantage even if it does allow them to create new relationships unburdened by the history of their “failed” migration attempts.

In moving away from their original communities for social support, this means that returned migrants also end up relying disproportionately on whomever they do know in the place to which they’ve relocated, which puts a new burden on those individuals who may not have been prepared to support an additional person on a long-term basis or to such a great extent. In
deciding to stay in Dakar until he earned enough money to pay back the *toniène* he stole, Malick has essentially become a new member of the household of one of friends, where he currently lives. Although he does use some of his earnings to contribute to household costs, he became another person to feed, care for, and worry about for other members of the family. Similarly, for Alpha, his friend in Guediawaye had left his work — and thus, his income — for three days in order to support Alpha immediately following his deportation, and this same friend had also paid for all of Alpha’s medical costs at the clinic where he had stayed to take care of his arm wounds. Other friends had also sacrificed for Alpha by providing him a place to sleep, changes in clothing, meals, and even some liquid cash for pocket money. Thus, while returned migrants may be able to skirt the judgmental gaze of their families and avoid burdening those they had intended to help with further costs, the financial support men require upon return does not go away but rather shifts to new individuals or families who were not previously part of this equation, and in doing so creates new sources of social tension.

In sum, family and community encounters were the interactions where deported migrants’ “failure” was definitively established. Demonstrated abilities to meet expectations of lifting up one’s family, getting married, and building a house were met with harsh criticism and judgment, which migrants were occasionally able to negotiate through blaming their failure on forces beyond their control (such as witchcraft). Others, like Malick and Alpha, delayed or avoided returning home altogether, which effectively prolonged the liminal, transition stage of their migratory rite of passage by refusing to place themselves in positions of final judgment. In this sense, Malick seemed to be stuck indefinitely in liminality, uncertain of when he could definitely return to his family and thus officially end his migration and the rite of passage it
represented, but neither entirely incorporated into his new household and community in Dakar as
he professed to be staying only until he could pay off his debts.

*Failure’s ripple effects: judicial consequences and social responsibility*

Men’s “failed” returns represented a significant social setback for them, but also for their
families and communities: part of the reason why the stakes for “succeeding” were so high was
related to the fact that Barça/Barzakh migrations were, at their most concrete, about finding new
avenues by which to support oneself and one’s family, and so when migrants failed to achieve
this it often came at the cost of others as well as themselves. Malick’s story, in particular, of
having stolen money from his mother and then refusing to return home out of shame for the
consequences of this action highlights another complicated facet of Senegalese migrants’ returns
— especially in the case of migrants who were unable to make any money abroad — which is
how individuals or communities dealt with the loss of the huge amounts of money invested in
these voyages. Given the high price tag of pirogue trips, they were almost never paid for by only
one person or only with cash on hand; rather, the funds might come from a collective pooling of
resources among family and extended family; from the sale of valuables such as a family store,
jewelry, or livestock; with the winnings from a tontine; or, in some cases, from theft.

Migrants’ rites of passage were not only a personal endeavor, but also a community
effort; through men’s expected remittances, marriages, and construction of houses as well as
stores and other structures, the entire family or community would theoretically transition into one
of higher status. This was reflected in the community involvement of funding of Barça/Barzakh
migrations: regardless of the way by which a man acquired the money needed for the voyage,
then, it almost always involved other people who see their contribution to the costs as a sort of
investment, and accordingly have expectations to see some sort of return (literally and
financially) on that investment. Even individuals who steal the money for their trip still tend to see their theft as being for the good of their family or community, and plan to reimburse this sum later on. Malick, for example, said that he stole his mother’s *tontine* because he didn’t believe she would let him take the pirogue trip if she knew of his plans, however, his motivation for going to Europe was still founded on a desire to support his family financially and he maintained that he had not stolen the money for himself, but ultimately as a way to help his family. Accordingly, in the case of deportations or other returns in which men do not successfully earn enough or any money to pay back the people who invested in their migrations, their shame in facing their communities derives not only from their failure at lifting themselves up as men, but also for having let down their family and community members, such as described already in this chapter.

However, in the case of theft, especially when the theft involves people outside of one’s family, this can also have significant legal repercussions. In a conversation over *attaya* one day with Modou Gueye, who ran a cybercafé in the fishing village of Yarakh, we were discussing his connection to the Barça/Barzakh movement and he recounted one such encounter with the local judicial system:

Me, you know that I helped my son to go to Spain, right? Okay, so this example— I have too many examples! I wanted to send my son to Spain, but I didn’t have enough money. Okay, I had some money, but not enough [to pay] for him to leave... So I left to go ask my friend to help me, Madame Camara, and I told her “As soon as my son begins to send back remittances, I will pay you back and more. You know me, we are good friends for a long time, so you know I will do this.” So between me and her, she lent me 500,000 CFA. Why could she lend me 500,000 CFA? Because, you see, she’s the head of a woman’s group. This woman’s group, they collect money all year long so that for the holiday of Tabaski, they can redistribute the money and everyone will have something with which they can buy a goat or new clothes. So, you see, when she gave me the

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87 Tabaski, more widely known as Eid al-Adha, is an important Muslim holiday celebrating the willingness of Abraham (Ibrahim) to sacrifice his first-born son Ishmael (Ismail) upon God’s
money, it wasn’t her own! It was the group’s money. I was eating the group’s money. She lent us the money like it was her own, but it wasn’t. So, I sent my son to Europe but they were stopped and detained at the Canary Islands. He stayed there for forty days, then he was deported. He returned here. Shit! But that woman, I had promised her that I would pay her back right away! Well, now I have nothing at all, plus I have 500,000 in debt to her! Well, I didn’t know, either, that she used the money from the women’s collective to loan me money. So the month before Tabaski, all the women from that group started asking to get their stipend, since they had been contributing to the collective all year long. Well, Madame Camara had to tell them that all of their money was gone, because she had lent it to me for my son, but my son was deported. So everyone came to me, to ask me where the money was, but they already knew. So we went to the justice, they brought us to the justice, me and her. Because, you know, if they couldn’t have their money back, well, at least they could have justice. You know, obviously I felt so bad. 88

Modou’s account is interesting for its portrayal of the ripple effect of migrants’ failures and the consequences of lost migration investments, given how many people were drawn into the monetary equation and the way in which money was obtained for the voyage.

The unsuccessful migration of a single person in this case embroiled both Modou and Madame Camara in a tense controversy over improper use — theft, even — of funds that the women had saved, and consequently the women in this collective were also at a loss for how to pay for the costs of Tabaski celebrations, one of the most expensive and important holidays of the year, where buying many sheep to sacrifice and beautiful new clothes to wear is a huge factor in establishing one’s social status and power. These women’s inability to pay for lavish Tabaski celebrations would then have affected others who would have benefited from these costs, such as family members who would also be looking to buy various items using money they would have command. At the last moment, God takes mercy and switches Ishmael for a lamb. Tabaski in Senegal involves sacrificing at least one but often more sheep in honor of this holy event, and is also an extremely important social event where individuals and families display their prosperity as well as their generosity to the rest of the community. Consequently, Tabaski can also be one of the most costly times of the year for many Senegalese families, as it involves significant expenses on food, clothing, and livestock, as well as charity or other gifts to other families. 88

been given by the matriarch of the household, or extended family and community members who might have expected to celebrate the holiday with the family from whom the money was stolen. While not all fundraising for migrants’ pirogue trips involved tactics as dramatic as this one, this ripple effect would surely also be present in any other exchange of money, given the prevalence of informal loan and credit systems in most communities and the consequent financial interconnectedness of all its members. Moreover, the sums raised were regularly so large that they were never someone’s simple pocket money, but rather always some sort of savings that otherwise was or would be put toward another significant purpose that would necessarily affect other people in the community.

Modou’s story is also indicative of how much faith people tended to put in the ability of an irregular migration trip to succeed. In Modou’s assurance to the woman that “as soon as my son begins to send back remittances, I will pay you back” makes not only the assumption that his son would safely arrive in Europe and not get deported, but also that he would find work in Europe, and that he would send back remittances, and that those remittances would be significant enough to reimburse a large loan in the span of just three to five months. Madame Camara likely made similar assumptions in order to be able to give away such a large sum of money that held such great significance to so many other women in the community. (All this being said, this instance did occur in the earlier days of Barça/Barzakh migrations, when there was less information about the risks and unreliability of irregular migration; this change in attitude and awareness about the Barça/Barzakh migrations will be discussed in the following chapter.)

Beyond the vast financial impact that these investment losses had on the migrant’s community — including on people who had not agreed to or even been aware that they were investing their money in this way — the particular case of thefts also put the social credibility of
individuals involved in loaning or reimbursing money at stake. Describing the aftermath of his judicial hearing, Modou exclaimed that

Credibility! My credibility, it’s disappeared! All of my credibility disappeared. Because of my son. Because they brought me to the justice. Because — because my son was deported, so I couldn’t pay the Camaras back. And so you see, I lost all of the money, but I also lost my credibility. That’s why I won’t loan anyone money anymore, because when I borrowed money, I couldn’t pay it back. And everyone knew that I couldn’t pay it back, everyone knew that it was because of me that they couldn’t buy anything for Tabaski that year. And, did you know, my family had to come pick me up from the [police] station. Did you know that? All because I couldn’t pay back. And did you know, I can’t show my face anymore at the Camaras. I can’t even go see them there, because I was never able to pay them back. Really, please. If you go to Yoff, you’ll see that everyone knows me, they know me because I couldn’t pay them back. You know, I should have been more careful, now I can’t go there at all. You know, there are a lot of people who are in prison. A lot of people have been imprisoned because of they way the lent money. But you know, it’s not only the borrower, it’s the borrower and the lender, both are blamed for what happens. But it’s never the son, no, my son didn’t get punished for this. Because he didn’t ask for the money, he didn’t borrow it! I did, and I gave it to him! And so, the second point is that her too, she can’t say anything to anyone that people will listen to. Because for us, our reality is that when you lend out money, you know, when you are irresponsible with other people’s money — well, people will stop paying any attention to you. That’s how it is. Even more in the villages, that’s how it is. You have us, and we have our realities. Once you touch something that isn’t yours, once you’ve stolen something from someone else… well, I can’t be part of the group of people in whom people can trust anymore, at least, with regard to money. Even to take part in some of our greatest debates, you know, like about suicide. You see. I’m stigmatized. And all of these consequences, just because of immigration. All because I sent my son to Europe.89

In addition to the vivid portrayal this narrative provides of how Modou’s credibility and social reputation were destroyed as a result of his inability to pay back the money he borrowed, it also demonstrates more subtly how even the destruction of a non-migrant’s reputation is ultimately brought back to be blamed on the migrant, himself: if Modou’s son had not been deported and had been able to find work in Europe, then he could have sent remittances back to his father, who could subsequently have paid back Madame Camara.

Modou seemed irritated at the point in this narrative where he explained that only he and Madame Camara had been tried for the theft of the women’s collective’s money, as though he saw his son being equally culpable or equally involved in the wrongdoing that occurred in this instance. One can imagine that Modou’s frustration (either with himself or with his son) might have translated into a more emotional or psychological punishment of Modou’s son, such as described personally by migrants in many anecdotes elsewhere in this chapter. Moreover, not only the possibility of being blamed for the aftermath but even just the sheer risk that parents or others take in order to pay for migrants’ journeys puts an enormous amount of pressure on migrants to succeed and uphold their family’s reputation.

Regardless of whether or not they experienced the explicit blame of their parents for their deportation, no migrant with whom I talked was incognizant of the suffering they caused their parents financially and socially, and most seemed to internalize the hurt their suffering caused others as a reflection on themselves and their failure to succeed in their migration attempt (despite the fact that migrants obviously had little to no control over whether or not they would be caught and deported, so this fact is more a matter of luck than of deliberate action or choice on the migrants’ behalves). Accordingly, returned migrants carried not only the weight of their own social and financial demise, but also that of their parents or other individuals who may have been associated with the failed investment.

Experiences and social pressures of “successful” returned migrants

The social pressure and stress involved in return migration and facing community judgment of one’s achievements was not limited only to men who fell short of standards for successful completion of rites of return, but equally to migrants who had managed to find work
in Europe and send remittances back to Senegal. While telling people that I was researching Senegal’s Barça/Barzakh movement and experiences of return migration tended to lead me to overwhelmingly to “failed” or deported migrants, I did have the fortune of getting to know several migrants who considered themselves to be “successes” (or at least not “failures”), in particular one man who had just returned from Spain earlier in the same week that I was introduced to him.

The first time I met Alioune, he was standing among a circle of friends outside of his parents’ house in Naari Tali in a slick red leather jacket and a baseball cap from the brand “Supreme” (a trendy street wear clothing brand based out of New York City, and popular in hip-hop culture). He was chewing gum and cracking jokes with the others around him, recounting soccer matches from the European “Champions League” tournament underway at the time, and catching up with his friends on their news from the past year. As he left, he pulled out a 5,000 CFA bill from his pocket and slapped it into the palm of a friend, adding in a handshake and a playful punch to the shoulder. Alioune had just returned from Coruña, a city on the northeastern Spanish coast, and would only be in town for two to three weeks until the end of Ramadan, after which he planned to fly back to Spain.

We had planned to go to a coffee shop in his neighborhood to talk about his experiences migrating illegally to Spain and ultimately finding work there, and we took a winding stroll through the neighborhood on the way there so he could run some errands and check in on a few

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90 The reason why the idea of failed migrants dominated discussion of irregular migration is most likely highly related to deteriorating esteem for this mode of migration, rather than an indication the ratio of “successful” to “failed” migrants. Certainly, there were many “successful” migrants or migrants who succeeded in making money abroad; if there hadn’t been at least a partial truth to this, then irregular migration would likely never have achieved the following it had. Greater elaboration on how irregular migration came to be associated with failure will take place [in the following chapter].
old friends. Not only did he stop to see many people along the way, always dipping his head into a door to hear elated greetings, but a number of individuals also approached him as we walked down the street, asking about his news from Spain and inviting him to parties, dinners and other events. He frequently gave out money in these encounters, whether some spare coins or more significant bills. We stopped by his sister’s restaurant, which he insisted had the best *dibi* in Înàari Tali, and then he gave me a tour of his house across the street, introducing me to two relatives inside as his *copine*.91 From the rooftop, he pointed out how serious Înàari Tali’s trash problem was.

Look at this, everywhere you look there is trash! You know, people here don’t respect the environment at all. Not at all! In Coruña, there is no trash hardly anywhere, that’s what was so shocking to me when I got here. I was walking on trash! You know, the schools are supposed to teach the little kids not to litter, but how can they learn when their parents are just as bad! Even old grown men, if they have a cup of *café touba* they will throw it on the ground the second they are done.

Before we left, Alioune showed me where he planned to build a second story for the house on top of the current roof, and ranted about his experiences with unreliable contractors in the past who had done shoddy work for him or overcharged. We finally reached the coffee shop — “the only one in town that sells decent espresso” — all of the seats had been pulled inside to preserve the anonymity of people eating or drinking there, since it was the month of Ramadan and many Dakarois were fasting. Alioune insisted on ordering my drink, and brought back two espressos.

Even before beginning to discuss Alioune’s thoughts and experiences on his migration to Europe, this instance of walking around Înàari Tali with him was incredibly revealing of the nature of “successful” return migration. Alioune’s return was markedly different from the return I heard about from “failed” migrants for its lavishness, fanfare, and visibility. His popularity in

91 *dibi*: grilled meat; *copine*: “girlfriend” or “friend” (who is a girl)
the neighborhood was impossible to overlook, and Alioune certainly encouraged this by freely
giving out money to family and friends, further solidifying the impression many already held of
him that he had come back boasting wealth without limit. His popularity vividly evokes the near
opposite experience of Daouda in his return, who was dismayed to find that he had been
forgotten or ridiculed by all of the “friends and lovers” he had before his deportation. Not only
the community, but even Alioune himself tended to hold himself in high esteem for what he had
achieved abroad and what he was capable of now. During our interview, he pronounced that

Every day, when I think of [my migration], well!... because, you know, me, I tell
myself that I am a hero. A hero. I’m a real man! Here in Naari Tali, I am a real
hero. I am somebody who can’t be discouraged! You know? That changed me,
you know, to realize that if I want something, I have to go get it... It is a huge
challenge! I tell myself, me, I want to have his house. I’m going to go get it! I’m
going to go get his house! I’m going— I’m going to use all measures at my
disposal to get his house. You know? And I tell myself no, I’m going to attain
this, I’m going to get his house, because there’s no challenge too large, and I will
succeed! You know? This is something that has changed me a lot!”

Alioune’s success was not something that was necessarily visible in and of itself, but
rather became apparent through his constant and concerted performance of it. For example, he
was adamant on showing me his rooftop so that I could better visualize what the space would
look like once the second story had been constructed, and the way in which he gave money to
individuals was obvious and public, rather than the discrete gestures many people described to
me for how to give money away in other situations. Later on, Alioune’s insistence on buying my
drink at the coffee shop came with an implied assertion that he ought to pay for my drink
because he was financially better-off than I was (“you’re a student, and you don’t have a job
here!” he exclaimed). This was a surprising role reversal for me given that, as a white upper-
middle class American woman, I was almost invariably seen as “financially better-off” in my

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relationships with Senegalese of all varieties, and frequently paid for all or more than my share of friends’ costs because of this understanding. In insisting on buying my drink by using his personal wealth as a justification, Alioune actively and publically repositioned himself socially in relation to me.

However, there were also indications that these performances of success were motivated in part by a desire to embellish a reality that was somewhat less ideal and stable. For example, although Alioune flaunted his wealth in the manner by which he gave out money, when I asked him what he did for a living in Spain he told me that he worked as a bouncer at a nightclub three nights a week, and outside of this was living off of unemployment payments from the Spanish government. In another example, he occasionally misrepresented our relationship, or otherwise made it ambiguous to the individuals with whom we stopped to talk. Alioune, who had married
and had a child with a white Spanish woman in Coruña, was recently divorced — the fact of which many of the individuals we met in Naari Tali seemed to be unaware. I was frequently under the impression that the people we met believed me to be Alioune’s Spanish wife, and only when people explicitly inquired about this did Alioune correct them. Moreover, he made this correction or the initial introduction of me by explaining that I was his copine, a term which has an ambiguous meaning and strongly suggests the idea of “girlfriend” while also allowing the meaning “friend, who is a girl” (Alioune did not clarify this point). In allowing some people to believe that I was his wife, Alioune was able to gloss over the fact of his divorce — something that is not only not positive, but actually negatively-perceived by many Senegalese — and continue to project the image of stereotypical success, that of a wealthy and happily married man.

In addition to facing obstacles to maintaining his social reputation as a “success,” Alioune also experienced serious pressure to support a huge number of people. This pressure was intimately bound up with the pressure he faced to maintain his social reputation, as an aspect of his image of successfulness involved his ability to provide; however, on a more practical level, this pressure concerned his real ability to continually give out money and funding to any number of people. Alioune himself commented on the quantity of demands he received from people for financial help, given his status as a “successful” migrant:

And what’s more is that there are people, there are people who are with you but… but they are just always trying to getting something out of it, no? One has to think of that, too! You know… they’re with you and they say, “I’ll help you, I’ll help you” just to get something out of it. In a little bit of time they’ll be coming to you saying, “me, I have such-and-such a problem… you know, a money problem.” You see. They harass you, and that bothers you a lot! No, me, I am Senegalese, and there are all of these people who come [to me]! Who tell me, “Alioune, you know, I have a 1000 CFA-problem, I have a 5,000 CFA-problem…” They say this to me because they know I have my papers, you know? There are people who I help, and there are people who, I just can’t. I — me, I share with the whole
world! But I have to take care of my family first! When I give out money I always give it to them first. And afterwards, for my friends— my close friends. But there are people who come, who say “I have a problem…” And there are also women who come, who talk and flirt with me, but they’re just the same as everybody else. And certainly, Alioune was financially supporting a lot of people. In addition to sending remittances to his family for their quotidian expenses, he was also single-handedly funding the construction of his house as well as supporting many other people to a lesser degree through basic charity.

It is not hard to imagine that this rate of spending would strain the income he received from unemployment welfare and from being a bouncer, consequently putting himself in a tricky position where he risked running out of money at the same time that he was parading himself about as a wealthy and successful migrant and as somewhat of a financial savior for his community. So, although his community considered Alioune a “success” as a result of generally satisfying the family-house-wife expectations of return migration, this did not signify that he did not also face significant and real pressures. His real-life circumstances fell neither solidly in the category of failure — he had not been deported, he had married and had children with a Spanish woman, and he had a job and official papers in Spain — nor solidly in the category of “success” — his marriage hadn’t worked out, he implied that his job was insufficient to live off of without additional support from welfare, and he didn’t have enough money to pay for everything his family and community demanded and expected from him. However, unlike “failed” migrants, Alioune was “successful enough” to be able to plausibly exaggerate and maneuver his representations of his life in order to more fully win the admiration of his family and community — or, as O. Alexander Miller describes, Alioune was able to “invent stories which heightened

[his] social esteem among peers” (Miller 2008:90). thus satisfying the requirements for a “successful” performance of return migration, even if his reality technically did not meet those requirements.

“Unsettled returnees”

In sociologist Giulia Sinatti’s own research on transnationalism and return migration among Senegalese migrants, she writes that her informants “almost unanimously confirm that return is a central ambition for most Senegalese,” and quotes a Senegalese man named Ndogo who asserts that “return is the reason itself for our departure” (Sinatti 2011:158). That is to say, migrants depart on migratory journeys based on the expectation that this will eventually allow them to return to Senegal in an improved economic and social position. However, both Sinatti’s and my own findings point to a reality where, despite these hopes and plans to return permanently, an array of factors made such definitive returns extremely difficult, and many migrants found themselves either engaging in a more cyclical transmigration or wishing that they could.

A huge part of the elusiveness of permanent return concerned the near impossibility of continually fulfilling the financial demands that families and communities impose on migrants. This was particularly evident in seeing the level of demand for financial help Alioune received in taking a simple walk through his neighborhood. Moreover, Sinatti writes that “family and kin are frequently reported as advancing added demands for support alongside basic everyday needs” (ibid., 160), signifying that the more money a migrant earns or sends back to his family, the more will be asked of him, such that one can never have enough money or income to satisfy all of his family and community’s demands, but rather will always be falling short no matter how much he
makes. The struggle to meet their families’ ballooning expectations of them is exacerbated by decreased opportunities to earn money in Senegal, as compared to options available to migrants in Europe. Most economic Barça/Barzakh migrants only managed to find unskilled labor jobs or work in the informal sector; these forms of employment offered little opportunity to gain the job skills necessary to advance into better-paying or more prestigious work in Senegal. This effectively prevents migrants from returning to Senegal to find work that is better than that which they would leave behind, including work that would enable them to locally sustain the types of lives that are now expected of them as “successful” migrants.

Sinatti, for example, notes that even among Senegalese migrants who considered creating business projects in Senegal using the resources they accrued abroad, most of these individuals were aware that “even if their business plans in Senegal were effective, their income would still be lower than their earnings” in Europe (ibid., 161). Alioune’s description of his income options fit exactly into this description:

I’ve been trying to start a business here, selling shoes and bags from Spain, but business isn’t very good here. I make two, three, even four times as much just through the unemployment checks I get from the government there! I’m lucky, because I have my papers, so I can come and go from Senegal whenever I want. If I couldn’t go back, yeah, I could make something work here, but as long as I can work there [in Spain], it’s better. It’s better for my family. 94

Additionally, many migrants in both my own research and among those cited in Sinatti’s paper describe it being much easier to save money from a distance, allowing migrants to save and remit larger sums of money than if they were in Senegal, where their earnings would be eaten up through huge quantities of petty expenditures and social obligations to provide financial support to others (Sinatti 2011). Accordingly, earning money from abroad also provided migrants with greater control over when and how much money they would remit, permitting them to employ a

more far-sighted judgment based on distance and detachment from local realities in order to send money home in a way that it could be used to greater effect.

So, having migrated once and experienced the possibility of earning and remitting money from abroad, many migrants get caught in a cycle of needing to support their family at ever-increasing rates that is only possible from abroad — or, as Sinatti articulates it, once migrants “have engaged in the process of migration, they are unable to stop, trapped between the luxury of ensuring a better livelihood for those who have stayed behind and the need for geographic distance to uphold local demands” (ibid., 163). In this sense, the notion of permanent return for anyone — whether initially considered a “success” or a “failure” — was elusive. Although the family-house-wife tripartite of expectations seems concrete and attainable if challenging, all of these expectations could be and were expanded upon initial achievement. Being able to supporting one’s family “reasonably” incited family members to push for more; building a house called for building extensions and more stories to the house, or boutiques and stores to supplement them; being financially secure enough to get married opened the floodgates to endless demands for new clothing, jewelry, funding for social events, and more. Accordingly, “successful” migrants’ “success” tended to be short-lived, and it was never too long before individuals began struggling to maintain this reputation.

*Return… to where?: Desires and imaginations of re-migrating abroad*

Given the intransience of “success” and the social consequences of “failure,” many migrants dreamed of returning to Europe to continue chasing after the possibility of the stable prosperity that seemed always to rest just out of reach. For many migrants who had been deported and did not have papers to allow them to return to Europe easily, their return to Senegal
may have resembled a form of more permanent resettlement, but many were mentally restless and anxious to go back to Europe, whether or not this would ever be a reality. Every migrant with whom I spoke (all of whom had been deported, with the exception of Alioune), expressed a desire to go abroad again, although they varied in their willingness to go abroad again illegally or by pirogue.

Cheikh, who was a deported migrant living in the fishing village of Yarakh, said that “if a pirogue pulled up to shore today and said ‘we are leaving for Europe tonight,’ I would get on it. Because my situation right now is no good, it is no good at all.” Alpha was similarly consumed by imagining his next trip abroad. When I saw him for the first time in Keur Massar, our conversation immediately turned toward travelling and immigration, with Alpha telling me about all of the family or other connections he had in the United States or other European countries, and how he might be able to move in with one of them or have one of them vouch for him so he could get papers. “I would go to Spain first if I could get back there, otherwise America would be my second choice and Australia my third,” he told me. Despite his forcible deportation from Spain and total lack of financial or logistical means to participate in international travel at that point, Alpha was restless to re-migrate and struggled to come to terms with the more probable reality of staying in Senegal indefinitely.

Some deported migrants also saw migrating again as an opportunity to rewrite their family’s and community’s impressions of them as “failed” migrants. Daouda expressed this hope particularly explicitly:

Yeah! I dream of going back one day! Not illegally though… at least I pray maybe to be legal. But I dream of going to Europe or another place. Yeah. So that I can call my people and everyone will know that, maybe I was unfortunate once, but now I’m fortunate! Yeah. Because I want to show everyone, you

know, that failing everyone is not my life. And so I will know again that failing is not my life. So I can still make it again. And I still want to give my parents back that happiness that they will have when I call them and tell that that I am in Spain. I still dream of calling them one day saying, “Dad, Mom, I’m abroad!”

Thus, although Daouda had been returned from Spain for almost five years, he was still anxious to leave, and many of his decisions in Senegal were geared toward preparing himself to migrate again. Spain represented something of “unfinished business” to him as a challenge he had once taken on but not overcome, and he craved for the opportunity to go back in order to re-write his identity as a “success.”

Outside of migrants’ hopes and plans to re-migrate abroad in search of “success” — whether to maintain success already achieved or to taste it for the first time — some individuals (especially those who had spent significant periods of time abroad) also expressed desires to return because they struggled to readjust to life in Senegal, and felt a stronger connection to or preference for the communities and lifestyles they had abroad. Alioune, for example, stood out from Senegalese living in Senegal in a great deal of ways. His dress was markedly more European than that of his local counterparts, and he insisted on smoking and drinking despite it being the holy month of Ramadan, for which many people fasted from sunrise to sunset or otherwise hid their consumption during the day so as to either appear to be fasting or to respect the difficulty of fasting for those who were doing it strictly. Alioune had even lost some of his biochemical adaptations to Senegal — he told me that he had started taking malaria medication for the month he would be in Senegal since his natural immunity was no longer as strong. In addition, Alioune frequently disparaged Senegalese lifestyles and customs, explicitly saying that he preferred Spain to the “third world” that is Senegal:

I don’t have a problem being here because I know it’s only for a short period. Him [the deported migrant], he knows that it’s for all his life… Me, I can endure this situation, because I know it won’t be long, it’s a short duration. But those guys, they can’t endure it because they know it will be forever. Even you! You can only endure it now because you know you will go back to the United States soon. But if it was for your whole life, your experience here would rot. Because the European life, it’s diametrically opposed to the third world life… Me, I want to live the reality. Reality… that’s life— all of us, we should all have the same. All of us, we should all have health. Where is it here, health? You know, here in Senegal, we don’t have this! Me, I want to live in reality! But reality, that is not Senegal, you know! That is not the life we have here! You see all of these mosquitoes, here. The water… you know? You see, you see the taxis that park here, this is not reality! Because there is no order. You see the ndiaga ndiAYes, which set whatever price they feel like! You see the taxis, which push whatever price they like! You see those guys there, who just set up a table wherever they want on the side of the road to sell fish. Without even knowing whether the fish they are selling are bad or not! That, that is not reality! We need to have that [reality] in Senegal! Outside of here, nobody would slaughter a sheep in his own home, because they don’t know whether the meat is good or not. But reality… it’s in Europe! That meat, if he sells it, people will get sick because it was too old. We, we have to bring reality here. Here, people drink powdered milk every morning! That’s not real milk! It’s just not the reality!97

Alioune’s use of the idea of “reality” is interesting here, suggesting that he viewed the Senegalese lifestyle as false or invalid. His rejection of this lifestyle involved not only critiques of real problems, such as that of public health and food safety, but also cultural and economic factors such as informal markets. In doing so, he aligned himself with the European culture (or at least, the bureaucratic orderliness) in which he had been living for the past several years.

The notion that Senegal was only endurable in small doses was another one that was frequently described to me, especially when I would express my appreciation for Senegal to Senegalese. “You only like it here because you know you’ll go back to the States soon,” my host sister Anaïs told me after one such comment. “If you couldn’t leave, you’d probably feel differently.” Alioune’s particular lack of desire to stay in Senegal came perhaps from a discomfort or distaste for the Senegal’s cultural order and organization, as it appeared that his

cultural preferences or expectations had shifted so much over his time in Spain as to make Senegal no longer endurable.

In addition to cultural shifts, Senegalese migrants who had spent significant amounts of time in Europe also experienced linguistic separation from their former communities in Senegal. This was a palpable struggle for both Alpha and Alioune, both of whom had been in Spain for at least five years and both of whom I met within the first week of their return to Senegal.

Alioune’s speech, for instance, involved heavy mixing of Spanish and French (with some Wolof), which publically marked him as out of place, for although he seemed to be unaware of many of the “mistakes” he was making, they were highly apparent to me as someone used to speaking a purer or unmixed variety of French. For example, the following section of an interview with Alioune in which he describes the work environment in Spain involves various levels of mixing and substitution of Spanish and French98:


/Yes, yes, yes! That’s why I travelled! There are a lot of unemployed people in Spain right now. This is why I’m doing some... some... how do you say it? Some business. Do you know? {Checks iPhone} Some “business.” Otherwise me, I could do that. You know? And I’m going to send it [the revenue] to my siblings here, to my brothers and sisters, so that they can manage the money here, and me, I’ll work over there. I only work three days. I don’t want to hang around there, only working three days without anything else. You know! I have to do other things.]*

98 Spanish or mixed words are denoted by bolded text, and French usage is in normal text.
This excerpt demonstrates a range of code-switching, as well as an apparent range in Alioune’s awareness of when he was or was not speaking French. In one particularly conscious moment, Alioune could only think of the word *negocios*, which is Spanish for “business.” In his awareness that this was not a French word and I might not understand it, he actively looked up a translation.\(^\text{100}\) \(^1\) Interesting in this moment was that, as Alioune thought to himself out loud as he searched for the translation, his speech switched entirely into Spanish (*como se dice eso*?), strongly suggesting that Spanish was the language he naturally thought in and that it came more fluidly to him, such that everything he was saying in French was a translation of his thoughts in Spanish.

Next, in some instances he would initially express an idea in Spanish and then repeat it in French for clarification, such as *a mis hermanos aquí, à mis frères y sœurs*. In these cases, it seemed that the Spanish came out instinctively but Alioune recognized the mistake after saying the phrase, at which point he repeated it again in French. However, in this case and at other points, there were certain words he failed to correct or didn’t realize were not French, such as *y* (Sp.) and *et* (Fr.) [“and”]; *mis* (Sp.) and *mes* (Fr.) [“my”]; and in other points, *porque* (Sp.) for *pour quoi* (Fr.) [“why”]; and *España* (Sp.) for *Espagne* (Fr.) [“Spain”]. In these instances, the differences between the same word in either language are negligible, allowing Alioune to think he was saying the French word when he was actually using the Spanish word, but without significantly diminishing comprehensibility.

In the final case for the excerpt, Alioune combined two similar-sounding words for “work” from Spanish (*trabajar*) and French (*travailler*) to form a new word that does not exist in either language: *trabailler*. As in the previous case of seemingly unwitting substitutions,

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\(^{100}\) “Business” is a purely English word, but is also commonly substituted for its French translation *affaires* by Senegalese French speakers.
Alioune’s use of *traballer* also seemed to suggest an unawareness that he was speaking neither Spanish nor French. However unknowingly, though, through this word usage and through word substitution and repetitions, Alioune was clearly making an effort to bridge a lingual divide between the way that he had grown used to communicating and the way that he was expected to communicate with me and others in Dakar. However, while he was clearly working toward reviving his ability to speak a purer strain of French, his use — deliberate or not — of foreign words and structures marked him as equally foreign, as well as serving as a highly identifiable sign of difference from others in his community.

Linguistic barriers also presented a huge barrier in Alpha’s readjustment to Senegal. My first meeting with him in the medical clinic in Guediawaye was conducted almost entirely in Spanish by Pamela (the Spanish woman who had first been notified of Alpha’s deportation) with some Wolof and almost no French. Alpha, who later told me that he had spoken French fluently before his migration, had forgotten almost everything he knew of the language. When I met him for the second time about a week later in Keur Massar, his proficiency had started to come back, but conversing in French was still clearly a belabored process for him and he spoke with a heavily Spanish accent as well as Spanish intonation and phrasing, and code-switched similarly to Alpha in the excerpt above. Having learned a little bit of Spanish the previous summer, I was able to follow his frequent code-switching between French, Spanish, and Wolof, and in some cases had short conversations with him completely in Spanish. After one such conversation, he confessed (in Spanish):

> You know, thank you so much. It’s really hard here! Nobody understands me. Even in Spanish they don’t understand me. French… I don’t speak French anymore, it isn’t my language anymore. Spanish is my language now. Even Wolof— sometimes I’m talking to someone in Wolof and I can only think of the Spanish word. Maybe I can use the Spanish word to find the French word, because they are so similar, but not everyone here understands French! So, it’s
difficult, and I miss speaking Spanish. It’s a beautiful language, you know. And it’s my language.¹⁰¹

Not only could Alpha literally not communicate with some people, but even when he could it was in a language that was no longer “his own.” This created an entirely new level of distance for him from daily life in Senegal, such that every verbal interaction involved a certain degree of discomfort and foreignness, thereby heightening the severity of Alpha’s forcible displacement from Spain and adding to his desire to go back to Europe.

Finally, in addition to the lingual and cultural detachment from Senegal that migrants who had spent significant periods of time abroad experienced, many also faced social isolation, finding that life in Senegal wasn’t like they remembered it being and that people who had once been important to them had moved on with their lives. Alpha offered a poignant example of this reality when he showed me the photos that his cousin had saved for him and explained to me one by one how the other people in the pictures had changed or left. One picture showed a large group of well-dressed people posing together outside a decorative tent.

“This was at my friend’s wedding. Here I am, on the top left… this is my brother on the bottom. He’s working in Ziguinchor now. And this is my uncle and his wife, although he died in a car crash three years ago and I think she might have remarried…”

Alpha flipped to another picture that showed a single girl with beautiful long braided hair. “This is Mariame. She was my girlfriend for two years, until I left for Spain. I was going to marry her, but we broke up and now she’s married to someone else. I think she lives in Touba now, I might try to visit her when I go there…”

The next photo was a picture of a much younger Alpha with whom he told me was his mother. “This is my mother. She also passed away a couple years ago.” Alpha’s voice dropped

off, not needing to explain that he’d been unable to go to her funeral for his pain in missing it to be clear.

Alpha continued to show me the entire stack of photos, each one with a commentary like the ones above, about how people had married, gotten jobs, moved away, died. Alpha seemed to grow nostalgic over this process, remembering the people he had left behind and the important moments of their lives that he had missed while in Spain, unable to return for funeral or marriage ceremonies because of his lack of official papers to allow him to go back abroad afterward.

Alioune, who faced a similar situation in having missed many important events in people’s lives back in Senegal but had the fortune now of being able to come and go, described his restlessness in Dakar when all of his family and friends were in Spain:

I’m going to return on the thirteenth... But you know, my problem is that, in Spain, every day I’m with people, we chat and hang out, every day! Every day I’m with friends, you know! But here, I don’t have a lot of friends, you know! I know people, but they are not a lot of friends with whom I can really talk, you know. For me, I used to have friends here, but now all of my friends are in Spain. And I miss them a lot, too. Yeah, what I miss is not people who come to see me, the acquaintances, but my friends! And, even my acquaintances here, there are so many of them who go to work, they have jobs here during the day. They can’t leave their jobs just to hang out with me! You know. So, I have a whole month where I go out every night, but I go out alone! That’s no fun. It’s better to go out with someone you can talk to, you know, I like to talk with people every day. But my friends here, they all go to work in the morning. There are days where I’m all alone here. That’s why I want to go, I want to go back to Spain.102

Alioune’s sense of his social isolation is interesting in comparison to Alpha’s because while Alpha found himself feeling abandoned or left behind by his many old friends and relationships, Alioune still found himself in company, but a company that was more detached or arguably less sincere that the friends he used to have in Senegal or the friends he currently has in Spain.

Because of his detachment from the lives of people in his hometown, he considered most of his

relationships to be simple acquaintances or family connections rather than true friendships, and these individuals may have been interested in maintaining their relationships with Alioune at least in part for his popularity and wealth. So, while he had people to talk to and spend time with in Senegal, he was unfulfilled by these relationships and longed to go back to Spain where his “real” friends and relationships were.

Even with a sizeable amount of acquaintances in Dakar, however, Alioune still felt himself as being external or tangential to daily activities: while everyone around him had jobs to do or tasks to take care of, Alioune had nothing to do but chat with people and go out at night (moreover, he was there during the month of Ramadan, when many people stop going out at all and many clubs close for the entire month. He didn’t have enough time in Senegal to find a job or start a project, and so he described feeling bored and aimless as he watched everyone around him go on with lives that did not involve him. So, for Alioune, the choice to return to Spain was an obvious one — that was where his “real” life took place now, and Senegal had become a place to which he was connected by familial obligations and history; his involvement in life had become a primarily financial and symbolic one, rather than his having a role in quotidian routines and relationships. While his impact on the community and his social importance were huge, he felt out of place in daily operations, highlighting the shift in where his life actually occurred and who “his community” actually was.

Alioune’s experiences show that, even for migrants who were judged as successfully completing rites of return, full reincorporation into their original communities following their return was not always possible. In this sense, the “rites of passage” theory is too strict and formulaic to account for the fact that human beings develop all kinds of connections, relationships, and loyalties in all interactions and points of their lives, regardless of a period...
being considered “transitory.” Particularly for migrants who lived abroad for long periods of time, their liminal homes and communities gradually became real, lasting homes and communities; Senegalese men adopted foreign languages, started businesses, built houses, made friends, fell in love, and even started families in this theoretically “liminal” space. While return to Senegal was and continues to be the official, verbalized goal of most economic migrations, then, this was frequently not the case in mind and heart.

**Discussion and critique**

O. Alexander Miller’s research on rites of return migration in Jamaican communities provides an extremely useful framework for understanding constructions of success and failure in Senegalese return migration. For, ultimately, these judgments involved highly tangible and performative requirements — building a house, giving out a lot of money, starting a family, buying a car — that were taken to be signs of other aspects of success, such as financial stability or the extent to which one helps one’s family. Alpha, for example, was in Spain for seven years and surely sent back a significant amount of remittances over this time; however, his deportation and consequent return to Senegal in a state of poverty denied him the opportunity to act the part of the successful migrant, despite the fact that he very well may have been considered this way prior to his forcible return. Thus, success is something that is performed publically upon return and only upon return; all that precedes return is “limbo” in which the migrant prepares himself and his resources for this impending judgment.

However, this theory is imperfect in a number of ways. First of all, success is not something that can be performed “once and for all” as one rite, but rather is a constant performance for a reputation that requires constant maintenance. A migrant cannot return to
Senegal and give out money to his neighbors for a single week to be considered eternally a “successful” migrant; rather, this “rite” is performed again and again, indefinitely. This plays a significant role in the presence of “unsettled returnees” and re-migration, for migrants often find that their performance of success is not sustainable without the resources and distance that Europe provides. Consequently, the idea of a “true success” is hard to grasp and even impossible to achieve, but reaching for it involves indefinite and cyclical migration. Furthermore, just as one’s success is not definitive, neither is one’s failure; conversely, many “failed” migrants make multiple attempts at migration to Europe or elsewhere, each one of which provides an opportunity for the individual to rewrite himself as a success (or again as a failure).

Finally, Miller’s application of the notion of rites of passage to return migration also makes the assumption that an individual’s ability to reintegrate into society is solely dependent on his being judged successful in his community’s eyes, which overlooks the ways in which migrants themselves change over the course of their migration that may limit their ability or desire to permanently resettle in these places they once called “home.” Rather, over long periods away from their original homes and communities, migrants’ cultural, lingual, and social loyalties are constantly evolving and their role in their role in their original communities also changes, making indefinite return hard for migrants even when they are judged “successful” and welcomed by these communities. Thus, while a rite of passage process may be at work, being judged successful will not necessarily mean that a migrant will easily be able to reenter his community; rather, many find that they are more comfortable from a distance, making “true successful return” an elusive concept for both migrants and the communities they leave behind.
Chapter Five

“The Tip of the Iceberg”: Migration narratives and articulations of underlying dilemmas

“Sunugaal” — Didier Awadi (2006)

French translation from Wolof

Ce que vous nous aviez dit

Ce que vous nous aviez promis

On attend toujours

You promised me I would have a job

You promised me I would have food

You promised me I would have real work and hope

But in reality, nothing at all so far

This is why I’m fleeing, this is why I’m leaving in this pirogue

Swearing not to stay here one second longer

Living this hell in such horrible conditions, I’d rather die

Come what may

I’d still rather die

Political journalists in prison or at the DIC

Political opponents in prison or at the DIC.

Too many companies are in bankruptcy

ICS, SONACOS are all sinking in bankruptcy

Every day your scandals flood our radios

The Elder, his holy son, the son of the Elder

It’s becoming dire, what’s happening in Senegal

Thieves and criminals are free or released and we consider that legal.

English translation from French

All of your beautiful words

All of your beautiful promises

We’re still waiting

You promised me I would have a job

You promised me I would have food

You promised me I would have real work and hope

But in reality, nothing at all so far

This is why I’m fleeing, this is why I’m leaving in this pirogue

Swearing not to stay here one second longer

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Every day your scandals flood our radios

The Elder, his holy son, the son of the Elder

It’s becoming dire, what’s happening in Senegal

Thieves and criminals are free or released and we consider that legal.

Il est où ce travail que vous nous aviez promis

Where is it, this work that you promised us

103 “Sunugaal” or “sunu gaal” is Wolof meaning “our boat,” a phrase allegedly overheard by early colonists who then adapted it as “Senegal” for the name of the country.

104 DIC: Division des Investigations criminelles (Division of Criminal Investigations)

105 ICS: Industries Chimiques du Sénégal (Chemical Industries of Senegal)

106 SONACOS: Société Nationale de Commercialisation des Oléagineux du Sénégal (National Oilsseeds Marketing Company of Senegal)

107 Potentially a reference to former president Abdoulaye Wade and his son, Karim Wade.
On ne voit toujours rien
On attend depuis!
N’est ce pas vous qui aviez promis de nous sortir de la misère
En vérité tous les jours elle empire.
Tout ce chahut,
Ce n’est pas du tout ce que nous espérons
Si tout marchait bien on ne s’embarquerait pas dans ces pirogues.
Tout ce chahut,
Ce n’est pas ce que nous espérons
Nos pirogues coulent et c’est nos gosses qui y restent.

Ce que vous nous aviez dit
Ce que vous nous aviez promis
On attend toujours

Tu nous proposes ton université du futur,
Celle qui nous inquiète c’est celle concrète du présent
Les jeunes sont inquiets.
Coupures à outrance à la SENELEC
Résultat personne ne bosse.
Pour l’eau c’est pareil, ils passent leur temps à la couper
Et malgré tous ces désagréments ils sont toujours pressés de venir nous couper le service quand on ne paye pas.
Ce n’est pas qu’on fasse de la politique ou qu’on veuille vous acculer
Ceci n’est que le triste récit de la réalité.
Nous acceptons certes vos réalisations et grands projets : routes, électrifications et ponts
Mais désolé l’homme ne se nourrit pas de goudron
Il n’y a pas de gloire pour un menuisier de fabriquer une table, il a été payé pour,
Il fait son job c’est tout
Un leader ne devrait pas crier victoire à chaque route construite.
Le peuple a voté et lui a donné un mandat et un budget pour.

We still don’t see anything
We have been waiting!
Isn’t it right that you promised to get us out of this misery
In truth it’s getting worse every day.
All this uproar,
This is not at all what we had hoped for
If all was going well we wouldn’t leave on these pirogues.
All this uproar,
This is not what we had hoped for
Our pirogues sink and it’s our children who are in them.\textsuperscript{109}

All of your beautiful words
All of your beautiful promises
We’re still waiting

You propose us your university of the future,
But we worry about the concrete present
The youth are worried.
Excessive cuts from SENELEC
Meaning, no one can work.
For water it’s the same thing, they spend their time cutting it off
And despite all these disagreements, they’re always in a rush to come cut our service when we don’t pay the bill.
It’s not because we’re playing politics that we want to corner you
This is but the sad account of reality.
Of course we’ll accept your grand productions and projects: roads, electrification, and bridges
But alas, man cannot nourish himself with tar
There’s no glory in a carpenter building a table, for which he’s been paid,
He did his job, that’s all
A leader shouldn’t cry victory after every road he constructs.
The people voted and gave him a mandate and a budget.

\textsuperscript{108} SENELEC: Société National d’Électricité du Sénégal (National Electric Company of Senegal); responsible for regular electricity cuts that are a source of much frustration for urban residents
\textsuperscript{109} Alternative translation: Our children are left behind [in Senegal]
While hanging out with Malick (the returned migrant who had stolen his mother’s *tontine* and was trying to earn the money back in Dakar) and some of his friends one day, we were listening to some of their favorite Senegalese rap artists, including the Didier Awadi song above. One of Malick’s friends, “Sam,” told me that he was trying to put together his own rap album geared toward awareness of social injustices, and was writing a few raps specifically for a documentary a friend of his was making about youth unemployment and crime. At my request, Sam performed one of the raps he had written, which, like Awadi’s “Sunugaal,” blended dismay at the prospects for modern youth with criticism of government inaction and corruption, echoing Black Power and African liberation themes and calling for solidarity and grassroots cooperation to address modern social problems. Afterward, I told Sam that his rap reminded me of politicized music I’d heard about irregular migration, and he explained,

> It’s all the same thing. This rap, this is about immigration, too. Because immigration is only the tip of the iceberg, so to speak. Immigration is what you see. But the real problem is what is underneath it. My rap, Awadi’s rap, Matador’s rap, all of them ask, “what is the source of these problems?”

Malick’s notion that irregular migration is only the “tip of the iceberg” is an eloquent articulation of the way many Senegalese are coming to understand the issue, and is the focus of this chapter. That is, while irregular migration remains an urgent social concern for its immediate risks and consequences, concrete problems such as migration are increasingly being used to build a framework for or entry-point into considering the dynamics and complexities of more insidious dilemmas in Senegalese society. Awadi’s and Sam’s raps, as well as innumerable other
narratives of all forms, showcase serious reflection on Senegalese society that push beyond immediate and visible crises to address more foundational dilemmas — such as neocolonialism, development, and social cohesion.

In order to begin using migration narratives as a window into more foundational societal contradictions, it was first necessary for people to begin seeing migration — or at least, irregular migration — negatively. In her examination of tale-telling about irregular migrant men in Dakar, anthropologist Caroline Melly writes that by 2006, “a newer generation of pirogue tales depicting a nation in crisis began to build on and destabilize [...] older storytelling conventions,” and that these tales “both reflected and stirred public anxiety about the tightening of migration regulations over the past decade and Senegalese men’s concomitant failure to migrate” (Melly 2011:364). This is to say, new stories about the dangerous and even mortal voyages men took to Europe overtook those that glamorized and heroized migrants, throwing doubt over the feasibility of irregular migration and highlighting the obstacles to “success.”

This new tone and reconstructed story of migration — which continued to pulse strongly throughout my research in Dakar from 2012-2013 — played a significant role in dismantling dreams of finding a fast and easy fortune abroad through irregular migration. While migration continues to be an important consideration and resource for tens of thousands of Senegalese families, “pirogue tales,” and the ensuing crystallization of the idea of “Barça/Barzakh” as a legitimate wave of migration as opposed to an anomaly, allowed people to not only consider it distinctly from other, surer forms of migration, but also consider it critically and assess its implications and consequences. Pirogue tales in the mid-2000s, as Melly and others corroborate

110 “New” here and throughout this chapter refers to the newest wave of mainstream thought and opinion about migration — currently characterized by its primarily skeptical and even negative attitude toward migration — and which arose roughly in 2005 and 2006 as Barça/Barsaqq migration began to peak and which continues today. (Triulzi and McKenzie 2013)
(ibid.; also Riccio 2005, Ludl 2008), tended to be more alarmist than celebratory, with even “success” stories recounted with caution and notes of disbelief.

This chapter will consider tale-telling of irregular migration in several different forms, such as in journalism and popular media, in formal community discussions, and in informal talk. Each of these genres provided a platform for people to express many hues of discontent about Barça/Barzakh and seize on negative experiences in irregular migration to discourage others from making similar choices. However, in addition to directly addressing the validity and viability of this form of migration, these pirogue tales also serve as a vehicle for considering the more vast and abstract questions and predicaments facing Senegal as a country, such as the influence of neocolonialism and globalization in national politics, how to promote “real development” and strong communities, and what it means to be a good citizen or a good Senegalese. These tales and critiques recognize the reasons for and importance of migration but increasingly problematize the tendency to default to or rely on this as a means of solving local and national problems, opening up a space to critically question and speculate on themes such as development and democratic governance pertinent to Senegal as a post-colonial state.

News journalism in particular gave platform to a wide range of these narratives (perhaps owing to its establishment as a platform for all topics of concern and the openness and flexibility of editorial sections) whereas other modes of communication tended to highlight certain themes more than others due to variations in intimacy, people involved, and structures of communication and interaction. Because of this, this chapter will examine the role of news media solely for its influence in rebranding irregular migration with the understanding that editorial sections addressed a plethora of themes beyond this subject, and will then explore these themes in greater
detail through the lenses of Senegalese hip-hop, organized community discussions, and informal talk.

**The Narrative Form as a Tool for Social Change**

Before delving into the content of the arguments and claims that Senegalese made on a regular basis in their critiques of migration, a discussion of the impact and value of the narrative form is due. What I consider to be a “narrative” here can circulate in a broad array of forms — media ranging from TV and newspaper journalism to music and film, from conference lectures to community discussion, from testimonials to informal chit-chat — anything that tells a story or constructs a certain perspective of reality.

Narratives are useful evidence in anthropology and sociology because of the form’s subjectivity and flexibility, open to formal and informal co-optation by anyone and broad enough to allow significant creative and significatory leeway. Accordingly, I define narrative generally so as to encompass a broad sweep of narrative varieties, taking it to include any communicated sequence with a beginning, middle, and end. While a vast and ever-growing body of scholars have discussed narrative forms, Erving Goffman’s analysis of them as “strips” and “frames” is particularly useful as far as narratives are discussed in this chapter. According to Goffman, a “strip” is “any arbitrary slice or cut from the stream of ongoing activity, including here sequences of happenings, real or fictive, as seen from the perspective of those subjectively involved in sustaining an interest in them” — this is to say, one must consider where the narrative begins and ends in an infinite span of time, as this decision by the narrator reflects an artificial and analytical division that is an inherent part of the narrator’s argument or subjective perspective (Goffman 1974:10). Similarly, “frames” refer to the constructions that narrators use
to organize, perceive, and communicate about reality, including frames of thought which involve mental representations, interpretations, and simplifications of reality (ibid.). The notion of narratives as particular and subjective “strips” or “frames” of reality highlights the variety of ways in which different people or groups can approach and understand what is theoretically the same “thing” or “event.”

In an exploration of accounts of cholera, Briggs and Mantini-Briggs highlight the politicized nature of narratives:

In examining the mechanisms through which stories were imbued with legitimacy, and challenged, we see that narratives had very real effects on how people lived and died...The problem is that stories are just as real as germs and bottles of rehydration solution. Stories reported by the media were particularly powerful... Their stories put public health institutions on the line. They forced officials to act. (Briggs and Mantini-Briggs 2004:7)

In their work, my work, and the life of narratives more generally, the “strip” and “frame” of a narrative and the identity or power of the narrator can affect how much attention and legitimacy the narrative receives. Moreover, the difference between which narratives are or are not privileged, valued, or repeated often translates into what is or is not considered to be the “truth” or the “facts” about a situation, with serious implications in practical, daily life.

This is the base value of narration: it is a form through which one is able to agentively construct and reconstruct one’s self, to define and redefine the world one lives in. Narratives are a vehicle for questioning perceptions of the world promoted as objective truths, for forming and advancing one’s own vision of reality. In narrating and storytelling — in publishing an article or taking the mike — the speaker claims authority and asserts the worthiness and validity of his or her own experiences; he or she upholds the right to present a different version of the mainstream line, to contradict traditional experts and authorities who hold power and whose voices and ideas are disproportionately privileged and influential. Likewise, storytelling is also one of implicit
optimism: optimism that someone will listen to and learn from the speaker’s experiences, necessarily validating their subjective reality by giving it an audience.

Moreover, to question the effectiveness of simple, regular talk and storytelling is to forget that this is where action is born. Only through conversation can people’s individual experiences and subjectivities come together to create collective will, to support and strengthen each other (Solinger et al. 2008). Narration allows for conversation, and through conversation people who were once unconnected individuals realize that which they have in common and can grow together through their interaction (ibid.). One person might interpret a story differently from the speaker or another listener, and then people can collectively compare and contest narratives in a way that develops them and draws in ever more voices. Though it may be modest in appearance, this is the process of establishing the collective will necessary to build movements and promote social change.

The rest of this chapter examines Dakarois’s narratives of migration during my time there in 2013, and the way that narration opened up discursive spaces for them to problematize and reconstruct the reality in which they live. While commentary on the effect of particular narrative forms will be a part of the following analysis, this is not, however, the primary argument of this chapter — which concerns the critical thinking about foundational societal problems that migration narratives spurred and facilitated. Rather, this chapter highlights the power of narratives to shape action and desire on large scale, which is helpful in understanding the spread and intensification of ideas in the arguments about migration described below.

Rebranding Barça/Barzakh at the local bus-stop newsstand

About a week or two after I arrived in Dakar in 2012 and had told my host family about recent work I had done with irregular migrants in the United States, my host brother Jacques
(“Jack”) sent me an eager text message saying that I should take a look at the newspapers. On my way to class later that day I stopped by a newsstand not far from my house, where some cord had been strung between two trees so that newspapers could be hung on them and displayed to passersby. There was always a small number of men grouped around the display, reading the front pages as they sipped on café touba or waited for the bus. I joined them to scan the papers for whatever jack had found so interesting, and found nearly the whole front page of one publication, Le Pop, taken over by a large photo of a pirogue at sea full with men. The title read, in thick capital letters: “‘Barça ou barsak’: ‘mbeuk-mi’ revient” 111 (“Barça/Barzakh”: “Mbeuk-mi” returns), and in a smaller subtitle (translated from French), “Mamadou Diop Thioune of the Fishing-Migration platform sounds the alarm” (Ndiaye 2012).

“That’s unbelievable!” I exclaimed to two other men looking at the same headline. “Look at how many people they’ve got in that boat!”

“They’re completely crazy,” one of the men said back to me. “Crazy! Migrating like that is like throwing your life into the sea. They all think they’ll get lucky and make it rich in Europe. Look at them now!” Without even opening the newspaper, stories and judgments about the migration implied by the cover had already begun to unfold — as was common at newspaper stands like this one. One man went on to tell a brief story about a relative of his who had tried to migrate to Europe by pirogue and was deported back to Senegal, broke. Both of them shook their heads at the idea that the Barça/Barzakh movement was resurging, citing its dangerousness and riskiness.

111 mbeuk-mi: a variation of “Barça walla Barsaaq” that roughly translates to “brave the sea” or “maritime adventure”
Figure 5.1 — Front page of *Le Populaire* on October 9, 2012, which implying the return of Barça/Barzakh
As is evident in this instance, the social interaction that contextualizes news consumption is also an inseparable component of the production of news, itself. At this newsstand, the physical newspaper and newspaper articles served as a base for speculation and sharing of personal experiences and opinions, which contributed to the production and spread of the story as much as the official newspapers themselves. Nor was this an isolated case: Perhaps because of the cost barrier to regularly buying newspapers or certainty that one could nearly always find someone else’s copy of a paper to read for free, newspapers often pass through many hands every day. My host family, for example, received several prominent publications daily, and extended relatives or family friends would often stop by in the afternoon to read through the stack of news.

Similarly, I frequently visited with a group of friends on their rooftop terrace where they made attaya every afternoon, and in the long waiting period between each progressive cup of tea, they passed around communal copies of a few different publications and often fell into spirited discussions of their contents. People read newspapers over the shoulders of others on crowded buses (a habit I fell into myself), and would then describe or comment on the news stories to other passengers. Roadside coffee and sandwich vendors, who often set up benches for their customers to sit on which they drank or ate, particularly encourage the meeting and conversational exchange of strangers, and at newsstands, where people often read only the front page of a publication, headlines and photographs inspire imagination and speculation which are absorbed into the public narrative just as much as the official accounts themselves. Speculating about news, adding in personal anecdotes, opining, and recounting take the official material of newspapers and television news and mythologize it, confounding the barrier between “fact” and “fiction” and making the personal news, and the news personal.
The general understanding that much of the news is sensationalized for the purpose of selling more papers further blurs the distinction between the formal accounts of newspapers and the informal accounts of individuals, as newspaper reports are accordingly not always considered definitive accounts of reality and may require informal discussion. When I ultimately bought a copy of the issue of Le Pop described above and read the full headline story, I was surprised to find that the article did not imply that Barça/Barzakh was returning, but rather, the opposite: border security was strong and had dramatically reduced the number of illegal departures over the last five years. My host brother Émile regularly complained about about the dramatic and negative tone that many newspapers adopted: “They just do that to sell more papers! They make their front page headlines scandalous so you’ll buy the paper, and then you read the story and it turns out the headline is barely even part of it!” Émile also told me that he read all of the main newspapers every day, because the reporting was sometimes so biased or exaggerated that “you have to piece together your own truth after reading all of the different versions of it.” When I mentioned the article about the return of Barça/Barzakh in Le Pop to Émile, he shrugged his shoulders.

Maybe. You never know, right? But I doubt it. Barça/Barzakh, that was an era of naïveté! That was an era of dreams. People saw a couple fishermen make it to Europe and then everyone left. Now, people know better. They ought to know better, at least! You know, you read the papers. Every day: “30 Senegalese repatriated,” the next day, “France rejects Senegalese visas,” the next day, “Senegalese man killed in racist attack.” You see? You’d have to be crazy to leave now knowing all that!112

112 Émile also believed Le Pop to be a publication that was more sensational than others, such as Le Soleil or L’Observateur. However, this thesis still gives weight to its content because it was nevertheless one of the more popular publications among the people I knew, and thus its content had significant exposure even if it was not held in the same esteem as other newspapers.
Sure enough, despite whatever doubt can be cast on the neutrality of some Senegalese journalism, migration was a regular theme in most newspapers during my time in Senegal, and articles addressing irregular migration usually adopted a rather dire tone.

Any given week included articles concerning irregular migration, including the lives of irregular migrants abroad, the situations of their families in Senegal, migrant deaths of a variety of causes, deportations and illegal boats being caught at sea, new proposals or changes to immigration policy, and projects being developed or implemented in Senegal tied to migration. The issue of *Le Pop* described above profiled a man who recounted having tried to migrate twice by pirogue and being deported both times:

We decided to take the risk and leave anyways. To pass 6 to 7 days at sea just to reach the Canary Islands, it’s too hard. We ate crackers and couscous with water. We didn’t know when we were leaving, and we had no idea when we would arrive or if we’d even get out alive. Every day that God made, we saw our companions die one by one and we told ourselves that, maybe tomorrow, it will be our turn. As we hadn’t even seen the lamps that lit the Canary Islands, we thought we might be there forever, and that our lives were only holding on by a string. (Ndiaye 2012)

The publication of stories such as these effectively contribute to a rebranding of irregular migration, gradually dissolving the “era of naïveté” Émile described. While I was unable to access newspapers preceding 2000 to compare older journalistic narratives on migration with those being published during my stay in Senegal, comments like that of Émile above suggest that dreams of easily traveling to Europe and making a fortune were due in part to an ignorance of the reality of this experience (“now, people know better”), due perhaps to more positive journalistic portrayals of the experience, or possibly, just to the power of informal, word-of-mouth testimonials and the impressions left by “successful” migrants upon their return.

Even if newspapers addressed the consequences and risks of irregular migration a decade ago, however, modern journalism has also likely increased its influence on this matter as a result
of the accumulation of information about irregular migration to which it has access. Where earlier deliberations over whether irregular migration was or was not likely to be successful were necessarily based on isolated accounts and postulation, the maturation of the Barça/Barzakh movement allowed for the build-up of statistical and anecdotal data that provide a more encompassing portrait of this experience and its most likely outcomes. For example:

**Le Soleil, February 16-17, 2013:** “In 2012, France expelled 36,822 foreigners who had an irregular status. This constitutes a raise of nearly 12% compared to the year 2011, with 32,912 expulsions.” (Diop 2013)

**Walfidjri, April 15, 2013:** “Over 200 Senegalese [in Spain] on the point of deportation” (Sagna 2013)

**Le Quotidien, March 1, 2013:** “120 thousand Senegalese live in precarious conditions in Italy” (Mansaray 2013)

**Le Soleil, February 16-17, 2013:** “The government and employers have long closed their eyes and collected the contributions of [undocumented] workers. Each year, the government earns about 2 billions euros from the work of sans-papiers, without any undocumented worker benefitting in return.” (Diop 2013)

**Le Soleil, December 15, 2012:** “More than 15,000 people have perished in the Mediterranean in 10 years” (Kande 2012)

**Sud Quotidien, October 1, 2012:** “6,648 men [in Thiaroye-sur-Mer] who have disappeared as a result of clandestine migration have tragically left their wives behind in marriage.” (Thiam 2012)

The statistics deployed in these excerpts (which include a mix of headlines, sub-headlines, and article excerpts) suggest trends, probable outcomes, and even just possible outcomes for irregular Barça/Barzakh migrants in a manner that is negative in most respects. Not only do these stories address the unlikelihood of establishing oneself in Spain (through deportation and death statistics), but also speak to the poverty, exploitation, and discrimination migrants experience abroad as well as the hardship their families face in Senegal in migrants’ absence.
Obviously, these articles also draw on what is now a steady stream of anecdotal testimonies that speak more subjectively to the difficulty of life as an irregular migrant. The following account, for example, appeared in a February 2013 feature on irregular migration in *Le Soleil*, and is a migrant’s description of his experiences with racism abroad and his struggles to find work without documentation or a legal status:

In France, professional opportunities are limited when one doesn’t have identity papers, making it difficult to find work. Trappes, a companion [of mine] in the ordeal who had come by himself from Italy to fell the crisis, connected me with some walking merchants at the Trocadéro, the Eiffel Tower. My first days coincided with the first cold fronts of winter, and the cold was intolerable when you had to pass the whole day outside selling trinkets to tourists passing through Paris. (Diop 2013)

By painting such a bleak picture of the “reality” of immigration to Europe, stories (and even just headlines) like those above work in opposition to and in many ways debunk the glorification of the lives of migrants abroad, and the lives of irregular migrants in particular. In contrast to the encouraging and inspiring stories and images of Europe as “El Dorado,” new narratives of migration reconceived of Europe perhaps still as an “El Dorado,” but one hostile to and exclusive of African migrants, whose wealth — while ostentatiously present — is ultimately inaccessible to those lacking official documentation.

While the excerpts above imply this numerically, some articles are even more explicitly defeatist and demoralizing in their portrayal of irregular migration. The following passage from an article published in *Le Quotidien*, accompanied by a picture of a Senegalese man with his head hung in his hands (Figure 5.2), describes the Belgian government’s reaction to increasing requests for asylum from Senegalese immigrants. In it, Freddy Roosemont, the Director of the Office of Foreigners (*directeur général de l’Office des étrangers*), states that

The test for these requests for asylum being brought to us by Senegalese have shown us that the cases are mostly made up of false documents and serve
uniquely to obtain a title of stay permitting mostly the exercise of economic activities. These demands are systematically rejected and the askers then end up in clandestinity, without benefitting from any financial or material assistance. (Basse 2013)

The reporter of this piece continued on to state flatly that “today, Senegalese cannot hope to travel to Belgium by way of request of asylum. It’s even in the domain of the impossible, Roosemont affirmed” (ibid.). In this statement, Roosemont and the journalist seem to speak directly to potential migrants, unequivocally rejecting the possibility of an economic (Barça/Barzakh or other) migrant taking advantage of the system to secure documentation through asylum. While such articles and reports would likely never completely extinguish every glimmer of hope or dissuade potential migrants from trying their luck abroad regardless of the proclaimed “impossibility” of success, stories such as these inject a degree of infeasibility into

Figure 5.2 — "Belgium rejects the Senegalese"
the public imagination of migration, such that irregular migrants who do “make it” appear to do so almost miraculously, rather than in accordance with expectations.

Journalistic accounts are by no means the sole avenue through which Barça/Barzakh migration and its variations have been “rebranded” as primarily dangerous and improbable ventures, but they certainly have contributed to this process and serve as a basis for further extrapolation. Sensitive to the significant geo-political shifts around migration over the past few decades and concurring changes in attitudes about it, I always began my interviews for this research by first questioning whether Barça/Barzakh migration was a generally “bad” thing (as opposed to an act of heroism, a necessity, etc.). I was uniformly met with a resounding “yes!,” occasional confusion as to why I was asking the question at all, and — if I pushed back on this label — instructions to start reading the newspaper. As a site of mass dissemination of information, news articles on the state of irregular migration and migrants are consumed by an enormous portion of city and suburban populations either directly or through verbal re-telling, putting personal experiences in context for individuals whose communities are highly affected by the phenomenon and serving as a primary source of information for individuals more detached from the proceedings of Barça/Barzakh. The reports’ formal investigation and publication in newspapers bestows them with a truth to semi-truth level of authority, but they also encourage the sharing of related experiences and opinions in a way that compounds and broadens the scope of the official stories.

The product of this is a complex, dynamic, and well-exposed condemnation of Barça/Barzakh migration. Where this particular form of migration was once glorified through fable and remembrance of experiences prior to anti-immigration political shifts in Europe,

113 See Appendix A for exact interview questions.
newspapers and the talk surrounding them bring this idea to a shattering halt. The perspective on irregular migration advanced by newspapers certainly contributes to the way returned migrants are received in Senegal: though some migrants have left with the support or at the suggestion of their families, Senegalese public opinion of irregular migrants continued to evolve in their absence, such that these migrants return to an environment that views them in a dramatically different way than at their initial departure. While migrants may have left under the public perception of Barça/Barzakh migration as a risky but worthwhile and profitable venture, therefore, they return in a dynamic in which their decision is perceived as foolish, impatient, disloyal, and even immoral (more on this later in this chapter), with only their achievements abroad to insulate them from public judgment.

“Modern Griots”: Artists of Mbalax, Rap, and Anti-Neocolonial Advocacy

While newspapers easily lend themselves to discussion of irregular migration as a site for reporting on current events, journalism is certainly not the only medium where the issue is addressed and reconceptualized, partly because newspapers have never been the only place or way that news is “reported.” Prior to the arrival of European traders and colonialists in West Africa, Senegal was host to primarily oral societies, where information was passed from generation to generation through individuals known as griots. Griots, while still active today, were especially prominent in this pre-colonial era as oral historians, musicians, praise-singers, political advisors, and genealogists. In these overlapping roles, griots are charged with remembering and recounting the history of their people in such a way that “links past to present and serves as a witness to events in the present” (Hale 1998:23), or in other words, griots recount cultural history in the context of the present. As opposed to modern journalistic portrayal of the
news, which aims to be objective even if it is recognized not to be, griots’ accounts were thus conspicuously subjective and open to change over time.

There is a clear link between traditional griot music and modern *mbalax*\textsuperscript{114} as many official modern griots are highly involved and specialized in *mbalax* music. However, numerous scholars have further noted the continuities between pre-slave trade griot music — such as Senegalese *taasu*, a type of rhythmic poetry performed over percussion — and the development of rap in African-American communities, inspiring the notion of a “boomerang phenomenon” to articulate a sense of the “return” of American rap to Africa (Tang 2012:82). The idea of Senegalese rappers as “modern griots” is not a completely sound reincarnation, as many Senegalese rappers have pointed out, themselves. For example, Didier Awadi, a well-known and popular Senegalese rapper, distanced rappers from the reputation griots sometimes have as greedy or elitist:

A lot of people say that rappers are modern griots. But first one must understand what we rappers take from griots. The griots in traditional Senegalese society would sing for the kings; they would sing about the history of Senegal. They were like history books, like a journalist. And the griot was also someone who sang for money. So he wore several different hats. What we rappers have continued to do, what we have taken from griots, is the journalistic side. A journalist engages in his society. But all of the other aspects of the griot, we don’t do. That is, we don’t sing for the purpose of receiving money. Of course, we are paid musicians. That’s obvious. But we do not sing about people so that they will give us money. There is a big difference… The rapper is like a sentinel for society, saying what works or what doesn’t work. And the griot’s purpose is different. In any case, to the present day, the griot is here to sing for money. Period. (Awadi in Tang 2012:84)

\textsuperscript{114} *Mbalax* is a highly popular form of dance music developed in Senegal in the 1970s. It is a fusion of Cuban, Congolese, and American music played to the rhythm of a *sabar*, a traditional Senegal drum.
In distancing himself from griots, Awadi emphasizes rap — or at least, his particular brand of rap — as a domain concerned not with money and privilege but with social critique for the common public.

Rather than being employed for nobility, Awadi and his colleagues (to be discussed shortly) aim to be watchdogs that critique instead of praise ruling classes, and who are therefore aligned with a broader, humbler audience. Awadi has recognized the historical role of griots in other ways, however, such as in his song “Return of Da Djelly” in which his reference to himself as a “djelly” (a Mande word equivalent to the French “griot”) situates himself as an authentic African storyteller, teacher, preacher, and historian but avoids the elitist and greedy connotations sometimes associated with the word “griot” (Tang 2012). In Awadi’s and other rappers’ positioning of themselves as reformed griots or djellies, they reclaim a voice and role considered authentically “African,” and thus complement the content of their critiques of Eurocentric narratives in format, as well (that is to say, by articulating their critiques in a form that also challenges typical European narrative forms). Moreover, in situating themselves as griots, Senegalese rappers also empower themselves as Authority or Expert, thus claiming the right to contradict modern authorities such as Senegalese and European governments.

To take a step back before delving further into rappers’ political advocacy, it’s worth first looking specifically at the foothold the idea of migration has in Senegalese music. Artists of both mbalax and rap music regularly concentrate on migrants in their songs, serving as a testament to the way in which Senegalese migration is not simply a “current event” but rather a longstanding cultural practice. Mirroring shifts noted in other contexts, Senegalese music has also followed the general trend of first celebrating migrants but now adopting stronger tones of concern and discontent.
Youssou N’Dour, a cultural icon and celebrated *mbalax* artist, released an album in 1988 called *Immigrés* (Immigrants), whose title song is an ode to migrants and praises their contribution to Senegalese society:

We thank you and we pray for you
Yes, Senegal is our country and when [you are] back we will sing about you

(N’Dour 1988; translation from Riccio 2005)

In this song, migrants are constructed as social saviors, highlighting in particular their “solidarity and the efforts they undertake for the well-being of their families despite being far from home” (Ludl 2008). Moreover, the promise that “we will sing about you” evokes the idea of the griot praise-singer, who primarily sings for those who are noble and wealthy — thus implying that the migrant will return with heightened prestige and will be admired by all. Finally, the song focuses on only the stage of migration — the glorified return — in which success is felt most strongly if at all, as opposed to other stages of migration such as the voyage abroad or the tough working conditions in Europe that would provide a harsher, less appealing portrait of migration.

In contrast to N’Dour’s rosy conceptualization of migrants, later music raised more doubt around choices to migrate and emphasized the consequences migrants’ departures have on Senegalese communities. The song “Partira” (Going) released in 2004 by Pape Diouf, for example, is set to the poignant melody of “Con Te Partiro” (“Time To Say Goodbye”) by the Italian opera singer Andrea Bocelli, in clear reference to the huge number of Senegalese who migrate to Italy. In the song, Pape Diouf speaks as a migrant to his girlfriend, announcing:

I’ve just gotten a visa
I’m expected to go to Italy because I’m the eldest and my parents want me to go
This is the only way I can help the family and make money
But will have to leave you
Will you wait for me?
What’s going to happen to our relationship?

(Diouf 2004)
Rather than glorifying migrants for the remittances they send back to their families or wives in Senegal, as earlier songs like “Immigrés” does, “Partira” articulates the pressure of juggling the variety of familial and social pressures men face to migrate and implies the struggle of maintaining close relationships at such a great distance. While the general reality of migration may not have changed significantly between “Immigrés” and “Partira,” each song constructs its own narrative about migrations that emphasizes different stages in the migratory process or different potential outcomes from that migration. While “Immigrés” reassures the migrant that he will honored upon his return (and assumes his eventual return), “Partira” evokes reluctance and uncertainty about the migrant’s fate.

However, at the same time that this song questions the advantageousness of migration to a greater extent than earlier musical representations, it does not condemn migration entirely. Rather, in lines like “I’m expected to go to Italy because I’m the eldest… / This is the only way I can help the family and make money,” the speaker expresses that, while not ideal, migration

Figure 5.3 — Pape Diop plays a migrant trying to convince his girlfriend of his decision to migrate in “Partir” (video still courtesy of YouTube)
often appears to be the only viable option for those who bear the responsibility of supporting themselves and their families. This narrative of migration not as a dream but as a last resort and a force of circumstance is a motif in several songs, including Didier Awadi’s “Sunugaal,” cited in full at the beginning of this chapter. In that song, Awadi laments that

If all was going well we wouldn’t leave on these pirogues
All this uproar
This is not what we had hoped for
Our pirogues sink and it’s our children who are in them.
(Awadi 2006)

Awadi articulates even more explicitly here not only his own, but a societal reluctance to migrate, similarly employing a different angle on irregular migration to highlight the extreme danger involved in the voyages and the communal hurt deriving from the loss of so many friends and family members at sea. Awadi channels his frustration and dismay into a sharp critique of governmental incompetence:

You promised me I would have a job
You promised me I would have food
You promised me I would have real work and hope
But in reality, nothing at all so far
(ibid.)

Then, he contrasts the honest but unglamorous work of regular Senegalese with the flashy but insufficient work of the government:

There’s no glory in a carpenter building a table, for which he’s been paid
He did his job, that’s all
A leader shouldn’t cry victory after every road he constructs
[…]
When elected, you either work or you resign
(ibid.)

As with journalistic commentaries, the critical reconstruction in this song of migration as a tragic and undesirable necessity (as opposed to an ideal and a dream) open a discursive space to explore broader flaws in Senegalese society that contribute to the problem of irregular migration
— specifically, in this case, governmental incompetence and detachment from its people, and the
meaninglessness of promises made during or after electoral campaigns. Awadi’s glorification of
the humble and slow work of everyday Senegalese in contrast to the government’s showy
infrastructural projects also doubles as a subtle reflection of the charge that irregular migrants
refuse menial work out of pride in Senegal, only to end up doing the same job abroad (or
otherwise, to return “successful” and aggrandize themselves with similar pomp). Conversely,
this excerpt from “Sunugaal” encourages people to have greater respect for and pride in whatever
work they are able to do, so long as it is honest and well done.

Beyond the sheer content and critique in Awadi’s “Sunugaal,” its existence as a song also
carries important implications for the social construction of narratives on migration. The song-
form is one that is succinct, catchy, and easily transferable, that captures and boils down a great
range and expression of ideas into one concise nugget. In doing so, “Sunugaal” and other similar
songs anthemize the issue of irregular migration. The representation of irregular migration in
songs by popular artists also recognizes and validates the topic as real and worthy of discussion,
crystallizing many people’s detached personal experiences into a communal “issue.” The song-
form likewise allows for this essentialized narrative to be repeated, considered, and adapted over
and over again, thus strengthening its presence and force in the social imaginary.

As Senegalese musicians increasingly recognize and decry the negative consequences of
irregular migration in song, many have moved to take their message beyond their formal music,
exploring other media forms and other functions of music in advocacy that could offer a more
effective exploration of the particular issue of irregular immigration. Awadi, for example,
directed a film titled The Lion’s Point of View (Le point du vu du lion) that takes Barça/Barzakh
migrations as a starting point but seeks to answer why those migrations occurred and what deeper reasons lie behind them over the course of interviews with 44 individuals ranging from former Senegalese President Abdou Diouf and UN officials to local writers, artists, and activists. Reviews of the documentary label it a “decidedly pan-African, deliberately subjective and revolutionary documentary,” reinforced by Awadi’s own statement of purpose:

Technically speaking this is no Spielberg or Spike Lee film. Our goal is to bring across a pan-African message. Don’t expect any naïve objectivity. Our intention is purely subjective. Our purpose is revolutionary. We stand by this… African policies are determined from the outside, not by Africans themselves. They [Africans] should be allowed to express what they think about current policies, colonialisation, de-colonialisation, foreign military bases on their territory, the colonial currency still used today, questions about migration. We welcome the whole world here, but nobody wants to welcome us anywhere. It is a hypocrisy that we must name, shame, and fight against. (AfricAvenir 2012)

In refusing to release a film guided by “naïve objectivity,” Awadi seizes upon the potential of narrative construction to subjectively shape a story that explicitly asserts and questions enormous structural oppression such as neocolonialism. This critique speaks to the powerful repercussions of French Gaullist policies in Senegal after achieving independence, which Senegalese immigrant-activist Sally N’Dongo describes as an effort to “maintain the supremacy of French big business, without paying the price of colonization” (Glaes 2012:4).

Without doubt, French policy continued to exert power over the Senegalese government, economy, and social life in ways that raise questions as to how “independent” Senegal really was or is in practice. Though the damaging influence of European colonial and post-colonial practices have been addressed in Chapter 2, it is useful to reexamine some of these events under the particular lens of neo-colonialism. As a result of French colonial emphases on agricultural production, when Senegal became independent in 1960 it had minimal industrial capacity or resources, and thus
continued to depend on outside (mostly European) aid to continue filling basic needs. Furthermore, post-colonial agreements between Senegal and France (as well as other former colonial countries) were frequently far from reciprocal, tending to proffer France much greater benefits sometimes even at the expense of Senegal. For example, development aid and IMF structural adjustment programs allowed France to “leverage economic influence through financial assistance provided under the guise of economic growth” in such a way that submerged Senegal and many other post-colonial African countries deeply in debt (Glaes 2012:3). Structural adjustment programs have also dramatically changed the architecture and processes of the Senegalese national economy in such a way that it is indelibly marked by the influence of France, the IMF, and other outside entities. These programs included the linking of the Senegalese Franc CFA to the French franc as a “stabilizing” measure, which on a practical level resulted in the devaluation of Senegalese currency by half and an immediate increase in experienced urban poverty, contributing to the rise of Barça/Barzakh migration (see Chapter 2, pgs. 48-50 for detail). These policies, in addition to the legacy of colonialism, actively underdeveloped Senegal and generated dependency on “former” colonial powers (Gunder Frank and Gills 1996).

On a different level, France pursued the perpetuation of its cultural and linguistic influence through organizations such as l’Agence Internationale de Francophonie (based in Niger) and through close personal relationships with the first generation of “independent” African leaders, including Senegal’s first president Léopold Sédar Senghor, in an “attempt to maintain a position of ‘grandeur’ and international power within the Cold War context” (Glaes 2012:3). These economic and cultural programs have been consistently been advertised as
“good” and “helpful” for Senegal and agreements have been signed under the guise of equal exchange, such that agendas like “development” are naturalized as a necessary and unquestionably beneficial plan (Escobar 1988). Awadi’s film, which takes Barça/Barzakh as an exemplar and the concrete form of many of these problems, rejects irregular migration as a response to modern crises but does not blame migrants for their actions. Rather, the film attempts to illuminate neocolonial processes such as those described here by presenting migrants as systematically disadvantaged, and shifts the public eye from the perception of migrants as crazy, unreasonable, and impatient to other foci, that is, to the forces that create the conditions that push people to irregular migration.

Another Senegalese rapper, Babacar Diagne (popularly known by his stage name Matador), has also taken significant steps toward the politicization and application of rap as the founder of Africulturban, a hip-hop arts and cultural center in the suburb of Pikine. The organization does a range of social justice work including significant campaigns on irregular migration, and also runs a school called the Hip Hop Akademy, which works specifically with youths in the region to provide them with instruction not only in the arts themselves but also in how to transform artistic talent into a job or apply it to social justice. Hip Hop Akademy’s mission statement asserts its aim to

professionalize the chain of creation, production, distribution, and export [of art], but also to optimize networking and partnerships so that urban culture can be truly taken into account by national and regional sectoral politics… Often operating as an outlet and a tool for conflict management and active in the management of the city, these art forms are leading political expressions and a medium between the poor younger generation and the institutions. (http://africulturban.org)

This is to say, the Hip Hop Akademy works to harness youth narratives and expressive forms and apply them in a way that both creates jobs to serve immediate needs, but also works to legitimize the social critiques at the core of those narratives by organizing and reinforcing them.
This aim speaks more indirectly to Awadi’s similar desire to reclaim and fortify Senegalese subjective realities. Rap — both Senegalese and other varieties — has long been a site of politicized narratives, but also one that is highly informal and unauthoritative. By institutionalizing and professionalizing rap and similar media as legitimate art forms, the Hip Hop Akademy simultaneously supplies young, social justice-oriented youths with greater leverage in contesting the realities promoted by traditional authorities.

For, in many ways, Senegalese youth narratives struggle to compete with rival, institutionalized Euro-centric narratives and representations that generalize, marginalize, and/or criminalize Senegalese and West African people and migrants. Pirogue migrations were both a cause and a result of tightening European immigration controls — or the development of “Fortress Europe,” as it came to be called — notably including the 1995 Schengen agreement that eased internal European borders and the establishment of Frontex (frontières extérieures) in 2005 in response to new waves of African migrants.\(^\text{115}\) The Schengen agreement, which was hugely influential in unifying Europe into the form it takes today, resulted in an heightened emphasis on external European borders as opposed to internal nation-state borders, such that the Mediterranean region between Europe and Africa now represents “not only a political, demographic, economic divide, but also an ideological and moral frontier, increasingly perceived by Europeans as a barrier between democracy and secularism on the one hand and totalitarianism and religious fanaticism on the other” (Castan Pinos 2009:3). As Europe congealed into a theoretical “entity,” the apparent divide between it and its complementary “other” (e.g. Africa) loomed greater and more threatening than when differences were more multiform and dispersed.

\(^\text{115}\) Refer to Chapter 2 for detail.
Consequently, the growth of immigration flows — both legal and illegal — from outside of Europe into the EU were increasingly referred to as a kind of “invasion” and inspired political changes to strengthen and support the interior while protecting against exterior threats (immigrants). Frontex was born out of this political environment,\textsuperscript{116} and in a sense extended the reach of European borders through agreements with West African and other countries to conduct preventative operations in foreign waters. These steps were pivotal in the “construction of the migrant as a security threat and the criminalization of ‘illegal’ migrants,” and the way in which Barça/Barzakh migrations were “mass-mediatized and made knowledgeable via cartographic (e.g. Frontex maps) devices and other forms of international expertise (e.g. IOM) is a modern way of rewriting the earth” in a Eurocentric fashion (Abrahams 2013:222). The establishment of Frontex and the Schengen agreement has thus played a significant role in European “re-bordering” practices, through which new geopolitical narratives have been manufactured, institutionalized, and naturalized.

In response to policies and their metaphysical implications that progressively marginalize and govern Senegalese and other Africans, hip-hop emerged as an expressive space to contest Western or Eurocentric narratives about Africa and Africans. As Matador explains with regard to his own music, and in line with his objectives for Africulturban and the Hip Hop Akademy:

\begin{quote}
We rap in our own languages and we speak our own history. The American dresses himself in his own way and speaks of what he lives. The European talks about what happens from his perspective. And that is hip-hop culture! It allows us to understand through lyrics how and what is really happening in France, and we make our own raps to allow the American or European hip-hop artist to
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{116} Specifically, after the March 11, 2004 coordinated bombings in Madrid’s train systems (which killed 191 people) were found to be orchestrated by an al-Qaeda inspired terrorist cell, the European Council issued the Declaration on Combating Terrorism, which asserted the need to enhance border control in order to strengthen internal security and combat terrorism. The declaration called for the creation of a European Border Agency, which was established as Frontex in October 2005. (Castan Pinos 2009)
understand what is really happening in Africa. (Matador in Abrahams 2013:2/223)

In the same way that Awadi’s film is explicitly subjective in nature, Senegalese hip-hop narratives of African and global political realities are equally deliberate in their subjective construction of accounts that make visible and challenge Eurocentric narratives, recognizing that all narrative construction is ultimately subjective and that those which criminalize or marginalize Senegalese and other Africans are not definitive by nature. In some cases, this involved not only the creation of original material but also the incorporation of other works: Ndongo D, a rapper with the activist Dara J Family collective, translated Public Enemy’s classic anti-establishment anthem “Fight The Power” from English to Wolof, making its radical ideas accessible to a wider Senegalese public (ibid.).

In seeing themselves as mediators of political power, many rappers became particularly involved in efforts to prevent and problematize irregular migration. Africulturban was at the heart of these efforts, initiating a full-fledged campaign (see Figure 5.4) and musical album (Figure 5.5) dedicated to discouraging Barça/Barzakh migration as well as inciting conversation about oppressive European policies and the potential in pan-African cooperation. For example, the following lyric from Africulturban’s compilation album, Les Pirogues du Hip Hop Se Mobilisent Contre la Migration Clandestine (Hip Hop Boats Against Illegal Migration) questions the “African dream” of migrating to Europe and highlights the corruption and discrimination involved in this “business of the ocean”:

The sun rises over the Canary Islands
This is the search for the key that opens the lid of a save-your-life
Sending your child to be killed in a pirogue
Is like firing a shot at the heart of the family
Why come back?
It’s the shame, the search for a better life in Europe without work, without papers, exploited and on the run
Just to speak what we are we doing in a country that speaks of human rights.

... Illegal migration is the new business of the ocean,
It is the death of the child before the mirage of the West
(Staz et al. 2008)

The anger in this song, like that of Didier Awadi’s at the beginning of this chapter, is directed generally toward oppressive conditions which lure or force individuals into migrating illegally. The song highlights the hypocrisy of Europe’s claim to moral righteousness when European policies can be held responsible for the dire situations in which Senegalese mind themselves and leave migrants without any protection while working abroad. Furthermore, the notion that “illegal migration is the new business of the ocean” refers to the numerous agreements made between the Senegalese and European governments, such as bilateral accords (to be discussed further in the next section) in which the Senegalese government essentially traded deportation rights and other measures to prevent migration to European countries in exchange for development aid — deals which most of the Senegalese who spoke to me about them considered to be corrupt.

While Senegalese rappers’ critiques did much to unveil the submerged parts of the “iceberg” of neocolonial processes and other problems underlying Barça/Barzakh migrations, their narratives were not without flaws. In her research on political activism and advocacy within the Senegalese hip-hop community, Abrahams rightly notes that Africulturban’s campaigns against la migration “clandestine” or “illegale” and the artists’ appeal to migrants to “prendre la voie normale” (“take the legal route”) do not challenge but rather play into and
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**********COMPILATIONS**********

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Figure 5.4 — Africulturban flyer (Abrahams 2013)
reproduce the European border regime, and do not “deconstruct problematic categorizations of legal and illegal migration which lead to a hierarchization of mobility” (Abrahams 2013).

While Abrahams contends that this linguistic turn is ultimately a negligible slip against the rest of hip-hop’s geopolitical critique of Europe, it seems that this slippage actually is a substantial contradiction in their critique, but is irrelevant here because Africulturban’s campaigns against “illegal” or “clandestine” migration are not designed with the purpose of deconstructing European neocolonialism; rather, they are concerned with discouraging Senegalese from migrating in a way that presents real physical, psychological, social, and financial risks and which has ravaged many Senegalese communities. While on a theoretical level Senegalese are making many inroads in their expanding and strengthening critiques of
neocolonial practices and narratives, the practical political environment has not changed for the
time being, such that irregular migration continues to be an unviable way of gaining access to
European wealth and continues to present many immediate dangers, even if the fact of this
reality is an indication of oppressive and exclusive policies, and even if abstaining from
migration because of its dangerousness concedes to rather than challenges that status quo.
Refusing to use the word “illegal” or believe in the illegality of irregular migration does not
change the immediate and real power that is exerted on irregular migrants through the already
established structures that migrants’ illegality represents.

As some of my friends and informants explained to me, Barça/Barzakh migrants are
neither praised nor stigmatized in Senegal for having done something “illegal” — that is, for
subverting the rules of a neocolonial European border regime — but rather are scorned for
having done something “foolish,” for disregarding immediate dangerousness of irregular
migration and risking one’s life and dignity for the potential of greater wealth. As one friend
quipped, “legal, illegal… that’s not what’s important! All people care about here is whether or
not you make any money, and how much!” Other friends pointed out, moreover, that technically
speaking, unofficial pirogue migration is illegal, and that its illegality does make the migrants
that partake in it “clandestine.” In this way, Senegalese advocacy against “illegal” or
“clandestine” migration stands linked to but distinct from narratives that work to deconstruct
Eurocentric and oppressive structures and policies. Regardless, new descriptions of
Barça/Barzakh migration — for instance as “irregular” migration — are beginning to take hold,
such as by Didier Awadi in The Lion’s Point of View where he notes the racism inherent in the
term “illegal,” as well as in some journalism and advocacy work. Abraham’s criticism of
Senegalese rappers’ negligence in abandoning entrapping terms like “illegal” or “clandestine”
fails to appreciate the slowness with which linguistic change occurs; for example, American migrant activists have been engaged in a political battle over the use of the term “illegal migrant” for over a decade but the term continues to remain entrenched in the standard lexicon of even those sympathetic to migrant causes.

The continuous usage of the term “illegal” or “clandestine” thus indicates the limitations of rappers’ critiques. While their narratives have played a crucial role in problematizing and rallying against oppressive global structures, these narratives are not yet enough to change those structures or real conditions and constraints in such a way that the illegality of Barça/Barzakh migration is no longer relevant. This tension harkens back to Kayhan Irani’s doubts about the power of narratives as a tool for social change: “Where was the quantifiable change? Who were the victors?” In the case of Senegalese rappers, though, there is quantifiable change, even if that change is not perfectly comprehensive (what change is?). Through just Africulturban and the Hip Hop Akademy’s advocacy, many young men in Pikine — potential Barça/Barzakh migrants — have developed marketable skills and found jobs in Senegal instead of leaving the country to seek work elsewhere. The absolute influence of rap music in changing individuals’ mentalities about migration and global politics is ultimately unknowable, but was highly evident just among the individuals who I knew over a single year in Dakar.

The strongest example of “real” change as a result of musical advocacy might be found in the establishment of the political youth movement “Y en a marre” (“enough is enough”), which began as a collective of Senegalese rappers in 2011. The group “addressed the difficult living situations in Senegal starting with electricity cuts, high living costs, food insecurity, unemployment, education, health, political pressure of religious leaders and most of all the bad governance under Wade’s regime” (Abrahams 2013:5/223), deploying both their renown as rap
artists and their very lyrics to push their political agenda — an effort which ultimately contributed to the election of current president Macky Sall in 2012. Despite its imperfections, then, Senegalese rap demonstrates that important change is possible in unpacking and rewriting mainstream narratives, and that even where change may not be particularly visible, musical narratives are an important outlet for expressing and understanding one’s situation as buffeted by grander structural forces.

“Don’t just stand there with your arms crossed!”: Development narratives in community discussions

Although rappers and other musical artists have certainly made important contributions to political advocacy and community development work, others have made such projects the central focus of their work, particularly within certain governmental departments and NGOs. Given the enormous significance of migration in Senegal and the gravity of Barça/Barzakh migration for many communities, Senegal is host to many organizations that work on the issue at all levels — from civic associations to prominent international NGOs, from local governments to pan-African assemblies. I had the privilege of working with one NGO as an intern for six months, which is a Dakar-based human rights organization called la Rencontre Africaine pour le Défense des Droits de l’Homme (“the African Assembly for the Defense of Human Rights,” also known as RADDHO). RADDHO is a mid-sized NGO with multiple departments dealing in a range of areas of human rights, such as women’s issues, environmental issues, education and children’s issues, and more. I worked within the “refugees, displaced persons, and migrants” department, which included one steady member (Souleymane Sembène) and several others who moved between several departments depending on what projects were unrolling.
Over the time that I worked with RADDHO, the immigration department was just reaching the end of a several-year-long campaign called “Local Development and Legal Migration as an Alternative to Illegal Migration.” On one hand the project attempted to create job opportunities for at-risk men in Senegal through professional training workshops that focused on project development and management skills. However, the bulk of the campaign was based in sensibilisation, or awareness building, about Barça/Barzakh migration. While media (such as movies, concerts, and plays) are often incorporated into awareness campaigns, sensibilisation more ubiquitously entails holding community discussions or testimonials where, at an informal level, experiences can be shared, and at a formal level, “experts” can interact with community members to “debunk myths” about Barça/Barzakh. 117 RADDHO’s campaign in particular favored sensibilisation as its method, in large part because of the belief that much of Barça/Barzakh’s popularity was based on its misrepresentation in the media and by migrants themselves. As Souleymane — my advisor at RADDHO and a also close friend — explained to me on a bus ride to one such community discussion,

You see, so many returned migrants are like that! They make themselves out to be big. It’s all bravado! They’re just showing off! You see it when they speak, how they live in the neighborhood. They wear nice shoes like Nike or Addidas, and they show it off to the neighborhood. And they get the other boys to talk about him: “yeah, that guy over there, he left for Europe and look where he is now, how he’s changed his life and how rich he is!” But they don’t say what they lived, that is, what they actually lived in reality in Spain. The real life he lived in

117 While community discussions tended to be more focused in their target audience than other, previously discussed media like newspapers and music, they still reached a vast number of people as a result of the number of organizations hosting discussions and the sheer quantity of discussions organized, as well as the structure of such discussions which often invited a broad cross section of individuals into discussion. Moreover, discussions also tended to multiply: where a formal, international NGO might hold a selective discussion with community leaders, these leaders might then initiate further and broader discussions within their own communities. RADDHO represents only one of many organizations, formal and informal, that made deliberate efforts to meet and sensibilise their communities against irregular migration. Another such organization — this one a women’s civic association — will be discussed in the conclusion.
Spain, the type of work he did... None of it is that glamorous. They don’t — no, they won’t! — say that to the others.

So, in the same way that Senegalese hip-hop sought to rewrite neocolonial assumptions and narratives about Senegalese migration, sensibilisation campaigns were born out of a similar need to confront and dispel at a basic level the exaggeration in migrants’ and migrants’ families’ own narratives about their experiences.

The first community discussion of migration I attended was on the formal end of the scale, structured as a two-day conference of about thirty local leaders in an expansive room at the Université de Cheikh Anta Diop in Dakar. Everyone arrived well dressed, women in brightly colored boubous and elaborately tied headscarves, and men also in clean, pressed boubous or in Western-style suits. Aboubacry Mbodji, then a director of RADDHO’s immigration program and now the head of RADDHO itself, opened the conference (in French, another indication of the meeting’s formality) with a discussion of different potential structures that the group could adopt, ranging from lecture-style instruction to participant discussion. The group unanimously adopted the latter, because, according to one man who weighed in on the matter, “[participant discussion] allows people to exchange many different ideas instead of accepting the ideas of just one person; you can both learn and teach in the way that you need.” In committing to engage in a communal discussion, the participants of this conference were already insisting on actively taking part in the information and representations that it would involve, making a claim to the worthiness of their voice and experiences in the dialogue that would ensue.

Having determined the general structure of the conference, Mbodji introduced a role-play exercise to help participants get to know each other in which pairs of people simulated a dialogue between a mother and her son, with the son trying to convince his mother to lend him money to take a pirogue to Spain. Different pairs practiced and laughed about their skits, many of them
writing down their dialogue and acting them out with great animation. After about ten minutes, Mbodji called everyone together again and invited one pair to share their skit with the group:

(Woman) Mother: What a beautiful house and car Madame Ndiaye has!
(Man) Son: It’s this beautiful house and this beautiful car that I want for you.
Mother: But there is not enough money. You don’t even have a job! How can we have money for a car if we barely have enough for rice and oil?
Son: I know that there is a boat leaving for Spain tomorrow. Three of my friends are already planning to go. And you know al-Hassane. He went to Spain last year and now he sends his mother money every week.
Mother: I don’t know if that’s a good idea. I also know someone whose son drowned on his way to Europe, and someone else whose son was deported.
Son: Mother, if you lend me the money from your tontine, then I can pay you back twice as much when I get to Spain!
Mother: How can you be sure that you will arrive in Spain? The sea is not safe and the pirogues are not strong enough.
Son: I’ll take my prayer beads (chapelet) and pray, “inch’Allah”!118
[audience laughs]
Mother: I am a believer, but you can’t throw your life to the sea and wait for God to save you! Your life is more precious (chère) than all the money in the world.
Son: Okay, I won’t leave if you don’t want me to go. When the Mother is happy, everyone is happy!
[audience laughs and claps]

The speed with which this group and others put together a long skit is a testament to how ingrained the counters of this dialogue already is in the social imaginary. In the process of essentializing the key motives and risks in Barça/Barzakh migration, the two actors demonstrate not only a mastery of these stereotypes attributable to a deep familiarity with the issue through other means, but also an understanding of Barça/Barzakh’s inconsistencies and drawbacks. The two actors in this skit subvert the typical “real-life” dialogue — in which the mother would more likely be pressuring her son to go abroad in order to earn the money necessary for status-raising additions, like a house or car — drawing attention to the impulsiveness of this plan by reframing it as reckless and putting it in relief with the secure alternative of staying in Senegal.

118 inch’Allah: if God wills it
The sheer reference to this stereotypical dialogue in the context of an anti-irregular migration conference invites a critical reconsideration of the arguments the son makes for migrating, but the alteration of the mother’s responses from the typical script further underscores the possibility for adopting alternative perspectives on irregular migration, such as by seeing it as dangerous and undesirable rather than heroic and lucrative. Moreover, at its face value, this activity was an opportunity for participants of the conference to solidify their stance on Barça/Barzakh migration by thinking intentionally about and articulating their reasons for opposing it. In verbally and publically rebutting a light barrage of standard arguments for pirogue migration, participants reinforced their positions on it and put them to the test, so to say, as practice for the potential instance where they would find themselves in a real-life version conversation.

While the conference was, at its foundation, about fortifying the ability of the local leaders in attendance to challenge irregular Barça/Barzakh migration such as in the above activity, much of the conference made space for and even invited discussion of more abstract themes. After this activity, Mbodji began to lecture on a number of topics with a heavy emphasis on international law and treaties pertaining to migration and migrant rights. As the group was large and chatty, however, the conference participants frequently interrupted Mbodji to express opinions, anecdotes, and questions about the lecture. At one point in an afternoon lecture regarding migrant deportations, Mbodji discussed the significance of a number of bilateral accords Senegal had signed with European countries such as Spain and France in 2006 that allowed for those countries to deport irregular migrants to Senegal in exchange for financial aid for Senegal designated for development projects. As he began to explain these agreements, the participants erupted with frustration:
Mbodji: This collaboration with Senegal was probably largely facilitated by promises of more visas for Senegalese as well as development aid, with France promising 2.5 million Euros for micro-projects—

Participant A (a man): It was just a deal! Senegal didn’t do anything for us. Any money or visas we got from Spain went into their [the Senegalese government’s] pockets, not ours. Has anyone in this room today received any aid? [pauses and looks around the room]. No! They don’t care about immigrants, they weren’t trying to help us, they just care about money.

Participant B (another man): Senegal doesn’t work for us. The government works for the government only. That’s why so many people try irregular migration, because they know that they can’t depend on the government to create jobs. And look at the consequences!

Participant A: The state must at least do what is has to do. After that, it should do whatever else it can do. But it does nothing at all!

Mbodji: As citizens, though, we live in neighborhoods that need help and we don’t do anything ourselves… we need to look at them as our responsibility, too. It’s in some ways a question of local development—

Participant A: The State can’t do everything, but there is a minimum! There are these accords that it signed! When there’s all that, when you’ve taken money in the name of the people, it’s impermissible not to act—

Participant B: —The State has the foremost responsibility—

Mbodji: But the State is us! The State is us! In this situation, if something is wrong and nobody does something about it, the [general] population is also at fault. The population also has a responsibility.

Participant B: But the State must take some responsibility. We don’t have real politics that are substantiated in practical application. There’s hypocrisy in all this!

Mbodji: But there is also some work that the society must do to bring the State to do its own work. You are right, we are living within a State that has not done its job. But that doesn’t mean there is nothing we can do about it. Action by the people can not only solve basic problems, but also—

Participant C: Yes! Once there was a broken wall on a street in my village, and we waited and waited for the government to fix it. Nobody ever came! Finally, we organized ourselves and pooled the money we had to buy the materials we needed to fix the wall. We reconstructed it in a single day! And we still haven’t heard from the government workers who were supposed to come!

Mbodji: Exactly. Exactly, exactly. If we organize ourselves, sometimes we can do things faster and even more efficiently. There is always something you can do! Almost all the resources you need to help your community are already there [in your communities], you just need to optimize them.

This exchange continued for longer than there is space to include here, drawing in more and more of the participants and also sparking many side conversations, until we ran out of time for
that session and broke for lunch. Moreover, the expansion of Mbodji’s fairly dry and fact-driven lecture into the heated and opinionated group discussion represented here is only one of many instances of this happening over the course of the conference.

As was the case with references to migration in music and journalism, the participants of this lecture were unsatisfied with letting the assumed “reality” of Senegalese migration go unquestioned: in re-examining the exchange above, it is apparent that the conversation breaks off into a spontaneous and free-form discussion beginning with one participant’s protest of Mbodji’s presentation of “the facts,” that is, that the money given to the Senegalese government as part of the bilateral accords was used to support grassroots development and micro-credit projects. The format of a community discussion is particularly amenable to this kind of digression — or perhaps more aptly, extrapolation. As opposed to media forms in which one receives and consumes “texts” or “messages” and can consider them, but which are not necessarily designed to initiate discussion, community discussions such as this one created an intentional space for a fluid meeting and building of ideas. While the conference did, to some extent, have a structured, and pre-imagined outline, there was also clearly much room for flexibility and digression, and discussion was guided in such a way as to encourage people to share their thoughts and contest assumptions.

The particular issue under question in this instance — the intention and significance of Senegal’s bilateral agreements — is one that I found to be particularly sensitive with most Senegalese who were aware of it, with the majority of people who discussed it with me affirming that the Senegalese government “sold out” for aid that never reached the people for whom it was intended. Mbodji’s attempt to address the topic might be considered “neutral,” in as much as he described the agreements in accordance with the official, dry legalese (the “facts”). In
interrupting and contesting this “reality,” the man who challenged this perspective actively inserted himself into the narrative-making of this case to correct and clarify Mbadji’s account in a way that reflected the man’s own sense of injustice and underhandedness in this agreement. The ensuing conversation spun out even farther from the initial subject of international migration law, instead disputing the relevance of governmental incompetence given the argument that people always have power to amend their own situations through grassroots organizing regardless of the government does initiating or aiding these endeavors.\(^{119}\)

Indeed, as is apparent in this exchange, many of RADDHO’s community meetings on immigration tended to veer into discussions about how to promote community development. This is potentially due to the stronger implications of NGO-led community discussions as searching for a “resolution” to irregular migration, as opposed to news or music, which played more of a role in simply problematizing it. (Even within music, it was at the point where artists would form collectives or meet to discuss their work that community development initiatives like Africulturban or \textit{Y en a marre} were founded). Such was conspicuously the case in the majority of the more informal, open, and locally-based community discussions (\textit{causeries}) RADDHO organized. Ongoing series of these discussions were held in regions that were heavily affected by irregular migration, including fishing suburbs of Dakar such as Yarakh, Yoff, Pikine,

\(^{119}\) The theme of governmental incompetence — or at least popular disillusionment with the government — could certainly be a topic for elaboration elsewhere. Frustrations with the Senegalese government were a point of lengthy explanation in every one of my interviews, and I had hoped to address them here but unfortunately ran out of time. It would be interesting to do further research with government organizations and programs and interviews with government workers to balance out what are essentially unanimous critiques from general Senegalese. I had difficulty distinguishing frustrations that could truly be attributed to sincere government incompetence and corruption, from what was exaggerated anger and finger-pointing due to a need to find a scapegoat or from misinformation or lack of information. However, regardless of the truthfulness or fairness of the blame Senegalese lay on their government, there is no doubt that these narratives \textit{also} have a significant and \textit{real} impact in everyday life and decisions.
Thiaroye, and Guediawaye, as well as more infrequent meetings in more distant areas such as Saint Louis and M’Bour. In keeping with the fundamental goal of sensibilisation, the meetings often had a sort of testimonial spirit to them, in that individuals were encouraged to relate their personal experiences of irregular migration. People who took this opportunity to speak publically often spoke in a formal manner: they would stand up, give their full name, position in the community, and begin with thank-yous to RADDHO and those who had organized the discussion.

This approach often led to thoughtful and comprehensive responses: many speakers’ comments were complete with an introduction, body, and conclusion of sorts (and thus followed the standard narrative mode). As a result, people’s contributions often started by questioning or proposing why irregular migration had become an issue in the first place, and ended with suggestions as to what should be done or what needed to change. The following excerpts from a RADDHO causerie in Yoff are one among many examples of this pattern:

**Participant A:** …I would first all like to thank everyone for the importance accorded to this discussion. I personally think this is an important subject to discuss, because I have personally lived this situation [irregular immigration]. I took a boat to Spain, and it is important that you all understand what horrible conditions were my daily reality on that voyage… There was not enough to eat, and some men started to hallucinate because they did not have fresh water to drink… Now that I am back in Yoff [after being deported], I regret having invested my family’s savings in “Barça walla Barzakh,” because now I see that I could have used it with more confidence here, and I could have helped more people other than just myself…

**Participant B:** First of all, thank you everyone who is here today to listen and share experiences, because I think that our youth today are practically back-against-the-wall, and this is why they are risking their lives in illegal immigration… Moreover, I think that people who have not migrated also have to understand that they also have their responsibility in the problem. It is not always the youths who decide on their own to leave; sometimes they have so much pressure from their family members to support them that it’s like they have no other choice. Because of this, they take all the money that they earn and invest it in a voyage that is like suicide. It is a
waste, it is a big loss. We have to stop pretending like migration is the only way to solve our problems...

Participant C: ... I implore our youths to speak up and express their ideas. It’s because of the extreme poverty in Yoff that youths are choosing to take to the sea. It’s a phenomenon that has existed for a long time and it is really time to bring it to an end. Youths really need to be helped to be able to work here at home... I am a member of the Club of Young Entrepreneurs, and I’m working at a restaurant at the same time that I am a student in telecommunications and business. Some people, they might say that my job is embarrassing or humiliating, but for me it’s just a way to get by until I can start my own business. It is up to us young people to help in the development of our country, that’s why we have to stay here instead of looking for quick success in Spain. Because development must also happen through a change in our mentality and behavior, so that we believe that we can make it here...

Participant D: I appreciate that RADDHO has initiated this forum and I agree with and appreciate what many people have said here today... It is important for our youth to understand what the reality of Barça walla Barzakh is, because many of them leave thinking they will find “El Dorado,” and their life will be better than it was here. I agree with Participant C]. In fact, everything that people refuse to do in Senegal, they end up doing exactly that in Europe. If people would stay here, then we could have used those efforts to develop our own community, and then maybe there wouldn’t be a need anymore for people to leave. People have to start believing that there are no stupid jobs here. Instead, we have lost so many of our able-bodied men, and that is why our town is still so impoverished...

[...]

In seeking to come to an understanding of why so many young men had left in pirogues and what would be necessary to “solve” irregular migration, community members delved into questions of what “real” or “good” development requires or might look like. Their commentaries and anecdotes not only reinforced the conception of migration by pirogue as dangerous and unreliable, but also framed Barça/Barzakh migrants and their families as occasionally defeatist and unreasonable in terms of the opportunities available to them in Senegal, opening a new discursive space for imagining an alternative, improved reality. Their critiques (even more powerfully so in full) recognize that, while one stands of chance of making more money abroad, the work irregular migrants do overseas
generally does not promote widespread community development and does not breed new expertise that can be brought back and reinvested for Senegalese development. This problematizes both people’s cravings for fast and great individual wealth at the expense of slower, wider national growth, as well as the unequal labor relationship between Senegalese migrant workers and the foreign countries for which they work, wherein Senegalese labor is expended for the benefit of foreign countries but does not involve skill development that could allow migrants to substantially change or affect development in Senegal.

Community discussions contributed to a localization and re-scaling of the abstract issue of irregular migration, as meeting together to talk about it highlighted the fact that this was not an individual experience and that the apparent need to migrate grows out of immediate, local scarcities and cultural mentalities. Even seeing a group of people assembled to discuss irregular migration was sometimes a powerful and inspiring experience for some, such as one man at another causerie who remarked that “we all care about our community, and together we have the power to make large changes… if everyone here worked together to develop our town instead of sending our children off individually, then we would be much stronger than we are today.” While the emphasis on individuals’ personal responsibility is a commendable attitude toward local development, this approach fails to the enormous obstacles or challenges to prompting significant development progress without the aid or approval of the state. Though this attitude grew out of impatience with government inaction on this front, the possibility of enacting significant development without the state or outside actors must therefore be taken with a grain of salt.
Working with RADDHO near the end of this campaign allowed me to see the effect of this narrative in the communities that had been a part of the project. The first time I visited Yarakh — a small, poor, coastal fishing town about a 30-minute bus-ride from downtown Dakar, and what was to become one of the primary sites of my research — I went with Souleymane on a trip to organize a final causerie on Barça/Barzakh migration. After stepping off the main road where the bus dropped us off, the narrow route leading toward the shore and into the neighborhood immediately turned into thick sand. People hanging out on the sides of the road all greeted Souleymane as we passed, who was well-known in the neighborhood from the work he did with RADDHO there. At the shore, a crowd of men were helping to pull in pirogues that had been out for the day to fish, while women and kids made trips back and forth from the boats to bring in the catch.

We met with Modou Guèye — a self-appointed community leader — at the cybercafé he had helped to build on the shore, which doubled as his office and a community meeting spot. He pulled out some worn plastic lawn chairs for Souleymane and me to sit on while the two of them caught up and started to discuss the next community meeting. He told us that, since the last community meeting on irregular migration that had been held in Yarakh, he had started a small micro-credit program to support women’s economic activities, called “Jappal Majapp” (“I help you, you help me”). Through an initial pooling of funds among the community, he had been able to start lending weightier sums of money to women to help them buy supplies (like soap or oil) in bulk to resell for a profit. Modou explained his thinking behind the formation of this program:

You have to lend a hand, and so I did, I lent my hand with this project. We can’t wait for things to come to us anymore. We can’t do nothing and then expect a rich harvest. You see, we’ve been waiting and waiting for the government to create jobs for us. Well, we waited until everybody was unemployed and left for Spain! Actually, I realized that everything that we need for development is right here. You can’t just stand there with your arms crossed! All the time, you have
to just try to do something. Seriously! Everyone is rich. When I say rich, I don’t necessarily mean— it’s when you can analyze, you can look around yourself and see opportunities. Everybody has to start thinking like they’re wearing the president’s hat.

Like the earlier exchange between Mbodji and participants at a more formal RADDHO conference, Modou’s perspective on local development reflected a disillusionment with the ability or willingness of the government to resolve the core causes of irregular migration. While such perspectives were not necessarily accurate and may have been amplified by speculation, they nevertheless had a powerful effect both in prompting youths to give up on change in Senegal and leave for Europe, as well as encouraging Senegalese to reconsider what they might be capable of accomplishing on their own without governmental help. For Modou, these conversations were enough to actually inspire him into realizing a local development project, and over the several months I spent visiting and working with him in Yarakh he organized a number of community discussions and meetings in neighboring towns to help communities there replicate or adapt his project.

This outcome is not to suggest that community discussions have effectively resolved problems at the

Figure 3.6 — Modou Guèye
local level — rather, it is an extreme example of the perspectival changes that basic discussions around migration sometimes provoked. Holding community discussions on migration provided a forum for working through and understanding why — at a basic, local, familiar level — so many youth had left, and the space became in effect a place brainstorm what “real development” might look like or require. In as much, migration unfolded not so much as the fundamental problem at hand so much as a symptom of another shortcoming. However, this recognition was a significant interpretation of the current situation at least in terms of increasingly encouraging men not to migrate irregularly, as community discussions such as these revealed the problems that that migrations were intended to solve as much more profound and complex than could be resolved by migration alone. Instead, community narratives initiated efforts to seek grassroots-level projects and initiatives that could serve to eliminate men’s need to migrate as well as address some of the “underlying issues,” and in this way the narratives often led to very practical and tangible (if small) changes in real life.

**Moralizing on Migration: Informal narratives on Barça/Barzakh’s ethical precariousness**

To focus only on structured, deliberate modes of communication discussed up to this point would be to lose sight of the fluidity and prevalence of such thinking in unstructured, everyday interactions. Even in structured contexts, “official” narratives frequently give way to the informal — such as men speculating about headlines at a newsstand or listening to a rap song and then making their own, personal version of it. As Melly aptly observes, “pirogue tales were [...] often told as people sat and waited—for traffic jams to ease, for electricity to return, for long lines to move, for fleeting economic opportunities to appear. Interestingly, youth (particularly young men) in Dakar typically employed the Wolof word *tooog*—literally, to sit or to wait—when describing their frustrated plans to migrate” (Melly, 2011). They were at once a
way to pass the time and also a regular consideration, migration being so embedded in the social fabric that innumerable things and situations could trigger a memory and a story, and opinion of it. Each different form of talking about migration highlighted different aspects of it in particular (but not exclusively): journalism and music address the broader, geopolitical implications of irregular migration; community discussions emphasize the local poverty and development-related causes. In informal, personal narratives, individuals considered Barça/Barzakh as a way of contesting or reinforcing a Senegalese social ethic, deliberating over what comprised “good conduct” and what moral principles should guide participation in family and community systems.

On many occasions I visited Yarakh to visit with some of my friends and informants there but would find them occupied with their work, and in these instances I often went to sit and chat with Modou in his cybercafé while he made attaya for the afternoon. Over the course of many slowly-brewed cups of tea he took great pleasure in explaining “Senegalese culture” to me, and always inquired about what I had been up to since I last saw him in case there was something in my experiences that he could illuminate or elaborate on for me. One such day we fell into a discussion of Islam, during which Modou expressed his frustration with Barça/Barzakh migrants for not having enough faith in God or following what he believed to be God’s plan for them:

You should stay here, win your life honestly, focus on getting by, and some day soon God will come to your aid. My brothers who are there [in Spain], even right now they are there, and I was just talking with them yesterday to tell them that they must come back! It’s a choice! And we all have to make them... No! People should be more respectful of the laws and rules of this country, and just wait and be patient. Voilà. For us, our religion forbids us from travelling clandestinely. God is everywhere. God is everywhere. Wherever you are, you can be rich. You just have to believe in God! The God of Spain is the God of Senegal, who is the God of the whole world. So, for us, our belief in God, uh... the Qur’an tell us, forbids us to risk our lives! If you risk your life, it’s like
committing suicide. It’s like suicide! And so for everyone who commits suicide, they won’t go to paradise… If a man believes in God, he can’t commit suicide. You must wait until God comes to take your life. It’s not up to you. No, you have to live. If you have money, you must live, if you don’t have money, you still have to live. If you have nothing at all you have to live. It’s God who put us here. It’s He who chooses whether you’re rich or poor! Only he knows why you have the life you have. You can’t just leave for the ends of the earth to have more… In any case, the Qur’an tells us that God is everywhere. Everywhere that you are, you can live happily. It’s not up to us to decide! Every person who lives on earth, it’s God who decided where you should be! So! So God has chosen that we should live in poor Senegal here where we are, so be it! But, one shouldn’t think to have more money or to commit suicide or do whatever! The money, it will come. If God wants it to be so, the money will come! Bu sobbee Yallah.120

Modou’s understanding of Barça/Barzakh migration through the lens of the Qur’an offered a completely different perspective on the morality of this choice than that often adopted by migrants themselves. While many migrants took to sea under on the grounds of a need to support their families financially, Modou’s frame of analysis (religious morality) instead took this decision to be indicative of a lack of faith in God’s supreme plan. In as much, his reasoning painted Barça/Barzakh migrants as immoral, putting their desire for wealth above a love and appreciation for all that God had already given them, and thus seeing the search for money as a selfish pursuit rather than as a sacrifice for one’s family. Consequently, this critique makes a judgment on personhood, not just on an isolated act.

Modou was not alone in perceiving Barça/Barzakh migration as so obviously dangerous and risky that to make an attempt at it essentially indicated a willingness to die; this idea was well-established even in the name for this form of migration, “Barça walla Barzakh”: “Barcelona or Death.” On many an occasion people expressed their incredulity at the notion of migrating in this way through exclamations that they would never consider it “because I don’t want to die!” However, in associating this risk as a suicide attempt that contradicts the Qur’an’s commands as

120 Common Wolof phrase meaning “if God wills it” or “if it pleases God.”
opposed to a “heroic” risk for the benefit of others, Modou significantly repositioned moral code by which migrants might be judged and asserted the supremacy of the Qur’an as a guide for conduct.

Modou’s critique is interesting because he explicitly pinpoints an authoritative moral system — the Qur’an — as a basis for action and judging others’ actions, and is worth keeping in mind as a possible background to all moral claims because of the depth of religious belief (in Islam or other religions) of many Senegalese. Not all interpretations are so candid, however, though many people referred more obliquely to the moral themes. One afternoon over lunch a friend of mine, Ibrahima, told me about his night in a Dakar club the previous evening, laughing in memory of how he had been hit on by an elderly, white French woman. He blamed her belief that she might charm him on the tendency of some young Senegalese men to take on elderly lovers as a way of getting legal status in European countries (such as through marriage), and told me the story of an acquaintance who had done such a thing:

I had a friend who left for Spain, and he would call and say, “yes, everything is good here, I found a job and they are giving me papers, so everything is good.” He was a close friend, and so one day he confessed to me that he had actually married an old lady! He, twenty years old, and she, seventy! She married him so that he could work in Spain, and he did domestic work and errands for her and also had sex with her. He became a prostitute to go to Europe! No, Maria… that’s no good at all! God! He even had a wife in Pikine, but he never told her what he was doing in Spain. There are lots of cases like that, people that just want to get a foothold in the country. But it’s not worth it, to do that kind of stuff, marry a cougar. That, that’s somebody who has no dignity. He sold himself away for money.

With this story, Ibrahima questions what are sometimes serious moral costs for the attainment of European riches and documentation. In marrying himself away for papers, Ibrahima’s friend not only lost a degree of sovereignty over his own body but also betrayed his wife and family in Senegal. This story and others like it also work to degrade migrants as symbols of masculinity.
Accounts of men — who in Senegal might be respected community members, heads of families, and breadwinners — doing domestic work for elderly women or, in other stories, selling women’s underwear on the street, degrade their social position by feminizing them and situating them in otherwise humiliating contexts. This story was accordingly both (for Ibrahima) a funny story relevant to his experiences the previous night, but also an act of drawing a line and pointing to the place where the moral or social costs for making money became too great to justify the endeavor.

As is implied in Ibrahima’s story, another significant social question at stake in migration is what it means or requires to be a good family member. Ibrahima’s friend had more likely than not left for Spain to support his family in Pikine and was doing what was in his power to earn money for them, but Ibrahima’s tone and expressions in telling the story made clear that he felt his friend had violated a sacrosanct set of family values. Stories abounded of infidelity of all kinds among migrants — from never sending money back to families in Senegal, to taking a new wife in Europe and abandoning one’s Senegalese family altogether. A friend who had an older brother working in France (originally as an irregular migrant but now with documentation) constantly complained that his brother had become a *toubab* (foreigner) over the three years he had spent abroad:

He never sends money back. When he left, he said that he was leaving for us, and so we all supported him and loaned him money while he got settled because we thought we were investing in him. Well, now he has his own business there, a little boutique, and he makes plenty of money but we never see it. He’s forgotten about us. Sorry, I’m sorry if this is insulting, but he’s become a *toubab*! That means that he doesn’t share. He has a French wife now and he doesn’t remember that he has a whole family that needs him in Senegal.

Remittances are an important token of enduring familial relationships across great distances, and here, the migrant’s neglect to engage in this exchange implied his abandonment of his family.
While the family supported the migrant’s journey, he forgot them as soon as he established himself in France, becoming a *toubab* and neglecting to reciprocate in his cultural and familial duties obligations to those who supported him. Beyond not sending remittances back to Senegal, however, the idea of “becoming a *toubab*” also articulates the loss of cultural identity more broadly speaking — in values, in dress and speech, and loyalty, and so forth. This transformation then gives rise to the dilemma of how to maintain cultural identity while simultaneously immersing oneself in a foreign culture and striving be part of it to a certain degree. For the friend who told me this story, he felt that his brother had betrayed him and “sold out” to have a comfortable life in Europe.

For others, this tension was resolved by a rejection in total of migration. Ibrahima, who is an accomplished entrepreneur and has lived in Dakar for his whole life, was also a champion of an undying work ethic and frequently recounted tales of *Barça/Barzakh* migrants to exemplify what he considered to be simple indolence. One day he took me on a tour of the various buildings he had helped to construct around the city, and I commented to him how impressive his accomplishments were. He declined the compliment, arguing that anyone could have achieved as much as him if they had only chosen to put in the effort, sparking a tirade on what he claimed to be the laziness of many *Barça/Barzakh* migrants:

I had a friend once, who left for Spain. He was always saying, “Senegal is hard, Senegal is hard.” If he really wanted he could have helped himself, but he was always in his bed! It’s just a matter of spirit, of mentality. No matter what race, no matter what ethnicity, things like that, if you are born, grown up, if you’re not sickly, you have everything you need. You only need to have the courage to change things, but not by taking part in these stupidities. You just work, no matter what work you’re given, except for the forbidden jobs… Sometimes you see a guy who says he’s looking for work, but he gets up at noon or 1 pm, takes a long shower and puts on nice cologne, and he sits himself in front of the door!
But that’s it, you can’t just stay at home! Café touba, cigarettes, bar, beer, pool, club. Hitting on girls. You can’t make a living just with appearances! I21

Ibrahima took himself as a model of success and of a good work ethic, having come from a poor family and worked his way up to wealth through persistence and hard work. He played the choices of Barça/Barzakh migrants off of his own experiences, characterizing them as lazy and unwilling to see the opportunities available to them in Senegal as opposed to his own tenacity and commitment to making life in Senegal work out.

Another day, Ibrahima recounted to me the departure of three of his friends on a pirogue to Europe, who had invited him to come along; he refused their offer, citing a loyalty to Senegal and an unwillingness to work somewhere that wouldn’t grant him the “dignity” of official

Figure 5.7 — Ibrahima Cissé at work

papers. For him, the choice to migrate illegally was an indication of a personal weakness and even treachery, which he explicitly emphasized when I asked about other structural constraints: “No! No matter how hard your life is, you only need courage. If I can make it here, anyone can make it.” His invocations of courage, willpower, spirit, and desire construct a deeply personal attack on irregular migrants, and simultaneously begin to form the contours of an ideal man — one who is strong and loyal to his country, successful through hard work rather than luck.

Stories like these about family and friends have an emotional weight to them because of their practical implications, but they and others also serve as a kind of moral parable, a concise story providing a window into an important moral and social concern, such as how to be a good family member, a good Muslim, a good citizen and worker, and so forth. In the same way that other kinds of narratives and story-telling about migration opened space to expand into more fundamental questions like neocolonialism or local development, personal, informal stories allowed for reflection on what irregular migration said or meant about migrants as humans; in telling such stories with tones of aversion, surprise, disappointment, and frustration, the storytellers contributed their voices to an ever evolving and clarifying social morality.

Conclusion

The narratives repeated here do a lot of work. Journalistic reports have effectively rebranded Barça/Barzakh migration as a highly dangerous and risky form of migration, and are often fodder for cautions against irregular migration; hip-hop music and artist advocacy bring attention to neocolonial forces that continue to exert influence over Senegal and call for the practice of pan-African collaboration as a mode of combatting this oppression; community discussions emphasize the immediate local deficiencies and problems that drive men to migration and are often sites where grassroots development initiatives are born and energized;
and the innumerable informal conversations between friends and strangers alike take Barça/Barzakh migrants as a diving board for jumping into reflections on Senegalese morality, and question the balance of priorities that establish the social ethic behind irregular migration. In all of these cases, Barça/Barzakh migration is at once the issue of immediate concern as well as a simple conversation starter to delve into deeper, grander issues that address questions of nation, independence, progress, and morality.

At the same time that I was writing this thesis, I was also volunteering in an urban student-run homeless shelter that provides dinner, breakfast, and a place to sleep for roughly twenty to thirty men during the academic year. I was surprised to find that there was a great intellectual continuity between the anthropology seminar I attended in the afternoon and the dinner conversations I had with the guys there in the evening. There was a regular group of men who, without fail, sat down together at a rickety fold-up table in a church basement to discuss classism, structural racism, and radical activism, one man in particular being especially well-read in classic social theorists such as Marx and Foucault. Over donated casserole, they worked out the world each night with a dexterity worthy of any college anthropology class.

While the contexts of these men and the men who are the subject of this thesis differ in infinite ways, I was and continue to be struck by depth of understanding that each attained of their respective worlds. Rather than needing to be taught about structural oppression, neocolonialism, and global political and economic forces in an academic classroom, they were articulating harsh and penetrating critiques of these systems because these were the forces that affected and shaped their daily lives; where a US privileged citizen must dedicate her or himself to developing a critical awareness of modern oppression, the fact of this is plainly evident to most Senegalese just by glancing at the daily newspaper headlines. As Solinger et al. suggested
over the course of their compilation, narrative is sometimes the only tool left for those who experience extreme oppression or marginalization — that is, the ability to process, understand, and articulate the complexity of one’s situation, and in doing so, form networks and communities of support and solidarity. As their book and the multiform narratives of Senegalese here demonstrate, narratives can be influential enough in and of themselves to inspire great social change, ranging from sweeping political reform to personal transformations of attitude and mentality.
Chapter Six

Conclusion

In my investigation of organizations in Senegal whose work explicitly addressed Barça/Barzakh migrations, I was repeatedly referred to *le Collectif des Femmes pour la Lutte Contre l’Emigration Clandestine* (COFLEC), or the “Women’s Collective for the Fight Against Irregular Migration,” based in the coastal suburb Thiaroye-sur-Mer just outside of Dakar. Souleymane passed on a phone number for the association’s founder and president, Madame Yayi Bayam Diouf, who I attempted to speak to several times over a staticky and repeatedly dropping phone connection until she invited me to meet her in person in Thiaroye. After taking a bus too far and following two small children through a labyrinth of sandy streets as they insisted they knew Yayi and could show me to her office, I finally arrived at a half-roofed cinderblock building similar to most other houses and buildings in the area; the outside street was calm and quiet, but the sound of lively chatter swelled upon approaching the door. Inside, some thirty adult women were sitting on woven floor mats in a rainbow of colorful dresses and *boubous*, exchanging cheerful greetings, laughing at each other’s jokes and catching up on news. Yayi was standing in the middle of the crowd talking to another woman, and waved me over upon seeing me

“You found us, alxamdulilaay!”

She sat me down with another group of women with a quick introduction, who asked me who I was with some curiosity before returning to their conversation in rapid Wolof. When Yayi came back to catch up with me, she told me that this was the meeting of COFLEC’s biweekly “solidarity fund” (*caisse de solidarité*), which operated as something of a mix between *tontine* and a micro-credit system. Yayi, directing my attention to two women collecting money at a
table at the head of the room, explained that members regularly contribute a sum of money to a pooled fund, a portion of which was allotted to a tontine that was auctioned off each week, another portion of which was saved for the distribution of smaller loans, and another portion of which went to supporting organizational costs. She pointed me to several rows of wooden crates on the side of the building where fish were being dried and processed for sale, and also described a variety of other projects that the association engaged in, including production and preparation of grains, educating women and girls in trade skills (such as sewing and hairdressing, as well as petty commerce) as well as personal health, and managing a number of community dialogues and advocacy events. Standing up to go address the group, she gave me a final word:

“We all have a responsibility in this. It can’t be just the men. And it can’t be just me. Do you know who the president of this association is? None of those women up front [collecting dues at the table] are the president. But they’re more important than me today. I’m the president, but you wouldn’t know it, because we walk together in this. Everyone has to share the problem and share the responsibility, not just me and not just the men. We all have to recognize our part and contribute to the solution.”

Yayi originally founded COFLEC in 2006 after her son died en route to Spain in a pirogue. Distraught by not only his loss but also the sense of guilt she felt in allowing and even pushing his departure, she created COFLEC in recognition of the significant role women play in men’s migrations, either directly as sponsors and encouragers of migrations or indirectly, as “dependents” who are in many cases reliant on male support. The organization originally worked more on sensibilisation — trying to raise awareness among women about the dangers of irregular migration and persuade women to start advocating against, rather than for, such departures. However, over the past eight years COFLEC has expanded enormously as an
association supporting local development and women, particularly women’s involvement in local development. COFLEC’s aims and achievements are in this way somewhat reminiscent of the pro-women NGOs and government programs that privileged women sometimes at the expense of men, such that the increasing economic power of women in households contributed to the destabilization of male power and masculine identities (see Chapter 3 for more detail). In other ways, however, the motivating drive and practical work of COFLEC speak to many of the core questions and dilemmas underlying Barça/Barzakh migration. In particular, COFLEC seeks to respond both to injustices and inequalities that migrant men face abroad, as well as the sometimes unreasonable expectations placed on them in Senegal, by advancing a local development approach in which the burden of confronting and overcoming economic and social difficulties in Senegal are shared by all.

This thesis, as a multidimensional analysis of Barça/Barzakh, has explored a number of the most prominent complications that converge from a variety of different places, people, and times to marginalize and burden Senegalese men with enormous expectations and responsibilities. First, and as Chapter 2 demonstrates, the global economic and political order in which Barça/Barzakh migrations take place are historically rooted. Both slave trade and colonial era policies continue to bear down upon contemporary political, economic, and social life in Senegal, resulting in the global imbalance in material wealth and resources, the systematic under-development of Senegalese agricultural and industrial activities, the implementation of new social and political hierarchies, and a persistent dependence on foreign financial and political aid. As a result of this, the past five hundred years have seen the relentless transfer of global resources and power to what are now former colonial powers (namely western European countries and the United States), which now stand as political and economic powerhouses.
Moreover, these differences of global resources and power have consequently carved out pathways for the transnational movement of all kinds — of people, money, commodities, culture, ideas, skill, and ideology, to name a few — which follow, and in doing so, reinforce and exacerbate, these connections and imbalances. Senegalese men are thus swept up in a tide that existed long before then (or, in the case of Barça/Barzakh migrants, sucked into a funnel that developed around them).

The disparity between different states’ economic and political strength has resulted in significant differences in opportunities for the attainment of material wealth and comforts. Senegalese increasingly find themselves unable to meet their standards for stability and “success,” not only because Senegalese have a significantly lower average wealth than people in Europe or the United States, but also because the notion of “success” increasingly comes from values and expectations based on Euro-American lives. Globalization has overwhelmingly involved the exportation of European and American products, media, popular culture and values to countries like Senegal, where they become symbolic of the luxurious lifestyles possible just across the ocean. Consequently, standards for success or imaginations of what kind of wealth is theoretically possible have shifted toward and incorporated Euro-American experiences, creating desires and expectations that sometimes exceed what is possible given the constraints within which Senegalese live in Senegal.

The simultaneous dependency of Senegalese (as a nation and as individual people) on European wealth, along with the power that Europe holds as an avenue for improving one’s life and accessing success, has fueled the migration of thousands of individuals. However, this has effectively put migrants as the specific, nameable individuals at the crux of contemporary tensions of global inequalities: in being the ones to bridge the divide between Senegal and
Europe, Senegalese men bear the burden of both people’s aspirations and hopes as well as their disappointments and criticisms. Migrant men shoulder the weight of seeking wealth, financial stability, and social advancement for their families, and when they do, they are elevated as familial and cultural heroes. However, these men also shoulder the burdens of having to dramatically uproot their lives, leave home for extended periods of time, endure life-risking journeys and racial discrimination. The consequences of an unjust economic order and legal strictures that maintain borders and economic divides with the aim of preserving abstract, global, and historical power are overwhelmingly brought down to bear upon individual human beings simply trying to support themselves and their families. They are the ones that absorb the consequences of global inequalities and discrimination in the most real way, as they are the ones who must confront the real, quotidian, and physical effects of restrictive immigration policies, xenophobia, and wealth disparity: their very bodies are submitted to physical danger, starved, abused, and shamed. The ongoing, abstract conflict and tension between global powers and marginalized countries is waged on the physical, personal body of the migrant.

Senegalese men equally find themselves made into the identifiable sites of contestation for abstract predicaments in Senegal. They are held responsible not only for elevating their families, but also their nation; they consequently must balance or negotiate both the need for immediate, liquid resources in order to fulfill their families’ daily needs (often satisfied through migration), as well as the societal expectation that they will fulfill more abstract responsibilities to contribute to “real” national development (which is increasingly thought to mean refusing migration and staying in Senegal to build the country from the inside). Though a given individual might be able to fulfill one of these expectations, the two of them are at odds with
each other and migrants almost indefinitely bear the criticism for failing to meet whichever they were unable to accomplish.

The inherent complication and contradiction of this dynamic is highly apparent to Senegalese and migrant men in particular. As Chapter 5 highlights, the rise of Barça/Barzakh migration has given rise to the construction of a wide variety of narratives through which Senegalese seek not only to understand and intensify their critique of broader structural forces such as neocolonialism and ineffective or even kleptocratic governance, but also to develop “homegrown” solutions. Africulturban’s Hip hop Akademy and Modou Guèye’s micro-credit association are key examples of this innovation, in which individuals develop projects that engender a sort of grassroots, do-it-yourself development, independent of European powers and not reliant on approval or funding by the Senegalese government. Yayi Bayam Dioul’s COFLEC, in particular, works to question and temper the social structures that disproportionately burden men, thus throwing into question the reasonableness of the social expectations loaded on men and highlighting the responsibility that everyone has to contribute to the solution rather than judge those who have tried their hand at it and “failed.”

The ultimate argument of this thesis is simply that return migration (and migration as a whole) is enormously complicated: it pulls individual people with fairly personal agendas into enormous, global, historical webs of entangled and contradicting expectations, restraints, and condemnations. While Barça/Barzakh migration seems to be on the decline, this does not mean that migration as a whole has stopped or in any way subsided; rather, Senegalese must continue to negotiate and balance an immediate dependency on European and American aid and politics with an simultaneous need and long-term desire to strengthen opportunities to lead stable,
successful, and fulfilling lives at home and to bring prestige to themselves, their families, and their nation.
Appendix A: Interview questions

1. Avez-vous jamais voyagé à l’étranger ? Si oui : quelles étaient les circonstances de ce voyage ? (Have you ever traveled abroad? If so: what were the circumstances of this traveling?)


3. Connaissez-vous quelqu'un qui a migré clandestinement ? Pourquoi pensez-vous qu’il a choisit de migrer de telle manière ? Sinon : Pourquoi pensez-vous que certaines personnes choisissent de migrer clandestinement ? (Do you know someone who has migrated irregularly? Why do you think they chose to migrate in this way? If not: Why do you think some people choose to migrate irregularly?)

4. Qu’est-ce que votre avis ou vos pensées au rapport des personnes qui choisissent d’émigrer clandestinement ? (What are your opinions or thoughts regarding people who choose to migrate irregularly?)

5. Connaissez-vous quelqu'un qui est rapatrie ? Qu’est-ce que votre avis ou vos pensées au rapport des rapatriés au Dakar et Sénégal ? (Do you know someone who is a returned migrant? What are your opinions or thoughts regarding returned migrants in Dakar and Senegal?)

6. Qu’est-ce que le différence entre un migrant qui a « réussi » ou « échoué » ? Connaissez-vous des migrants qui a « réussi » ou « échoué » à votre avis ? Pourquoi ? (What is the difference between a “successful” or a “failed” migrant? Do you know of any migrants who have “succeeded” or “failed” in your opinion? Why?)

7. Quels problèmes ont des rapatriés en retournant au Sénégal ? (What problems do migrants have in returning to Senegal?)

8. Pensez-vous qu’on doit faire quelque chose pour diminuer la migration clandestine ? Quels sorts de solutions pensez-vous seraient efficace ? (Does anything need to be done to diminish irregular migration? What kinds of things do you think would be effective?)

9. Qui est responsable pour la réalisation de cela ? (Who is responsible for carrying this out?)

10. Qu’est-ce que le rôle du gouvernement ? Qu’est-ce que le rôle des ONG ? Qu’est-ce que le rôle de la population général ? (What is the role of the government? What is the role of NGOs? What is the role of the general population?)
Appendix B: Additional interview questions for returned migrants

1. Quelles étaient vos motivations pour émigrer clandestinement? *(What were your motivations for migrating irregularly?)*

2. Quelles mesures avez-vous pris pour émigrer? Quelles formes de préparations (social, financière, psychologique, etc.) avez-vous fait? *(What measures did you take in order to emigrate? What type of preparations (social, financial, psychological, etc.) did you make?)*

3. Comment était le processus d’émigration? *(What was the process of emigration like?)*

4. Comment avez-vous conceptualisé le pays de migration avant que vous soyez arrivé là-bas? Comment étaient vos expériences réelles à l’étranger? *(How did you imagine the country to which you migrated before you arrived there? What were your actual experiences like abroad?)*

5. Quel était le circonstance to votre retour au Sénégal? *(What were the circumstances of your return to Senegal?)*

6. Comment votre famille et vos amis ont-ils réagi à votre retour? Comment est-ce que leurs réactions vous faire sentir? *(How did your family and friends react to your return? How did this make you feel?)*

7. Quelles ont été les parties les plus difficiles de revenir au Sénégal pour vous? Quel a été difficile de se réadapter à ici? *(What have been the hardest parts of coming back to Senegal for you? Has anything been difficult to readjust to here?)*

8. Pensez-vous que les gens vous traitent dans la même manière, ou différemment, qu’avant que vous soyez parti de Sénégal? Si c’est différent, comment? *(Do you feel that people treat you the same, or differently, as before you left Senegal? If differently, how so?)*

9. Est-ce que votre situation économique ou la situation économique de votre famille a changé dès votre départ de Sénégal? Si non, comment gérez-vous les problèmes économiques persistants? *(Has your or your family’s economic situation changed since you left Senegal? If not, how are you dealing with the continuing economic problems?)*

10. Est-ce que votre expérience du Sénégal ou votre avis au rapport du Sénégal a changé dès votre retour? Comment? *(Has your experience or your opinions of Senegal changed since returning here? In what ways?)*
11. Avez-vous reçu quelque aide ou appui en retournant au Sénégal ? Avez-vous bénéficié de quelques programmes pour appuyer des migrants rapatriés ? *(Have you received any aid or support in returning to Senegal? Have you benefited from any programs designed to support returned migrants?)*

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