Risk-taking in unauthorised migration

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Abstract

This thesis addresses the dynamics of high-risk unauthorised migration. First, it explores how new routes develop in relation to policies that seek to curtail unauthorised migration. Second, it analyses how aspiring migrants justify taking certain risks to migrate by negotiating risk information in relation to their life circumstances and considering the symbolic value of specific forms of migration. Finally and, in relation to the previous, the thesis discusses whether policies that seek to curtail unauthorised migration flows by increasing the likelihood of migrants' apprehension and repatriation are likely to be effective.

In order to explore these questions, this thesis project focuses on the specific case of unauthorised boat migration from West Africa to the Canary Islands, Spain. This route emerged in the year 2006 in relation to increased border control activities along the Strait of Gibraltar and between Morocco and the Canary Islands. In opening a direct link between Sub-Saharan Africa and Europe, the new route from West Africa to the Canary Islands provoked a major change in the dynamics of irregular maritime migration to Spain's southern borders. Both the number of sub-Saharan migrants arriving on the shores of the Canaries and the length of the itinerary they had followed were unprecedented, and arose much astonishment at the ostensibly very high risks migrants appeared willing to take in order to reach Europe. While it has been argued that migrants following perilous unauthorised migration routes do so out of misinformation about the risks they face, this thesis argues that the relationship between risk information and risk-taking is significantly more complex. Decisions to migrate through high-risk channels are mediated by factors such as aspiring migrants' options for socio-economic advancement, the social and moral acceptability of certain migration forms and the risks they involve, the religious significance of death, and migrants' perceptions of their relative preparedness to, and ability to control, the risks they may face.

Migration control measures aimed at curtailing unauthorised migration, such as risk awareness campaigns, border patrolling and repatriation are likely to be ineffective if they are based on a simplistic understanding of unauthorised migration dynamics. Careful design of border control measures is necessary to ensure their effectiveness in curbing unauthorised migration flows and upholding their humanitarian concern with protecting the lives of migrants.

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Preface

First and foremost, I want to thank my informants in Senegal, for trusting me with their stories and upholding the reputation of Senegalese *teranga.*[1] This thesis would not have been possible without the many hours of conversation you shared with me. I am grateful to the inhabitants of Ndiarène for welcoming my presence and curiosity, especially the wonderful Gueye family for their great warmth and generosity in providing me with a home in Senegal.[2]

A number of other people provided great assistance during my fieldwork in Senegal by explaining the nature of their work in relation to unauthorised migration to the Canary Islands or sharing their thoughts on it. I am grateful to personnel at the Senegalese Red Cross, the Spanish Embassy and cooperation offices in Senegal, Manuel Lopez Baumann at the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the students at the Movement Citoyen, Papa Demba Fall at the Institut Fondamental de l'Afrique Noire (IFAN), and Dr. Ousmane Sene, at the West African Research Centre (WARC) for taking the time to meet me. WARC, the Movement Citoyen and Mame Arame Ndoye additionally assisted me with the practical aspects of my research in Senegal.

I am very grateful to have had the opportunity to write this MA thesis within the project *Migration-based threat*, which is part of the larger project *Europe under threat* at the International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO). These projects investigate the nature of unconventional sources of insecurity in Europe, including migration. The *Migration-based threat* subproject seeks to re-examine the relationship between migration and new perceptions of insecurity, including security concerns arising from unauthorised migration flows across Europe's external borders. The opportunity of writing my thesis as an integrated component of projects of wider relevance and reach has provided me, as a student, with a great learning experience. Support from the *Migration-based threat* project included funding to provide me with a ten-month student scholarship, a workstation at PRIO, and partial funding of the fieldwork in Senegal. This allowed me to work within a most inspiring research environment and enhance the fieldwork component of my MA project, on which the latter is largely based. I have benefited much from being able to develop my findings and reflections within a larger research group, and it is my hope that this is reflected in the final results of this thesis.

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[1] Hospitality, in Wolof
[2] The name of my fieldwork location is fictitious, as is later explained.

Glossary

Attaaya – Wolof term for the local tea (drank in the traditional Mauritanian style, according to my dictionary), that people consume all day long, in groups, while conversing. The process of making and drinking it is long and divided in rounds, and it holds a central place in socializing.

Ceebujën – Wolof term for the traditional dish consisting mainly of rice (ceebu) and fish (jën), and consumed almost daily in coastal areas.

Passeur – French term used to refer to a crew member of a boat used for migrant smuggling.

Marabout – Muslim religious leader or spiritual advisor.

Pirogue – French term for the traditional, wooden-built dugout canoes used by local fishermen. Pirogues can be found in varying sizes, but those used for the journey to Spain are generally the largest, their length ranging between 20 and 23 metres. They are usually decorated with bright colours and religious inscriptions in Arabic.

Teranga – Wolof term for hospitality. Senegalese people are proud to hail their country as "the country of *teranga*."

Tubaab – Wolof term to designate white people.

Figure 1. Some of the routes from North and West Africa to the Canary Islands

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I.   Introduction

T his thesis seeks to contribute to a better understanding of risk-taking in the dynamics of unauthorised migration. I do this by exploring the relationship between the development of new routes, risk perception, and migration control measures. Based on fieldwork among aspiring migrants, the analysis focuses especially on individual migration choices with respect to risk. In order to address the significance of risk perception to these choices, I have drawn upon the risk theory perspective. This can provide an innovative approach to analysing high-risk migration decisions. There are nevertheless shortcomings to the applicability of these theories to the understanding of migrants' perspective, and filling the gaps requires a more holistic approach. The analysis in this thesis therefore integrates the role of contextual factors such as socio-economic opportunities and situation-specific attitudes to risk-taking.

The analysis specifically addresses the development of unauthorised boat migration from West Africa to the Canary Islands, Spain. This thesis project has been structured around three research questions:

1. How have new routes of irregular maritime migration developed from West Africa to the Canary Islands, and how have Spanish and European authorities responded to these changes?
2. How does awareness of the risks of death or return affect the decision to attempt the crossing?
3. Are policies that increase the rates of apprehension and repatriation likely to lead to a decrease in the number of migration attempts?

Background

Aspiring migrants who cannot fulfil the requirements to migrate through legal channels often resort to irregular ones. Irregular migration has many forms, including entering a country legally with a permit obtained through illicit means or overstaying a legally obtained visa. Unauthorised migration is one form of irregular migration and is characterised by the fact that it occurs "outside the common, authorised means of entering the national territory" (Carling 2007b:5). This includes migrants who avoid authorised border crossings or cross them as stowaways in order to hide from border authorities. Unauthorised border crossings often entail serious risks for migrants, including death and return: journeys are frequently carried out in hazardous conditions that endanger migrants' safety and, if apprehended by border

authorities, migrants are subject to being repatriated to their countries of origin. Typically, unauthorised routes are followed by migrants who cannot afford the price of forged documents for a safe journey, as is the case with maritime routes to Europe (de Haas 2007; Monzini 2004).

The high degree of risk to which migrants expose themselves when following unauthorised routes begs to question whether migrants are aware of the risks involved and if so, why they persist in their attempts. In this thesis, I intend to address such questions by drawing upon the risk theory perspective. In one of the pioneer works on risk perception, scientist Chauncey Starr (1969) addressed the question "how safe is safe enough?" in relation to the limits of popular acceptability of technological risks. Theoretical perspectives on risk acceptability and risk-benefit analyses are useful for gauging risk-taking in unauthorised migration. Starr's phrase can be reversed to question "how unsafe is unsafe enough?" in the minds of aspiring migrants, that is, what risks and of which magnitude is it acceptable to take in order to reach one's migration objectives? Appreciating how aspiring migrants rationalise risk-taking in unauthorised migration requires exploring the meanings they attribute to specific risks. This is largely mediated by local values and socio-economic possibilities.

Understanding migrants' attitudes to risk-taking in the context of unauthorised migration represents a significant component of comprehending the dynamics of this migration form. The dynamics of decision-making in the context of high-risk migration have been studied in the context of the US-Mexico border, but they are less explored in Europe (Carling 2007b; Cornelius 2001; Cornelius and Salehyan 2007; Espenshade 1994; Reyes *et al.* 2002). Studies of migration dynamics across the US-Mexico border have found that border control measures only have a limited, if any, deterrent effect on migrants' decisions, even though migrants are aware of the difficulty and danger of unauthorised border crossings. Recent research on the geography of irregular maritime migration routes suggests that stronger border control along Europe's southern borders is leading migrants to use longer, potentially more dangerous routes (Carling 2007a, b; Spijkerboer 2007).

Comprehending why individuals undertake perilous migration journeys requires a deep investigation of the local and transnational factors that influence migrants' attitudes to risk-taking. This includes exploring the role of risk information on migrants' decisions to migrate through high-risk channels, the contribution of other factors to justifying this decision, and, ultimately, how migrants minimise existing risks in order to increase their chances of succeeding. While this thesis focuses on boat migration from West Africa to the Canary Islands, the analytical structure that it establishes could be useful for further development of a more general framework for understanding decision-making in the context of high-risk, unauthorised migration.

Pirogue migration

The analysis presented in this thesis focuses on unauthorised boat migration from West Africa to the Canary Islands, a Spanish archipelago off the coasts of Morocco and Western Sahara. Unauthorised boat migration from Africa to Spain's southern coasts has been important to European concerns over irregular immigration since the early 1990s. Until recently, most attention focused on crossings across the Strait of Gibraltar from North Africa. In the year 2006 there was a significant shift in attention to boat migration from West Africa to the Canary Islands as a result of the unprecedented arrival, throughout the year, of over 30,000 migrants aboard small boats.

Although boat migrants had earlier arrived to the archipelago from North Africa, this peak in arrivals coincided with the emergence of a new, remarkably long route from West African shores. The characteristic vessel used by migrants to cover this route is the traditional West African pirogue, a long, wooden fishing boat decorated with vivid colours. Throughout this thesis, I use the expression "pirogue migration" as a simplified term for unauthorised migration aboard small boats from West Africa to the Canary Islands. I moreover speak of "pirogue migrants" and "pirogue returnees" to refer, respectively, to migrants who attempt pirogue migration and those who, for a variety of reasons, return to their countries of origin after the attempt.

Focus on Senegal

In order to explore attitudes to risk-taking among aspiring pirogue migrants I have carried out three months of fieldwork in Senegal. Senegal was considered an appropriate location for fieldwork for two main reasons. First, almost half of the migrants who arrived to the Canary Islands in 2006 were Senegalese nationals (Godenau and Zapata Hernandez *forthcoming*). Second, Senegal was the country of departure to the Canaries for undocumented migrants of other nationalities (Africa Research Bulletin 2006). In consequence, Senegal represented an appropriate location to meet suitable informants with different attitudes to pirogue migration, including aspiring pirogue migrants, pirogue returnees, and other aspiring migrants who want to migrate by other means than pirogue migration.

Relevance to Peace and Conflict studies

There are at least three aspects of the dynamics of pirogue migration that make it relevant to the field of peace and conflict studies. First, it represents a *locus of convergence of human and state security*. Irregular migration to Europe is increasingly framed as a security problem for receiving states concerned with preserving their territorial integrity and socio-cultural order (Huysmans 2006; Koser 2005; Lohrmann 2000). At the same time, restrictive approaches to

the control of unauthorised migration may undermine the safety of individual migrants willing to take greater risks to escape situations of socioeconomic stagnation. Proper management of unauthorised migration therefore requires strategies that successfully reconcile state and human security (Grant 2005; Koser 2005; Lohrmann 2000).

Second, pirogue migration is also *related to positive peace and structural violence*. A state of positive peace requires the absence of both overt and structural violence (Barash and Webel 2002). "Structural violence" refers to the violence built into societal structures and which "shows up as unequal power and consequently as unequal life chances" (Galtung 1969:171). Unauthorised migration in general and pirogue migration in particular are symptomatic of the unequal distribution of wealth and opportunities created by the chasm dividing rich and poor, both in migrants' home societies and globally. These divisions may lead to political unrest and addressing the root causes of pirogue migration is therefore critical to preventing greater tragedies (Sandell 2005).

Third, pirogue migration has *repercussions for diplomatic relationships between origin, transit, and destination countries*, in this case between Spain and the European Union (EU) on the one hand and North and West African countries on the other hand (Lohrmann 2000). Diplomatic relations between the two have been enhanced as a result of the EU's interest in managing the flow of irregular migrants to its coasts, including the tendency to "externalise" migration control beyond Europe's borders (Betts and Milner 2006; SIDINT 2006). The nature of these nascent relationships will determine whether they serve to foster cooperation geared to promote positive peace and development in countries of origin or simply to serve Europe's interests.

Structure of the thesis

Following the introduction and methodology chapters, the three research questions of this thesis are addressed in the remaining four chapters. Chapter 3 analyses the emergence of the pirogue route in relation to European migration policy and other flows of unauthorised migration from Africa to Spain, and the repercussion of this new route on migrant dynamics to the Canary Islands. Chapter 4 and 5 explore attitudes to risk-taking in unauthorised migration addressing contextual and psychological aspects of risk perception, respectively. The analysis in these and part of Chapter 6 seeks to establish how awareness of the risks of death and return affect high-risk migration decisions. Lastly, Chapter 6 draws upon the analysis of previous chapters to assess attitudes to border control measures and provide a policy-oriented discussion of the potential of restrictive migration control measures to diminish the number of pirogue migration attempts.

II. Methodology

Throughout this thesis project, I have followed a qualitative approach in order to understand the development of unauthorised migration channels and the risk perceptions and decisions of migrants who follow them. Qualitative methods such as semi-structured interviews provide a useful medium for exploring individual perceptions and were therefore considered appropriate for exploring opinions on pirogue migration. In this chapter, I first describe how I have designed and carried out this project, then move on to address methodological issues of fieldwork and finally discuss some aspects of the analysis and writing processes.

Research design

The process of data collection for this thesis project has been based on two periods of fieldwork and the review of media reports related to pirogue migration. Understanding the development and dynamics of the pirogue route to the Canary Islands has also required the analysis of literature – including policy documents, NGO reports, and academic writing – on Spanish and EU policy and practice regarding irregular migration from North- and West-African coasts to Spanish territories in recent years.

Media review

Media reports provide access to the observable evolution of unauthorised migration aboard small boats from North and West Africa to the Canary Islands. Journalistic coverage allows to trace the historical trend in public awareness of, and institutional responses to, this irregular migration route. The analysis of the development of the pirogue route that is presented in Chapter 3 is therefore based on news coverage, mostly through the Spanish newspaper *El País*, and complemented with information from policy documents and interview material.

News articles from Senegalese, Spanish and international sources covering news related to irregular migration between West Africa and the Canary Islands from 1994 to today have been systematically gathered in a database system using the Microsoft Access software. The keyword-organized record of media reports was used to simplify access to documented irregular migration events and analyses in the media.

Fieldwork design

The fieldwork component of the thesis project served to gain first-hand impressions of attitudes to risk-taking in the context of irregular migration and was undertaken in the Dakar region in Senegal. During the preparatory phase of the project, before the first fieldwork period, I did background research, collected media reports on the topic and on the basis of this information, planned a preliminary strategy for fieldwork. During the first fieldwork period, in September 2007, I was based in central Dakar and focused on gaining first impressions on the local realities of irregular migration, finding a suitable field site for the second fieldwork period, initiating a network of informants, and conducting preliminary interviews. I also gathered information about actions being undertaken to tackle this "new" migration, visited the National Archives for an overview of old media reports on the topic, and attended an introductory Wolof language course.

Following my first fieldtrip I spent two months outside the field, when I transcribed the four pilot interviews and reflected on my initial impressions. In addition, this two-month hiatus allowed for further research on background and theoretical perspectives that would provide a relevant framework to analyse the themes arising through fieldwork. The opportunity to reflect on my initial fieldwork findings and contrast these findings with a more focused theoretical perspective allowed me to evaluate and re-design my fieldwork approach and interview guide. I then returned to Senegal for another two months of fieldwork in December 2007 and January 2008. At this time I was hosted by a local family in a medium-size coastal community within the Dakar region, referred to in this thesis under the fictitious name of Ndiarène. This was my main field site for the overall fieldwork.

This organisation of time the fieldwork time proved very useful to me as a novice researcher. While qualitative research is a continuous learning process, the possibility to go back for a second, longer fieldwork period after evaluating the first and beginning to theorise fieldwork impressions allowed me to learn much from my own experience. At the time of the second part of my fieldwork, I was more confident and had a better sense of how to go about finding informants, building rapport, and developing an appropriate interview technique for appreciating informants' perceptions of risk in relation to high-risk migration.

Data-collection during fieldwork

During fieldwork, I conducted semi-structured interviews and wrote field notes on observations and conversations with informants. Qualitative interviews and participant observation are the main research tools in qualitative fieldwork. Each can provide access to information on the topic of study that the other would not. For example, in an informal conversation about irregular migration, Senegalese youth might discuss the issue differently, or they might

choose not to address certain aspects of the topic during a formal, recorded interview with a researcher.

I used an interview guide (see Appendix 1) to direct the dynamics of interviews and ensure a relative homogeneity in their content. The preliminary interviews and field observations from my first field trip served to revise the initial interview guide. The semi-structured nature of interviews allowed informants to take an important role in determining what topics to emphasise. I believe this also made them more comfortable to reflect upon, and share, their opinions. The duration of the interviews ranged from one to three and a half hours. Altogether, I conducted a total of 40 interviews with 31 informants, amounting to a total 89.5 hours of interview time.

Observation during fieldwork contributed to my understanding of local dynamics in relation to migration in general and pirogue migration in particular. Ideally, being a *participant* observer would have given me access to richer data. Participant observation, Russell Bernard (2006:344) explains, is not so much a method as a strategy for improved data collection during fieldwork, which includes staying in a community, experiencing the lives of the people you study, learning their language, establishing rapport, and being able to act in such a way that your presence does not disturb "business as usual." Being a participant observer and taking part in daily conversations and interactions without my presence being a significantly influential factor would have given me access to information presented in a different way than in an interview. Although I was hosted by a local family in my interviewees' community and took part in daily life, my fieldwork was too short to allow my presence to become unnoticeable. This was also made especially difficult by the community's relatively large size and my being the only *tubaab* (white person) there for most of my stay. An additional major barrier to participant observation was my lack of proficiency in the local language, Wolof. This is discussed later in this chapter.

While not a participant observer *per se*, I was able to spend much valuable time with community members while taking part in daily activities. Given the ubiquity of my research topic throughout contemporary Senegalese society, virtually anyone had something to comment on pirogue migration. At the time of my fieldwork, roughly one and a half years after the burst in popularity of the phenomenon, the topic continued to capture many a headline and to absorb the ambitions and teatime conversations of Senegalese youth. As a result, it was natural for people to share with me their opinion, a matter-of-fact explanation of the issue, or the story of one's own or an acquaintance's attempt. People's openness about the topic allowed me to gain an understanding of the social importance of migration in general and pirogue migration in particular. It allowed me to become familiarised with the opinions of aspiring migrants as well as other young men, their parents, relatives, friends, or girlfriends,

and therefore to gain rich insights into the lifestyle and preoccupations of young men, and the importance of societal values and family dynamics in the decision to emigrate.

Understanding the dynamics of irregular boat migration from Senegal involves empirical observation beyond the local. Few, if any, sites remain sealed off from the outer world, which, as cultural anthropologists have established, requires that we appreciate the influence of the global in understanding the local (cf. Marcus 1995; Metcalf 2001). In the case of Senegalese would-be migrants, aspirations are conditioned by transnational connections between Senegal and countries of the West as much as by local realities. Emigrant success stories, immigration policies in destination countries, international information campaigns aimed at dissuading irregular migration, emigration-related blogs and the images of "the West" portrayed by satellite TV channels are elements that influence individuals' expectations of emigration and thus their motivation to emigrate. Observing some of these trends from within as well as outside Senegal, for example through the media database, was helpful in making sense of emigration at the local level.

In addition to interviews and observation among informants, I benefitted from interaction with local researchers, representatives from civil society groups, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the Red Cross, and Spanish authorities, who were able to inform me of the nature of some of the collaborative work being done in relation to pirogue migration.

Interviewee demographics: selection criteria, representativity and variation

Young men, generally between the ages of 20 and 35, were selected as the target interviewee population. The decision to focus on young men was made on the basis of their overwhelming predominance among pirogue migrants arriving on the Canary Islands (Mbow and Tamba 2007). This is not surprising given that, within Senegalese society, it is traditionally men who take on the role of migrating (Kaplan Marcusán 2005). Interviewees belonged to one of three broad groups corresponding to their view on pirogue migration at the time of the interview. *Aspiring pirogue migrants* consider pirogue migration as an option but have not yet attempted the journey. *Pirogue returnees* have attempted the journey and returned to Senegal following apprehension by patrols, technical problems or storms at sea, or repatriation. *Aspiring migrants* want to migrate through means other than pirogue migration.

Heterogeneity in the informant sample was sought on the basis of attitude to pirogue migration, profession, language, and area of residence within Ndiarène.[3] This provided a varied sample of interviewees, listed in Appendix 2. My informant sample is illustrative of, but does not aspire to represent, the overall population of pirogue migrants. This is due both

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[3] With a few exceptions, all of my interviewees are inhabitants of Ndiarène.

to the sample's limited size and informants' originating in a coastal community. Ndiarène is located along the coast in the Cap-Vert peninsula and its population is predominantly Lébou, who are traditionally fishermen. Most of my informants held Lébou identity as an important element when it came to evaluating the risk of pirogue migration, whether or not they themselves were fishermen. The mere fact of being Lébou seemed to create, for many, a favourable view of one's capacity to undergo pirogue migration, in opposition to non-Lébou migrants. The peculiarity of the Lébou relationship to the sea means that fieldwork in a different location within Senegal would probably have led to variations in the findings.

Accessing the field

Being based in the home community of the majority of my interviewees and integrating into community life was key to gaining a better understanding of the relevance of irregular migration in young men's daily lives and aspirations. In addition, it facilitated the task of finding interviewees and building rapport with them. The strategies, or "entry points" one uses for accessing the field and crafting an informant network influence how the researcher is subsequently perceived by informants and must therefore be given thorough consideration beforehand. Anthropologist Russell Bernard bluntly advises the novice researcher: "Don't try to wing it, unless you absolutely have to. There is nothing to be said for 'getting it on your own.' Use personal contacts to help you make your entry into a field site" (1988:161). Others advice caution in relating to personal contacts and gatekeepers as a way of entering the field, as, depending on their status within the community, relating to them may be facilitative but also obstructive (Walsh 1998). As an outsider, one is often ignorant of how others view the contact person or gatekeeper, and therefore how this might affect access to informants.

Balancing the benefits of "exploiting" existing entry points with developing a relatively diverse informant network was an important part of the learning process during my fieldwork. Some of the first informants I had access to during my first fieldtrip I met through organisations such as the Red Cross and the IOM. During my second fieldtrip and main part of my fieldwork, I first began to meet informants through the contacts I had established earlier, including my host family. These initial informants in turn put me in touch with other relevant acquaintances, helping to the development of an informant network. This approach to finding informants is known as "snowballing" (LeCompte and Schensul 1999:55).

Relying only on two entry points would have been detrimental to the heterogeneity of my pool of informants, not least because of the implications of being associated with gatekeepers. I therefore sought to find additional informants, independently of existing networks. Finding new informants was fairly uncomplicated, given the popularity of my topic among young

Senegalese men, and the overwhelming simplicity of approaching them. At the end of my fieldwork, my 31 interviewees could be grouped in eight unrelated clusters.

Researcher positionality and establishing rapport

The researcher's identity, behaviour, and attitude to local norms and informants affect how people perceive him or her and whether or not they choose to be cooperative towards his or her research. It therefore affects rapport-building, the process of "developing good personal relationships with people in the research setting that facilitate access to activities and information necessary for conducting the study" (Schensul *et al.* 1999:74). One's previous experience and academic background also affect how we relate to our research and analyse the information obtained. Reflecting upon the effect of our identity and previous knowledge on the overall research process is necessary to attain a critical relationship to our own research outcomes (Etherington 2004). My analytical approach to the topic of pirogue migration is influenced by my academic background in social anthropology and development studies, my current studies in the field of peace and conflict research, my supervisor's disciplinary affiliation in human geography, and finally the field of migration studies to which the topic of unauthorised migration belongs. The aspects of my personal identity that most affected my interaction with informants were my being a *tubaab*, specifically Spanish, and a young, unaccompanied female.

Being an outsider has both advantages and disadvantages for fieldwork (Smyth 2005). First of all, it might help the researcher get in touch with the community if people express curiosity towards foreigners. Being the only *tubaab* in Ndiarène, people were eager to invite me in for tea and chatting, which was very helpful in order to integrate in the community and meet prospective informants. In addition, while cultural nuances might escape the foreign researcher, that very foreignness justifies curiosity. As Axel Borchgrevink (2003:108) states, it is often argued that "it is easier to do fieldwork in foreign places, as the very foreignness facilitates the questioning of what local people take for granted." I often perceived an eagerness in informants to explain certain aspects of local circumstances or beliefs that I doubt they would have so emphasised if I had been Senegalese.

My foreignness also affected what information interviewees chose to share with me and how they chose to present it. In some cases, being an outsider seemed to give informants a freedom to talk about their experience with irregular emigration. Some of my informants said that they had never told their story as extensively to anyone as they did to me. One of them explained that the fact that I was an outsider made a big difference: if he told a friend or relative what he had lived through, his story could start circulating around the community, which he did not want. Other informants, however, suggested they could *not* say certain

things to me. Although it was not always clear whether the obstacle was my foreignness, my gender, or simply the fact that I was a stranger, I sometimes felt that my informants considered that, as a foreigner, I would not understand certain things. On the topic of spiritual protection, for example, my curiosity was at times dismissed with an "it's just an African thing," implying that the cultural distance would prevent me from fully understanding its significance. Other times, my gender was the barrier to communication. Idrissa (37), for example, explained, "You are a woman. Well, there are things, that, me, as a man, I hide from women. Like the fact of not being married yet. That's hard. Without having children. It's hard." As I later discuss, notions of manhood and pride are in some cases closely related to the decision to undertake pirogue migration. It could therefore be the case that some interviewees felt uncomfortable sharing difficulties that led them to undertake pirogue migration or discussing their attitude to the risks of this option. This might have been equally important irrespective of my gender, but in the case of some, as Idrissa, it was obvious that my femininity limited how much he was willing to say to me on this topic.

For the outsider researcher, it is crucial to present oneself and one's purpose in a clear and open way that dissipates suspicion and promotes trusting and cooperative relationships with informants (Smyth 2005). As David Walsh (1998:225) warns, if the people under study "know nothing about research, they are likely to be suspicious and wonder if the researcher is acting as some kind of agent or spy for an outsider body." Being Spanish, I was often asked whether I was working for my government in relation to the issue of irregular immigration, and one informant went as far as to suggest I might be a government spy. People's initial suspicion did not entirely surprise me since pirogue migrants who arrived to the Canary Islands were interviewed by authorities in order to collect information to dismantle organisation at the origin (Frontex 2007). I generally made sure to avoid confusion by quickly introducing myself as a student doing research for my MA thesis, showed pamphlets of the research institute where I am based and explained where I study. Most people, I believe, understood my intentions, although some inquired more thoroughly than others about the motivations and aims of my project. A few people rejected, more or less openly, the suggestion to be interviewed, although I cannot be sure what the reasons were.

In general, however, it was fairly uncomplicated for me to get in touch with young Senegalese men eager to migrate to Europe. More often than not, it was young men who addressed me first, inquiring about my "holiday" and, rather regularly, whether I was married – a question generally followed by a statement of their interest in having a *tubaab* wife.[4]

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[4] Marrying a European is in fact the simplest strategy to emigrate. The procedure for getting a visa once married is relatively simple, and does away with the complexities of finding a contract. Of course, some might want to marry a *tubaab* out of personal preference, and not migratory motivations.

While young men's interest in approaching me was helpful to get to know prospective informants, it also meant I had to be very clear in explaining the objectives of my visit, so they would not be mistaken about the possibilities of interacting with me. Most people understood my purpose and gave up courtship jokes. It might still have been the case, however, that some informants chose to relate to me and help my fieldwork in the hope that I could help them migrate to Europe.

Awareness of how casual daily behaviour affects a researcher's ability to build positive relations with prospective informants is what Walsh (1998) describes as "impression management." I had my first lesson on what aspects of my behaviour could influence how people perceived me, and if they chose to accept my presence, at the beginning of my second fieldtrip. In Ndiarène, I went to visit a group of young men whom I had met during my visits to the town at the time of my first fieldtrip. The men usually congregate in the same place chatting, drinking tea, playing scrabble or watching TV. For a few hours, I sat with them, joined their conversation, and shared their tea and lunch. After I had explained that I wanted to have the opportunity of both meeting them as a group and having more formal (recorded) individual interviews, one of them, Assane, who had not yet spoken and whom I did not remember from my former visits, said to me:

> You know, I met you when you came here last time but I did not talk to you. Today I have not talked to you either, because I wanted to watch you and see what kind of person you are. Now I see that you have come back, you have drunk our *attaaya,*[5] and you have eaten our *ceebujën,*[6] so I am thinking that you are a nice girl, and we should help you with your thesis. I want you to interview me so that I can explain to you what I know about irregular migration.

I was both pleased and surprised by these remarks. After a pleasant but also slightly intimidating afternoon (I was full of insecurities at the time), it turned out that I had unknowingly made some important steps in gaining access and trust through conveniently simple and thoroughly enjoyable actions – drinking *attaaya* and eating *ceebujën*. As Assane's words show, it was also important that I had returned for a second visit, as promised.

During my fieldwork, however, I came to understand that gaining my informants' trust was not a simple, linear process. Instead, it seemed trust developed in waves: some people who had showed an initial understanding of my intentions and expressed their willingness to contribute to my fieldwork later came back to questions about my motives and the use I would make of the information gathered. I thought it natural that after some time they had reconsidered what they knew about me and whether they wanted to trust me. I again explained my motives, intentions, and aims, and was able to reassure them. It is possible,

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[5] Wolof term for the local tea that people consume all day long, in groups, while conversing.
[6] Wolof term for the traditional dish consisting mainly of rice and fish, consumed almost daily in coastal areas.

however, that others who did not voice their concerns directly to me remained worried about such issues, and perhaps as a result decided not to participate in my project. Reflecting about the dynamics of trust between researcher and researched made me more aware about my informants' concerns and how my behaviour could contribute to addressing them effectively.

Language as a barrier to observation

Language limitations represent an important obstacle to observation and interviewing. The disadvantages of lacking proficiency in the language of the community to be studied are, however, surprisingly overlooked in methodological discussions of fieldwork (Borchgrevink 2003). In Senegal, French is the official language, used in the administration, education, and all formal forms of written communication. Wolof is the most widely spoken in the country, even though the Wolof ethnic group only represents about half of the total population. In coastal communities in the Cap-Vert peninsula, such as Ndiarène, the Lébou, closely related to the Wolof, predominate, and they speak a variation of Wolof. When I first arrived to Ndiarène at the time of my second field trip, I was fluent in French, but knew little more than a few basic words and expressions in Wolof. Given the fact that many people in Ndiarène, especially men, had a fairly good command of French, I was able to communicate directly with most of my informants without intermediaries and to conduct most interviews on my own. I gradually learnt some more Wolof, which allowed me to hold basic conversations with informants who did not speak French. In addition to the usefulness of being able to interact directly with all informants, my efforts to learn the local language were generally appreciated and probably facilitated rapport-building.

The main advantage of being proficient in the language of informants is not so much the ability to do away with interpreters as it is the possibility of understanding what people say *to each other* (Borchgrevink 2003:107). Although my basic knowledge of Wolof was helpful in establishing relationships with people and interacting in group settings, my lack of proficiency in the language prevented me from truly observing social interaction. Indeed, I was excluded from understanding conversations where it seemed inappropriate to ask for translations of the contents, for example arguments between a young man and an older relative. This was unfortunate when I could sense that the topic of the discussion was rich in material related to my research interests, such as an elder's complaining about the unemployed young man's inexistent contribution to family expenses. Being fluent in Wolof would have enhanced the quality of my observations, as it would have allowed me to understand such conversations.

Interviewing in a second language and working with an interpreter

Interviewing in a language that is common to both interviewee and interviewer but not a mother tongue for either poses certain challenges to effective communication during interviews. While most of the interviews I conducted in French felt rich in content, I often realised that there were limits to how much, or how well, some of my informants could express their thoughts in French. Some of them said things like: "there are things I cannot explain in French – if only I could explain this to you in Wolof, it would be much easier."

From my side, my command of French, while often better than that of my informants, had limitations that were often obviated during interviews, when I could not understand certain words or expressions. I did not see this as an obstacle. It gave interviewees the opportunity to explain the meaning of expressions and concepts, and I believe it contributed to minimising any discomfort created by the disparity in our educational and socioeconomic backgrounds. Part of my French limitations originated in the fact that some expressions are specific to the local variations of the language. Living in Ndiarène allowed me to balance my language limitations by becoming acquainted with local expressions.

Interviews in French were affected by the limits created by the fact that my informants and I needed to "meet" at a linguistic middle ground that neither of us mastered. Still, I preferred to maximise the number of interviews I conducted on my own, as I believe this allowed for more direct communication. It also simplified interview dynamics, as interviewees could develop a thought for long time intervals without interruption, something that could not be done when working with an interpreter.

In the cases of informants who could not at all, or only very poorly, communicate in French, I engaged an interpreter to conduct interviews in Wolof. The process of finding someone with an excellent command of both Wolof and French, preferably young, and with considerable and flexible time availability was not easy. Besides, once I had found three candidates whose French proficiency I thought appropriate, I was not able to judge their Wolof-French translating abilities. In order to select the best interpreter, each did a recorded "test" interview and the translation was then evaluated by a bilingual student in Dakar.

I learned from this experience that language skills are not the single most important quality for a good interpreter. The main challenge I encountered in finding an interpreter was making clear the importance of nuances and the limits to personal interference. The interpreter I finally hired was the most rigorous about not including additional explanations or personal opinions while translating. This might have been related to the fact that she was also the candidate with most distance to the topic.

In order to ensure the accuracy of translations, my interpreter and I jointly transcribed the interviews in Wolof. This allowed the interpreter to "rescue" the information that had,

inevitably, escaped her during the interviews, and gave her the opportunity to reconsider initial translations. Joint transcription additionally made it possible to discuss the cultural meaning of some expressions that did not make much sense when translated literally. This learning process allowed me to better understand my informants' accounts during interviews in French.

Another important consideration of working with an interpreter is how *their* identity may affect the access to informants and information. Mame Arame Ndoye, my interpreter, was at once an insider and an outsider in relation to the group under study: On the one hand, she was Senegalese, and therefore shared a cultural repertoire with informants. On the other hand, she was a young female student, neither a native nor an inhabitant of Ndiarène, and with little prior knowledge of irregular migration or fishing, all of which made her an outsider to my informants. Her insider position might have made interviewees more comfortable talking about certain topics they may have otherwise considered I would not understand. This was at times stressed by interviewees with comments such as "you will understand this, explain this to María." At the same time, their perception of Mame Arame as an insider could have been a disadvantage if this meant interviewees gave up explaining something themselves because they assumed she would. Her gender and social status, I believe, were of little influence to the interview dynamics, since both of us are female and students. Overall, she was rigorous but also able to interact with interviewees comfortably. I was reassured when, at the end of her test interview, the interviewee thanked her for her help, then turned to me and said: "María, next time you come visit you have to bring Mame Arame with you!"

The power dynamics of knowledge production

Knowledge production in the research setting is mediated by the power dynamics inherent to the process of researching and writing about others. The research process is, however, determined by the quality of the collaboration between researcher and informant (Thapar-Björkert and Henry 2004). Undoubtedly the researcher is in a position to decide what he or she wants to learn about and how the information gathered is used. Still, informants largely determine the process of data collection by deciding whether to participate in the research process, what information to share, and how to present it. They might have specific ideas of, for example, how they wish to portray themselves and the issue to the researcher, and the "outer world" to which the researcher connects, and what they presume the researcher wants to hear.

As I have commented on throughout this chapter, individuals decided whether to contribute to my research on the basis of the information they had on my project. Some openly declined the suggestion to be interviewed. Others agreed, but failed to meet up on

repeated occasions, which, aside from practical reasons, I took to signal their reticence to speak to me about the topic. In many other cases, however, people who had heard of me and my project approached me of their own initiative. In addition, the semi-structured nature of interviews also allowed interviewees to determine what they talked about and what they omitted. While I focused on covering a number of core issues, it was up to the interviewee to determine whether or not they felt like talking about a specific topic, and to include additional ones which they considered of relevance to my understanding of pirogue migration.

The ethics of asymmetric fieldwork relationships

Even though the research process is a collaborative one, relationships between researcher and informants are marked by power asymmetries. During my fieldwork, it was clear that many people, informants and others, saw me as having something to offer them by virtue of my nationality, which implies a certain socioeconomic position. This meant I had to be careful to continuously manage perceptions about my presumed access to resources (cf. Smyth 2005). This was especially sensitive with regards to helping people migrate. On one occasion, my "host grandmother" told me a number of people had been coming to see her because they heard a certain Spaniard staying at her house had come to recruit young men to work in Spain. In spite of my efforts to be very explicit about the aims of my project and my inability to assist people to emigrate, it was impossible for me to reach everyone and control rumours about my intentions. In addition, even though I emphasised to my informants that I could not help them migrate, some might have maintained a hope that if the relationship developed, my "ability" might change in the future. This hope was mostly expressed by some of my informants' families, who often insisted they expected me to help their son migrate to Europe. It was challenging to always give a proper explanation of the intricacies of the migration process during brief encounters with family members, and I therefore sometimes felt it more appropriate to give a vague reply and take up the issue seriously with my informant. Dealing with perceptions of my socioeconomic power and ability to assist people to migrate was complicated and overwhelming. While challenging, finding the balance between the ethical and the appropriate is, however, an essential part of ensuring that the relationship between researcher and researched is a fair one, based on realistic expectations.

Researching risk-taking in the context of irregular migration

Researching risk-taking among potential pirogue migrants required talking about "risk." Although I initially asked my informants what they thought the *dangers* or *challenges* of this kind of migration were in order to avoid imposing the risk label, I soon realised that speaking of pirogue migration in terms of "risks" was common in Senegal. In some cases, however, my

interlocutors and I attributed different connotations to the notion of risk. Most of my informants associated risk with physical harm, so they were surprised when I asked whether they considered apprehension or repatriation as one of the risks of migrating by pirogue. Still, it is possible to speak of what they considered the unwanted consequences of pirogue migration as risk in the sense of "a compound measure of the probability and magnitude of adverse effect" (Lowrance 1980:6). The usefulness of this definition to addressing risk assessments among aspiring migrants is further discussed in Chapter 3.

Asking about risk-taking

Inquiring about people's attitude to risk in the context of pirogue migration was challenging in terms of finding appropriate ways to frame my questions. This was first of all important so that my informants would not feel that I was questioning their good judgment. While most informants understood my interest in such questions, a few became slightly uncomfortable or defensive. Whether or not this discomfort made them reticent to explain their decision-making process, noticing it helped me put additional focus into finding more appropriate ways of approaching questions about risk judgements. Secondly, it was necessary for me to present my questions in such a way that those among my informants who had attempted the journey spoke of their attitude to pirogue migration from a retrospective standpoint, that is, of their opinions *before* going. For them, the memory of risk perceptions and judgements prior to the journey may have been "distorted" by the actual experience. Knowing how undergoing the journey affects attitudes to pirogue migration requires contrasting views prior to and after the journey. When interviewees were able to disengage expectations and experience, the interview material gained additional richness.

The contextualization of high-risk migration is complex and in the case of my fieldwork required paying attention to a multiplicity of themes: living conditions at home, family relationships and responsibilities, societal ideas about emigrating (and staying), ideas of the European reward, former encounters with risk, and religious meanings of sacrifice and death. In developing an appropriate interview strategy for understanding attitudes to risk-taking in the context of migration, I had planned to include questions about the interviewee's background. Still, I was often surprised by the extent to which my informants emphasised topics not directly related to pirogue migration. Although I first mistook this as digressions, I soon began to recognise the presence of very significant information about the role of social relations and expectations in the decision to undertake high-risk migration. Understanding the importance of those "digressions" helped me analyse their meaning afterwards.

Listening to stories of perilous migration attempts

Stories of irregular migration, especially under dangerous conditions, are often dramatic. During interviews, some of my informants became emotional while recounting their attempt to reach the Canary Islands by pirogue, commented on the difficulty to go through those memories or recalled the difficult period after coming back. I did my best to empathise with, and acknowledge, the difficulties the person had lived, and to be a good listener. In many cases my informants were thankful that I listened to their story, and some explained that telling it "helped their memory." While I was glad that my interviewees could find comfort in sharing their stories, I also worried about ensuring a balance between being a caring listener and a researcher. My concern was that my informants would come to identify me as someone they could talk to about this difficult experience, and that I would not be able to fulfil their expectations if they needed me to fill the role of a listener later on.

Analysis and writing

Field notes and interviews were transcribed and then coded using the software NVivo. Coding facilitates the analysis process, as text fragments are categorised under multiple keywords, or "nodes," that capture analytically useful concepts. Nodes can be "free" or be part of a hierarchy, or "tree," of nodes. Conducting queries with different combinations of nodes allows for a complex analysis of the material, bringing the latter into perspective and helping to discover existing connections. The nodes I have used for coding are listed in Appendix 3.

Researching and writing about unauthorised migration is sensitive. Sensitive research has been defined by Sieber and Stanley as that where "there are potential consequences or implications, either directly for the participants in the research or for the class of individuals represented in the research" (as cited in Lee 1993:3). Writing about irregular migration and the efforts people make to circumvent border controls requires considering the potential ethical implications of the knowledge produced. This means assessing and, if necessary, limiting the extent to which it could pose a detriment to the collective or personal interests of informants. I believe none of the information presented in this thesis could compromise their common aim to migrate to Europe by contributing to making migration channels more difficult. In order to protect the personal privacy of my informants, I have taken care to anonymise their identities and the location of my fieldwork by using pseudonyms for both.

III. The emergence of the pirogue route

This chapter provides an overview of the development of the unauthorised migration flow from West Africa to the Canary Islands aboard pirogues. Given the relationship between measures aimed at curbing irregular migration flows and the emergence of new smuggling strategies, the evolution of the pirogue route must be understood in the wider context of European efforts to control irregular migration from Africa. These are, in turn, closely related to the trend whereby migration policy is increasingly framed as a security problem. After setting the migration policy context in which pirogue migration has emerged, the chapter discusses how the existence of this route has affected the demographics of boat migration to the Canary Islands, including the reasons why some migrants have chosen to follow this specific route. General motivations to emigrate are discussed in the next chapter.

The migrant threat and the securitisation of migration in Europe

Spanish immigration policy and border control measures are integrated in a European-wide trend where the issue of migration is increasingly problematised as a security concern. Throughout the 1980s, immigration increasingly became presented as dangerous to the public order and the domestic stability of society (Huysmans 2000). The re-framing of migration as a security concern coincided with the end of the Cold War, the growth in transnational flows and, in Europe, the development of the European Union and the Schengen Area. These transformations have importantly affected socio-economic and political orders across the globe, provoking the emergence, in Western societies, of important questions and anxieties relating to issues of identity, security and wellbeing (Ceyhan and Tsoukala 2002:21). As a result, over the past two decades migration in Europe has gone from provoking a general unease to evoking a feeling of "existential threat," that is, it has been "securitised" (Huysmans 2000, 2006). "Securitisation" refers to the process of re-defining an issue "as an existential threat, requiring emergency measures and justifying actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure." (Buzan *et al.* 1998:23-24). Given that the issue in question may not necessarily be a "real" threat, it has been argued that securitisation is led by the interests of a growing transnational network of security providers whose influence goes hand in hand with securitisation (Bigo 2002).

The securitisation of migration does not represent a natural reaction to a real threat but rather a politicised social construction. In Europe, the securitisation of migration has been

closely related to the European integration process, which has affected how migration is approached in common policies regarding third country nationals and cross-border mobility, and the perception of immigration as a security concern at the level of individual countries. Overall, migration to Europe is increasingly identified as threatening on three levels: internal security, societal security, and state sovereignty and security. These are discussed in turn.

The creation of an "area of freedom" among Schengen countries provoked the fear that *internal security* would be undermined as the abolition of internal borders could facilitate the movement and activities of asylum-seekers and immigrants as well as terrorists and other criminal organisations. The joint discussion of crime and irregular migration over the preservation of internal security has created an implicit connection between the two. This association has been more or less explicitly reasserted in EU agreements and treaties since the Single European Act of 1986 (Koslowski 2001). Developments in the establishment of the single market area have therefore required the reinforcement and harmonisation of the control of common external borders as a compensatory measure for internal freedom of mobility (Huysmans 2000; van Munster and Sterkx 2006).

The figure of the immigrant has also come to embody a threat to *societal security* in Europe, specifically to cultural identity and the welfare system. Concern over societal security arose as a result of the renewed state-society relations and state boundaries ensuing from the development of a supra-national European entity (Wæver *et al.* 1993). Society's increasing prominence over the state has put issues of identity and migration at the fore of the perceived threats and vulnerabilities that conform Europe's new security problematique (Buzan 1993:5). This development is partly fostered by the EU integration process. References to a homogenous European culture and identity provoke a vision of immigration as an alien intrusion disrupting an otherwise harmonious society (Adamson 2006; Huysmans 2000, 2006; Shore 2000). Immigration is also seen to endanger the welfare system. Migrants, especially undocumented ones, are accused of illegitimately abusing welfare services, appropriating scarce employment opportunities and challenging the functional integrity of host societies by undermining authorities' control of population dynamics (cf. Ceyhan and Tsoukala 2002; Collinson 2000; Huysmans 2006; Tsoukala 2005). These accusations contribute to the depiction of immigration as a threat both nationally and at the EU level.

Lastly, irregular migration is considered to undermine *state sovereignty and security.* The uncontrolled transgression of national borders is considered to challenge states' control over their national boundaries and their regulatory functions over the national population (Adamson 2006; Sassen 2004). Especially after the 9/11 attacks, smuggling routes are increasingly regarded as having the potential to facilitate the entry of terrorists and other criminals, and therefore undermining state security (Koser 2005). In 2002, the Spanish

Interior Ministry released a report where growing crime was attributed mainly to higher rates of illegal immigration (Alscher 2005).

Implications of the securitisation of migration for European migration policy

Reducing migration to a security problem implies a disregard for the many other perspectives – humanitarian, economic, social, cultural, political – from which it could be understood (Ceyhan and Tsoukala 2002; Huysmans 2006; Lohrmann 2000; van Munster and Sterkx 2006). It moreover leads to securitised migration policies with a strong focus on regulatory measures, including reinforced policing at borders and internal controls in host countries (Ceyhan and Tsoukala 2002; Sassen 2004). Such policies are based on the logic that territorial integrity and security can only be protected from the "migration threat" by strengthening border controls (Koser 2005; Sassen 2004). Given the prominent symbolic position of the border as a marker of national identity and state sovereignty, authority and power, allowing illegal border transgressions to go unheeded would undermine the credibility of the state (Ceyhan and Tsoukala 2002:25; Collinson 2000). The border control measures adopted in relation to the unprecedented arrival of thousands of immigrants to the Canary Islands in 2006 were indeed necessary to address Spanish citizens' preoccupation with immigration following this sudden inflow of unauthorised migrants (CEAR 2007:35-36). Security-oriented mechanisms of migration control are useful to the extent that they provide immediate responses to regulate otherwise uncontrolled population flows.

EU migration policy has been harshly criticised for its overriding attention to coercive migration control, focusing on managing irregular immigration from Africa by fortifying and militarising the EU-African frontier while largely ignoring the fundamental problems of sending countries (Baldwin-Edwards 2006; Huysmans 2000; de Haas 2006a; Lutterbeck 2006; Sandell 2005). Others, however, have argued that securitisation is far from evident in EU discourse, and that migration is equally represented as a humanitarian issue (Gammeltoft-Hansen 2006:2). The predominant security approach in EU policy is allegedly due to the fact that border control measures are the most "tangible" and therefore the only ones likely to fit the decision-making structure at the European Council of Ministers, where policies must be approved unanimously (Chou 2006). In any case, the fact that large numbers of people are willing to attempt risky unauthorised entries into Europe suggests that the issue is not so much whether or not such flows should be regulated at all, but rather which mechanisms are most appropriate for this task.

The Europeanisation of Spain and migration control

Immigration to Spain has been strongly influenced by the country's gradual Europeanisation. Its transformation into a destination country for migrant workers was a result of the economic boom of the 1980s, partly fostered by the country's inclusion in the European Community (EC). Membership to the Schengen group moreover transformed Spain into African migrants' gate to Europe (Alscher 2005; Andreas 2000; Arango and Martin 2005). Spanish migration policy, especially in regards to irregular migration, has similarly been marked by the country's integration into the European Union and the Schengen Area. Spain's first basic immigration law, the *Ley de Extranjería*, was drafted in 1985 as a mixed result of pressure from EC countries prior to its entry to the Community and Spain's own embracing of its new European identity and the responsibility to control its share of Europe's common external border (Arango 2000; Driessen 1996). Immigration legislation became increasingly sophisticated following Spain's Schengen membership, which required it to adopt a more security-oriented approach, including the harmonisation of visa requirements and border control with those of the other Schengen countries (Bigo 2001). As Henk Driessen (1996:191) argues, "closing off the borders to the south [was] an integral part of Europeanising Spain."

Border control along the Strait of Gibraltar

The cancellation of visa-free travel for Maghreb countries in 1991 marked the beginning of an era of dramatic crossing attempts by undocumented African migrants trying to reach Spain. The most visible and dangerous strategy involved attempting to traverse the very strong currents of the Strait of Gibraltar aboard a *patera,* a small, open fishing boat (Alscher 2005; Driessen 1996). Spain began to control its maritime borders in the mid-1990s in response to pressure from other EU countries concerned by its weak contribution to the protection of the common external border (Cornelius 2004:407). The first major steps involved the deployment of patrols to guard the Strait of Gibraltar, and the construction of border fences surrounding Ceuta and Melilla, the two Spanish enclaves in North Africa. Patrolling is carried out by ships and helicopters supplied with technologically advanced sensing equipment (Andreas 2000:131). Ceuta and Melilla are now surrounded by double fences as high as 6 metres, also equipped with hi-tech detection systems (Alscher 2005:11; Jan and Rodríguez 2005).

In 1999 the Spanish Government announced the establishment of SIVE (*Sistema Integrado de Vigilancia Exterior*), an external surveillance system equipped with long-distance radars, and surveillance and infrared cameras. This system is designed to detect the presence of vessels and coordinate their interception when necessary. SIVE's stated aims are to protect the Spanish and European southern border from drug trafficking and irregular migration, and to provide humanitarian assistance to victims of human smuggling at sea (Guardia Civil nd.).

Its activities began along the Strait of Gibraltar and have gradually extended to cover the Andalusian coast and the easternmost Canary Islands. Spain has also signed agreements with origin and transit countries along smuggling routes in order to facilitate border control and the readmission of apprehended migrants (Carling 2007a).

The southward shift: a route opens to the Canary Islands

The reinforcement of border control along the Strait of Gibraltar led not to the eradication of irregular migration from Africa to Spain, but to a shift in smuggling routes, amongst others towards the Canary Islands. Some of the maritime migration routes to the archipelago are shown in Figure 1 (page ix). The parallel growth in arrivals to the Canaries and lower interception rates along the Strait of Gibraltar and Ceuta and Melilla at the end of the 1990s indicates that increased surveillance along the Strait turned the archipelago into an alternative gateway for migrants headed to the EU (Arteaga 2007; Bekkar-Lacoste and Fall 2006; Carling 2007a; Lutterbeck 2006; van Moppes 2006; Spijkerboer 2007). Figure 2 below shows the progression in unauthorised arrivals aboard small boats to the Canary Islands from 1994 to 2007. Since no single source provides a consistent recount of arrivals throughout this period, statistics have been collected from multiple sources. Given the difference in definitions used by each source, there is often a lack of consistency in statistical time series.

Sources: 1994-1998: Pérez-Llombet 1999 and Cevallos 1999 (El País 02/08/99 and 25/08/99); 1999-2002: Lutterbeck 2006 (Spanish Interior Ministry data); 2003-2006: Carrera 2007 (Government of the Canary Islands data); 2007: Spanish Interior Ministry.
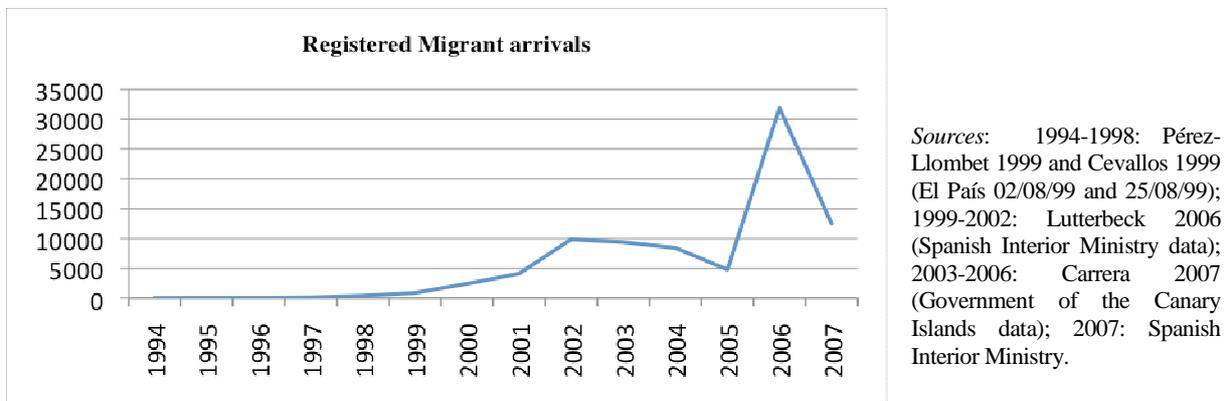
Figure 2. Annual registered migrant arrivals to the Canary Islands, 1994-2007.

The changing number and demographics of unauthorised migrants arriving to the Canary Islands responds to evolving border control activities in the region. From the first *patera* that landed in 1994 until about 1997, few boats arrived, carrying Polisario leaders fleeing the Moroccan authorities. From 1997 onwards, *patera* arrivals increased and passengers were predominantly Moroccans (Carling 2007b). Boats departed from Tarfaya in Morocco and Laayoune in Western Sahara, and navigated to the islands of Fuerteventura and Lanzarote, nearly 100 kilometres away (Cevallos 1999). By 1999, *pateras* were arriving to Fuerteventura

almost daily, and a year later the majority of passengers were of Sub-Saharan origin (Arango and Martin 2005; Carling 2007b). The doubling of arrivals to the Canary Islands from 2001 to 2002 has been attributed to a Moroccan crackdown on migrant smuggling along Morocco's northern coast in 2001 (Cornelius 2004). Lower arrivals during 2004 and 2005 were related to the establishment of a control station on Fuerteventura and the extension of EU maritime border control operation Ulysses to the Western Saharan coast (Sørensen 2006). Some opted for shifting *patera* departures south to Boujdour and Dakhla and avoiding SIVE detection around Fuerteventura by navigating to Gran Canaria (Bárbulo 2005). In 2006, an unprecedented number of unauthorised migrants arrived to the Islands, but now aboard a different type of boat, the pirogue, and to the westernmost islands. A new route had emerged.

The pirogue route

The year 2006 began with an unprecedented level in migrant arrivals to the Canary Islands. From January to March, 2,430 unauthorised boat migrants arrived to the archipelago (Pardellas 2006d). The Islands' migrant-receiving logistics were quickly overwhelmed and a sense of crisis arose among public opinion as well as local and national authorities. It shortly became obvious that this sudden increase in the influx of boat migrants corresponded not to an amplification of the *patera* route from Morocco and Western Sahara but rather to the emergence of a new route: migrants, overwhelmingly of Sub-Saharan origin, arrived on the westernmost islands of the archipelago, and did so aboard a "new" type of vessel, the West-African pirogue, reportedly departing as far South as Mauritania. In early 2006, it was found that pirogues were mainly departing from La Güera, at the southernmost point in Western Sahara, and neighbouring Nouadhibou in Mauritania (Bárbulo 2006b).

The emergence of a new route to the Canary Islands with departures further south along the African coast was likely related to enhanced Spanish-Moroccan cooperation to curb the flow of *pateras* from Western Sahara to the Canary Islands and along the borders to Ceuta and Melilla. In early 2005, Morocco agreed to enforce controls along the Western Saharan coast and later that same year a number of coordinated assaults of the fences of Ceuta and Melilla led to the death of over a dozen migrants and the arrest by Moroccan police of many others, who were subsequently abandoned in the desert without food or water (Carling 2007a; Pardellas 2005; Spijkerboer 2007).

Moroccan authorities' tougher stance towards the predominantly sub-Saharan migrants attempting to reach Spain from Western Sahara and Ceuta and Melilla allegedly led migrants to seek new routes outside of Moroccan-controlled soil (Bárbulo 2006d). Indeed, some of my informants said it was preferable to travel through Mauritania, more accepting of black Africans than other Maghreb countries. Increasing numbers of sub-Saharan migrants gathered

in Mauritania throughout 2005 in the hope to cross to the Canaries. By March 2006, reports warned that thousands of sub-Saharan Africans were waiting in Nouadhibou. From an initial 12,000, government and NGO estimates of the number of migrants waiting to reach the archipelago grew within days to a dramatic half million (Bárbulo 2006d; EFE 2006). Although Spanish authorities dismissed the latter figure as "exaggerated," diplomatic efforts quickly secured Mauritanian cooperation, allowing Spanish patrolling of its coasts before the end of the same month (Cembrero 2006; El País 2006). By March, departure points were reportedly emerging further south, in Senegal (Pardellas 2006a). In the following months departures became increasingly common from St. Louis in the north of the country and as far as the region of Casamance, South of The Gambia (Bárbulo 2006a, c; Rodríguez 2006b; Sauquillo 2006). The emergence of departures this far South has been attributed to tighter patrolling of the Mauritanian coast (Bekkar-Lacoste and Fall 2006).

The connection between the *patera* and pirogue routes was also present in the minds of informants, who often talked about the route as having existed for a decade, alluding to others who had travelled to Spain through Mauritania or Morocco. Idrissa (37), speaking of the origins of the pirogue route, said, "before, people left from Mauritania. They left from Morocco! From Tangier. After that, it came to Nouadhibou. Then, it came all the way to Dakar." Idrissa's words point to the connection between the routes in terms of the effect of enhanced patrolling in the emergence of new departure points to the Canaries. Still, it would be incorrect to say that patrolling simply provoked one single smuggling infrastructure to shift southwards, since the organisation of small boat journeys to the archipelago from North and West Africa does not appear to have been constant. Still, the initial, patrol-induced, southward shift of the *patera* route along the West Saharan coast may have had an important role in awakening the possibility of organising pirogue departures from northern Mauritania.

The explanation provided by my informants about how the route first emerged in Mauritania and gradually shifted south is consistent with this argument. Accounts differ, but the general storyline tells about Senegalese fishermen who during a fishing expedition in Mauritanian waters navigated as far as to notice the glimmer of distant lights, which they attributed to the Spanish archipelago. Using a Global Positioning System (GPS) and coordinates of the itinerary obtained from navigators who cover that route on larger boats, a first expedition set out to explore the itinerary, and succeeded. From there onwards, word of the route, as well as the description of the itinerary, spread among the Senegalese fishing community. While this story is perhaps not an accurate description of the emergence of the pirogue route, it points to the importance of the roles of Senegalese fishermen and the availability of GPS devices to the establishment of the route.

The Mauritanian fishing industry, informants explained, is run by locals but manned by Senegalese fishermen. It is therefore not unlikely that the latter were aware that many compatriots and other sub-Saharan migrants were travelling through Mauritania to reach the coast of Morocco or Western Sahara in order to cross to the Canaries and may have decided to attempt the journey themselves. The decline of the once prosperous Senegalese fishing industry in turn provided numerous other skilled fishermen willing to captain pirogues to the Canaries, allowing the route to develop. Some fishermen did this in exchange of a chance to go to Europe, others seized the opportunity to use their skills towards becoming a *passeur* (crew member of a migrant-smuggling boat), a more lucrative livelihood than fishing (Lafraniere 2008; Ndione and Broekhuis 2006). The influence of Senegalese fishermen in the development of the route continued with their "bringing the business home" to Senegal after Spain's patrolling of the Mauritanian coast made it increasingly difficult to organise departures. It was also they who were identified to have organised the shift in departures to Guinea-Bissau as patrolling along Senegal's coast began (Altozano 2006). The importance of this collective in upholding the route was consistently underlined by informants, who insisted the pirogue flow will not truly cease until fishermen are "grounded" with improved livelihood opportunities in Senegal.

As explained in my informants' accounts of the origins of the pirogue route, the availability of GPS devices and description of the itinerary to the Canaries was also an essential element of the route. While *pateras* reaching the Canaries were only equipped with a handmade compass, all pirogues now had a GPS device, without which they would not have been able to reach the islands (Pardellas 2006c).

New route, new dynamics

Pirogue migration to the Canary Islands was characterised by an unprecedented number of unauthorised migrants arriving through a much longer route than that of *pateras*. A total of 31,863 people reached the Islands in 2006, an extraordinary increase from the 4,790 in 2005 (Carrera 2007). Total *departures,* however, were probably over 40,000, since 3,887 migrants were intercepted near the African coast, numerous others were forced by weather or technical complications to regain the shore before the Canaries, and an unknown number died while attempting the crossing (Frontex 2007). Some estimate the number of migrants who perished during the journey in that year at 6,000 (Gammeltoft-Hansen 2008). The length of the pirogue route ranges from approximately 800 to 2000 kilometres for journeys starting between Nouadhibou, in Mauritania, and Guinea-Bissau. The journey from Dakar is estimated to take seven days, but may become longer as a result of complications.

Given the astonishing length of the pirogue journey in comparison to the 100 kilometre-long *patera* route from southern Morocco and northern Western Sahara, it seems unintuitive that the number of migrants following the pirogue route boosted as it did. The greater length of the itinerary means migrants are exposed to the perils of a sea journey aboard a frail vessel for a longer duration of time. As a result, the pirogue journey to the Canaries is possibly more dangerous than its shorter, *patera* counterpart. The peak in arrivals over the summer months coincided with the shift of departures to Senegal, which, in my informants' words, was when the phenomenon "exploded." This was probably due to the fact that as pirogues began departing from Mauritania and Senegal, they opened a new window of opportunity for thousands of West African youths who had long aspired to emigrate. The high number of migrants who followed the pirogue route after its emergence may be explained by its being perceived as a relatively more accessible option than the *patera* route to the Canary Islands.

Pirogue migration may in fact be perceived as cheaper, faster and safer than other available alternatives. The main options for reaching Europe before the pirogue route appeared involved obtaining a visa through illicit means or travelling to North Africa and then crossing by sea or entering the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla. For sub-Saharans unable to afford the high price of obtaining a visa, either of the other options required crossing the desert, an expensive, and, if by land, long and arduous journey. Pirogue migration may therefore have appealed to many as an easier, more realistic alternative.

Many informants pointed out, to my initial surprise, that the pirogue route is in fact *safer* than other maritime routes linking Africa and Europe by small boats. This makes sense when taking into account not only the sea journey itself, but also the travel to that point. For sub-Saharan migrants it may be relatively safer, and therefore more realistic, to travel to the departure points of pirogues than to follow a trans-Saharan route to North Africa. Crossing the desert is difficult and dangerous. In addition to the inherent hardship of the itinerary, migrants are often forced to choose especially dangerous routes because increased migration control has led border officials and police to impose higher bribes on migrants (de Haas 2006a). Those headed to Western Sahara or Morocco must also travel through the mined and patrolled territory controlled by Polisario near the border between Western Sahara and Mauritania (Ba 2007; van Moppes 2006). Once in Western Sahara, migrants often have to wait for very long periods before embarkation, sleeping in open air or in caves under harsh weather conditions (Pardellas 2006c). Though the accounted-for death toll of pirogue migration is very high, this does not necessarily mean this route is more dangerous than that across the desert. It might simply reflect a heavier flux of migrants or higher media attention.

Pirogue migration is also relatively cheaper for Sub-Saharan migrants than travelling to North Africa by air or paying smugglers to guide one across the desert (Rodríguez 2006a). It

is also faster: while many sub-Saharan migrants spend years making the journey to North Africa, the distance from Mauritania or Senegal to the Canaries can be covered by pirogue in a few days. Some of my informants explained that this was an important difference, either because they could not leave their families unattended for the undetermined duration of a journey across the desert, or because pirogue migration provides a faster return to the migration investment: some migrants who left by pirogue in 2006 have already begun building themselves a house back home.

Overall, the emergence of the pirogue route effectively created a direct link between sub-Saharan Africa and Europe. This opened a new, realistic window of opportunity for thousands of aspiring sub-Saharan migrants.

Controlling the pirogue route

The emergence of the pirogue route provoked a rapid reaction from Spanish authorities, who sought to curb this new migration flow by establishing maritime controls along the West African coastline. By the end of May 2006, Spain had negotiated permission to carry out aerial surveillance of Senegal's coast and signed repatriation deals with Senegal and Guinea-Bissau in return for large aid packages (Agencias 2006; Aizpeolea 2006). Besides ensuring bilateral cooperation, the Spanish government emphasised the "Europeanness" of the problem and requested the involvement of the European border control agency Frontex (Mir 2007). Frontex assistance was materialised through operations Hera I and II, effective during the second half of 2006. Their function was to identify arriving migrants for the purpose of repatriation, and to coordinate patrolling in Cape Verdean, Mauritanian and Senegalese waters (Frontex 2007). By February 2008, the Spanish government had signed accords with Morocco, Mauritania, Senegal, Cape Verde, Gambia, Guinea and Guinea-Bissau that allow for cooperative surveillance of the coasts of these countries. This evolution represents an important step in Europe's growing "externalisation" of its borders through the creation of "buffer zones" that distance border control activities from its own frontiers, in order to decrease migratory pressure on the latter (de Haas 2007). As one French researcher in Dakar put it, Frontex operations "brought Europe's borders to Senegal" (Judah 2007). Frontex patrolling of West Africa's coast is also a clear indication of Europe's growing attention to the region and its security concerns towards the enormous potential for irregular migration flows towards the EU's external borders.

The interaction between efforts to control unauthorised migration from Africa to Europe has led to a continuous re-adaptation of smuggling routes. While the options for migrants and smugglers might not be endless, past developments suggest that border control measures may not be able to effectively contain unauthorised migration (Carling 2007b). As long as

migrants continue to be strongly motivated to circumvent border restrictions in order to migrate to Europe, they might simply be willing to undertake longer routes that expose them to higher risks and greater exploitation by smugglers (Sandell 2005; Spijkerboer 2007).

The risks of pirogue migration

Pirogue migration is a risky undertaking, with two main possible adverse outcomes: death, or return to the point of departure. Less serious outcomes include physical and psychological harm, to which migrants appear to give relatively little importance. It transpired from the explanations given by my informants that whatever hardships they would face throughout the journey they expected they would easily forget about them if able to enter Europe successfully.

Dangers of the pirogue journey and the risk of death

The pirogue journey to the Canary Islands is a dangerous one, where migrants face a high risk of injury or death. The main factors responsible for this high degree of risk are the length and inadequate conditions of the journey, and the isolation in which it takes place. Given the extensive length of the journey, there are high chances of encountering adverse weather conditions and other obstacles related to the itinerary. My informants for example stressed that dangerous storms and extremely high waves form where different currents meet, as between the Canaries and the African coast, which can provoke pirogues to shipwreck. Relatively minor problems such as seasickness, dehydration or hypothermia are also aggravated by the length of the journey and may lead to death.

The pirogue journey is made additionally difficult by the inadequacy of its logistics. Even though, as is described in Chapter 5, trips are thoroughly planned with careful calculations of the necessary provisions for a safe journey, the excessive number of passengers per boat and the inadequacy of pirogues to cover such a long itinerary make the journey especially dangerous. Pirogues measuring approximately 20 metres in length and 3 metres in width often embark close to or even over 100 passengers. The resulting overcrowded and unhygienic conditions, including the presence of dead bodies, can provoke sickness. Overcrowding can also provoke disputes and, according to one interviewee, may drive people to shove others off-board if they are taken for dead while in fact sleeping. Passengers who accidentally fall into the water are not rescued because the delay would provoke the loss of precious time and fuel. The traditional wooden pirogues, while relatively solid, are often too weak to resist strong storms and may catch fire as a result of accidents with oil lamps or portable stoves.

The isolation in which journeys take place further enhances risks. Pirogues are equipped with one or two GPS devices and a compass, but no radio, and only rarely a rough map of the

itinerary. My informants often expressed this isolation with the expression "*la mer n'a pas de branches*" – there are no branches at sea. The impossibility to seek help or refuge when faced with major problems such as GPS failure, engine breakdown or fuel insufficiency makes trips all the more vulnerable. Unless found by fishing or patrol boats, pirogues are left adrift and migrants may die of starvation, dehydration, or after consciously or unconsciously jumping into the ocean.

The significance attributed to the risk of dying throughout the journey is mediated by factors such as the meaning attached to life at home, the symbolic value of sacrifice and religious attitudes to death and destiny. These are discussed in later chapters.

Technical failure, accidents, illness, getting lost at sea, and other adversities are at times attributed to the mystical powers of "sorcerers," "demons," or "vampires" who are said to board pirogues with the deliberate aim of causing suffering and death. Probably as a result of this, suspicion of other passengers is not uncommon. My informants pointed out that the diversity among passengers makes it difficult to be certain of everyone's intentions.

The journey can moreover be psychologically harmful to migrants as a consequence of the overcrowded and isolated conditions of the journey, and of witnessing dramatic episodes such as accidents and the death of fellow passengers. This can lead to death when people jump into the ocean out of delirium or despair. Others are said to "go crazy" as a consequence of the experience. Many of my informants mentioned the psychological duress of the journey and some said they had suffered nightmares after returning.

The risk of return

The second major risk for pirogue migrants is to be returned to their point of departure. This may happen as a result of technical problems forcing them to regain the shore, interception by patrols near the African coast, or repatriation after arrival to the Canary Islands.

Patrolling along the pirogue route developed rapidly from the summer of 2006 onwards. Spain has signed accords allowing it to patrol the territorial waters of all countries along the West African coast between Morocco and Guinea with the aim of intercepting pirogues directed to the Canaries. In 2006 and 2007 Frontex intercepted and diverted 4290 and 8574 migrants near the African coast, respectively (MIR 2008). Migrants who are intercepted may be prosecuted upon return and are liable to fines and prison sentences.

Migrants who successfully land on Spanish shores are also subject to being repatriated. Repatriations from the Canary Islands began in July 2006. 6076 migrants were repatriated in 2006 and repatriations of migrants who attempted to enter Spain at points not habilitated as border crossings increased nationwide in the following year (Frontex 2007:19; MIR 2008).

Return, regardless of the reason behind it, represents the loss of a significant financial investment. This is especially so for migrants with no relationship to the sea, whose families often have to sell property or borrow money in order to afford the price of the journey, up to 800,000 FCFA (1,200€). Fishermen and other migrants from coastal regions are often able to travel for free if they can be part of the crew, or receive discounted prices when they know the organisers. Additionally, return has a psychological dimension. Returnees are not only frustrated and angry but also at times speak of a sense of shame in relation to having failed and having to return home empty-handed.

Assessing the risks of pirogue migration

I have found it useful to examine the decision-making process of aspiring migrants in relation to pirogue migration by analysing their risk assessments using the definition of risk presented by William Lowrance. Lowrance describes risk as "a compound measure of the *probability* and *magnitude* of adverse effect" (Lowrance 1980:6, emphasis added). From this definition, risk assessments would involve consideration of the probability, or likelihood, of possible negative outcomes and the magnitude, or importance, of the occurrence of those outcomes. The main adverse effects of pirogue migration, as described above, are death and return. The decision-making process of aspiring migrants when they contemplate whether or not to undertake pirogue migration can be analysed as involving considerations over the likelihood of dying throughout, or being forced to return during or soon after, the journey, and the importance of these eventualities to the aspiring migrant.

The discussion over the next chapters elucidates on how probable those risks appear to aspiring migrants, and what importance they attribute to them. This is in turn helpful for understanding why and how some aspiring migrants decide to attempt to migrate by pirogue, and more generally how migrants view risk-taking in unauthorised migration.

Dialectical perceptions of insecurity and risk

Throughout 2006, numerous headlines and commentaries mirrored the mixed feelings of fear and pity awoken by pirogue migration among European public opinion and policy makers. Headlines evoking imagery of an assault on Europe by the African destitute included "Waiting for the barbarians," "The D-day package from Senegal to Spain," "Desperate voyage, destination Spain," "Group from Senegal risks all to reach Europe," "When surviving is a tragedy" or "They fear nothing" (Associated Press 2006; Bortin 2006; Chrisafis and Soares 2006; Pardellas 2006b, 2007; Pereda 2006). Such headlines illustrate a sense of dread about an invasion by desperate migrants with nothing to lose. As journalist Christopher Caldwell (2006) put it, images of migrants risking their lives in search of a better life send a

chill down one's spine for a number of reasons: "It is partly that we pity people driven to such lengths by poverty and misery. It is partly that we fear they are in deadly, desperate earnest, and are staking their claim to a continent inhabited by people who are not." Caldwell's portrayal of European attitudes to high-risk migration, if caricaturesque, captures the feeling of insecurity awoken by unauthorised migration.

In instances of visible, dramatic, high-risk unauthorised migration, perceptions of insecurity interact across the migration divide, shaping flows and policies. Irregular migration evokes a sense of threat that has given rise to migration policies dominated by a focus on restrictive control measures. Europe's feeling of insecurity with respect to irregular migration feeds the kind of border control policies that lead migrants determined to enter Europe to follow longer and more dangerous routes. The resolution of migrants who appear either oblivious to the risks involved or, worse, willing to take them, in turn reinforces the perception that Europe must further protect itself from the many who would storm its borders if ever they were left unprotected.

Undocumented migrants, while intent in their purpose, are not necessarily unaware of the kind of security considerations that are triggered by their actions. Some of my informants, migrants and non-migrants, were understanding and supportive of Europe's restrictive response to the pirogue rush in 2006. While finding it unfair at the personal level, they reasoned that Spain had a right and duty to protect its own borders from the uncontrolled arrival of people. They could have criminal intentions or carry diseases, they said, and in any case they represented an unexpected burden on Spanish authorities. A common phrase was "We wouldn't want them to disembark here like that!" Assane thus explained the tension between both sides: "It's not right to go *en masse*, hundreds of people at once. *Every day*. To a country that did not request us. It's not serious, I know that. […] But we no longer have a choice. We don't have a choice. But it is not right. Because over there does not belong to us."

It is necessary to further explore the nature of the mutually reinforcing circles of perceived insecurities that arise in the context of unauthorised migration. A better understanding of their dynamics might improve our understanding of the development of unauthorised migration flows and the effectiveness of the policies designed to address them.

IV. High-risk migration decisions in context

Awareness of a person's life context is essential for understanding their attitude to risk and risk-taking. Life options, specifically the existence of realistic and meaningful opportunities at home, have an important influence on individuals' perception of high-risk migration.

The motivations of pirogue migrants are to a large extent common to those of other West African youths who migrate through other channels. The connection between migration and the search for improved life opportunities in West Africa has been documented by others and only some of its aspects are discussed here (Adepoju 2006; Bjarnesen 2007; van Dijk *et al.* 2001). It is important to underline that socio-economic stagnation, the perception of emigration as the only realistic strategy to move out of poverty, and the limited availability of options to emigrate legally influence attitudes to the risks of pirogue migration, namely death and return. In addition, context-specific attitudes to risk, expectations of manhood, and religious meanings of death contribute to making high-risk migration an acceptable avenue in the minds of many West African youths preoccupied with achieving socio-economic success.

Theoretical approaches to vulnerability and risk-taking

Risk acceptability and risk taking are significantly mediated by socio-economic vulnerability. The latter affects individuals' life options and their hope that these may improve. This relationship has been acknowledged in the risk literature. "Poverty," John Adams (2001:66) argues, "will affect the perception of rewards and dangers and can induce people to take extra risks. There is a steep social-economic class gradient to be found in accident rates, with the poorest experiencing much higher rates than the wealthiest." Adams suggests that economic vulnerability has a direct impact on the way individuals assess the acceptability of certain high-risk activities. This is supported by a recent study on the attitudes to information on work-related environmental health risks among Mexican workers in the US (Vaughan and Dunton 2007). The study found that individuals who perceive themselves to be economically dependent and with limited employment choices tend to minimise the importance of scientific risk information when making risk judgments. Such findings suggest that poverty affects people's willingness to accept higher risk thresholds, that is, to perform certain high-risk activities that wealthier individuals would not undertake.

Higher risk acceptability among the socio-economically vulnerable might reflect a lack of alternatives or the hope that undertaking certain high-risk activities will bring about much sought-after changes. This is especially so when poverty not only provokes a lack of alternatives, but moreover forces people to live with uncertainty and insecurity. If living conditions are considered unendurable, Hayenhjelm (2006:194, 198, emphasis in original) argues, "*refraining from taking any action* is also a kind of risk taking." As a result, it may seem reasonable to undertake a high-risk action "if that action offers a possible way out of the present circumstances." Hayenhjelm's perspective allows for the recognition both of the element of agency in risk-taking decisions among socio-economically vulnerable individuals and the difficulty in divorcing personal from socio-economic possibilities.

Individuals whose life options are significantly restricted by poverty may regard risk-taking from a perspective that maximises potential positive outcomes, instead of considering negative ones. Hahyenhjelm (2006:198) has suggested that when an individual is in an outset situation with no reasonable options, they might embrace an alternative involving risk-taking but containing the possibility of bringing about change "even if the probabilities of that positive outcome are low, and if all other outcomes are very negative and hence there is a huge risk." This is an interesting perspective because the focus on "hope for change" provides a positive angle from which to interpret risk-taking as a proactive rather than misinformed action. The need to better understand well-informed risk-taking to which positive meanings are associated has also been stressed by Tulloch and Lupton (2003) and Lupton (2006). Voluntary risk-taking, Debora Lupton (2006:20) argues, can be viewed as:

> a way of moving out of a 'rut', to progress in life rather than allowing oneself to stagnate. Risk-taking was viewed as a means of achieving self-actualization and accomplishment, a chance to improve the self by taking on challenges and demonstrating to oneself that one could meet and conquer these challenges.

Instead of seeing risk-taking as irrational or naïve, Lupton suggests, parallel to Hayenhjelm's argument, that in some contexts high-risk activities are consciously undertaken because doing so provides an opportunity to move ahead in one's life.

The notion that wilful risk-taking may result from a hope for change in life opportunities provides an innovative approach to risk perception. It brings risk-taking into the framework of everyday life, the availability of life options and personal initiative against stagnation.

Living with uncertainty in the Senegalese context

The greatest commonality among those of my Senegalese informants who intended to attempt pirogue migration or had already done so was their determination to break out of protracted economic and social stagnation. Second to this was the shared conviction that they could not

accomplish this wish by staying in Senegal. Even though pirogue migrants are not among the poorest in their society, their possibilities for socio-economic advancement at home are severely limited. As de Haas (2007:22) points out, migrants move not because of absolute poverty, but rather "because of a general lack of perspectives for self-realization in their origin countries and the concomitant inability to meet their personal aspirations." Perceived opportunities and personal ambitions are, in addition, changing quickly as globalisation provides youth from less-developed countries with more information on global disparities and their relative lack of opportunities (Horst 2006a). Locked in socio-economic stagnation, many aspiring migrants perceive pirogue migration as the ultimate avenue for fulfilling their personal ambitions. As Idrissa, 37 years old, unemployed, single and still living at his parents' home says,

> we see development – it's a global village. That's what it is. Nowadays. We see *everything*, what happens… in Spain, immediately you see it in your house! I see the whole planet, how everyone *lives*! Eh? We see all of that. [*silence*]. And you, you can't even *live*… you can't even live your life properly… so you are going to risk. Soon forty. Thirty-seven years old, it's soon forty. Soon forty years old! Are there people over there, in Europe, who have no job by the age of thirty-seven? Maybe there are […]. But here, it's almost sixty percent!

In his last sentence, Idrissa is referring to the high unemployment rate among Senegalese youth. Although there is a limited availability of reliable statistics, overall unemployment in Senegal was estimated at 48 percent in 2007 (CIA 2008). Unemployment and the associated inability to fend for oneself keep youth from advancing socially and financially. This is, as Idrissa says, central to thousands of young Senegalese men's willingness to risk their lives in order to reach the success they believe will come hand in hand with emigration.

Even when employed, young people are often only able to access jobs with unstable, meagre salaries. Many Senegalese pirogue migrants did have jobs before leaving, but were still unable to reach financial independence and establish their own families. Pape (33), one of them, speaks of the kind of salary available to youth:

> 50,000 FCFA [76€], what is that going to do? Because don't forget that all persons want to, one day, settle down. And settling down, what does it mean? It means having something of your own. […] It means having a wife, a house, and why not, a nice car. And children. That is what we call settling down. And, 50,000 francs per month won't get you that.

To most of my informants, the possibility of settling down while remaining in Senegal seemed an unattainable feat. Succeeding there, they said, is dependent on having the necessary contacts to become employed or the financial means to invest on one's own.

As Pape's words illustrate, financial insufficiency, which for many implies dependency on relatives, also signifies the inability to progress socially by establishing one's own family. Without prospects for improvement, many of my informants expressed anxiety about the bleak future in front of them: First, depending on one's parents or relatives for subsisting is

not a sustainable condition. Second, continued dependency implies the inability to transition into respected adulthood. "If my life does not change," Thierno lamented, "I will never be able to marry." For young men in Senegal, marrying and becoming a provider represent part of a man's social advancement, or "social becoming," of transitioning into a respected male adult (Vigh 2006). The impossibility of making this transition therefore implies permanent social stagnation. Henrik Vigh (2006:38), referring to the similar case of Guinea-Bissau, explains:

> As persistent decline makes social networks contract and centre on their key relations an ever-growing group of youth find it increasingly difficult to acquire the resources to fulfil the ritual and social obligations needed to set up a household or in other ways create a space of patronage needed to move along the trajectory of social becoming form youth to adulthood. […] Trapped in the category of youth they await their chance to move on in life and realise their social being.

The importance of resources to the process of social becoming was very often underscored by my informants in Senegal. "If you have nothing," they said, "you are nothing. You are not considered." This was so in relation to both women and society at large. My informants regularly complained that it was hard for them to preserve relationships, because of their inability to fulfil women's material wishes, such as braids and clothing. Marrying is all the more challenging, as a man is expected to pay a dowry and provide a room with basic furniture for his young family. Pointing to the difficulty of fulfilling these basic needs, Idrissa explained:

> People tease you: why don't you have a wife yet? Why don't you have children ? *Me,* if I have a wife, where am I going to put her?! Where am I going to put her?
>
> *Because you don't have your own house?*
>
> Yes – no, my own room! If only I had my own room! […] Not even a house, but… my own room!

As a result of the inability to provide for a wife and family, young men often expressed their fear, or experience, of their long-time girlfriends leaving them for a man with more financial means, who could formalise a relationship into marriage – often an emigrant.

Unable to fend for themselves and adopt the traditionally expected role of providers, men remain trapped in a perpetual state of youth, or what Vigh (2006:37) refers to as a *social moratorium*: "a predicament of not being able to gain the status and responsibility of adulthood […] a social position that people seek to escape as it is characterised by marginality, stagnation and a truncation of social being." Indeed, the inability to transition to adulthood forces young men to remain trapped in a social status to which society attributes little respect, power, or recognition.

Justifying high-risk emigration

The previous section has highlighted some of the difficult conditions in which many Senegalese youths live, with few options to transition to adulthood. In this context, pirogue migration appeals, to many, as an attractive opportunity through which to seek social mobility. In this section, I discuss, first, that for many young Senegalese, pirogue migration appears as a unique opportunity to seek the personal success promised by emigration; second, that given the context of livelihood insecurity in which many aspiring migrants live, pirogue migration is not necessarily viewed as opposing a safe alternative, but instead as a different kind of risk-taking; and third, that pirogue migration may have become a social phenomenon through which young men could seek to restore a tarnished sense of dignity and manhood.

Emigration imagined

Migration is an established, widespread strategy for minimising the risks associated with poverty and insecurity (Massey *et al.* 1998; Snel and Staring 2001). This strategy has moreover become increasingly popular with the growth in transnational flows of information. As Cindy Horst (2006a:10) argues, increased exposure to media images of life in the West and to personal accounts of emigrants means that increasing numbers of people are able to imagine their own lives as migrants. The cumulative experience of international migration has indeed meant that values and expectations at communities of origin are increasingly attuned to the idea of migration. Douglas Massey and his colleagues (1998:47) refer to this as the emergence of a "culture of migration," as "migration becomes deeply ingrained into the repertoire of people's behaviour, and values associated with migration become part of the community's values."

This is indeed the case in Senegal. Following the growth of emigration since the 1980s, the figure of the emigrant, locally referred to as *Modou-modou*, is seen to embody economic success and social prestige, and has become a social role model (Amadou Ndoye 2006; Ba and Choplin 2005; Fall 2007). This image encourages the perception, among youth, that emigration is synonymous with success. During my fieldwork, the desire to emigrate seemed ubiquitous, like a collective dream, as young and elderly alike expressed their wish to go work abroad. Among youth, this dream at times appeared an obsession, as many seemed to be constantly preoccupied with finding a strategy to materialise their wish. The intense longing for life elsewhere has been noted among other populations (Horst 2006a). My informants regularly referred to the image of success emanating from the emigration experience of others as the main element encouraging them to seek better opportunities abroad. As those at home witness emigrants' ability to assist their families, build a house, get married, and even buy a

car, the notion has developed among Senegalese youth that emigration is the most direct path to success.

The prevailing image of Europe among my informants was, moreover, of a place where one can become economically independent and socially respected solely through one's effort. By contrast, they incessantly referred to the difficulty of finding a job in Senegal, let alone one with a contract and a regular salary. My informants frequently complained that access to formal employment is restricted by nepotism, so that even those who have jobs spend their entire lives working in the informal economy, with insufficient, inconsistent pay and no social provisions. Pay in Europe is not only considered higher because of the differential in currencies and lifestyles, but also because it is seen to match one's effort fairly. "The way they pay you in Europe," Modou argues, "is not like in Africa. […] Because what you work, that's what they pay you. Here […] they pay you nothing. They pay you just enough to buy bread so you can come back the next morning." In addition, work in Europe is believed to be widely available, which leads to the perception that succeeding economically is only dependent on one's effort, or, alternatively, that failing to find work and save money to send home is due to one's laziness or enjoying "the European lifestyle." Modou voiced the commonly held impression that "most Senegalese people know that, in Europe, there is work. So if you come home empty-handed, that means you messed up over there." This notion encourages the idea of emigration as offering a path to success that is not mediated by previous socio-economic status or contacts, but simply by individual hard work.

The fact that aspiring migrants believe that success through migration would come relatively easily does not mean they are oblivious to the hardships that may come as a result of being undocumented in Europe. My informants regularly acknowledged that "lacking papers" could pose some difficulties, but generally downplayed the importance of these challenges. On the one hand, they said they could rely on their social network to provide assistance in order to counter the lack of documented status. On the other, they emphasised that difficulties in Europe would never compare to the hardship of life in Senegal. Some commented that coping with adversity abroad would be more bearable than at home, under the inquisitive gaze of one's social network. Assane (34) for example said:

> I prefer to suffer over there, rather than here. Here, at home, I must have money… do something, like everyone. But as long as you stay here, you don't even have 100 francs [0.15€] to buy cigarettes. […] You look at your mother, she looks at you… If you go *travelling*, you go looking for something, she will know that "my son has courage. He went looking for something." Each day, she will pray, ask the good God that he helps her son who is over there. At least, she knows that, if God helps him, she will be taken care of.

The appeal of emigration as an opportunity to emerge from socio-economic stagnation and advance in life solely on the basis of one's effort is, however, usually confronted with the

difficulty of pursuing this option. In Senegal, as in many other West African countries, avenues to emigration, both legal and irregular, are highly limited and acquiring forged documents or illicitly obtained visas requires considerable financial resources (cf. Carling 2002; Vigh 2006). In general, my informants spoke of a long-lasting wish to emigrate that could not be accomplished because of lacking financial means. Virtually everyone knew of someone who had left by means of an illicitly obtained visa, and some had even tried this option, but were swindled by the "businessman" in charge of the transaction, loosing up to 3 million FCFA (about 4,600€).

In this context, the emergence of the pirogue route, although a high-risk option, was seen as a chance not to be missed: the price of the ticket was relatively inexpensive, the bureaucracy inexistent, and the migrant would end up with undocumented status regardless of the means followed to emigrate. Speaking of his decision to migrate through the pirogue route, Ibrahima explained that after years wishing go to Europe but lacking the means to do so, it was nearly unquestionable whether or not to take on this opportunity, in spite of the risks. Lat too emphasised this point of view, saying: "What to do? If it is the only path… we are obliged! All the while knowing that there were dangers, all the while knowing that we could die, we left." Many aspiring migrants who are unable to afford the high price of forged documents for air or land migration routes resort to dangerous, maritime ones (Monzini 2004). Senegalese pirogue migrants are an example of this: they see pirogue migration as their *only* realistic avenue to migrate and are therefore willing to face the risks involved.

Staying as risk-taking

The decision to undertake pirogue migration is not necessarily one between taking risks or remaining safe from them. The alternative, remaining in Senegal, might also be perceived as a risky one, as it is characterised by livelihood insecurity. This would help explain some people's willingness to take risks to migrate in order to change their lives' prospects.

During an interview, Modou explained how for many aspiring migrants, the perceived magnitude, or importance, of the risks involved in pirogue migration, is mediated by the view that remaining in Senegal itself represents a form of risk-taking:

> At the time when we were leaving, the only risk that we saw was staying in Senegal. […] That was the *real* risk for us, staying in Senegal. Whatever was at sea, or after the sea, we did not see that […]. Because we could not find the remedy, or the solution, that would allow us to live a good life in Senegal. So, the only danger, or the only death, was staying in Senegal. The manner of dying, that didn't matter. Reaching the objective, your aim, that's what mattered.

Modou's assertion that remaining in Senegal constitutes a "danger" mirrors Hayenhjelm's (2006:194, emphasis in original) argument that, when living conditions are not "endurable," then "*refraining from taking any action* is also a kind of risk taking." In a situation of socio-

economic stagnation in which most (aspiring) pirogue migrants described themselves to be, the dilemma is not necessarily between risking or not, but rather between which risks to choose. Undertaking pirogue migration appears to be considered as merely replacing one set of risks with another, namely, the risks of continued livelihood insecurity and social stagnation with the risks of dying or returning to the point of departure.

In this context, risk-taking is often presented as a natural aspect of life and of attempting to move out of insecurity. "Africans," Aziz explained, "are born into risks," because they have much higher chances of going through life in poverty than of coming out of it. At some point, he argues, one is willing to do "whatever it takes" to emerge from poverty. Pirogue migration may then merely represent one of many possible instances when an individual is willing to take risks in order to break out of an uncertain, insecure life. The notion that remaining in Senegal may represent a danger in itself, and that overcoming it may require taking certain risks was further reinforced by Abdourahmane (35):

> Danger, we're used to it! This life, here, if you risk nothing, you gain nothing! We live a miserable life. A difficult life, a hard life. You do not live, you do not die. There are many living dead here.

> *Living dead?*

> Living dead! You walk around, but you are nothing. You are sick, you have nothing to heal yourself with. You heal yourself with… you use traditional medicine. You find a way to cope.

Abdourahmane's assertion that many in Senegal live a life of hardship comparable to a "living death" coincides with Modou's assertion that "the only death was staying in Senegal." Indeed, many of my informants expressed a sense that the life they lived in Senegal lacked meaning or was hardly worth living. Such statements appeared to be based on the perception that financial dependency and social stagnation prevent one from living a meaningful life. In consequence, taking risks in order to change this situation appears a reasonable option. Abdourahmane's sentence that "if you risk nothing, you gain nothing" was indeed very often repeated among my informants. This reasoning is consistent with Hayenhjelm's argument, discussed above, that in a context of limited life options, individuals may focus on the hope for change offered by an option, regardless of the magnitude of the possible negative outcomes. It is also congruent with Lupton's assertion that voluntary risk-taking may in some cases capture an individual's intention to "move out of a rut," towards improvement.

This in turn partly elucidates the apparent paradox of why men whose lives are not endangered by extreme poverty would willingly put themselves at risk of death through high-risk migration. Idrissa, for example, explained:

> It is not extreme poverty, but for me, it's poverty. [...] I don't have a job! For us, life is not only eating and sleeping! You have to have pleasures too! […] Well… being able to feel that you are alive. Staying put doing nothing… eating, drinking tea… that, that's not interesting! That… because I see that… in the future… what will be of me, at 37?! Without work. Still, I do eat. But I

am 37, and I have no wife! No family! [*silence*] After all… it's poverty! […] There are lot of things that you want to do, enjoy yourself, things like that, but you can't. And that gives you… it makes you not be scared from doing certain things – from trying to emigrate.

Idrissa's words again illustrate the sentiment that, when life becomes synonymous with bare subsistence, it loses meaning and one *barely feels alive*. His words moreover emphasise the frustration of being unable to gain financial independence and establish one's own family, and the fact that for Idrissa, remaining in Senegal represents a risk in the sense of allowing the continuity of this social stagnation. This, he reasons, dissipates the fear of undertaking high-risk migration in order to seek a more fulfilling existence.

The notion that the perceived value of one's life plays an important role in how acceptable pirogue migration appears to potential migrants was also very clearly expressed by Alioune (33):

I should have left, and succeeded, or died. Once and for all. […] Because if I had gone at that time […], if I had arrived, now I would be working. Eh? If I had left at that time, and died, we wouldn't talk about it anymore… Because the fact of staying here, with nothing… It's not even worth living. The fact of being here with nothing.

Alioune, Modou, Idrissa and Abdourahmane's dramatic assertions are reminiscent of Ghassan Hage's concept of "social death" as the "absence of the possibility of a worthy life" as used by Vigh (2006:45) in reference to the limited opportunities of urban youth in Bissau to progress meaningfully.

In a context comparable to a state of social death, Alioune's words bring a new dimension to the notion of risk-taking as seeking change. They suggest that, either through death or success, pirogue migration would have brought closure to the frustration of a life he describes as "hardly worth living." Justifications of the acceptability of pirogue migration are often characterised by a sense of hopelessness about the possibility of change at home and a vision that, in order to break from stagnation, there is little choice other than following this or other risky paths.

Indeed, when speaking of the difficulties of life in Senegal and their decision to undertake pirogue migration, my informants often put this option in contrast to the morally inacceptable option of engaging in crime. Many, they said, are pushed to engage in theft in order to escape hardship. In this context, pirogue migration, although filled with risks, seems a morally better alternative. The dilemma of seeking to migrate instead of engaging in crime as a way to escape poverty has also been pointed out by Vigh (2006) in the case of youth in Bissau. There, international migration is considered the best strategy for emerging from socio-economic stagnation, but also the most difficult to attain, so that youth often revert to violent opportunities to advance socially. For Senegalese youth, both alternatives involve risk-taking: engaging in criminal activity implies rebelling against God's word, and therefore facing the

risk of divine punishment. On the other hand, pirogue migration, involving the risks of death and return, is considered justifiable from a religious perspective, as is later discussed. In this context, my informants underlined that pirogue migration, though risky, provided a unique, morally acceptable opportunity for youth to seek better opportunities. Serigne (27) refers to this perceived lack of choice, and how this relates to the value of one's life, and the possibility of undertaking pirogue migration:

> Most people didn't have a choice. Because... María, there are things... there are things people won't explain to you. […] But here, most people live, really, miserably. […] For example, in a job, you get paid – each day, you earn 2.5€. And when you get home with those 2.5€, you are going to spend it all. Yes. Each day, you save nothing. So, that, yes, it's not... a reason to live, or something that will keep you in your country. No.

Pape further illustrated the notion that hopelessness was an important factor in the motivation to seek change through high-risk migration:

> If you have hope that in two years, or five years, or even ten years, things will change, ok, you can stay, whatever the situation. But, when you see that it has been this way for ten years, *fifteen* years, and, and… you see absolutely nothing in the horizon, then… there is no more hope. There, one… one tries to change things.

Those among my informants who had decided against pirogue migration, whether before or after having attempted it, appeared more hopeful about possibilities at home. Generally this hope was based on something more or less concrete, like a possible job opportunity, or a potentially useful contact.

Perceptions of the worth of one's life, the availability of livelihood choices and the degree of hope that change may come about appear to have a very significant influence in my informants' attitude towards high-risk migration. In addition, the notion that life, in the context of socio-economic stagnation, is inherently risky, and, for some, lacking in meaning, may partly explain the almost nonchalant attitude with which some of my informants spoke of the possibility of dying in attempting to cross to the Canaries, and the slogan "Barça ou barzakh" (Barcelona or death) adopted by many Senegalese pirogue migrants.

Pirogue migration as a social phenomenon

The decisions of thousands of Senegalese youths to board a pirogue towards Europe may be additionally explained by attending to the social context in which these decisions were made, especially considering the social momentum that pirogue migration stirred. For young men trapped in the transition to adulthood, pirogue migration appears to have been seen, at least partly, as an opportunity to restore one's sense of dignity and pride as a man and provider within one's social milieu. My informants' justifications for undertaking this kind of emigration appeared imbued with great symbolic value. Notions of manhood, honour, pride, responsibility and courage intertwine in accounts of the decision to embark a pirogue to

Europe, making of it almost something heroic that a man, faced with life's hardships, *should* do in order to ensure his independence, assist his family and, ultimately, restore a tarnished sense of dignity. As discussed above, reaching financial independence and becoming a provider for oneself and one's family are social markers of the transition to adulthood for Senegalese young men (Bjarnesen 2007).

Migration in general is in many African contexts as much a family as an individual strategy to minimise the risks of unstable income (Massey *et al.* 1998; Tacoli 2001). Indeed, the majority among those of my informants who had boarded a pirogue to Europe framed this action in the context of one's responsibility to his family. A young Senegalese man is expected to help his father provide for the family and gradually take over his responsibility. Fulfilling this duty, Bocar explained, is moreover essential for forging one's dignity as a son and a man, and the shame of failing to do so can become a powerful driving force:

> Sometimes, someone can hurt you a lot, speak badly of you. The words he will use, he will say something like, that "look at you, your father brought you to the world, has seen you grow up, has devoted himself to you, and you have nothing to give." So it hurts. So, before… before having to hear those things, you are forced to try to do something, in order to never hear that kind of thing.

Bocar's words are not uncommon. Souleymane (30), too, explained that the urge to ease his familie's difficulties and rid his mother of the need to work constituted his main reason to board a pirogue while avoiding thinking about the risks involved. If you want to deal with all the problems, he says, "you have to work. That's what made me forget all the things that I imagine about the sea […] all the serious things."

In addition to restoring their identity as providers for the family, my informants also saw pirogue migration as a way to repair their dignity and honour as independent men. The inability to provide for oneself and become a self-sufficient adult is not only unsustainable, it is also personally frustrating and an additional source of shame and social stigma. Idrissa, nearly forty and unable to take over the role of his deceased father, laments, "there is something very tough here. If you don't succeed, people say 'it's your mother who is working for you!' You see? That's why people risk their lives." Iddrisa's words illustrate the feelings of many youths to whom embarking on the pirogues became tantamount to a quest for dignity and social respect.

My informants moreover explain that as thousands boarded the pirogues, everyone constantly talked of who was going, who was preparing to go, who had succeeded in arriving to Spain. This heightened attention seems to have turned pirogue migration into a social phenomenon with high symbolic value, where many young men felt certain pressure to go. As Mansour says, "at that time, well, everyone saw that it was… simply following that path, it was a good thing to do." Idrissa's explanation of how he changed his mind from his initial

scepticism towards pirogue migration as "everyone was leaving" reflects the social pressure that developed in relation to the pirogues and moreover the role of (some) women therein:

> I didn't believe that people could go […] But I see people leaving, and succeeding. They say "hey, I made it. I am here. I am here, in Barcelona, or in Murcia. I am, I am in Real!" Whatever – you say "ah?! Then, we have to go!" People – women, here, they tease you, they tell you things. "You, why aren't you going? All the men have gone! Men are leaving, and you, you're staying here? You – you are a woman! But, you are a woman!" – you are going to risk your life!

The comments made by the women Idrissa refers to are suggestive of an attitude, among some within Senegalese society, that taking part in pirogue migration was the responsible thing to do for young men. Idrissa's concern with women's opinion is moreover especially significant since single men appear to have represented the overwhelming majority of pirogue migrants (Mbow and Tamba 2007). As discussed above, aspiring pirogue migrants' anxiety over achieving socio-economic success includes their inability to maintain a family and therefore their bleak prospects for marriage.

The comment by the women in Idrissa's account also contains a very telling allusion to manhood, namely how this might be at stake in the decision over whether or not to undertake pirogue migration. Referring to making this decision in the midst of the momentum that enveloped the departures, my informants often repeated phrases such as "I thought: I am a man, just like those who were taking the risks to go to Europe. So if they could do it, why not me?" As this phrase shows, many men framed the decision to board a pirogue as a manly act of courage by which they compared themselves with other men. Ibrahima (23) further illustrates:

> At some point, I said that, if a man stays here, it's the men who must go into the kitchens. […] If a guy stays here, without going on the pirogues, eh? […] He's a girl. You see? So, it's a guys' business, we have to go. So… and I didn't want, if my son grows up, that he asks me, "dad, why, at the time of the pirogues, why… uncle so-and-so, and uncle so-and-so went, why didn't you go?" What am I going to tell him? […] Am I going to say that, well, "I was scared"? No, I can't tell him that I was scared! I must go, like the others! They are human beings like me!

The notion, stressed by Ibrahima and the women in Idrissa's account, that a man who refused to board the pirogues "was a woman" has important implications for the symbolic weight of the momentum that surrounded pirogue departures. The men who left, Moustapha insisted, were more courageous than those who would not risk death for the hope of a better life. He furthermore argued that for him, as a fisherman, the challenge of pirogue migration "is a question of honour." Being a *Lébou*, he said "I am a man of the sea. And someone, someone who is not from the sea, takes this initiative, and goes to Spain. So I say, why not me? Since I am even from the sea, then […] I must be the first one going!" Moustapha stresses an important point, that if for many men the decision over whether to board a pirogue to Spain bore implications for their image as courageous men willing to risk their lives to protect their

dignity and confirm their commitment to their family, then this pressure was even stronger for fishermen. As they are considered to know the sea, Moustapha implies, they would be expected to be less fearful of embarking upon such an enterprise.

In this context where pirogue migration is seen as a courageous action to fulfil the duty to one's family and protect one's dignity as a man, the eventuality of death along the pirogue journey becomes, for many, framed in a narrative of honour and sacrifice. For Pape, dying in these circumstances would be akin to dying "a martyr." For Modou, it would be an "honourable death," filled with dignity:

> Those who died over there – well… it's like, maybe the soldiers who are dead on the battlefield. Because they had their aim, their destiny, and their ambitions. And they died – they did not die because they were stealing and were lynched. […] What I mean is… they died with dignity. […] It is like they died in the battlefield. In the field of honour.

The symbolic importance that emerges from accounts of the meanings of the decision to undertake pirogue migration is reminiscent of the notion of *rite de passage*, as an act that accompanies "changes in structural position or status" and where "decisive physical and symbolic steps are taken to extinguish the old status" (Harris 1988:462). Migration has been identified as a rite of passage of sorts in a number of contexts where the individual earns social value by way of his or her mobility or, alternatively, appears as "lazy" or "unenterprising" when choosing to stay put (Driessen 1996; Juntunen 2002; Massey *et al.* 1998:47; Monsutti 2007; Osella and Osella 2000; Reichert 1982; Tacoli 2001:146). The element of dangerousness in the symbolic passage to a different social status varies among these different types of migration, but seems central to the case of the pirogues. As discussed above, a man's courage to face the risks of the pirogue journey appears to have a central place in the symbolic value attributed to this kind of migration. For young men whose symbolic manhood was already at stake because of their inability to fulfil their socially expected role as providers, pirogue migration might have appeared as an opportunity to restore a tarnished sense of honour and dignity as a man. As such, the symbolic meaning of this kind of migration may at least partly explain the attitudes of those who consider the risks of pirogue migration acceptable.

Religion and risk acceptability

Religious or spiritual beliefs, just as they influence human behaviour in general, may influence risk-taking behaviour in a variety of ways. In the case of pirogue migrants, religion permeates my informants' accounts of their decision to undertake pirogue migration and their attitude to the potential risks involved, in other words, the way they assessed the potential risks and the acceptability of these. Risk assessments are mediated by religion or spiritual

beliefs when these influence an individual's perception of the magnitude of a risk, or the probability of its occurrence. Risk acceptability is mediated by religion when religious beliefs influence one's judgement of the importance of the possible consequences of risk-taking.

When referring to the main risks involved in pirogue migration, death and return, my informants often framed their attitude to, or explanation of, these risks through the lens of religion. This was stronger in the case of death, and less so in the case of return.

The importance attributed to the possibility of dying throughout the pirogue journey and my informants' attitude to such an eventuality was very clearly influenced by religious beliefs. Firstly, the notion that death is a natural part of life – and therefore determined by God – appeared to make my informants relatively at ease with the idea that they might die as a consequence of embarking on pirogue migration. Phrases such as "death is a normal part of life" or "we only die once" were repeatedly used to stress the notion that death is inextricable from human experience. Because these sentences were generally accompanied by religious references, they appeared to have their origin in the speaker's faith. Secondly, some of my informants underlined the notion that only God was to be feared, not death nor other men. As Ibrahima asserted, "one should not fear. If you are fearful, then, you disbelieve God. […] You should not fear a man, a human being like you. If you are to be fearful, you should fear God, but not another person." The attitude to death as a normal part of life and the notion that only God should be feared appeared to make my informants relatively accepting of the possibility of dying when attempting pirogue migration.

The presence of religiosity in assessments of the probability that negative eventualities would occur during a pirogue journey was clear through references to spiritual preparation before one's departure. This usually involved doing special prayers, seeking amulets from religious guides, performing sacrifices, or, often, a combination of these. Through such actions, migrants sought help and protection from God against risks. These are further discussed in the next chapter.

Risk acceptability too appears to be mediated by religiosity to the extent that my informants consistently framed the consequences of pirogue migration, whether positive or negative, as the result of God's will. Death was presented not only, as mentioned above, as inescapable, but also as determined by destiny as dictated by God. A common way of expressing this among my informants was to argue that God had established the time of one's death from birth, so when that moment came, one would die, whether aboard a pirogue or sleeping at home. This deterministic understanding of death appeared to make (aspiring) migrants approach the prospects of pirogue migration with a relatively fearless attitude or, in any case, to provide a justification for the occurrence of death.

Repatriation, on the other hand, was usually attributed to human action, more specifically the interference of the Senegalese government, and therefore resented. Even then, returnees often attributed their failure to God's will. In this context, religion also appears to have an important value in helping returnees cope with the outcome of their migratory attempt. Relatives were often quoted to have comforted them saying "it was God's will."

The importance of religion in the framing of risk-taking and risk acceptability was further reflected in the discussions that arise from the allusion, by some within Senegalese society, that pirogue migration constitutes a "suicidal" action. Given that suicide is forbidden by the Qur'an, those of my informants who were in favour of pirogue migration strongly protested such labelling on two grounds. First of all, they argued, it was nonsensical to consider pirogue migration akin to suicide, since nobody would attempt it if there existed no chances of succeeding. Secondly, those following this migration route did so not with the aim of dying, but rather in the spirit of accomplishing a "good deed." As Thierno explained, "If I died, they would say I was someone who went in search of work, in order to help. I prayed that my good intentions would find me when I should die." In other words, (aspiring) pirogue migrants may be willing to accept the possibility of dying in the attempt to succeed in migrating, but this does not mean they would seek death in order to put an end to their problems. As they explained, other risky alternatives, such as criminality, exist, that would help them overcome poverty, but these are considered immoral and therefore disapproved of by society. Pirogue migration, on the other hand, as it is framed in a narrative of sacrifice and duty, may provide a sense of closure through a means that is both morally acceptable and symbolically congruent with social expectations of men transitioning to adulthood.

Agency and empowerment through high-risk migration

Much of the dramatised press coverage of pirogue migration throughout the year 2006 appeared to present the migrants arriving to the Canary Islands as a kind of army of desperate, destitute African youth. This chapter has sought to redress this image by emphasising the agency in migrants' decision to undertake this migration. Migrants' agency can be appreciated both at the level of the decision and in the form of migration itself.

To a certain degree, pirogue migration may be seen to have provided a space for migratory empowerment for those whose emigration aspirations had earlier been truncated by limited or expensive avenues to emigration. Most of my informants in Senegal viewed visa fraud as the only alternative to pirogue migration. The process for obtaining a visa through illicit means is however not only very expensive but, most significantly, determined by the action of the middle-man in charge of the transaction. Aside from taking the initiative to begin it, the aspiring migrant has little room for manoeuvring the process and is often at the mercy of

'businessmen" who may simply swindle their money. While there is a certain degree of organisation within pirogue migration, much of the initiative seems to have been taken by unemployed fishermen-turned-*passeurs*, or even migrants themselves. As a result, this form of migration challenges the common portrayal of migrants as mere victims of unscrupulous smugglers (van Liempt and Doomernik 2006).

In a context where prospects for earning economic independence and transitioning into socially acknowledged adulthood seem bleak, the decision to undertake pirogue migration may be interpreted as an individual's move to take his future in his hands and overcome stagnation. By embarking on pirogue migration, migrants actively seek to put an end to the risk of protracted economic hardship as well as the continued threat to one's social identity as a man. To be sure, societal expectations and a degree of social pressure may have also played into some migrants' resolution to go, yet while these may have had an important effect on migration decisions, it is hardly imaginable that they could fully explain them. In any case, the action of undertaking pirogue migration may be seen as a reflection of the determination to bring closure to an untenable situation through a means that is morally acceptable and socially sanctioned, as it takes place within a narrative of sacrifice and duty.

The fact that ideas of destiny are very prominent among rationalisations of the (potential) consequences of pirogue ventures should not be seen as a contradiction to the interpretation of embarking on pirogue migration as a conscious action to alter one's future. Instead, references to destiny may be seen to signify the recognition that a large extent of this undertaking lies outside of one's control. As Horst (2006b:44-45) argues, "[the] realisation of one's own lack of power does not mean that an individual will not try to protect himself or herself against risks and just wait passively for things to happen. Rather, views on fate and destiny assist people to rationalise and justify the course of events or the impossibility of changing it." Indeed, as discussed above, the attribution of consequence to destiny or God's will appears to be important in assisting aspiring migrants to make difficult decisions and providing them with a mechanism to cope with adversity. Still, as I discuss in the next chapter, in order to maximise their control of the outcomes of pirogue migration migrants resort to strategies that include the mobilisation of spiritual protection. This, again, underscores the element of agency in the rationalisation of fate and risk.

V. Psychological elements of risk-taking

This chapter aims at contributing to academic analysis on the dynamics of migrants' decision to travel along highly dangerous routes. Policy-makers often assume that the decision to undertake unauthorised migration results from misinformation on the risks involved (Nieuwenhuys and Pécoud 2007). This chapter first explores the role of risk information on migrants' perception of the risks of pirogue migration. Specifically, it discusses how aspiring migrants actively engage with risk information in order to establish or maintain their decision to undertake or not pirogue migration. The chapter then shows how, when migrants are aware of the risks they face, one way in which they make sense of taking these risks is by focusing on the attributes that provide them with a feeling of control or immunity to specific risks and by mobilising strategies that allow them to minimise those in order to increase their chances of succeeding.

Risk perception

Psychological theories of risk perception and decision-making work on the assumption that individual attitudes to risk are "biased" or "faulty" because they rely on inadequate probability judgements. Paul Slovic (1987:281), one of the main proponents in the psychology of risk perception, explains that

> difficulties in understanding probabilistic processes, biased media coverage, misleading personal experiences, and the anxieties generated by life's gambles cause uncertainty to be denied, risks to be misjudged (sometimes overestimated and sometimes underestimated), and judgments to be held with unwarranted confidence.

As this quote suggests, the psychology of risk perception considers lay judgements, based on rules of thumb or "heuristics," to be generally inaccurate with respect to expert risk judgements (Tulloch and Lupton 2003; Wilkinson 2006). Central to their work is to "uncover" the mechanisms through which individuals assess risk and the factors that influence these assessments. Some of the elements and concepts used by the psychological approach to risk perception are useful for understanding decision-making in the context of high-risk unauthorised migration; they are explored throughout this chapter.

Risk perceptions, defined by Paul Slovic (1987:280) as "intuitive risk judgments" about hazards, are affected by a myriad of factors and in turn influence how acceptable a "risky" activity is seen to be. Essential to how a person views the risks involved in a specific activity

and therefore how voluntarily they accept these risks is whether he or she is at all informed about those risks and how he or she relates to this information. The effect that risk information has on the person's perception of certain activities will depend on elements specific to the information provided, such as the amount of information available, the emotional response that this information elicits on the recipient, and how credible and trustworthy the source is considered to be. In addition, the effect of risk information on the individual's perception of those activities will depend on how the person interacts with the information available, either choosing to reconsider their opinion or actively ignoring or discrediting the information in order to justify their attitude to risk-taking.

While it is not possible to generalise on how potential migrants tend to react to information on the risks of unauthorised migration, it is nevertheless useful to point to certain trends that emerge from the fieldwork material. Broadly speaking, it appears that many of those who decide to attempt the pirogue journey to the Canary Islands respond to one of the following attitudes: they were unaware of the extent of the hazards involved at the time of the decision; they were aware of available risk information but chose to dismiss it as inaccurate or irrelevant to their case; they were aware of available risk information but chose to ignore it because other factors were more important to their decision. Decisions to emigrate by pirogue often result from a combination of the last two dispositions to risk information. The following section provides an in-depth discussion of these attitudes.

Imagining potential risks

The process through which people assess risks is closely related to the kind of information they have about the possible adverse consequences of an activity and the extent to which they are able, or willing, to imagine them. The "availability" heuristic, as presented in the psychometric paradigm, refers to how our ability to imagine or recall instances of an event affect how likely we think it to be (Slovic *et al.* 1979; Tversky and Kahneman 1974). Our relative familiarity with certain events is often influenced by the degree of attention these events receive from the media. (Kasperson and Kasperson 1996; Sjöberg 2000; Slovic 1987). This, in turn, may affect our ability to imagine specific risks and the degree of importance we attribute to them, which creates an availability bias. Efforts to redress "faulty" lay perceptions of risk by bringing them closer to expert views have commonly consisted of attempts to "educate" the public by providing additional information of the risks in question (Slovic 1987). As Slovic states, additional information on risks is however not guaranteed to provoke a swift change in opinions:

> Strong initial views are resistant to change because they influence the way that subsequent information is interpreted. New evidence appears reliable and informative if it is consistent with

one's initial beliefs; contrary evidence tends to be dismissed as unreliable, erroneous, or unrepresentative. (Slovic 1987:281)

Some strategies to control unauthorised migration have focused on rising awareness of the risks involved in order to discourage migrants from following this form of migration. They are based on the assumptions that migrants follow unauthorised channels because they are unaware of the risks they may face, and that if information on these risks is made available to aspiring migrants, these will change their minds accordingly (Nieuwenhuys and Pécoud 2007).

In the case of pirogue migration, there are three main channels through which aspiring migrants receive information about the perils of this migration form: the stories of others' pirogue journeys, media reports, and awareness campaigns. When the information is acknowledged by the migrant, it might change his or her initial opinion over whether to attempt pirogue migration. A clear example of this is illustrated by the words of Alioune, who has seen many friends and relatives attempt the journey. During our conversations on the topic, he had consistently positioned himself as opposed to pirogue migration, which he considers too risky and responsible for causing extensive human damage in his native Senegal. At the end of our second interview, however, he surprised me by stating: "Frankly speaking, all I regret is not leaving when everyone was leaving." He went on explaining that in 2006, when numerous Senegalese youth were leaving, he considered joining them but lacked the means to materialise his intention. At the sight of my confusion between this and his earlier statements, he clarified that at that time there was no information on deaths or accidents. All they heard about were the news from those who had arrived safely, so that was the only impression of pirogue migration that was available to them. As information grew on the risks of pirogue migration, Alioune felt he could not ignore it. Had he remained in the naiveté of not knowing the extent of the journey's perils, he could have justified to himself the decision to leave by pirogue. This action would have provided a resolution to his stagnant socioeconomic situation in Senegal, whether in the shape of success in reaching Europe, or, less fortunately, a relatively unexpected death at sea, he says. Awareness of the likelihood of finding death in the attempt, however, had made it impossible for him to willingly face such risks. Alioune's case provides a good illustration of how many youths wishing to emigrate may give up unauthorised channels as information is made available on the extent of risks involved.

Other aspiring migrants, as Slovic suggested, hold on to their initial opinions even in the face of extensive information on the perils of high-risk migration. They try to remain blind to risks while restricting their attention to information that supports their choice. They might avoid hearing accounts of the difficulties of the journey, focus on the success of those who

arrive while ignoring the deaths, and leave questions about life in Europe unasked. Maintaining this kind of "tunnel vision" about the realities of pirogue migration might be a way to protect oneself from having to reconcile the wish to emigrate with the awareness of serious dangers on the chosen route. Avoidance of negative risk information may happen more or less actively. Sometimes, people who are considering the pirogue journey simply do not enquire about the conditions of the journey to others who have already attempted it. When In relation to why he had not asked a friend who had left by pirogue a year before him about the difficulty of the trip, Aziz (24) explained:

> We didn't talk about that. All we talked about was how things were going over there. [...] "So, how is it going in Spain," and all that. He had already been there for a year, so I didn't want to… remind him about those kinds of thing. I tell him, "So, how is it going in Spain…?" [he asks] "And what's up in Senegal…?", bla, bla, bla. We talked about that. We didn't talk about his trip.

Avoidance of potentially negative information about pirogue migration was fairly common among those of my informants who had attempted the pirogue journey. When I enquired about what they had thought, before leaving, about different negative eventualities related to pirogue migration, some admitted to having actively avoided such thoughts. They say all they were thinking about at the time was leaving and working in Europe. They were not interested in giving too much thought to the wide range of risks they could encounter.

Lack of information about the difficulties of high-risk migration options also contributes to the reinforcement of "tunnel vision." Irregular migrants in destination countries often conceal the hardships of their experiences in order to maintain a successful image in front of family and friends back home. This poses significant limits to awareness of the risks of this kind of migration in home communities. Belinda Reyes and her colleagues (2002) have also noted that Mexican unauthorised migrants to the US often do not share negative experiences with others at home. In the case of pirogue migration, the difficulty in determining the actual number of casualties may also create a distorted image in potential migrants' minds of the degree of risk involved. In addition, economic vulnerability limits people's access to reliable information on the "riskiness" of a choice as well as to alternatives to a risky option, and therefore affects the acceptability of taking certain risks (Hayenhjelm 2006).

In other cases, aspiring migrants directly reject negative information, for example avoiding people who they know will argue against high-risk migration. Ibrahim (25) explained how he reacts to those who insist that emigrating by pirogue is not worth the risks:

> Like for example, María, if you want to criticise the issue of emigration, "Why do you go, eh? There is nothing there," I'm going to tell you that, "María…" I am going to leave you here! […] The way I see it, you are sabotaging me. That's what it is. That's why, sometimes, there are a lot of people I don't go visit. I stay always at home.

When I asked if he just ignored those who say that it is too dangerous to go by pirogue, he said:

> Everyone said that to me. Even my brother […] said that. He said, "Ibrahim, it's not safe! You have to stay." I said "Shit! You're a woman! You're a woman! You can stay! I am going to leave! I am going to leave. Me, Ibra, I go or I die!" You see?

This kind of discrediting attitude appears to act as a safety valve to avoid entering a serious discussion with those who hold a different opinion, where it might be more difficult to justify one's position towards high-risk migration convincingly. Dismissing risk information on the basis of distrust of the source or the feeling that they do not understand one's perspective is common. This is further discussed in the following section.

Some migrants admit, in retrospect, that the challenges they met during their trip(s) surpassed all initial expectations. This is probably especially the case among those who did not receive sufficient information prior to their departure, or actively dismissed or ignored this information. In some cases, migrants, especially those from interior regions with little knowledge of the sea, might not have been warned by organisers about the difficult conditions of the journey. Some of my informants spoke of people who went to board a pirogue "as if they were taking the plane" or who, after only two days, began to ask if the journey was soon over.

Still, many migrants have attempted the pirogue journey even though they believed reports about accidents and deaths and did not necessarily avoid such information. This challenges the suggestion that risk-taking is a result of missing or inaccurate information or the conscious dismissal of the information available. In fact, some of my informants emphasised having taken up risk information and accordingly making detailed risk calculations in order to prepare for all possible eventualities. Observing the trends in departures and safe arrivals around them, they calculated the chances of success; comparing the mechanics of the journey in relation to those of fishing expeditions, they assessed the feasibility of the trip.

The fact that many migrants embark on this journey in spite of being conscious of the risks involved suggests that risk information is only one of the factors that affect the decision over whether to emigrate through a high-risk channel. Bocar explains how risk information is balanced with respect to the weight of other factors:

> We knew that we were going to encounter many difficulties. Especially because we heard of pirogues that broke… well, about deaths, all over. Some days we watched TV, or we heard when other clandestine migrants called. They gave us information. So when we were leaving, we knew that we had put our lives in danger. But we had to make this journey. We had... we had to make this journey. Because at least, we believed that if we made this journey, we would be able to manage, we could find what we did not have in Senegal, what we could not find in Senegal.

Bocar's justification for attempting pirogue migration in spite of being aware of the serious risks he was exposing himself to is not uncommon. Among my informants, most of those who had attempted the journey insisted that they had been aware of the dangers before leaving. I heard the phrase that "one has to take risks in life in order to get somewhere" in many different variations. With it, my informants seemed to underline their view that undertaking high-risk migration is not a result of ignorance but of the compromises, or sacrifices, one must make in order to cope with life's hardship. Bocar's willingness to attempt the crossing in spite of being informed about the risks is all the more telling given that he is one of the many migrants who had attempted the journey on repeated occasions. In cases like his, it is clearly not possible to argue that the willingness to attempt pirogue migration may result from misinformation about the risks involved. This supports the argument that, while risk information is an important element of risk-taking decisions, it is by no means alone in determining people's choices. Other factors such as lacking hope in livelihood alternatives at home also carry great importance in these decisions, as was discussed in the previous chapter.

Relating to risk information

An additional dimension of the active interaction between aspiring migrant and risk information lies on how trustworthy and credible they perceive information sources to be. In general, individuals' reaction to information on risk is mediated by the degree of trust and credibility they attribute to information sources (Short 1984; Tierney 1999). Media and authorities play a decisive role in establishing how serious an issue is, yet recipients generally engage critically with this information (Anderson 2006; Lupton 2006; Tierney 1999). For example, audiences tend to dismiss risk information when they consider information sources to be biased by vested interests (Slovic *et al.* 1979). Delegitimising risk information as inaccurate or biased may in turn serve to legitimise individual risk-taking decisions.

Aspiring migrants often ascribe different levels of credibility to the media, public or private institutions, acquaintances, friends, and relatives. It would not be surprising, for example, for a fisherman seeking information about the difficulty of navigating the pirogue route to rely more on the advice of a fellow fisherman than on that provided by the authorities, or for any migrant to hold on more tightly to the experience of a relative than that of a stranger in an awareness campaign. Trust and credibility are indeed strong determinants of the attitude a prospective migrant will adopt towards an information source.

Throughout my fieldwork, I identified two main trends in how these elements affect how potential migrants evaluate the relevance of certain risk information to their attitude to pirogue migration. First, veracity is discounted from statements about risk that come from sources who the aspiring migrant perceives as having a vested interest in keeping migrants at

home. This might include migrants in destination countries as well as home authorities. Second, the credibility or relevance of risk information also tends to be dismissed when risk warnings are seen as inapplicable to the individual or the source perceived as too far removed from the aspiring migrant's experience to address it effectively.

Stories told by irregular migrants about the emigrant life being more difficult than expected tend to be dismissed by aspiring migrants as untrue, inspired by egotistic ambitions to keep all the benefits of emigration to themselves (Carling *in press*). Aziz, for example, insists that:

> Senegalese people, on one side, very true, there is the *teranga*, the hospitality, all of that. *But*, internally, there is some meanness. […] For example, my friend is in Spain. For him, if I ask him about coming over there, well, once I come there, I am going to… surpass him. Do you understand? And for that reason he says, "Here things are very difficult, it's not worth coming. You should stay there."

The belief that these migrants are lying about life abroad in turn reinforces the idea that emigration is a fruitful investment and not a risky undertaking. To be sure, not all who wish to emigrate dismiss stories of hardship as dishonest. Youssouf (27), a former fisherman who prefers to wait for his opportunity to emigrate legally rather than gamble his life on a pirogue says he trusts that his friends in Spain tell him the truth when they say they are unemployed. They would not lie to him because they are as brothers and besides, he argues, he would know if things were going well: their sister would not come asking him for help, and he too would receive some money from them.

In addition, some of those who accept that other migrants are having trouble in Europe interpret this as a problem specific to those emigrants' laziness or self-indulgence, rather than seeing it as a negative consequence of unauthorised migration. When emigrants do not manage to send money home, for example, they might be accused of spending all their salary in living "like a European," going out to have fun instead of "tightening the belt" and saving for the family. Dismissing difficulties in Europe as a personality problem serves to reinforce the earlier mentioned tunnel vision.

My informants very often dismissed media information concerning the perils of pirogue migration as inaccurate, biased or irrelevant to them. Awareness campaigns, although generally the product of collaborative efforts between different governments and organisations, tend to be solely attributed to the Senegalese government's initiative. As a result, their content is dismissed by those who consider them to reflect authorities' vested interests in keeping youth from emigrating by pirogue. A large segment of Senegalese youth feels disappointed towards the current government, which they consider has failed to deliver better employment opportunities for the young. This disappointment is often turned into distrust about the intentions of authorities to prevent unauthorised migration and encourage

youth to join government-led development plans that are often of little interest to them.[7] Pape (34) emphatically insists that "the majority of those who go on TV are corrupt. […] In order to go on TV, you have to say whatever suits them." He argues that the government has a vested interest in stopping pirogue migration because it suggests to the international public that the country is poor and its resources mismanaged:

> In order to say that "we are managing things well since we've been in power," etc, they will do everything to stifle us to stay here. To force us to stay. Through those campaigns, and whatever else. You see what I'm saying? So, if you come to the TV, to say "go, the young, we are tired of staying here, of those meagre salaries, we cannot do anything with this…" etc, well, they will not broadcast you. That's for sure. So, that's the reason why I never listen to the radio and all that.

Pape insists that young people who appear in media debates on irregular migration are brought to air-conditioned rooms, given a sum of money and told what to say. As a result, he dismisses all media information on the topic as unworthy of his trust and refuses to pay attention to it. Ousseynou (31), a fisherman who does not wish to migrate by pirogue, shares Pape's view that the government opposes youth leaving by pirogue out of self-interest, and dismisses awareness campaigns as artificial. "They make up their own thing. Feature some people, pay them, and put them into a pirogue to make some clips," he says. Pape and Ousseynou's suggestion that people giving emotive testimonials in awareness-raising videos or debates have been paid is a way to further delegitimise the content of such media campaigns, portraying them as corrupt and risk information as manufactured. This challenges the effectiveness of the narrative form in risk communication by undermining the very basis of its emotion-eliciting power, the first-hand testimonial (Finucane and Holup 2006).

In addition to lacking trust on the source of risk information, risk awareness messages are also discredited on the basis of the characteristics of the information source (for example, the institution) or the people who physically deliver the information. The most recent awareness campaign in Senegal featured Youssou N'Dour, Senegal's most international music star, telling youth not to risk their lives on the pirogue journey. The fact that he is neither a migrant nor a fisherman provoked some strong reactions among my informants, who consider he lacks the knowledge and therefore the authority to talk about the dangers of the journey. Ousseynou, for example, says, "Whatever I may find at sea, it is not up to Youssou N'Dour or others to tell me." Many other coastal people similarly dismiss awareness campaigns as irrelevant to them, considering their own knowledge of the sea more reliable for assessing the risks of pirogue migration than any information provided by the media. Still, they consider this information necessary to inform aspiring migrants from interior regions.

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[7] One such plan is the plan REVA, which is discussed in Chapter 6. Few people see this plan as providing realistic opportunities for youth.

Awareness messages coming from politicians, icons of wealth and success or generally anyone in a good socio-economic position tend to be dismissed as oblivious to the reasons that lead youth to consider pirogue migration. Many, referring to Youssou N'Dour's involvement in awareness campaigns say things like, "If we were rich like him, we would stay too." Ibrahima moreover claims of those who criticise pirogue migration that "it's those who are employed here! Who have jobs here! But those without jobs don't say such things." These statements suggest that aspiring migrants discard negative risk information when they consider the information source to be too far removed from their experience to effectively engage with their migration choices. The feeling that risk warnings are out of place because they mistake the deeper motivations for undertaking pirogue migration for insensitivity to risks may simply lead aspiring migrants to disregard them.

This section has discussed how migrants relate to available risk information in order to make the decision to undertake pirogue migration, and suggested that risk-taking choices are not, as some have argued, merely the result of missing or misperceived risk information. Following this argument, the next section explores how migrants additionally make sense of risk-taking in the context of pirogue migration by emphasising their relative preparedness to face the risks involved, or mobilising strategies that allow them to minimise those risks.

Relativising and minimising risk

This section focuses on how migrants who decide to undertake the pirogue journey to the Canary Islands resort to mechanisms, both cognitive and practical, which help them feel in control of the hazards of pirogue migration, or even able to minimise them.

Theoretical perspectives on control and acceptable risk

People are more likely to undertake high-risk activities that are familiar to them and which are perceived to be controllable, and as a result tend to fall prey to risk denial, that is, to see themselves as being less vulnerable to risks than others (Fischhoff *et al.* 1978; Sjöberg 2000; Slovic 1987; Taylor and Armor 1996; Whittaker 1986; Wilkinson 2006). This is partly explained by the cognitive "errors" known as the "illusion of control" and "unrealistic optimism," which make people perceive themselves as unrealistically able to control situational outcomes and less likely than others to undergo negative events (McKenna 1993; Taylor and Armor 1996). Although these two biases might work through separate mechanisms, it is also possible that they may be closely interrelated, since control is, allegedly, a major driving element in unrealistic optimism (McKenna 1993). A study of unrealistic optimism by social/behavioural scientist Neil Weinstein (1980) for example found

that, in relation to events perceived to be controllable, individuals tend to focus on the personal factors – attributes and actions – that would make their chances better than others' to achieve positive outcomes.

Unrealistic optimism and an exaggerated sense of control appear to be more prone to arise during stressful or uncertain situations. They lead to risk denial, which makes individuals feel overly confident, helping them cope with anxiety (Slovic *et al.* 1979; Taylor and Armor 1996; Whittaker 1986). Overconfidence resulting from unrealistic optimism or illusory control may lead people to dismiss risk information, ignore precautions and, ultimately, to engage more easily in risky behaviour if they believe that their personal attributes or actions will exempt *them* from risk (McKenna 1993; Slovic *et al.* 1980; Weinstein 1980).

Control and risk acceptability among pirogue migrants

The idea that pirogue migration involves an acceptable or, at least, manageable degree of risk was prominent during conversations with those of my informants who had attempted pirogue journey or said they would if they had the necessary means. References to the possibility to control the risk of the pirogue journey were recurrent during conversations with migrants where they explained why they considered pirogue migration a reasonable option. This is consistent with the above-discussed theoretical suggestion that individuals are more likely to embark on risk-taking activities when they feel optimistic about their ability to control the level of risk involved. A sense of control over the risks of pirogue migration is expressed by emphasising *familiarity* with the dangers of the journey and alluding to the *risk minimisation strategies* that are employed to limit the magnitude of possible adversities. These two appear to have a crucial importance in how migrants perceive and portray the degree of risk involved in pirogue migration as acceptable.

Familiarity with danger and relative risk

Fishermen and other individuals who consider themselves to have a close relationship to the sea are more prone to emphasise their relative preparedness to face the challenges of pirogue migration and are therefore optimistic about their chances of success. As was mentioned at the beginning of this thesis, all my informants in Senegal came from coastal communities. As a result, it was very apparent to me that they had a particular perspective to the seriousness of the risks involved in pirogue migration and their own ability to minimise them. The ever repeated phrase that "there are no risks for those who know the sea" left no doubt about this positioning.

There are a number of factors that fishermen alluded to in explaining why they, as fishermen, were less at risk than other migrants. First, *familiarity* with the form of travel

makes fishermen regard pirogue migration as less risky for them than others. For fishermen who work on the same pirogues that are used for travelling to Spain, the journey to the Canaries tends to be considered as a longer version of their daily activities. This especially appeared to be the case for those who go on long fishing expeditions that can last up to 15 days and reach as far as Sierra Leone. While many conceded that the conditions of a long fishing expedition are not fully comparable to the journey to Spain given the overcrowding and route difficulty of the latter, a few insisted that the migration trip was in fact easier, since one could sit and relax instead of working hard pulling fishing nets.

Given their familiarity with sea travel, fishermen are perceived, by themselves and others, to be better prepared to undergo the pirogue crossing at a physical, pragmatic, and psychological level. *Physically*, they know they will be more resilient than other travellers to the physical strain of the journey: they have a kind of "immunity" to seasickness, which can provoke serious illness or even death for migrants who have never before boarded a pirogue. In addition, they are used to remaining in the restricted space of a pirogue for long periods of time, something that some of my informants (not fishermen) pointed to as challenging. In fact, one fisherman, Souleymane, explained that: "For us, fishermen, it feels good to be at sea. But on land, it hurts. For me, if I stay here as much as five days without working, it hurts." He had decided against crossing the desert to emigrate, he explains, because he did not think he could manage to walk for so long. "But if it is the sea, well… a week, two weeks, I can do that. Because I am used to it."

On a more *pragmatic* level, fishermen feel they have acquired, through their work, the necessary skills to face technical difficulties during a long journey: they have experienced and dealt with serious storms and engine breakdown while on fishing expeditions; they can keep their balance on the pirogue, so will be able to better stay in place during rough weather; they can swim, so would survive if they fell into the water; and, ultimately, they are used to performing all daily activities (such as going to the toilet and eating) on pirogues.

Finally, fishermen consider themselves to be better prepared to handle the trip *psychologically*, because they are used to being far from land for long periods of time. This is indeed an advantage, since many of my informants pointed to the psychological duress of the journey, which in some cases even makes some "go crazy." Ultimately, some of my informants pointed out that fishermen are familiar with the idea that they might die at sea one day, in a work-related accident. This is likely to affect significantly their perception that the challenges, and possible consequences, of pirogue migration are less extraordinary for them than they may be for others. Overall, some of my informants insisted that if only fishermen were making the journey to the Canaries, they would happen without problems, because it is

those who do not know the sea who bring many of the complications by being more prone to falling ill, or becoming scared and subsequently provoking disputes about returning to shore.

Interestingly, the feeling of being safe from the risks of pirogue migration is not limited to fishermen. Many others consider that, being part of the Lébou community, even when lacking any real fishing experience aboard large pirogues, they are still relatively better prepared to undertake a pirogue journey than other non-Lébou migrants. "Being able to swim" was, for these informants, the marker demarcating the ability to face the pirogue journey safely. In addition, the ability of fishermen to minimise the risks of the journey might be appropriated to the group as a whole in a way that provides an enforced sense of safety not only to the individual fisherman, but also to the migrant collective who deposits their trust in his ability. Pape, for example, has no maritime experience of his own, but his conviction that "Senegalese fishermen are the best sailors in Africa" contributes to his confidence that the pirogue journey to the Canaries is not as dangerous as it seems. Reference to personal attributes that represent the ability to control risk can therefore be used as a mechanism to minimise perceived risk and maximise perceived safety both at the individual and the collective level.

It is important to point out, however, that not all fishermen consider themselves sufficiently familiar with, or in control of, the challenges posed by the pirogue journey to undertake it. As an older fisherman said about pirogue migration, "Those who really know the sea do not take the pirogues."

Besides fishermen, other (aspiring) migrants tend to be particularly optimistic about their personal ability to overcome the risks of pirogue migration not because of their familiarity with the sea, but because of their *familiarity with danger*. Past experiences with hazardous situations are referred to as having built them to "fear nothing" and appear to make these migrants perceive themselves to be better fit, relative to others, to face the risks of pirogue migration. All three former soldiers I interviewed referred to the challenges they had faced in the army when I asked if they feared the possible risks of pirogue migration: after that, they said, they felt prepared to face anything. Aziz, for example, says his experience in the army gave him the courage to go because there he had gone through some things "much worse than death," so the risks of pirogue migration did not appear "that serious" to him.

Positioning oneself as more prepared than others to undergo the risks of pirogue migration on the basis of personal qualities or acquired experience provides the migrant with exaggerated optimism over their chances to face the dangers of pirogue migration, relative to others. Aspiring migrants who see themselves ranking higher in a kind of "hierarchy of preparedness" tend to deny the existence of risks for themselves, even though they might

concede that the same journey would pose unacceptably high risks for others with different attributes.

Risk minimisation strategies

When justifying the acceptability of the risks involved in pirogue migration, aspiring pirogue migrants emphasise their use of strategies to minimise and limit the magnitude of risks. Some actions are aimed at minimising the risk of death by diminishing dangers during the journey; others are aimed at reducing the risk of return by avoiding interception by patrols at sea and repatriation after arrival to the Canary Islands.

In what concerns the *journey*, my informants gave detailed explanations of the careful planning that goes into ensuring their safety. A sturdy pirogue is bought and equipped, with two powerful engines, often one new and one used. Capable navigators are engaged, assigned tasks, and provided with one or two GPS devices, which orient the captain with detail throughout the route. Sufficient fuel, food, water, cooking devices, tools to repair minor engine breakdowns and even pills against seasickness are gathered. While not all trips have been carefully planned, migrants generally appeared convinced that theirs would be properly organised before they left, either because they were aware of the preparations being made or because they trusted the person in charge. Modou, for example, explains how he was very careful in selecting a pirogue to go to Spain:

> I will *never* die of negligence. Never! [semi-laughs]. Never, ever! I have done all the necessary checkouts to go into – into *any* pirogue. Even if I was going from here to Gorée, it's not far away [...] but I will do all the necessary checks, the *bare* minimum, I will, I will check. That's right. […] Emigrating irregularly does not mean one has no right to, to see what is good and what is bad! One must have the choice, anyhow. So… I checked everything. I checked everything.

Not all pirogue migrants, however, gave much attention to the safety details of their trip. Some admit to having jumped on the first opportunity without giving much thought to the organisational aspects, in some cases to later find out that the trip was not properly planned. Others insist that the technical problems they encountered were a result not of bad planning but of sabotage. In general, most of my informants who had attempted the crossing to the Canaries agreed that if properly planned, any journey would have a high chance of succeeding.

In addition to the above-mentioned preparations, my informants stressed the importance of other less tangible strategies that are mobilised to manage the risks of the journey. The timing of the journey is, for instance, not aleatory. When properly planned, a departure date will take place at the time of the year when the sea is likely to be calmer and will be coordinated with weather forecasts for the region and the advice of a religious leader, or *marabout*.

Many consider spiritual preparation an important factor to the overall success of the journey. The role of *marabouts* is especially important, as they are said to provide spiritual protection for the journey as a whole as well as for individual travellers. They suggest appropriate dates for departure, revise passenger lists to warn of potentially dangerous individuals (such as "demons"), provide organisers and migrants with amulets for protection and luck and, finally, pray for the success of the journey throughout its duration. Often, they also advise organisers to offer sacrifices (to the sea) to ensure spiritual protection for the journey. The use of amulets is widespread among migrants, who seek in them protection from dangers and sickness during the pirogue journey and from malicious spells cast by "bad tongues" at home. Some rare but powerful amulets are also said to have the ability to make pirogues, to which they are attached, invisible to patrols. Not all migrants use amulets, however, and many who do often insist that they wear them more out of habit than full conviction of their effectiveness. Still, resort to these strategies of protection appears to provide migrants with a sense of control and optimism over the challenges of the journey. Ultimately, however, a successful outcome is seen to depend solely on God's will.

Prayer is therefore also an important element of the spiritual preparation for the journey. Some migrants say special prayers before leaving or bring a copy of the Qur'an for the journey, entrusting themselves to God. In addition, migrants also commend themselves to their parents' prayers, when these are aware of their departure. Often, migrants leave without warning their families, to avoid worrying them or being interdicted from embarking on the journey. Discretion is also considered essential to avoiding malevolent spells from jealous acquaintances and attracting the attention of the authorities.

Risk minimisation strategies are employed not only at the individual but also at the family level. In a family with many sons, some of my informants explained, they will avoid travelling together in boat in order to minimise the losses in case of accident.

Besides the already-mentioned strategies mobilised to avoid *interception by patrols*, migrants rely on other tactics to avoid controls at departure. While at the early stages of the phenomenon pirogues are said to have left in the open, even in the presence of police who at times helped to maintain order, nowadays departures are hidden from the public eye and controls are actively avoided. Some of my informants mentioned that contacts or bribes are at times used to keep patrol boats at bay; others said organisers plan departures carefully to avoid the areas and times controlled by patrols. Once at sea, the itinerary followed maximises time spent on international waters, in order to avoid coastal guards in Senegalese, Mauritanian or Moroccan-controlled territorial waters.

Strategies of risk minimisation that provide the migrant with a sense of control over the outcome of their migration project are not limited to the journey. Upon arrival, those migrants who are aware of the possibility of *repatriation* have prepared strategies to avoid it:

> Me, personally, and almost everyone in the pirogue, we didn't have papers with us. Because we had been told that if we had papers, we would be identified, and we could be easily sent back. (…) You don't even dare bringing a backpack with "Senegal" written on it. You see? Or a t-shirt with "Senegal" written on it, or… something that will easily identify you. (…) For the language… well, there were people who did not speak at all. If you asked them a question, they would not reply. There were others who spoke French… but if I speak French, you will not identify me all that easily, because French, almost all of Africa speaks French. (…) Even money, we did not have any on us. The day of boarding, we were asked: "does anybody have money on them? Does anybody have CFA on them?"[8] So, someone asked that question, and everyone gave the money; we left it here. No sign that you are Senegalese. (Bocar).

As Bocar's words show, migrants appear to be aware that Senegal had agreed to readmit its citizens, even though they might not always have a thorough knowledge of the mechanics of repatriation agreements. Attempts at withholding one's nationality and all signs of it appear to have been, as a result, relatively commonplace. Some, aware that asylum seekers cannot be repatriated, had prepared themselves to declare being nationals of a war-torn country.

By emphasising their relative preparedness to face the risks of pirogue migration, or their ability to control or minimise them, (aspiring) pirogue migrants justify the acceptability of taking these risks. This partly explains how high-risk migration choices are made.

Reconciling risk awareness with risk taking

Information campaigns about high-risk unauthorised migration are based on assumptions about the relationship between access to risk information and risk-taking decisions. Specifically, they assume that migrants who follow high-risk migration routes do so because they are unaware of the risks involved, and that if information on these risks was provided to them, they would refrain from these migration forms (Nieuwenhuys and Pécoud 2007). The campaigns are based on an understanding of individual risk-taking similar to that put forth by psychological theories of risk perception. These theories often view risk-taking as the result of irrational or faulty decision-making conditioned by misinformation on the nature and magnitude of risks involved in the activity in question. When individuals are provided with accurate risk information, their risk perceptions (and consequently their behaviour) are expected to converge with "expert" risk opinions.

As this chapter has shown, however, there is no simple relationship between awareness of the risks involved in pirogue migration and migrants' attitudes to this form of migration.

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[8] The CFA Franc is the currency of Senegal as well as other former French colonies in West Africa, Guinea-Bissau and Equatorial Guinea.

Aspiring migrants actively engage with the risk information they receive, evaluating the validity of its content in relation to the credibility of the source, and filtering it as they see is relevant to their case. The fact that many – not least those who make successive attempts – embark on pirogue journeys in the knowledge that there is a chance they may die or be returned points to the existence of other important factors in shaping high-risk migration decisions. Some of these factors were explored in Chapter 4 and include lacking opportunities to advance personally and socially at home, the belief that emigration provides the means to fulfil one's aspirations, and the religious-informed acceptability of risking death on this path. This chapter has also shown that the decision to undertake pirogue migration is mediated by migrants' confidence in their relative preparedness to face the risks involved, whether because of their familiarity with risks in general or with the challenges of the sea, or because of their conviction that they are able to control or minimise possible risks.

Awareness campaigns that seek to "restore" faulty risk perceptions address the problem of information availability, but leave many other factors of risk-taking decisions unaddressed. As a result, they are likely to be seen as irrelevant by many aspiring migrants. Some of my informants half-jokingly suggested that information campaigns should rather be directed to encouraging the multi-millionaire public figures who speak of dissuading youth from pirogue migration to invest some of their wealth in providing more opportunities for young people to progress at home. This, they implied, would be a more effective way to ground young men.

VI. The impact of migration control policies

Building upon the material discussed throughout this thesis, this chapter seeks to provide a policy-oriented discussion of the strategies adopted to control pirogue migration, addressing the third research question, *Are policies that increase the rates of apprehension and repatriation likely to lead to a decrease in the number of pirogue crossing attempts?* While restrictive mechanisms constitute short-term action to address unauthorised migration, the extent of their effect on the opinions of prospective migrants is questionable. This is so because they are based on a limited understanding of the factors that influence migrants' decisions to undertake high-risk unauthorised migration. More specifically, they fail to consider the socio-economic factors that shape migrants' willingness to confront very high risks in order to achieve their migration aspirations. Because of this, they are not only of limited efficacy, but may also be counter-productive. Other strategies such as facilitating legal channels to emigration might be more effective in dissuading migrants from undertaking pirogue migration while protecting the migrants' safety.

Controlling unauthorised migration

One of the aims of migration control measures such as patrolling and repatriation is to dissuade prospective migrants from undertaking unauthorised migration. They decrease the chances that migrants will successfully enter Europe through unauthorised channels by making it more difficult for them to reach their destination or, if they succeed in completing the journey, by returning them to their origin. The effectiveness of the intended deterrent effect, however, depends on the extent to which their presence affects aspiring migrants' risk-benefit analyses.

The number of pirogues arriving on the shores of the Canary Islands has significantly decreased since 2006, which some have attributed to the effect of Frontex operations (Ba 2007; Godenau and Zapata Hernandez *forthcoming*). Still, it is virtually impossible to ascertain whether this reduction on the migrant influx to the Islands is solely due to the effect of patrolling and repatriation, or instead to other factors, or a combination of them. Some of the other factors that may have played into this reduction in migrant arrivals include initiatives promoted by the Spanish and Senegalese authorities, such as awareness campaigns aimed at informing potential pirogue migrants of the risk of dying throughout the journey, or programs developed to provide alternatives to pirogue migration.

Deterrent effect of surveillance

A large number of my informants appeared little preoccupied about the presence of Frontex patrolling along the West African coast. They said the presence of patrols had not altered their readiness to undertake pirogue migration, and emphasised the possibilities for avoiding them, or the fact that, given the impossibility of surveilling the entire coast, the chances of being caught are small enough to justify trying. The dismissal of the likelihood of interception as a question of luck is somewhat parallel to many of my informants' attitude to the possibility of storms or technical problems throughout the journey: migrants tend to be optimistic and focus on the chances of succeeding. Some even insist they would simply re-attempt the journey if apprehended by patrols. The apparently limited effect of patrolling on migrants' decisions to undertake unauthorised migration parallels the findings of research on the US-Mexico border (Cornelius 2001; Cornelius and Salehyan 2007; Espenshade 1994; Reyes *et al.* 2002).

On the other hand, many of my informants said increased surveillance has made it more difficult to organise pirogue journeys. In addition to patrols at sea, controls are also present on land, and organisers and migrants who are caught are subject to prosecution. At the risk of serving prison sentences, it appears that fewer organisers are willing to arrange journeys. This means that even when aspiring migrants consider sea patrols a minor obstacle, they might be unable to find a pirogue journey to join. Alternatively, a reduction in the number of journeys organised might reflect a decrease in interest towards pirogue migration, as a result of the repatriation regime or increased awareness of the risk of dying during the journey.

Deterrent effect of repatriation

Repatriation after arrival appears to have a much stronger effect than interception at sea on aspiring migrants' attitudes to pirogue migration. Few of my informants dismissed the significance of repatriation to the overall decision to undertake pirogue migration, but those who did so alluded to arguments similar to those used to dismiss the importance of patrols. They referred to the strategies (discussed in Chapter 5) that can be mobilised to avoid repatriation or to the fact that repatriations from the Canary Islands are "a question of luck." Indeed, Senegalese migrants arriving on the Islands are not systematically returned home, since repatriations depend on *ad hoc* agreements and the availability of identification missions from Senegal.[9] This lack of consistency probably means that repatriation fails to deter those aspiring migrants who, when assessing the risks of pirogue migration, generally tend to emphasise the possibilities of succeeding and undermine those of being returned. A

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[9] Repatriations from the Canary Islands are conditioned to specific authorisation from the Senegalese government, who will send a special commission to the Canary Islands charged with identifying its nationals.

few of my informants further dismissed the significance of repatriation just as that of patrolling, by stating that, in the event of being returned to Senegal, they would simply re-attempt the journey. This attitude is likely to be most common among fishermen who can make the trip without paying if they can be hired as part of the pirogue crew or others living by the sea, who might be able to get a reduced price if they know the organisers.

Most of my informants, however, agreed that the increased likelihood of repatriation at the present time makes it significantly less worthwhile to subject oneself to the dangers of the journey. Moustapha, when asked about whether he intended to attempt the pirogue journey a second time, quickly answered with an energetic negative, explaining that at present,

> it's not sure, that if you try again, to go to Spain, you will be able to get through. You can go to the Canary Islands, but will you get a permit, to go to Spain? […] Like they used to do, will you be directed towards the big Spanish cities, like Barcelona, or Málaga […] It's not for sure! So, in order to risk something, first of all, that thing has to be something that, once there, will allow me to… reach my goal! But, I will not risk my life for nothing! […] There is no point in risking your life, getting there, and being returned to Senegal. […] It's pointless to go there and back.

Moustapha's words point to a relationship between the likelihood of return and the acceptability of risking death. He suggests that risking death is acceptable as long as there exists a chance to arrive and begin a new, successful life in Europe. When repatriation is perceived as probable and therefore removes the likelihood of beginning anew as an emigrant, he feels it is no longer justifiable to risk his life. This attitude was very common among my informants, and suggests that the acceptability of risking death is intrinsically related to the risk of repatriation. Repatriation not only implies losing the opportunity to enter Europe, it moreover removes the possibility of moving beyond one's pre-departure circumstances. In other words, it denies migrants the chance to bring closure, or change, to a difficult life situation. Thierno's account illustrates this well. Frustrated about being repatriated, he says: "What makes me angry is that the government, once we came back to Senegal, should have brought us back home dead, or put us in prison. That would have been better for us. So that we would not have to walk around in Senegal any longer."

Thierno's statement that prison or death would have been preferable to "walking around in Senegal" suggests he feels a sense of shame about the fact of being repatriated, as though it represented his personal failure to emigrate. Saying he would have preferred to die than to be returned moreover suggests that forcible return may appear to migrants as a greater defeat than death. Although this may sound striking, it makes sense in relation to the meanings, explored in previous chapters, attributed to death and the act of emigrating by pirogue. Indeed, while death is considered to be determined by God, the act of undertaking pirogue migration is seen as a personal action to overcome stagnation, help one's family and defend one's dignity. While death is accepted with resignation as God's will, failing to carry through

one's emigration project is seen as a personal failure to progress in life. It makes sense, then, that migrants started using the slogan "Barça ou barzakh" after the authorities began to put pressure on young people to stay put, as Aziz explained. The slogan appears to make it clear that migrants were willing to risk their lives in order to reach Europe, but they did not contemplate the possibility of returning to the situation of protracted social immobility they were trying to escape.

The questionable effectiveness of border control measures

Besides the effect of border control measures on migrants' attitude towards unauthorised migration, there are three additional issues that raise questions about the effectiveness of these measures: they may simply lead to the prolongation of a route and as a result increase its danger; they disregard the causes of pirogue migration; and their deterrent effect, if any, is likely to vanish as soon as these measures end.

Firstly, restrictive migration control measures might provoke, in the middle to long term, the re-routing of the current pirogue route or even the emergence of a new one, potentially through a longer and/or more dangerous itinerary. As described in Chapter 3, the emergence of the pirogue route itself was related to tightened border control along the Strait of Gibraltar, and the deployment of patrols along the Mauritanian and Senegalese coasts progressively led to the prolongation of the route as departure points shifted further south along the West African coast. The emergence of longer routes that are potentially more dangerous for migrants is undesirable from a humanitarian perspective and contradictory with the objectives of Frontex and SIVE, both of which have stated their aim to provide humanitarian assistance to, and reduce the loss of lives of, undocumented boat migrants.

European border control agency Frontex states in its description of joint surveillance operation Hera II its aim "to enhance the control of the area between the West African coast and the Canary Islands, thus diverting the vessels using this migration route and *contributing to the reduction of human lives lost at sea* during the dangerous long journey" (Frontex 2007:12, emphasis added). Protecting the lives of migrants is here stated as a central factor in the motivation to curb, or divert, the migration flow along this route. It would therefore be counterproductive to this aim if the very presence of Frontex patrol boats led migrants to adopt longer routes that expose them to higher dangers (Spijkerboer 2007).

The Spanish border control system SIVE similarly refers to the protection of human lives as one of its central concerns, stating: "*One of the fundamental dimensions of this System is the humanitarian one*, since SIVE allows for long-distance detection of vessels, which facilitates the tasks of identification and rapid relief to the victims of this new kind of traffic in human beings" (Guardia Civil nd., emphasis added). Whereas Frontex aims to prevent the

loss of migrants' lives by deterring them from embarking on pirogue migration or deflecting those who do, SIVE's humanitarian aim lies with intercepting migrant vessels close to the Spanish coast. This assistance is indeed often vital when migrants have followed a long route and might be exhausted or their boat damaged. At the same time, since interception by coastal patrols near the destination and migrants' subsequent arrest increases the chances that they will be repatriated, patrols might lead migrants to resort to longer routes, in a similar way to Frontex boats' presence near departure points. An example of such a rerouting is the detour *pateras* began making from Morocco to the Canaries after SIVE was installed in Fuerteventura. In order to avoid detection, the boats instead navigated to the farther islands (see Chapter 3).

In sum, it is important that migration control measures assess the effect of their activities on the migration flows they seek to curb, so that they may not contribute to the development of longer, more dangerous routes.

The second limitation to the effectiveness of border control mechanisms arises from the fact that restrictive approaches to curtailing unauthorised migration do not attend to the root causes of these migration flows and therefore only provide "band-aid solutions." Aspiring migrants might persist in their attempt to circumvent border control mechanisms if nothing is done to address the needs they intend to fulfil through emigration (Bhagwati 2006). At the same time, development promotion strategies that improve economic capacity across the population at large are, in the short to medium term, more likely to augment migration aspirations than to diminish them (Bakewell 2007; de Haas 2006b). Migration policies are more likely to succeed in controlling unauthorised migration flows when they are based on an understanding of the complex considerations that lead migrants to follow high-risk unauthorised channels. In the case of pirogue migration, such an understanding requires taking into consideration not only the economic factors but also the social, psychological and religious aspects of migrants' decisions.

The third limitation to the efficacy of the use of restrictive mechanisms to control unauthorised migration lies on the difficulty in sustaining them. It is not certain that cooperation between West African countries and Spain in migration control could be upheld indefinitely at the current level, especially in what concerns patrolling. Unless maritime migration controls are incorporated into national coastguard activities, origin and transit countries may, in the future, reconsider their willingness to allow European patrolling of their territorial waters. If this happens, the presumed deterrent effect these mechanisms have had on pirogue migration will probably vanish soon after the patrolling and repatriation schemes dissolve. Many of my informants said they were certain patrols would not be there forever, and that as soon as they ended, pirogue departures would resume. This underlines the need to devise migration control policies that address the root causes of unauthorised migration, not merely flows.

Creating alternatives to unauthorised migration

Besides the use of restrictive migration control mechanisms, the Spanish and Senegalese governments have attempted to curb pirogue migration by creating alternatives to it. The main two alternatives discussed here are the Spanish government's promotion of its "hiring at the origin" scheme to facilitate legal migration to Spain from Senegal, and the Senegalese government's Plan REVA (*Retour Vers l'Agriculture*), a project to promote youth employment through a "return to agriculture."

Since 2006, the Spanish government has promoted regular migration from Senegal through its "hiring at the origin" scheme in order to discourage pirogue migration. Every year, a fixed quota of contracts is to be filled by Senegalese workers. Contracts through this program are to be allocated among both returnees and other young people who have not attempted pirogue migration, so that aspiring migrants will be dissuaded from following the pirogue route. As personnel at the Spanish Embassy in Dakar explained, this scheme has opened an "escape valve" to counterbalance the repressive function of patrolling. This opening is more likely to provoke visible changes in a more immediate term than longer-term development projects aimed at tackling the root causes of irregular migration.

While it is difficult to assess the effect of the "hiring at the origin" initiative, many of my informants were optimistic about its providing new avenues for legal emigration to Europe and partly attributed the decrease in pirogue departures to the expectation awakened by this scheme. If this initiative is successful, they reason, it would no longer make sense to risk one's life through the pirogue journey.

The "hiring at the origin" scheme moreover appears to be significantly more appealing than the Senegalese government's strategy to fight irregular migration through the REVA plan. This plan is aimed at deterring pirogue migration by offering "sufficiently remunerating" employment in the agricultural sector, including fishing (Senghor 2006). There was a consistent disinterest towards this plan among my informants. Much of it appeared to arise from general distrust of government initiatives and the potential of the plan. My informants justified their distrust by referring to the administration's failure to deliver its promise of increased employment opportunities for youth, and by describing politicians as "speaking much but doing little" and working for their own interest. With respect to the plan itself, informants said to have little information on its content, and dismissed it as unlikely to succeed – just as past similar plans – and in any case of little interest to them. The impression that youth do not perceive a "return to agriculture" as an alternative to the perceived benefits of emigration has been corroborated elsewhere (Ba 2007). Consequently, the Spanish initiative to promote "hiring at the origin" is more likely to influence attitudes towards unauthorised migration by pirogue.

The success of the Spanish "hiring at the origin" is, however, constrained by the perceived unfairness of the scheme. Most of my informants reported discontent about the management of the contracts, on two grounds. Firstly, there exists some confusion as to who the contracts should be assigned to, probably as a result of misinformation or inconsistency in the portrayal of this arrangement. Many of my informants were under the impression that contracts are to be solely distributed among those who have attempted the pirogue journey. As a result, they complained about what they consider the unfair allocation of some of the contracts to people who have never attempted the crossing to the Canaries.

Secondly, there is growing scepticism towards the system through which contracts are being distributed. Most informants reported rumours that the contracts, instead of being assigned through the stipulated lottery system, are being sold or distributed on the basis of nepotism or political interest. Such allegations have also appeared in the press (Kandji 2008). My informants often argued that proper management of the scheme would only come about if the Spanish authorities themselves took charge of the assignment of contracts. Personnel at the Spanish Embassy in Dakar, however, explained that they consider it more constructive to assist the Senegalese government in developing the necessary infrastructure (for example a national database of unemployed workers) so that they may have the possibility to establish similar cooperation schemes with other countries in the future.

Promoting capacity building in this area at the level of the Senegalese government is, without doubt, an important contribution that may greatly facilitate avenues for legal emigration from Senegal. Besides, it might be difficult for the Spanish government to interfere with the Senegalese authorities' administration of the contracts. The relationship between the two governments is complex and rests on mutual benefit and respect for the other party's interests. As a result, even if the allegations of corruption in the distribution of contracts were found to be true, the Spanish government might have little room for leveraging better management.

At the same time, mismanagement of the contracts can be extremely damaging to the initiative's aims. If aspiring migrants come to see it as "another plan turned corrupt," they will stop regarding it as a realistic alternative to pirogue migration. If unconvinced by the Spanish scheme, my informants said, young people would simply turn again to the pirogues. Needless to say, this would be counterproductive to Spanish interests, and, most importantly, to the security of aspiring migrants who might return to the pirogue or other high-risk unauthorised migration route.

Concluding remarks: Kamikaze migrants?

This thesis has sought to contribute to the analysis on the dynamics of high-risk unauthorised migration by focusing on the pirogue migration route from West Africa to the Canary Islands.

In doing so, it has explored, first, how high-risk migration routes develop in relation to migration control policies and practices; second, how aspiring migrants' perceptions and assessments of the risks involved in this migration form affect their decision to take part in it; and third, how policies devised to curb unauthorised migration affect its dynamics.

In order to answer the first research question guiding this thesis project, *How have new routes of irregular maritime migration developed from West Africa to the Canary Islands and how have Spanish and European authorities responded to these changes?* I have first explored the relationship between the emergence of the pirogue route and the securitisation of migration in Europe, and the new migration dynamics that have developed as a result of this new route to the Canary Islands. The growing European focus on irregular immigration as a security problem has led to the development of migration management policies that emphasise control of unauthorised migration flows along external borders. Increased surveillance of the Strait of Gibraltar and the *patera* route from Morocco and Western Sahara to the Canary Islands contributed significantly to the emergence of the pirogue route from West Africa. Subsequent border control activities along the coasts of Mauritania and Senegal further led to the emergence of departure points as far away as Guinea-Bissau. The emergence of the pirogue route represented, for migrants unable to migrate regularly, the creation of a direct route linking sub-Saharan Africa with Europe. As it avoids the need to cross the desert, the pirogue route appears to have been perceived by aspiring migrants as an easier and safer alternative than the long routes to Europe through North Africa. This would explain the peak number of migrant arrivals to the Canary Islands in 2006, coinciding with the emergence of the pirogue route and its gradual shift towards Senegal.

The second research question, *How does awareness of the risks of death or return affect the decision to attempt the pirogue crossing?* has been explored by resorting to psychological theories of risk perception and risk-taking. Certain migration control strategies such as risk awareness campaigns are based on the assumption that unauthorised migration decisions are a result of missing or inaccurate risk information. The analysis of fieldwork material from Senegal suggests that though high-risk migration decisions are indeed mediated by the availability of risk information, the relationship between information availability and decision-making is not a linear one. Aspiring migrants actively interact with the risk information available to them, assessing its validity, credibility, and relevance. Furthermore, high-risk migration decisions are influenced by aspiring migrants' socio-economic situation, the social and symbolic value attributed to pirogue migration, the moral acceptability of the risks involved, and the extent to which migrants perceive themselves to be prepared to face and control those risks, especially in relation to other migrants.

Aspiring migrants' risk assessments are therefore complex and far from irrational. Still, it may seem paradoxical that people would follow highly perilous migration routes even while aware of the risks to which they subject themselves. Voicing his perplexity at this paradox, a General of the Spanish Guardia Civil on the Canary Islands was quoted saying of pirogue migrants: "they are like kamikaze terrorists, they have nothing to lose and everything to gain" (Soudan 2007:22). As discussed in Chapter 4, allusions of pirogue migration as "suicidal" are not uncommon in Senegal, and might, not least, be encouraged by the slogan "Barça ou barzakh" voiced by many pirogue migrants. Still, the suggestion that pirogue migration is a kind of suicidal action is outrageous to pirogue migrants: it is an accusation of immorality (as per the Qur'an's prohibition of suicide) of an action to which migrants attribute high symbolic and moral value. To many pirogue migrants, embarking on the journey to the Canary Islands represents a courageous move to take one's future in one's hands, and step out of socio-economic stagnation in order to become a respected adult. Framed in a narrative of sacrifice for their families, many migrants view facing the risks of the journey as socially acceptable and morally justifiable, not the least because dying on this path (trying to do good for one's family) is considered "an honourable death" and the moment of death itself is determined by God. The term kamikaze implies a suicidal action, one undertaken in the knowledge that the sure outcome is death. Pirogue migrants are willing to risk death in order to bring about change to their lives, but as many of my informants insisted, they are optimistic. They risk because they *believe* they have a chance of succeeding; they would be "kamikazes" if they knew they had no possibility of surviving the journey and still attempted it. Migration control strategies that deny the complexity of high-risk migration decisions, as risk awareness campaigns often do, are likely to fail to address this migration form effectively.

The implications of failing to recognise the complexity of high-risk migration decisions are also highly significant for the last research question guiding this thesis: *"Are policies that increase the rates of apprehension likely to lead to a decrease in the number of crossing attempts?"* Restrictive border management practices, while they might have some immediate effect on curtailing unauthorised migration flows, fail to address the socio-economic factors that drive these flows and migrants' willingness to confront very high risks. As a result, not only are they likely to fail to manage unauthorised migration effectively, they might also contribute to the emergence of longer, more dangerous routes, as migrants seek to avoid detection. This would be counterproductive to the humanitarian concerns of bodies such as SIVE and Frontex with preserving the human safety of migrants.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1. Interview guide

This interview guide was translated to French and simplified into a small, one-page keyword map that I could use during interviews. Some of the questions are phrased in a way that is relevant to aspiring pirogue migrants or pirogue returnees, and were appropriately adapted for interviews with those aspiring migrants who do not want to migrate by pirogue.

Basic information
Age, profession, place of origin, education level, family situation, Muslim brotherhood.

Life in Senegal
o Do you have a job? Is it enough to cover your expenses?
o Do you have a big family? Do you have a wife and children?

Motivations for emigrating
o Do you wish to emigrate?
o What makes you want to (not) go?
   ▪ Do your family or friends encourage you to migrate?
o What ideas/expectations do you have of emigration/Europe?
o Do you know many people who are there / have come back? What do they say? Do they talk about the difficult times?
o What do you think life "without papers" in Europe is like? What are the difficulties?
   ▪ How different would the conditions be from staying here?
   ▪ How easy/difficult do you think it is to get a job there? Would the fact of not having "papers" make any difference? Would you do jobs there that you would not here?
   ▪ How easy/difficult do you think it would be to integrate there? Is there a specific country where you think it would have been easier to live?
   ▪ Do you think you would run into problems with the authorities?
o Do you think it is possible to not succeed in Europe?
o Do you see any alternatives to migrating in order to "succeed" in life?

Strategies for emigrating
o What do you think is the best/easiest way to get to Europe?
o Have you tried applying for a visa?
   ▪ How difficult is this?

- o Have you considered the land routes to North Africa?
- o Would you go by pirogue?
    - ▪ Do you know anyone who has? Have they told you about their experience? How does this affect your will to go?
    - ▪ What is your relationship to the sea? (work, experience navigating, etc.)
    - ▪ How difficult is it to join/arrange a pirogue journey?
    - ▪ What do you think about organisers? Are they "on the migrant's side," or just there to do business?
    - ▪ How expensive is it? If you had to borrow money to pay the trip: would people have lent you the money for other purposes, such as investing in a business in Senegal?
    - ▪ Do you know that migrating by pirogue means you will not have a legal status there?
    - ▪ Do you know how migration by the pirogues began? What happened in 2006?
    - ▪ Have the pirogues made it easier to migrate?
    - ▪ Would you have tried to emigrate if the pirogue option did not exist?

Challenges/dangers of the pirogue journey
- o What are, in your opinion, the challenges/dangers of the pirogue journey?
- o How likely is it that there could be an accident?
    - ▪ What does it depend on? Is there any way to control this? Are the pirogues solid enough?
    - ▪ Did you know who would be taking charge of the navigation?
    - ▪ How do you find the itinerary?
- o How were the cohabitation conditions?
- o How likely do you think it is that you could die during the journey?
    - ▪ Do you think it is possible to know how many die in the attempt?
    - ▪ Do you know (of) others who have died? Is it talked about?
    - ▪ What would happen if you died? What would be the consequences for your family?
    - ▪ Are you afraid of the possibility of dying throughout the journey? If not, do you consider yourself exceptionally courageous, or just like others?
    - ▪ To what extent is death determined by God or destiny?
- o Do you think it is worthwhile to risk your life if you are not living in extreme poverty?
- o Did/would you do anything special to protect yourself before the journey?
    - ▪ Did/would you go see a *marabout*?
- o If attempted pirogue migration, how was the actual experience? Did it go as expected?
- o What is your opinion of awareness campaigns?
    - ▪ Do you think they reflect the reality of pirogue migration?
    - ▪ Have they had any effect on your opinion of pirogue migration?

Apprehension and Repatriation
- o How likely is it to be apprehended by patrols during the journey?
    - ▪ Can this be avoided? How?
- o How likely is it to be repatriated after arriving to the Canary Islands?

- Can this be avoided? How?
- Did you have any ID documents on you when you left?
o What do you think happens after arriving to the Canary Islands?
o What is your opinion of apprehension/repatriation?
o Have you heard stories of people who have been apprehended / repatriated?
o Do you think apprehension and/or repatriation are making it more difficult to reach the Canary Islands by pirogue?
o Do you think it is fair that Europe tries to prevent young Africans from migrating?
- Are you frustrated/angry with someone? Whom?
- What do you think of the collaboration between Spain and Senegal?
- European countries are richer than African ones – is there something you think they should do to help African youth?
o What do you think about the Spanish initiative to hire people in Senegal and give them a permit to work in Spain?
- Have you thought of applying?

Senegalese government
o What do you think about the government's attitude to pirogue migration?
- Are they preventing people from leaving by pirogue?
- Are they doing enough to help youth?
- What more can they do?

Questions for those who do not wish to migrate by pirogue
o Are you generally not interested in migrating, or just not by pirogue?
o What dissuaded you from migrating by pirogue?
o Do you think the risk of pirogue migration is too big?
o What kind of people do you think leave by pirogue?
- Are they not conscious of the risks?
- Are they willing to take the risks because they have no responsibilities?
- Are they simply very courageous or fearless?
o What differentiates you from those who want to go by pirogue?
- Is your situation in Senegal better than theirs?

Appendix 2. List of interviewees

Pseudonym	*Pirogue*	*Age*	*Family status*	*Profession*
Abdourahmane	Yes	35	Single	Fisherman
Abou	No	28	Married, children	Multiple
Alioune	No	33	Single	Industry
Amadou	Yes	41	Married, children	Fisherman
Assane	No	34	Single	Unemployed
Aziz	Yes	24	Single	Unemployed
Babacar	No	35	Married, children	Fisherman
Bocar	Yes	n/a	Married, children	Unemployed
Cheikh	No	26	Single	Unemployed
Elimane	Yes	28	Married, children	Fisherman
Fodé	Yes	20	Single	Unemployed
Ibrahima	Yes	23	Divorced, one child	Unemployed
Idrissa	Yes	37	Single	Unemployed
Khadim	Yes	26	Single	Fisherman
Lamine	Yes	28	Single	Fisherman
Lat	Yes	29	Single	Accountant
Maguette	No	33	Single	Construction
Mansour	Yes	n/a	Single	Fisherman
Modou	Yes	n/a	Married, children	Multiple
Moussa	Yes	37	Married, children	Commerce
Moustapha	Yes	34	Single	Multiple
Ousmane	No	34	Married	Multiple
Ousseynou	No	31	Married, children	Fisherman
Pape	Yes	34	Divorced	Industry
Salif	No	30	Married, children	Businessman
Samba	No	18	Single	Fisherman
Serigne	Yes	27	Single, one child	Fisherman
Souleymane	Yes	30	Single	Fisherman
Thierno	Yes	28	Single	Fisherman
Tidjane	No	31	Married, children	Driver
Youssouf	Yes	31	Single	Multiple

Appendix 3. Nodes used for classifying fieldwork data

<u>Free nodes</u>

(In)dependence
Adventure
Ambitions
Challenge
Choice
Corruption
Courage
Credibility
Crime
Destiny
Dignity and Pride
Disappointment
Education
Fairness
Family
Fear
Frustration
Globalisation
Hope or lack of
Information
Livelihood/poverty
Luck
Manhood
Money
Motivation to emigrate
Quote
Religion
Responsibility
Sacrifice
Shame
Sharing stories
Social status
Solidarity
Solutions
Success
Suicide
Trust/confidence
Women
Work

<u>Tree nodes</u>

African problems
Europe's responsibility

Countries
Europe
France
Gambia
Italy
Mauritania
Morocco
Spain
US

Death
Magnitude
Meanings

Deciding
Change

Emigration alternatives
Contracts/Spain
Desert/Morocco
Legal emigration
Marriage
Other
Pirogues
  Evolution
Studies
Visa

Emigration in society
Opinions at home
Others' emigration experience

Ideas of emigration
Acceptance of emigrants
Life in Europe
  Irregular situation
Need for labour
Network
Papers

Journey perils and difficulties
Conflicts
Fatigue
Lack of food/water
Navigation

Overcrowding
Psychological difficulty
Route/sea unreliability
Sickness
Technical problems
Weather
Witchcraft

Life in Senegal
Alternatives for future
Investing
Senegalese government
  On youth
  Spain collaboration
Staying

Pirogue journey
Date
Equipment
GPS
Itinerary
Life onboard
Organisers
Others' pirogue stories
Planning
Price and paying

Risk-taking
Life experiences and risk perception
Relation to sea
Risk assessment
Risk awareness
  Information campaigns
Risk minimisation
  Amulets/Marabouts
  Prayers
  Weather forecast
  Withholding ID
Self vs. Other

Spain/EU migration management
Logic
Mechanics
Post-arrival process
Repatriation
Surveillance